Instructional Design Project

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ETEC 6440: Instructional Design II

Professor Medrano

Project Title

Introduction to Photography Basics – Module: Composition Techniques – Rule of Thirds

Step 1: Identify Instructional Goal(s)

Problem Statement:

Many beginners in photography struggle with composition, often placing their subject in the center of the frame, which can lead to unbalanced and uninteresting photos. Without an understanding of composition techniques like the rule of thirds, their images may lack visual impact and storytelling elements.

Opportunity for Instruction:

This module introduces the rule of thirds as a fundamental composition technique. By teaching learners to apply this principle, they can create more balanced, engaging, and visually appealing photos. The module will provide clear explanations, guided practice, and real-world applications to help learners develop an eye for composition.

Instructional Goal:

Learners will be able to apply the rule of thirds in their photography to create balanced and engaging compositions.

Step 2: Conduct Instructional Analysis

Learning Domain:

Intellectual Skills – This module requires learners to apply a rule (the rule of thirds) and make composition decisions, which involves analyzing a scene, making adjustments, and problem-solving rather than simple memorization.

Major Steps to Perform the Goal:

To successfully apply the rule of thirds, learners must complete the following steps:

1. **Understanding the Rule of Thirds and Its Purpose**

   The Rule of Thirds is a composition guideline that helps photographers create balanced, visually appealing images.

   Divide an image into nine equal parts using two horizontal and two vertical lines, forming a grid.

   The key elements of a photo should be placed along these lines or at their intersections, known as power points, to create a more engaging and natural composition.

   Photographers use the Rule of Thirds to: Enhance visual interest, Create balance, Guide the viewer's eye

2. **Select a Subject and Scene**

   Choose a subject that benefits from off-center composition.

   Identify key elements in the background and foreground.

3. **Activate or Visualize the Rule of Thirds Grid**

   Turn on the gridlines in the camera or smartphone settings.

   Mentally divide the frame into nine equal sections using two horizontal and two vertical lines.

4. **Position the Subject According to the Rule of Thirds**

   Align the main subject along one of the vertical or horizontal lines.

   Place key focal points at grid intersections for balance.

5. **Adjust Camera Angle and Framing**

   Move the camera or adjust the perspective to improve composition.

   Consider secondary elements to balance the frame.

6. **Capture and Evaluate the Image**

   Take multiple shots using different placements.

   Review the image and determine if adjustments are needed.

7. **Refine Composition in Post-Processing** (optional)

   Use cropping tools to improve composition if necessary.

   Compare rule-of-thirds compositions with centered compositions.

Subordinate and Entry Skills

For this analysis, I will focus on Step 3: Position the Subject According to the Rule of Thirds and break it down further into subordinate skills and entry skills.

Subordinate Skills (Required to complete this step):

- Understand the purpose of the rule of thirds and how it improves composition.
- Recognize key focal points and how they interact within the grid.
- Balance negative space and supporting elements in the frame.

Entry Skills (What learners must already know before instruction begins): - Taught in module 1

- Basic familiarity with how to operate a camera or smartphone camera.
- Ability to take a photo using manual or automatic settings.
- Awareness of basic visual elements (light, subject, background).

Step 3: Analyze Learners and Contexts

General Description of the Intended Learners

This course is designed for middle-aged men and women who are passionate about photography and follow their favorite photographers online. They are aspiring photographers who are either completely new to photography or have only a very basic understanding of their camera. Many of them are interested in progressing to more specialized courses on topics such as posing, lighting, family and portrait photography, landscape photography, sports photography, or wedding photography, but they feel left behind because they are still struggling with the fundamentals of using their camera and composing strong images.

These learners come from diverse backgrounds and locations worldwide. Some may speak English as their first language, while others are non-native English speakers looking for an accessible and beginner-friendly course. Additionally, the course will be designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities or learning challenges, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.

General Description of the Performance Context

- Learners will apply their new photography skills in a variety of real-world settings, depending on their personal interests and goals. Since this is a beginner-level course, they will primarily practice photography in casual, everyday environments before advancing to more specialized settings. Some common places where they will apply the rule of thirds and other composition techniques include:
- At home – Capturing photos of family, pets, or personal objects in different lighting conditions.
- Outdoor settings – Taking photos of landscapes, cityscapes, or nature while experimenting with composition.
- Social events or gatherings – Practicing photography during casual outings, family events, or vacations.
- Street photography – Capturing daily life and interesting moments in their community.
- Online content creation – Using their new skills for social media, blogging, or business photography.

Since learners come from varied global locations, the settings in which they apply these skills will differ based on climate, culture, and available photography opportunities.

Challenges and Constraints Learners Might Face

Learners may encounter several challenges when trying to apply their new photography skills in real-world situations:

1. Lack of Confidence or Experience

- Many learners feel intimidated by photography concepts and may be hesitant to apply them.
- They may struggle to identify good compositions or second-guess their framing choices.
- Overcoming fear of failure is key—some may avoid taking photos in public settings out of self-consciousness.

2. Limited Access to Advanced Photography Equipment

- Some learners may only have a smartphone camera and worry about whether they can apply the rule of thirds effectively.
- Others may own a DSLR or mirrorless camera but struggle to navigate its settings, preventing them from fully engaging in the learning process.
- Tripods, lighting, and external accessories may not be available to all learners, requiring adjustments in practice techniques.

3. Environmental Constraints

- Lighting conditions vary – Indoor lighting, bright outdoor sunlight, or low-light environments can affect how easily learners apply composition techniques.
- Unpredictable subjects – Capturing moving subjects (e.g., children, pets, wildlife) can make it harder to frame shots using the rule of thirds.
- Weather and location limitations – Learners in urban areas may have different opportunities for practicing photography than those in rural settings.

4. Accessibility and Physical Challenges

- Learners with mobility limitations may have difficulty physically positioning themselves for ideal angles or compositions.
- Visual impairments may require them to rely more on grid overlays, audio feedback, or zoom features.
- Cognitive processing challenges might make it harder to retain composition rules without structured repetition and visual examples.

Prior Knowledge of Entry Skills

Since this is an introductory course, learners are expected to have little to no prior knowledge of photography. However, they may already:

- Own a digital camera or smartphone but struggle to use its settings.
- Be familiar with point-and-shoot photography but lack an understanding of composition, camera functions, and manual controls.
- Follow professional photographers online and have a strong interest in learning photography, even if they haven't taken a formal course before.

Most learners do not yet have experience with technical photography concepts such as shutter speed, aperture, ISO, or composition techniques like the rule of thirds. They may have experimented with taking photos but lack the confidence or knowledge to improve their skills.

Motivation and Learning Preferences

The primary motivation for these learners is to build a strong foundation in photography before moving onto intermediate topics designed for non-professionals or amateurs. They feel frustrated with their lack of understanding and want to gain confidence in using their camera so they can enjoy photography as a hobby, creative outlet, or potential professional pursuit.

Their learning preferences include:

- Clear, step-by-step instruction that is easy to follow and not overwhelming.
- Visually engaging content (diagrams, example photos, and videos).
- Practical application – hands-on assignments where they can immediately apply what they learn.
- Self-paced learning – the ability to go through the course at their own speed.
- Accessible materials – support for non-native English speakers and individuals with learning disabilities, including captions, transcripts, and alternative formats for content.

This course will provide an inclusive and beginner-friendly environment where learners can develop essential skills in photography without feeling lost or left behind.

Tools Needed to Achieve the Goals

To complete this module, learners will need:

Essential Tools:

- A digital camera or smartphone camera with the option to enable a rule of thirds grid overlay.
- A computer with the internet to access learning platforms (LMS, like Moodle) to access lessons and private social media platform with other students.

Optional Tools for Advanced Learning:

- Photo editing software (e.g., Adobe Lightroom, Snapseed) for post-processing and refining composition.
- Tripod or stabilizer (optional, but useful for precise framing).

Accessibility Considerations:

- Closed captions and transcripts for all instructional videos.
- Screen-reader-friendly formatting for text-based content.
- Keyboard navigation support for learners with mobility impairments.
- Clear, simple language to support non-native English speakers.
- Ideas for adaptations for those with physical disabilities

Step 4: Write Performance Objectives

Terminal Objective

Given a digital camera or smartphone and a selected photographic scene with a defined subject, learners will apply the Rule of Thirds by composing and capturing images that demonstrate proper subject placement using the grid system. Successful performance will be demonstrated when they capture 3 compositions that align with the Rule of Thirds principles, as assessed by a rubric evaluating placement, balance, and visual appeal.

Step 5: Develop Assessment Instruments
Subordinate Objectives

1. **Define the Rule of Thirds**

   - **Skill:** Explain the Rule of Thirds in photography.
   - **Condition:** Given a multiple choice quiz in the interactive lesson
   - **Criteria:** The learner correctly identifies the definition and purpose of the Rule of Thirds in composition.

2. **Identify Grid Lines and Intersection Points**

   - **Skill:** Recognize and label the Rule of Thirds grid, including horizontal and vertical lines and intersection points.
   - **Condition:** Given a multiple choice quiz with images in the interactive lesson
   - **Criteria:** The learner correctly selects the grid lines and intersection points.

3. **Compare Images Using the Rule of Thirds vs. Centered Composition**

   - **Skill:** Differentiate between images that follow the Rule of Thirds and those that do not.
   - **Condition:** Given side-by-side comparisons of images with and without the Rule of Thirds.
   - **Criteria:** The learner correctly categorizes 9 images based on their adherence to the Rule of Thirds.

4. **Apply the Rule of Thirds in Framing a Shot**

   - **Skill:** Adjust the subject placement to align with Rule of Thirds guidelines.
   - **Condition:** Using an interactive tool, learners will place a Rule of Thirds Grid over pre-selected photographs to align the framing to fit the guidelines. **Criteria:** The learner frames 4 images with the subject positioned along grid lines or at intersections.

5. **Capture and Analyze Photographs Using the Rule of Thirds**

   - **Skill:** Take photographs that demonstrate correct application of the Rule of Thirds.
   - **Condition:** Given a photography assignment where learners capture at least three images using the Rule of Thirds.

- **Criteria:** Students will turn in three images that effectively apply the Rule of Thirds as evaluated using a grading rubric.

7. Justify Composition Choices

- **Skill:** Provide a rationale for the placement of subjects in relation to the Rule of Thirds.
- **Condition:** Given a self-assessment or peer review discussion.
- **Criteria:** The learner explains their composition choices and explains how they applied the rule in each of their three images

Step 6: Develop Instructional Strategy

Learning Components

Learning Components	Considerations for Each Component	Instructional Strategy
Pre-instructional Activities	**Engage & Motivate Learners**	A professionally edited short video, showing a mix of visually striking examples and poorly composed images. Includes an engaging voiceover explaining why composition matters in photography.
	Interactive Pretest Activity (Built in Adobe Captivate)	Learners will categorize sample images into "visually appealing" vs. "less

Learning Components	Considerations for Each	Instructional Strategy

	Component	
		appealing" based on their instincts. No correct answers—this activity primes them to understand how composition affects perception. A follow-up prompt asks them to reflect on why they categorized the images as they did.
Presentation Activities	**Instructional Content Delivery**	**Rule of Thirds Explanation Video** (**Adobe Premiere Pro**) A well-edited instructional video introducing the Rule of Thirds, using **animated overlays** to show grid lines on images. Includes voiceover explaining why photographers use this technique and show examples of photographs. **Why it works!** Features real-world examples of professional photos that follow the Rule of Thirds.
	Interactive Lesson with Click-to-Reveal Elements (Adobe Captivate)	**Slide 1:** Explanation of the grid layout (Click to reveal the horizontal and vertical lines). **Slide 2:** Click on intersection points to learn why they create balanced compositions.

Learning Components	Considerations for Each Component	Instructional Strategy
		Hopefully, I can figure this out in Captivate, if not I will demonstrate with short video or in the lay out in Captivate.
	Before & After Image Comparison (Built into Captivate)	Learners interact with a slider feature to compare images before and after applying the Rule of Thirds. **Hopefully, I can get slider feature to work in Adobe. If not, I can make a short video.**

| Learner Participation | **Practice & Apply Knowledge** | **Guided Practice: Framing a Shot**

Learners use their own cameras or smartphones to take photos applying the Rule of Thirds.

A built-in camera overlay guide (in Captivate) helps them visualize the grid.

Interactive Drag-and-Drop Exercise (Adobe Captivate)

Learners drag a subject into different positions within a frame to see how placement affects composition.

Feedback appears explaining whether their placement aligns with the Rule of Thirds principles.

Not sure yet if this is possible in Adobe Captivate. If not, a short video may work. |

Learning Components	**Considerations for Each Component**	**Instructional Strategy**

		Group Discussion & Peer Review (via LMS Discussion Board) Learners upload one of their photos and discuss their composition choices. Peers provide feedback using a structured rubric.
Assessment	Measure Learning & Performance	**Multiple-Choice Quiz (Adobe Captivate)** Questions cover key concepts like: What is the Rule of Thirds? Why do photographers use it? Where should key elements be placed within the grid? **Interactive Image Analysis** (Hotspot Quiz in **Captivate**) Learners click on correct **Rule of Thirds** placement within an image. Immediate feedback explains why a selection is correct or incorrect. **Photo Submission Assignment** Learners submit two original

Learning Components	Considerations for Each Component	Instructional Strategy
		photographs: One using the Rule of Thirds One breaking the Rule of Thirds intentionally **Photo Submission Assignment** Learners submit three original photographs with the same subject demonstration three different grid placements Learners will select their favorite of the three and justify their creative choice

Follow-Through	**Retention & Real-World Application**	**Portfolio Building** Encourage learners to start curating a **personal photography portfolio**, incorporating their Rule of Thirds images. Encouraged to continue applying this principle in future assignments. **Final Reflection & Application Discussion** Learners answer a reflection prompt: *How has learning about the Rule of Thirds changed the*
Learning Components	**Considerations for Each Component**	**Instructional Strategy**
		way you view photography? *Will you always follow this rule, or do you see value in breaking it intentionally? When might you break this rule?*

Storyboard

Separate link to storyboard -separate PDF file

Step 7: Develop & Select Instructional Materials

Instructional Materials

Main Course Platform: The course will be designed and delivered using **Canvas.**

Interactive Lesson (Adobe Captivate): A key instructional component is an interactive module built in Adobe Captivate and embedded into the course through **Moodle Cloud** (accessible via guest link). This lesson guides learners through the Rule of Thirds with interactive elements including knowledge checks, quizzes, and drag-and-drop photo assessments. The Moodle link (to access the lesson) is clickable in the Canvas course.

Instructional Video (YouTube): A carefully selected **YouTube video** was incorporated into the Adobe interactive lesson to introduce the concept of the Rule of Thirds, explaining grid lines, focal points, and visual balance in photography.

Visual Aids and Example Photos: Throughout the lesson, learners are shown before-and-after photo comparisons,images with and without Rule of Thirds application, and visual overlays to reinforce understanding.

Rationale for Material Selection:

The materials were selected to align with the constructivist learning approach, which emphasizes exploration, visual modeling, and hands-on learning. Since the Rule of Thirds is a visual-spatial concept, it is most effectively taught using multimedia elements that allow learners to *see* and *interact* with examples.

- The interactive Captivate lesson offers a self-paced, hands-on experience ideal for diverse learners, including those with learning differences or who benefit from repeatable, visual tasks.
- The YouTube video adds variety to content delivery while providing foundational vocabulary and visual clarity for novice learners.
- Hosting through Canvas and Moodle Cloud ensures ease of access and organization, supporting both structured navigation and flexible learner pacing. Both Canvas and Moodle access is free.

These materials were developed with UDL principles in mind, offering multiple means of engagement and representation.

Step 8: Formative Evaluation

Evaluate materials

1.   One-to-One Evaluation

I conducted one-to-one evaluations with two participants (both 21 years old) who recently completed a beginning photography course at Chaffey College. I sat with each participant individually while they worked through the Adobe Captivate lesson on the Rule of Thirds.

Evaluation Instruments Used:

1. Direct observation notes
2. Verbal feedback/discussion after completion
3. Informal checklist for navigation, engagement, and comprehension

Both participants were ideal learners because they both fit the learner profile for the Rule of Thirds lesson. They are both adult beginners with little foundational photography knowledge.

During the session, I observed how they interacted with the instructional materials, particularly the Adobe Captivate lesson embedded in the Moodle Cloud course. One participant preferred to turn off the audio narration and read the on-screen text independently. This stresses the importance of offering both visual and auditory formats, aligning with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.

A key usability issue arose when one participant did not realize that he could scroll down within the Captivate slides. As a result, he initially struggled to find the "Next" buttons to advance through the lesson. This revealed a design flaw in how navigation elements were displayed and suggested a need to improve visibility or include clearer instructions at the beginning of the module.

Despite the minor navigation issue, both participants reported that the "Check Your Knowledge" quiz was appropriately challenging and clearly written. They both felt it reinforced the content well. Both learners also had no trouble locating and using the YouTube video provided to learn how to activate the grid lines on their cameras, showing that external resources were effectively integrated and accessible.

Both participants struggled on the last activity and felt that it had too many options to choose from and they both got overwhelmed.

This evaluation provided valuable insight into both the strengths and areas for improvement in the course design. Based on this feedback, I plan to adjust the Captivate layout to ensure that scrolling is intuitive and instructions for navigation are more prominent. I also plan to change the final activity/test.

Small-Group Evaluation:

A small group of four participants (ages 20–22) with no formal photography experience completed the lesson together. Three participants were friends of the one-to-one evaluation participants, and one was my third son (also 21) with no photography course background.

Evaluation Instruments Used:

- Group discussion after lesson completion
- Observation of group interactions and reactions
- Informal checklist for navigation, engagement, and comprehension

During the small-group evaluation, participants responded positively to the YouTube video included in the lesson, noting that it was engaging and helpful. They enjoyed the

first activity, which involved selecting the most visually interesting photos, and found it valuable and fun to compare their choices and reasoning with one another. While three learners kept the audio on for the slides, one chose to mute it, indicating the importance of offering flexible audio options. A consistent point of feedback from all four participants was that the final activity felt overwhelming due to the number of images presented, making it difficult to complete with confidence.

Field Trial:

I sent the lesson link and a Google Form survey to six additional participants to complete individually. This provided anonymous feedback regarding clarity, motivation, and perceived difficulty.

Evaluation Instruments Used:

- Google Form survey with Likert-scale and short-answer questions
- Anonymous feedback collection for candid responses

Final Project

Final Reflection & Project URL

Working with the Dick and Carey model provided a clear, structured roadmap for developing my *Rule of Thirds* photography lesson, helping me think critically and systematically about each component of instruction. However, I found the process tedious and time-consuming at several stages.

Heavy Front-End Analysis:

- The early steps, such as writing goal statements, conducting instructional analysis, and identifying entry behaviors, required a significant amount of time before I could even begin creating content. While these steps ensured alignment, they slowed down the creative process and felt repetitive at times.

Detailed Objective Writing:

- Crafting performance objectives with precise conditions, behaviors, and criteria took a lot of revision. It often felt like I was over-engineering what could have been stated more simply. Writing objectives for every single step in the learning process was especially draining.

Instructional Strategy Planning:

- Outlining every element of instruction (content, activities, practice, feedback, assessment) in advance made it hard to stay flexible. As someone who likes to iterate while building, I felt boxed in by needing everything planned before designing.

Multiple Evaluation Layers:

- The one-to-one, small-group, and field trials each required planning, participant coordination, data collection, and analysis. While this led to a stronger final product, it took a lot of time. It almost sucked the joy out of my project.

Despite these frustrations, I understand why the Dick and Carey model is so highly regarded. The model ensures that instruction is intentional, measurable, and learner-focused. However, in a professional setting, I'd likely use the ADDIE model going forward. I did not like working with the Dick and Carey model.

Technology Challenges During Project Development

One of the biggest hurdles I encountered during this instructional design project was learning how to use Adobe Captivate effectively. While the software offers powerful tools for interactive learning design, the interface is not always intuitive. It's quite difficult for beginners. I found myself spending considerable time watching tutorials, reading online instructions, and experimenting with features just to understand how to build slides, embed media, add knowledge checks, and set up navigation. Even small tasks, like aligning buttons or adjusting audio timing, often took far longer than expected.

Another major challenge was exporting my project as a SCORM package. Although Adobe Captivate provides SCORM export settings, configuring them correctly to ensure compatibility with an LMS was not straightforward. I had to learn what SCORM actually was, why certain settings mattered (such as completion tracking or LMS reporting), and troubleshoot when things didn't work correctly after upload.

Once I had my SCORM file, I then faced the challenge of finding a learning management system (LMS) to host it. After some research, I chose Moodle because it supports SCORM. However, installing Moodle and navigating the backend as an administrator required a completely different skill set. There were permissions to manage, plugin settings to adjust, and compatibility issues to resolve.

Finally, one surprisingly difficult task was setting up the course for guest access. I assumed this would be a simple checkbox setting, but I quickly discovered that multiple configurations had to be enabled, from system-level permissions to specific course enrollment methods. Getting these to work together so users could view the course without needing an account involved a lot of trial and error and help forum searching.

What I Gained from These Challenges

Although these steps were incredibly frustrating at times, each challenge helped me build valuable technical skills and confidence as an instructional designer. I now understand more deeply how eLearning content is packaged, deployed, and accessed. This is knowledge that will directly apply to future work in this field.

Link to Canvas Course (self-enroll feature)

https://k12.instructure.com/enroll/949B6P

Enroll in Rule of Thirds

You are enrolling in **Rule of Thirds**

View Privacy Policy   Enroll in Course

	Module 2- Rule of Thirds	
	Interactive Lesson	✓
	Discussion: How Will This Impact Your Photography?	✓
	Interactive Lesson-Cropping Images	✓
	Practice: Exploring Composition 15 pts	✓
	Share your Favorite Image-Critique	✓
	Module Project 50 pts	✓

The Adobe Captivate lesson link and directions can be found in the first activity: **Interactive Lesson**

ADOBE CAPTIVATE INTERACTIVE LESSON

Link to Moodle LMS with Adobe Captivate interactive lesson (also found in the Canvas Course)

***Choose the option to enter as a guest. ***Use password: **A1234**

https://lanierlearninglab.moodlecloud.com/mod/scorm/view.php?id=39&preventskip=1

Directions:

When you click on the link to the moodle course, look for the **Guest Access**
Enter the password: **A1234** then press **SUBMIT** button
One the next screen press the Blue **ENTER** button
The Adobe Captivate lesson will open in a new window.
Maximize the screen.
NOTE: it can take about 10 seconds to load, it will look white/blank until it loads.
When it loads you will see a gray screen with a little white play arrow.
Press the play arrow to start the lesson.

Dashboard / Enrollment options
Rule of Thirds
Enrollment options

Rule of Thirds 🔒

Teacher: Kara Lanier

∨ **Guest access**

Password   [   ]

[Submit]

Rule of Thirds

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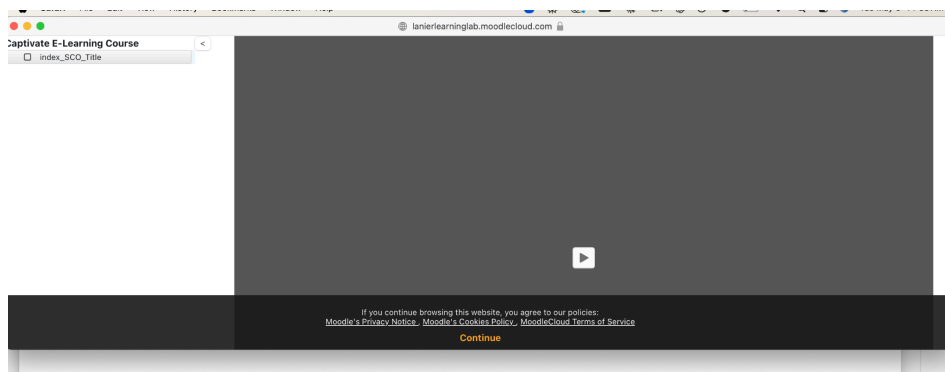
Number of attempts allowed: Unlimited
Number of attempts you have made: 0
Grading method: Highest attempt
Grade reported: None

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