

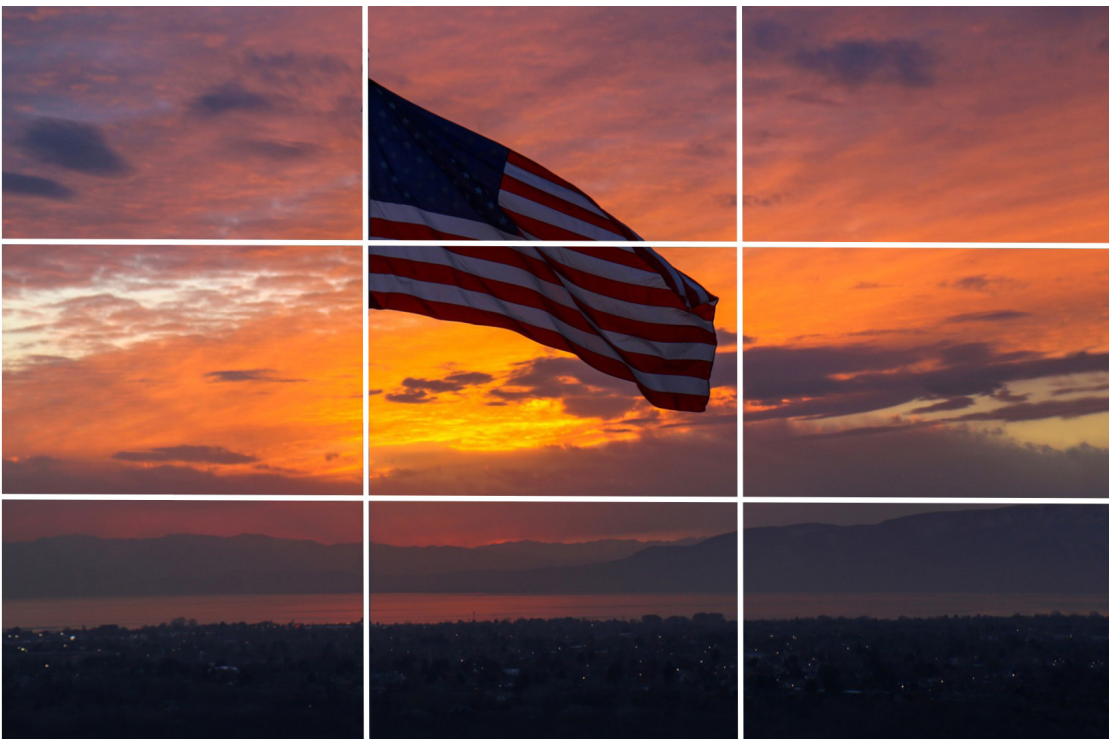
PHOTOGRAPHY FUNDAMENTALS

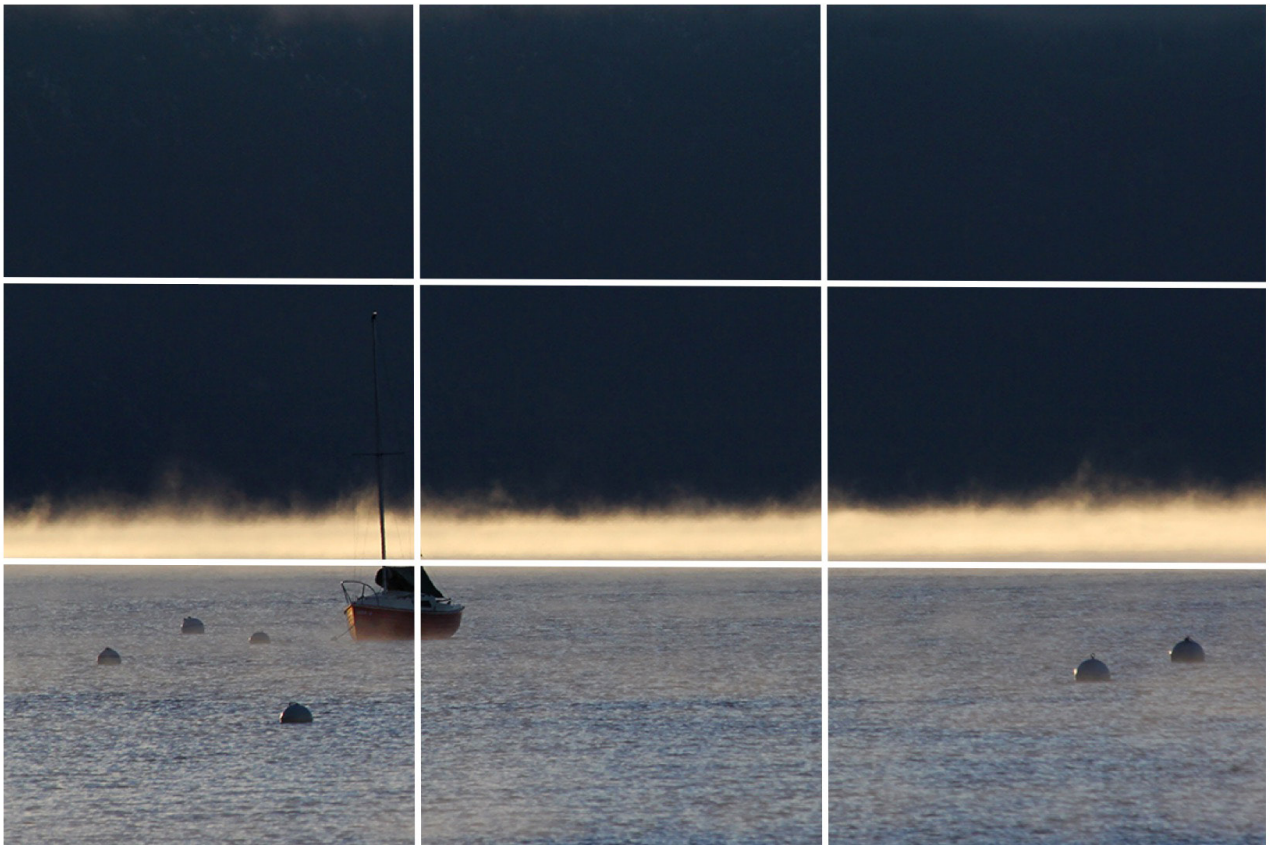
JAMES HUSTON

There are no set rules for photography composition, but these are some guidelines to help improve the compositions of your photos. Composition is the way the various elements of a scene are arranged within the frame of your shot. By changing your perspective or your physical location, you can greatly affect the look of your composition. The way your shot is composed will catch the viewer's interest and guide their eye through your photo.

RULE OF THIRDS

The basic premise of the rule of thirds is to divide your frame into thirds horizontally and vertically in a grid. Then place the important element(s) of your scene where two lines intersect, with horizontal or vertical subjects following the gridlines. Many beginners tend to place their subject in the center of their shot. By placing your subject off-center on a third, you will often create more interesting compositions.



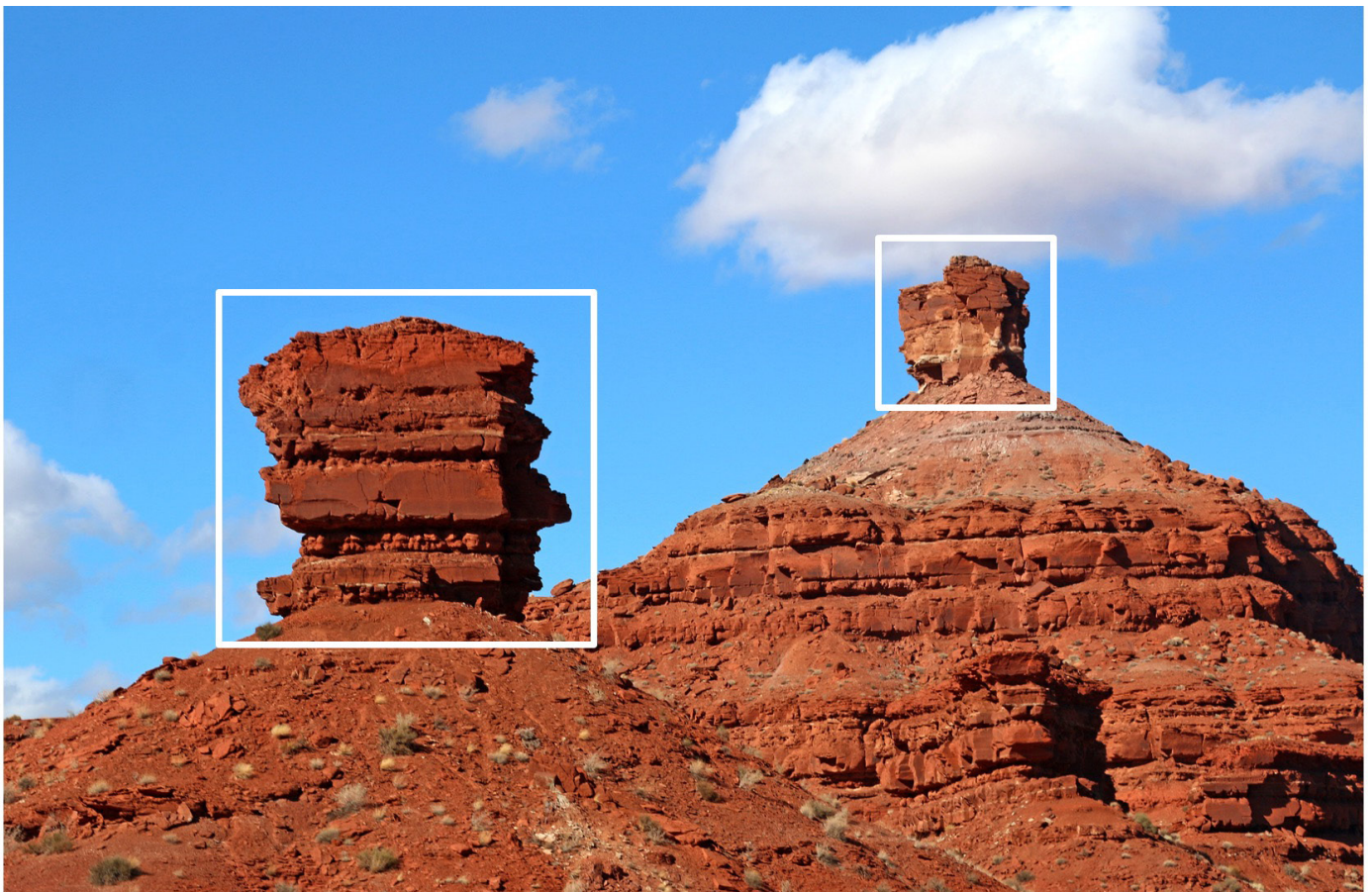




BALANCED FRAME

The placement of objects in your frame, their size, and their relation to each other creates balance. When your composition is balanced, it creates a relaxed feeling that is pleasing to the eye. Conversely, objects in your frame can be placed out of balance to create a feeling of tension or unease. Try moving around to see how the balance of your shot changes to create different feelings.









LEADING LINES

You can use lines within your frame to draw your viewer in and guide their eye through your composition. Diagonal lines can be especially useful in creating interest for the viewer. Look for natural lines when composing a shot, such as fences, rivers, roads, walls, mountains, or even shadows to guide the viewer's eye to your subject(s).







LEADING LOOKS

Leading looks, or eye lines, are the imaginary lines leading from the subject's eyes to where they are looking. Generally, more space between the subject's eyes and the edge of the frame will create a more relaxed feeling, whereas having a short distance between the subject's eyes and the edge of the frame will create a feeling of tension.







DEPTH

Depth refers to the distance from the closest object to the farthest in your composition that is in focus along the Z-axis. A shallow depth of field will blur more of your shot, which will draw the viewer's attention to a specific point that is in focus. This will give your photo a more intimate feel. A deeper depth of field will have most of the photo in focus, which can create a feeling of vastness or openness.





CONVEY EMOTION

Often, the goal of photography is to convey emotion. This is done best by capturing people in candid situations when they are showing their true emotions. However, photos can also convey emotion without showing a person's face. Body language can convey emotion, and objects can also convey emotion.





FRAME WITHIN A FRAME

A frame within a frame can be used to focus the viewer's attention quickly to your subject. Frames can include trees, rocks, doorways, arches, windows, etc. Placing your subject within a frame will isolate your subject, and it can also add a narrative by giving context to your subject.





EVERYTHING IN YOUR FRAME MATTERS

Everything in your frame makes up your photo's composition and will affect the way the viewer responds to your photo. You can often control everything in your frame by placing your camera in the best spot and using the guidelines outlined above. As you practice framing your photos more deliberately, it will become easier to create compelling compositions.



The leaves wouldn't pop as much if the mountains were also in focus, and they wouldn't be as interesting by themselves without the mountains as context.



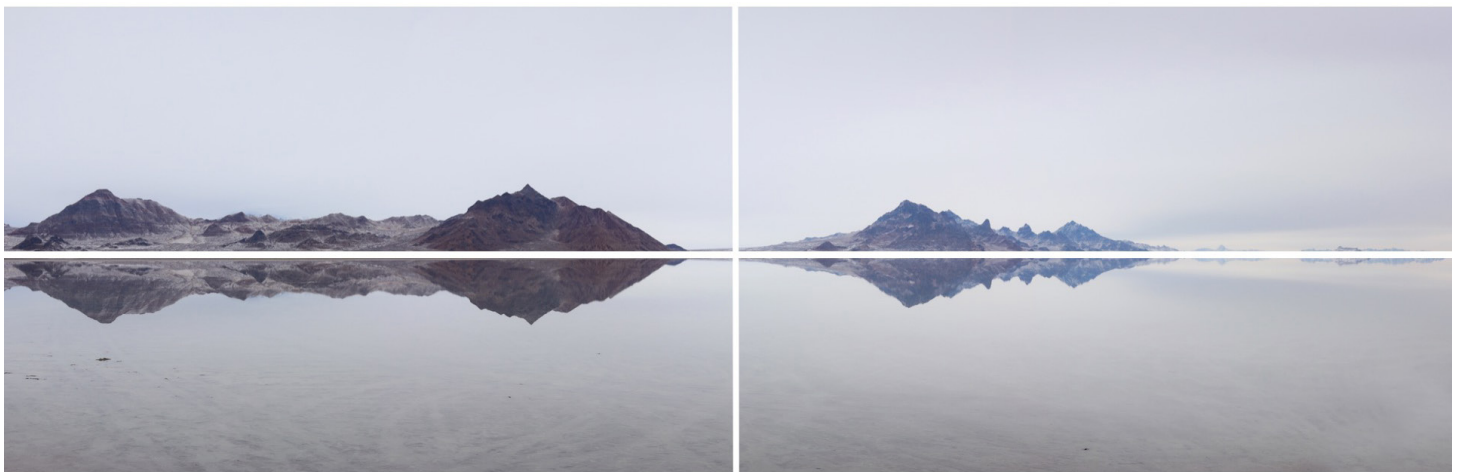
The weight is heavy to the left side, but the road catches attention on the bottom right and leads back up toward the top and left as it meets the line of the mountains



Several distinct layers of interest

BREAK THE RULES

These rules are actually more like guidelines to help beginners improve their photos quickly, but all of these rules can be broken. Breaking the rules can create different feelings for the viewer, such as tension or unease. As you become more deliberate with composing photos, you will learn when the rules help and when breaking the rules creates a more interesting shot.



This photo is centered vertically, but it works because of the symmetry reflected across the horizon line.



This photo is centered, but it works because of the repeated shapes and patterns.



The train is coming in and heading out of the short side of the frame, making the leading line too short, but it works because of the weight of the Joshua tree on the left.

BE ORIGINAL

With access to good photography equipment becoming cheaper and easier, the main thing that will set your photos apart from everyone else is you, the photographer. Try to explore new perspectives and develop your own voice as an artist.

