

Total time:
3-8 hours



Skill Points:

- Identifying leading lines within a scene
- Using a leading line that is created by light and shadow
- Creating a leading line using a color
- Using leading lines in a composition that run horizontally or diagonally instead of 'into' the photo

LEADING LINES THAT WORK



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Leading lines are a typical, 'first try', for many photographers when they attempt to compose a photograph, since they can be pretty easily spotted in a scene. Leading lines can be comprised of physical objects, colors, and/or areas of contrast.

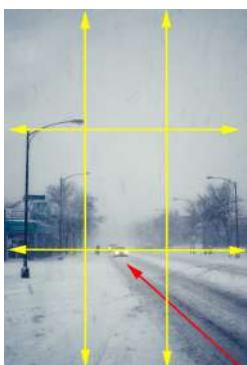
KEY LESSON: There are two common mistakes when it comes to the use of leading lines. The mistakes: 1- The leading lines *lead away* from the subject of the photo instead of *toward* the subject. 2- The leading lines *lead to nowhere specific* (i.e. a subject), and are not strong enough to be the subject themselves.



Lines to nowhere:

Road & Landscape: This use of a leading line doesn't work properly. The line leads to nowhere significant enough to be the subject, and the line itself is not strong enough to be the subject. Leading lines should lead somewhere.

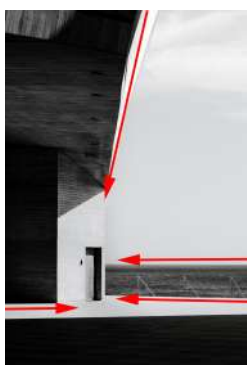
Curvy Road: An ill-devised leading line creates composition confusion. If the car is the subject, then the leading line carries all of the visual weight reducing the car to a focal point. The road in the foreground is so visually dominate that the mountains almost become non-existent.



Lines and a central subject:

Blizzard: The subject is placed in the Rule of Thirds. The lightpoles frame the subject. The headlights are a focal point, and the road is a leading line. Notice that it leads directly to the subject, not past it. At times, it's okay for a leading line to extend beyond the subject. It depends on the overall composition.

Man in Forest: Leading lines depend on balance. The intent here was for the trees to lead *down* to the man, but the opposite happens due to the strong spot color. The eyes move from the man, to the top of the frame.



Natural lines and contrast:

The Door: Our eyes tends to follow lines of contrast. These lines can be used as leading lines. The doorway is the subject. The red arrows show the leading lines 'of contrast' that push the eyes toward the door.

Basketball: A very simple use of a leading line. The white line separates the upper and lower halves of the image in perfect symmetry. Because the white line is so bright- it attracts the eyes immediately, and then moves them to the center of the image- to the ball and shadow. A properly used leading line can lead from anywhere in the image.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Shoot a naturally found leading line of a physical object. Make sure that it leads to the subject and not past it.
- 2- Find a leading line that leads nowhere, then insert your chosen subject at the appropriate point along the leading line for a great composition.
- 3- Use a leading line, or lines, to create a composition that are composed of light and shadow.
- 4- Create a picture with a leading line that enters the shot anywhere other than the foreground.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Do your leading lines direct the eyes toward the subject?
- Do your leading lines lead to the subject without overwhelming it?
- Are your leading lines easily noticeable?

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