

# TIPS FOR BETTER COMPOSITION

(avoiding the "snapshot" look)

by Clem Wehner



With a little knowledge you can take great photos with any camera!



*"It's what's in your head, not what's in your hand."*

Move yourself down to their level

not this

this

photo by Clem Wehner

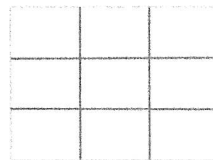
photo by Clem Wehner



SUGGESTION

## The "Rule" of Thirds

1. Divide image (in viewfinder) into thirds each way.
2. Place center of interest at an intersection of lines.



Get down on your subject's level.

Don't shoot down on people and animals

not this

this

photo by Clem Wehner

photo by Clem Wehner



Position the subject using "The Rule of Thirds"

OK

better

photo by John Powers

photo by John Powers



### Using the Rule of Thirds

OK

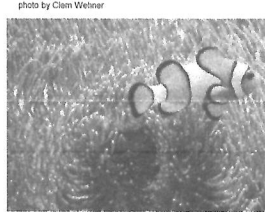


better

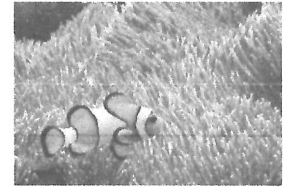


### Plan placement of subject Leave room in front of moving subjects

not this



this



### Using the Rule of Thirds

Both good

photo by Clem Wehner

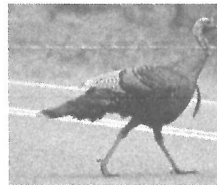


photo by John Powers

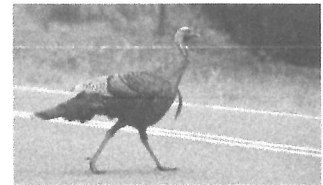


### Give the subject room to move

not this



this



### The "rule" is really only a suggestion

These photos DO NOT follow the rule of thirds  
but, both are good

photo by John Powers



photo by Clem Wehner



### Leave space in front of moving subject

not this



this



### If it's supposed to move, leave room

not this



this

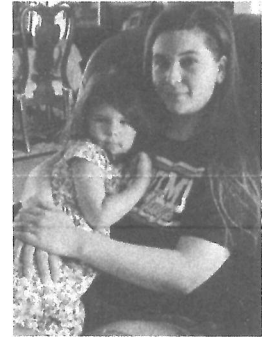


### ZOOM IN TO ELIMINATE CLUTTER

SNAPSHOT



PORTRAIT



Generally, the subject should fill about 60% of the scene

### Watch for distractions

Avoid branches, objects thru image, etc.

not these



this



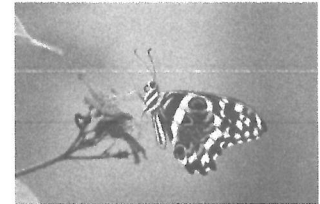
photos by Clem Wehner

### Zoom in to emphasize the subject.

photo by John Powers



photo by John Powers



### Recompose to eliminate distractions

Zooming in often helps

not this



photo by Clem Wehner

this



photo by Clem Wehner

### Compose to give a sense of scale

Put something in the foreground or zoom out

ok

photo by John Powers



much better

photo by John Powers



### Use foreground objects to add interest

good

photo by John Powers



much better

photo by John Powers



### Try vertical and horizontal compositions

photo by Clem Wehner



photo by Clem Wehner



### Use foreground objects to show depth

photo by Clem Wehner

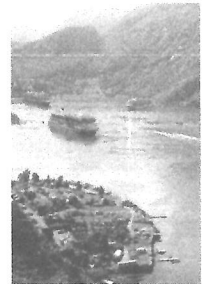


### Try vertical and horizontal compositions

photo by Clem Wehner



photo by Clem Wehner



### Try vertical and horizontal compositions

photo by John Powers

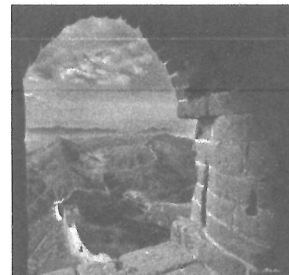


photo by John Powers

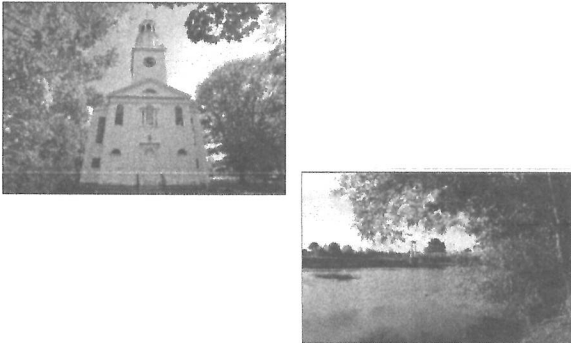


### Framing in composition

Use objects in the photo to "frame" the main subject



Framing in composition



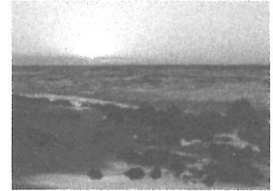
Put the horizon off center

not this  
Centered

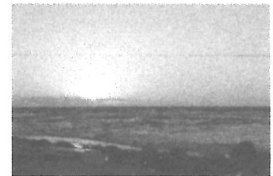


Upper third

these



Lower third



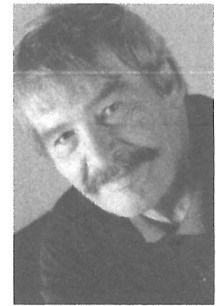
Framing in composition



Try some UNUSUAL ANGLES for added interest

photo by Fran Wehner

photo by Fran Wehner



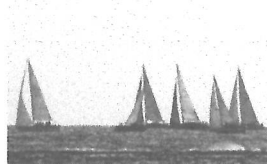
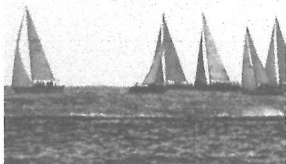
Don't put the horizon in center

not this

this

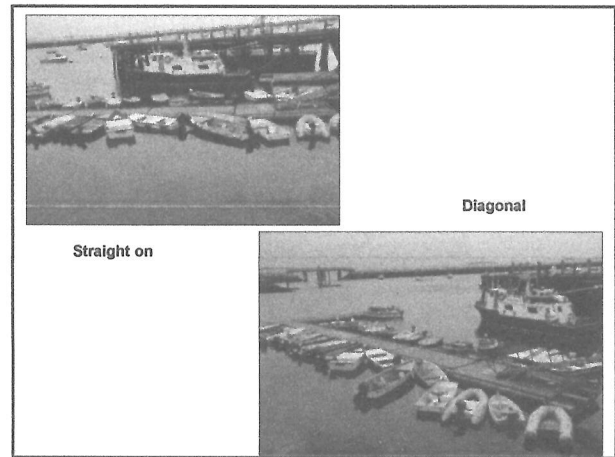
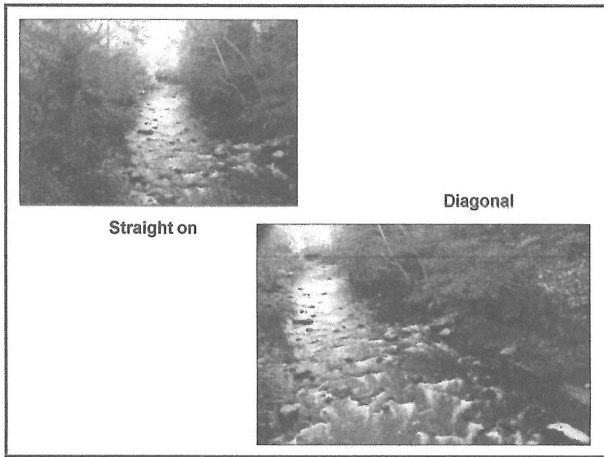
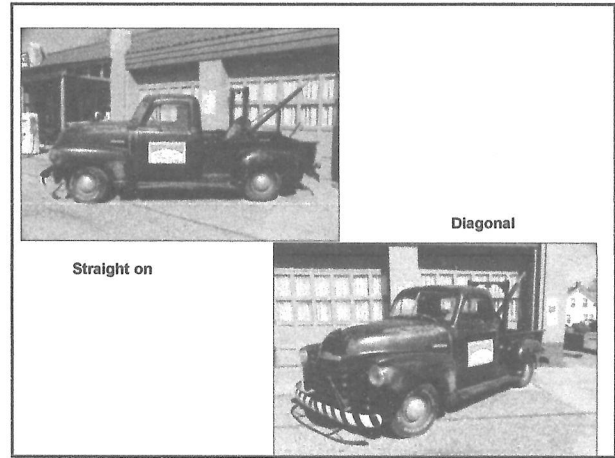
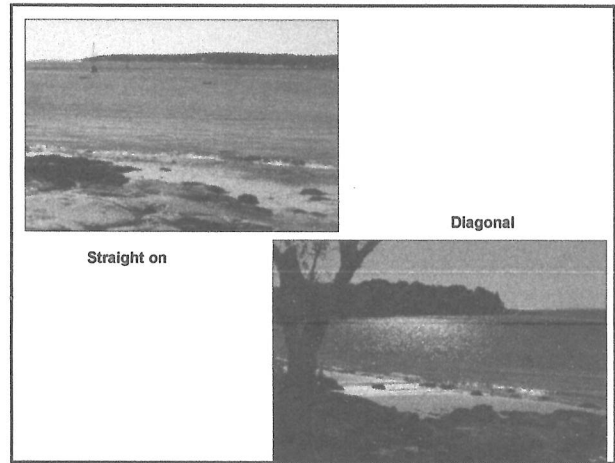
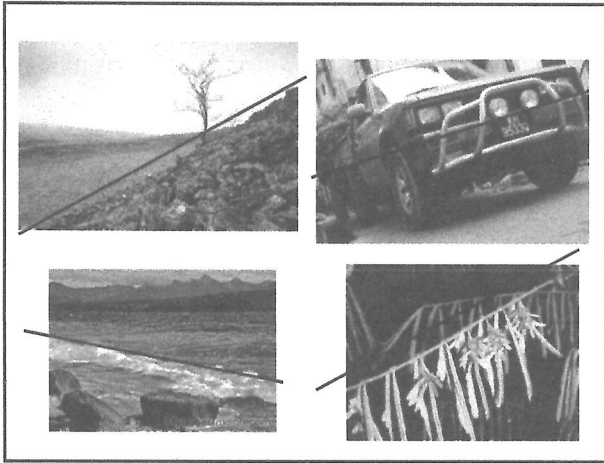
photo by John Powers

photo by John Powers



DIAGONAL COMPOSITION





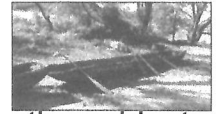
To compose a "diagonal" presentation:



Move to one side of the subject  
Don't tilt the camera!

To create a diagonal composition:

1. Move to one side
2. Shoot at an angle to the subject



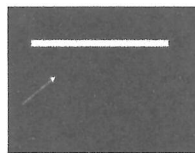
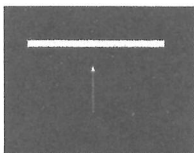
Tilting the camera only makes a tilted subject



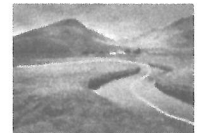
## HOW TO USE S- CURVES

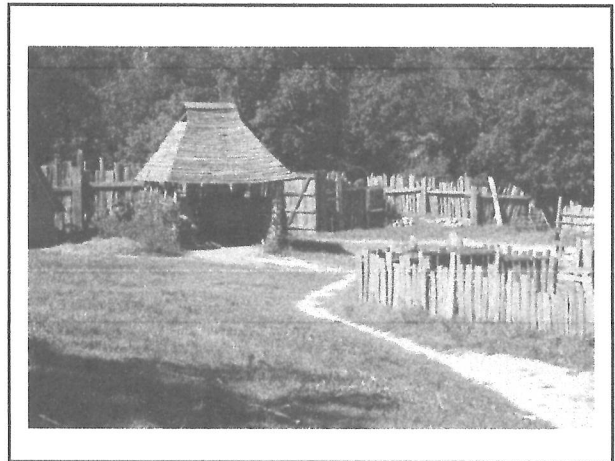
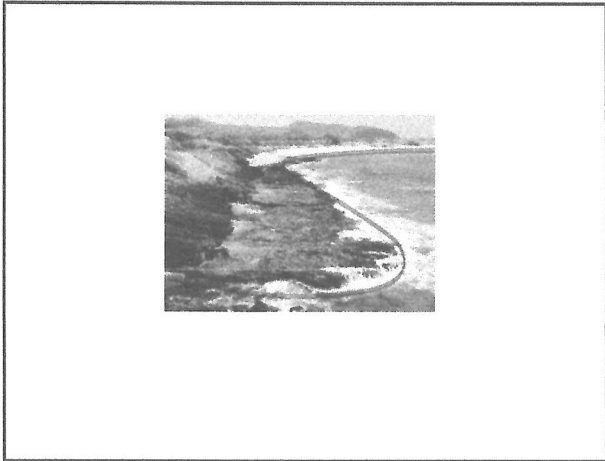
IN COMPOSING PHOTOGRAPHS

Creating a Diagonal Composition




An S-Curve is an imaginary line  
in a photo in the shape of an S


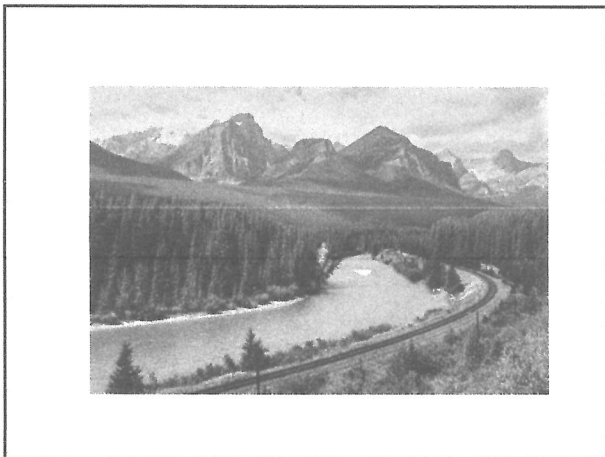




- S-curves are soothing
- The eye enjoys following "S" curves
- They add grace and balance
- They create dynamic images
- They give a sense of rhythm and movement

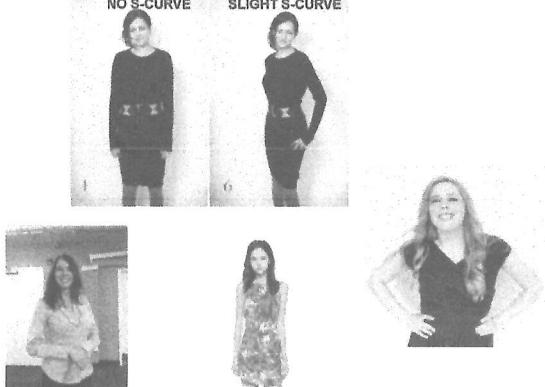


**Understanding the use of S-curves is ESSENTIAL in portraits of women**

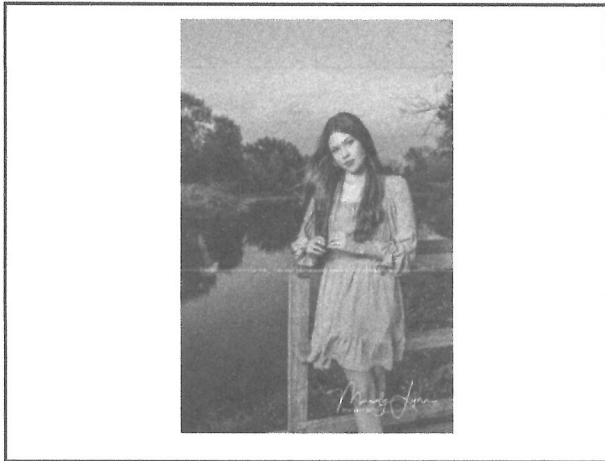



**Without S-curves you get unflattering images**

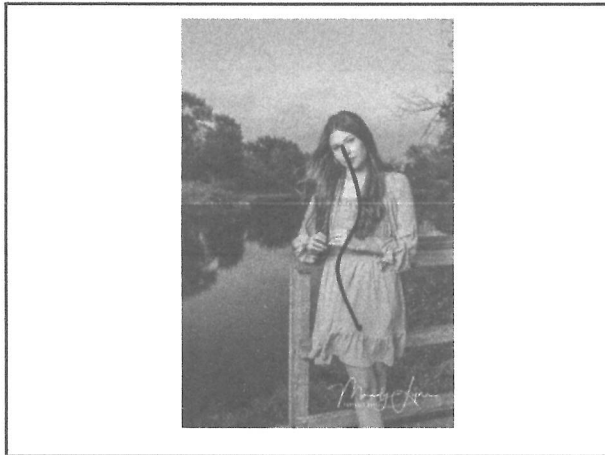
NO S-CURVE      SLIGHT S-CURVE



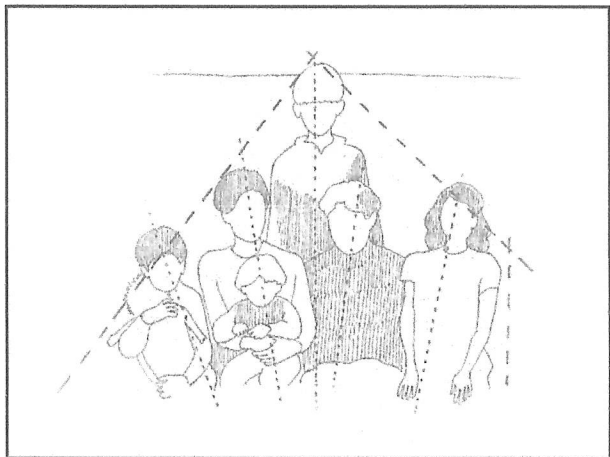
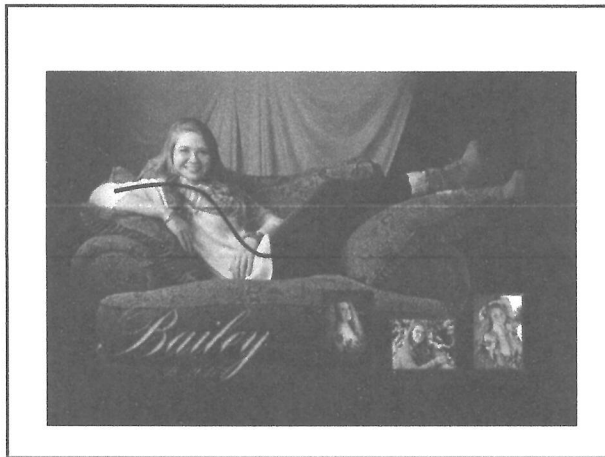


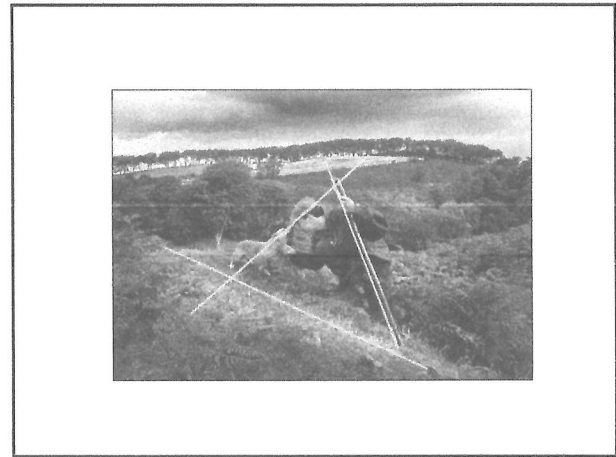
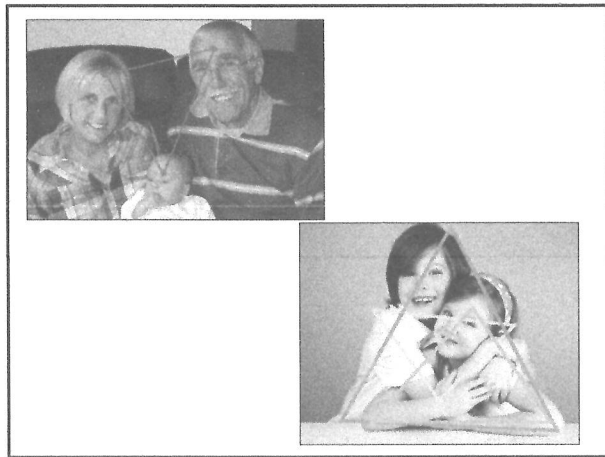
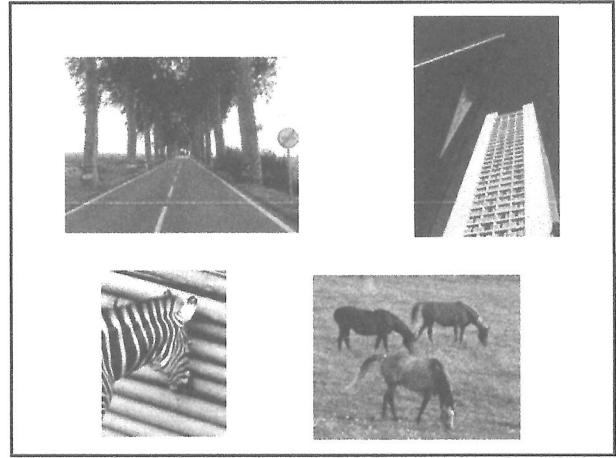
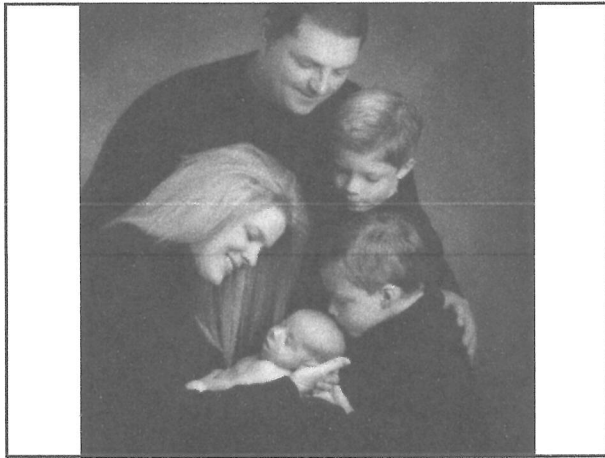
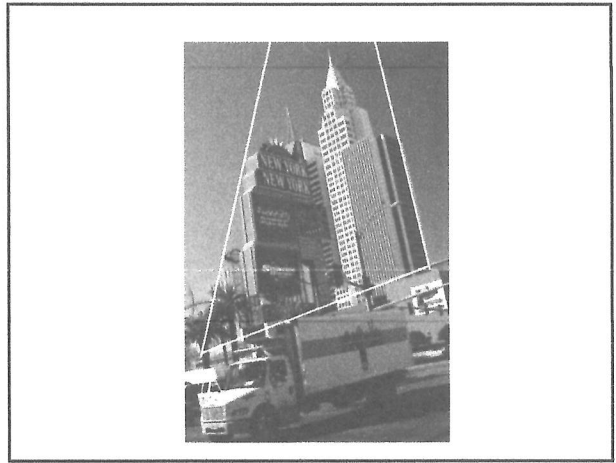
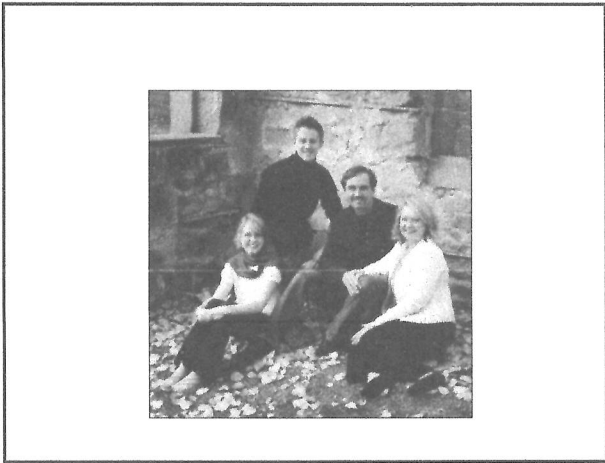


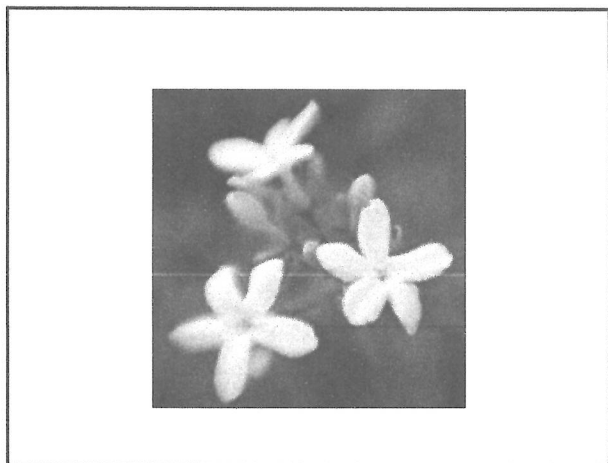
**Men are NOT posed in S-curves**




**HOW  
TO USE  
TRIANGLES  
IN COMPOSING  
YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS**







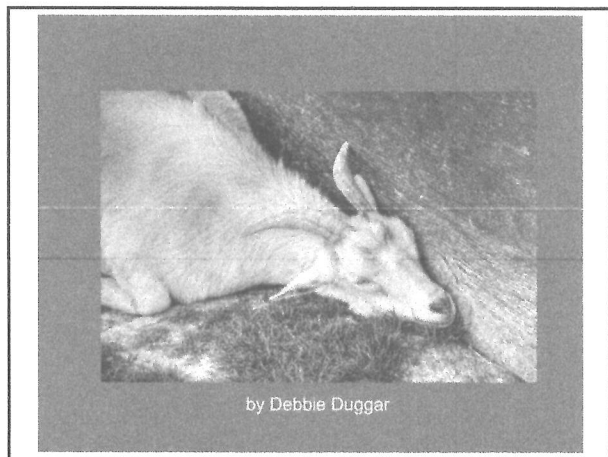

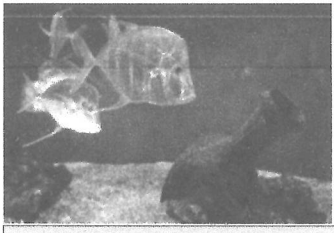
**B A L A N C E**




**IN PHOTO COMPOSITION**



**BALANCE:**  
Composing the image so that similar weight is on each side.



**UNBALANCED**



The "Rule of Thirds" can make an image more interesting, but can create a void on one side.



### Learn with practice!

- Get on subject's level \*
- Rule of thirds \*
- Leave room to move
- Eliminate distractions \*
- Zoom in closer to subject \*
- Give a sense of scale
- Compose to show depth
- Vertical & horizontal \*
- Framing
- Position horizon properly
- Unusual angles
- Diagonal composition
- S-curves
- Triangles
- Balance the images

\* biggies!

### UNBALANCED



To keep balance, compensate for each element with a counter-weight

