

Photography Tips

Cropping for General Composition

Image composition is in many respects an art form. Rules are meant to be broken but a few rules which should be considered when cropping for composition include:

Rule of Thirds: Divide the frame into thirds horizontally and vertically. The points where those lines intersect are good starting points to place the main subject. Essentially the primary subject is slightly off center.

Focus Attention: Crop to make the primary focus or center of attention clear. For example, the eyes of a person might be the focal point of a portrait.

Allow for Movement: Consider how the viewer's eye moves across an image and allow for that movement. For example, in a portrait of someone looking left to right, make sure to allow 'space' for them to look into or include enough of the subject so the viewer knows what they're looking at. Cropping too tightly will make the view wonder what's going on.

Amputations: Generally, cropping off people's limbs at joints makes them look like amputees. It's okay to crop off a hand, leg or even portions of a person's head or face, but consider the other cropping and composition factors when doing so. The mind's eye can fill in many blanks to complete a person's torso, limb or part of their face or it can stop and wonder what happened to those parts.

Framing: Cropping can be used to bring out natural frames within an image to further enhance the focal point. For example, looking through a cluster of trees towards the mountains can help create a frame to focus the viewer's attention and provide depth to an image.