

# Takin' Care of Business



Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

February 2014



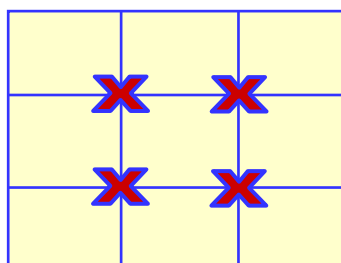
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## Rule of Thirds & Balance

The **rule of thirds** says we can easily create interesting page layouts by visually breaking our design into thirds vertically and/or horizontally. The most important elements of your design go within those thirds. This is a rule-of-thumb used by artists, painters, photographers, and publishers to guide their layouts.

Professional graphic designers learn to divide a page into thirds both vertically and horizontally. Place the most important design elements at one or more of the four intersections of those lines – the points illustrated below:



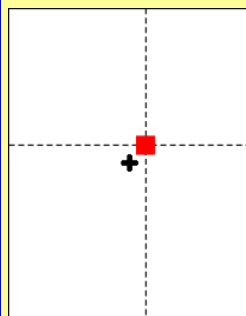
Three is a magic number. It's been a close and dear friend of designers for thousands of years.

There's just something about three that works across all mediums, all formats, all sizes. Three is beauty. Three is symmetry. Three draws your eye through a design.

The magic of three leads us to the rule of thirds, which tells us how to create a strong visual design. The rule of three dominates video, photos, print and even the web – watch for this next time you are surfen' the 'net.

Do all designs have to follow the rule of thirds? Of course not. This is tool that great artist, designers, architects, movie

### Visual Center and Balance



Placing important elements or the focal point of a design within the visual center, not "dead center", is another design trick. The visual center is slightly to the right of and above the actual center of a page.

We don't want to build our design around the exact mathematical center of a page, photo, or video. This looks boring and static. Placing design elements in the exact middle of our layout will not draw the reader's eye through the rest of our design.



Portrait  
Orientation

Landscape  
Orientation



directors, and photographers have used for centuries.

Three will never get old. It isn't a fad that will go away – you can count on the rule of threes. Vincent Van Gogh certainly knew of the power of three – take another look at his famous painting, *Starry Night*. Do you see the threes?



Mr. B's *Takin' Care of Business* newsletters always use three-columns. Can you visualize the rule of threes here?

But the purpose of thinking in

thirds is not to limit creativity – it is to unlock the creative process and let ideas flow.

In art and design, all rules are meant to be broken – but only break them for a good reason. Once you get used to working with the rule of thirds, it gives your designs more freedom because now you are consistently placing each idea and object in your work where it will be most effective.

When learning design, the most important rule is this: *Once we know the rules, we can skillfully break them as needed.*

For example, if you want to create a shocking layout with a chaotic feel, you may end up with something interesting and unique by forsaking the number three.

But be careful, most of the time, this will not be visually pleasing. Is that the effect you want?