



How to Use Leading Lines for Better Compositions

A Post By: **Anne McKinnell**

Leading lines refers to a technique of composition where the viewer of your photos attention is drawn to lines that lead to the main subject of the image.

A leading line paves an easy path for the eye to follow through different elements of a photo. Usually they start at the bottom of the frame and guide the eye upwards and inwards, from the foreground of the image to the background, typically leading toward the main subject.

The easiest place to find a leading line is on a road. Roadways are inherently leading because they go somewhere, give us a feeling of motion, and the lines often point so far inwards that they reach a vanishing point – the place where two or more lines converge into theoretical infinity.



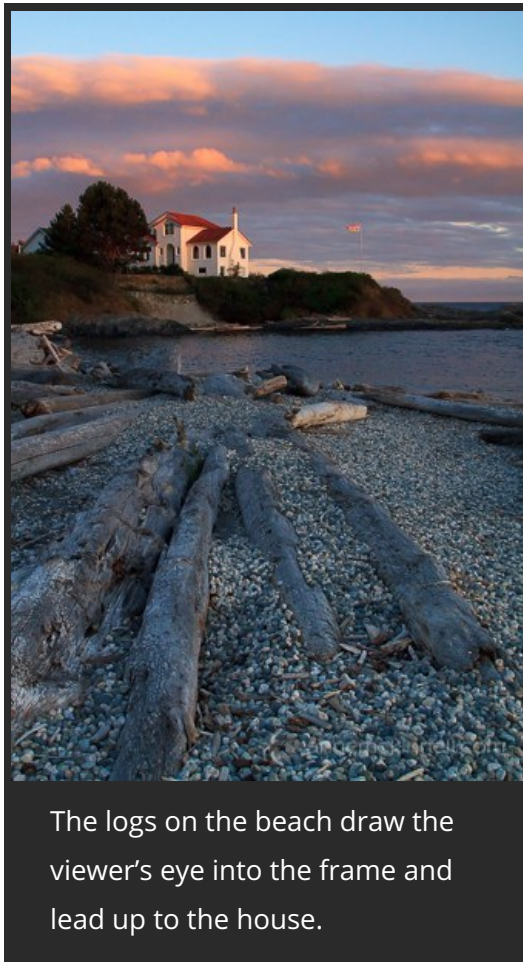
The leading lines of the road converge to create a sense of infinity.



When leading lines, such as roads, connect the foreground to the background of a scene, they help to create depth and dimensionality which draws the viewer into the image.

Leading lines are all around us in cities and in nature. Your job as the photographer is to find them and

arrange them in your photograph so that they lead towards something, even if that something is infinity.



When you're setting up a shot, take a moment to examine the scene for its prominent lines. Clear your mind, relax your eyes, and notice where they are naturally drawn to.

Pay special attention to man-made things such as:

- roads
- fences
- boardwalks
- bridges
- bricks
- anything in a row such as lamp posts
- buildings
- doorways
- window panes

In nature, pay particular attention to:

- rivers
- shorelines
- waves
- sand dunes
- trees
- tall grass
- cliffs
- rocks
- sun rays



Once you've identified your strongest lines, consider how you can use them to enhance your composition. Depending on your intention, you might:

- create depth and perspective by positioning a strong line leading from the foreground to the background;
- create a visual journey from one part of your image to another;
- place your subject where the lines converge to give the subject more importance in the frame and draw the viewer's attention directly to it; or
- make a cyclical composition, with the lines leading the eye in a circular motion and never out of the frame.

Arranging the elements in the frame may involve the use of different lenses to change perspective, but usually you can accomplish it simply by moving yourself so that the point of view you choose is purposeful.



The leading line of the path leads the eye directly to the maple tree.



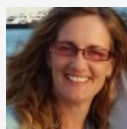
Leading lines are the key compositional element that carries our eye through the photograph. They can be used to tell a story, to place emphasis, and to draw a connection between two objects.

Use them creatively and with expressive purpose to help you tell your unique photographic tale.



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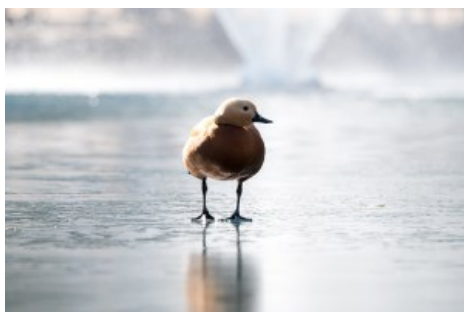


Anne McKinnell is a photographer, writer and nomad. She lives in an RV and travels around North America photographing beautiful places and writing about travel, photography, and how changing your life is not as scary as it seems. You can read about her adventures on **her blog** and be sure to check out her **free photography eBooks**.

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Some Older Comments

Ashiq

August 30, 2013 02:22 am

These type of articles in dps are very helpful, especially for a novice like me. Thank you for the excellent and simple presentation of ideas.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ashiqpm/9493012580/>

Jerry Ferguson

July 26, 2013 06:08 pm

A water pipe ...

http://www.flickr.com/photos/jerry_pics/8859033387/

RockinRita

July 25, 2013 12:11 am

Padres Island National Sea Shore, Texas

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ritahogan/9301251147/>

Ed

July 22, 2013 01:14 pm

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/30424614@N07/9337780709/>

Tyrone S.

July 20, 2013 07:02 am

http://alchemistphotography.smugmug.com/Nature/A-Day-In-Sandbridge/i-wmBNXDc/1/M/IMG_8313_Final_Snapseed-M.jpg

Tyrone S.

July 20, 2013 07:02 am

http://alchemistphotography.smugmug.com/Nature/A-Day-In-Sandbridge/i-Pt7QV8h/1/M/IMG_8315_Final_Snapseed-M.jpg

steve

July 20, 2013 06:25 am

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ssnidey/9314642915/>

marius2die4

July 19, 2013 06:34 pm

I liked also leading line. Good write article!

Some of my pics:

<http://marius-fotografie.blogspot.com/2013/06/dealuri.html>

gilda

July 19, 2013 03:57 am

Thank you for sharing your experiences and expertise. This makes what I feel and see behind the lens so rewarding.

Guigphotography

July 19, 2013 02:26 am

Lovely clear article and great examples as always, Anne. It's a good exercise to try out too. As Fred says, initially it can take a while to work it into what you initially see.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/69604456@N07/9273105599/>

David Scott

July 19, 2013 02:07 am

Have been doing this for years, some are obvious, some not so, but fun. That to me, is one of the

reasons, why I enjoy wandering the countryside,

Mridula

July 18, 2013 03:47 pm

That list is really useful.

<http://blogs.gonomad.com/traveltalesfromindia/>

Fred

July 18, 2013 10:27 am

I have on occasion used leading lines in my images but must admit that quite often I get caught up in the scene and don't compose it correctly. I definitely need to slow down and compose my images better.

Brian Fuller

July 18, 2013 09:44 am

I am always looking for leading lines in my photos. Thanks for the list. Those & s-curves as well.

Draw people to your intended focus.

Flickr:

<http://bit.ly/oufr4c>

ScottC

July 18, 2013 08:47 am

The example photos are incredible, a pleasant read.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/lendog64/6877930187/>

Jason St. Petersburg Photographer

July 18, 2013 06:07 am

I have only really thought of using more distinct objects as leading lines in shots, but I like the use of the loose wood in the lead image and the stone shoreline of the other. I suggest to my photography students to look for leading lines as well:

<http://jasoncollinphotography.com/blog/2013/3/11/photography-tip-using-leading-lines-in-composing-your-shots.html>

Steve

July 18, 2013 05:02 am

This path led nicely to the old manor house

<http://wildlifeencounters.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/Old-England/G0000MOp2nIRJG9s/I00002Gn1psweqW8/C0000KeBDGBB0d0E>

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