

Lines in Photography

The lines that can be found in images are very powerful elements that with a little practice can add dynamic impact to a photograph in terms of mood or energy as well as how they lead an image's viewer into a photo.

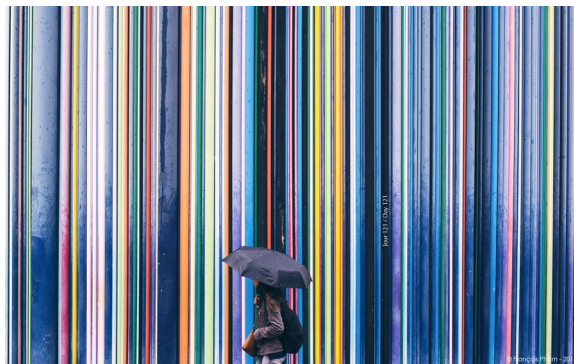
Making use of lines in photography is a photographic composition technique used by many professional photographers, and for good reason. Lines - also referred to as "Leading Lines" - can be used to lead the eye to the point of interest and prevent the eye from wandering. Lines can put emphasis on distance or illustrate a relationship to foreground and background elements. Keep in mind that using lines incorrectly can have the opposite effect and lead the eye away from the point of interest.

Vertical Lines

Vertical lines can suggest dominance, power and growth. Some excellent examples include tall structural designs and trees.

Try keeping your vertical lines parallel with the sides of your photograph as much as possible. Keep in mind the Rule of Thirds when you have strong vertical lines in a photograph. Placing a line directly in the middle of a shot will effectively cut your image in half. This can be used with dramatic impact but also can leave your image looking segmented.

Keep an eye out for vertical lines that are repeated in patterns in your images as they can be used to great impact – particularly if they are contrasted with other shapes and lines going in different directions.



Horizontal Lines

Horizontal lines can suggest peace, calmness and a sense of restfulness. Some prime examples include fallen trees, the ocean, beaches and horizons.

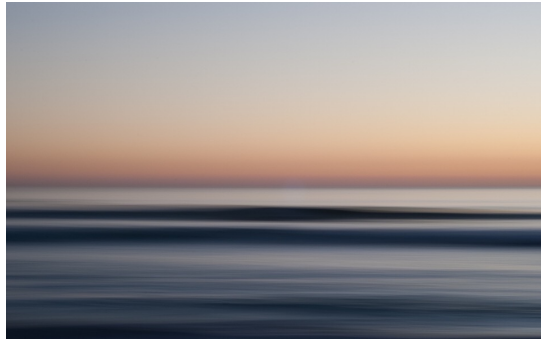
Keep in mind that unbroken horizons can often lead to a photograph feeling somewhat static or dull and a good strategy is to use other shapes in the landscape you're photograph to break things up and give a point of interest (mountains, trees, buildings etc).

Just like vertical lines, horizontal lines should be kept as horizontal as possible and square with the edges of your images frame. There's nothing more frustrating than viewing a picture that is slightly off center.

Also like vertical lines, the Rule of Thirds should be taken into consideration. Horizons should generally not be placed in the middle of your frame. This leaves an image feeling unsettled compositionally. A much more effective technique is to place them in the upper or lower third of your frame.

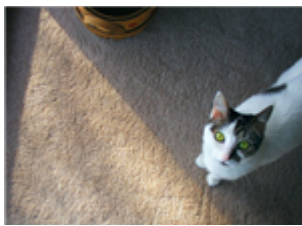
Layering horizontal lines can strengthen the composition and can be successful in generating patterns and rhythm that can become the focus of an image in and of itself.

Breaking horizontal lines up with an object or intersecting vertical lines can also create interest.



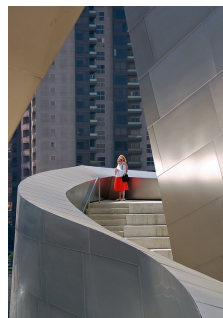
Diagonal Lines

Diagonal lines can suggest action, stimulation and depth. The use of diagonal lines can help draw the eye through a photo. The best way to utilize diagonal lines is to present them from the bottom left of the photo to the top right, this is because our eyes naturally scan from left to right. To prevent the photo from looking split, try positioning your diagonal lines to begin slightly above or below the corner of the photo.



Curved Lines or S-Curves

Curved lines or S-curves suggest sensuality, elegance and a serene sense of balance. S curves don't necessarily need to be S-shaped; any form of a winding line can be used. Some examples include rivers, streams, paths and even the human body.



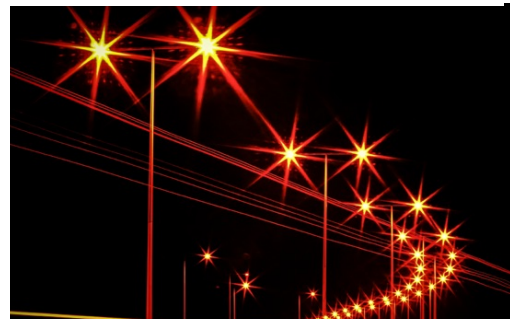
C-Curves

Once you start looking for them, you will find them everywhere.

Curves make an image easy to look at by leading the viewer's eye through the frame. It is almost as if the photographer takes the viewer by the hand, draws them into the landscape, and points the way. The viewer's eyes are compelled to follow the line.

Curves are graceful, rhythmic, dynamic and add energy to an image. They can separate or connect elements or simply offer a balance.

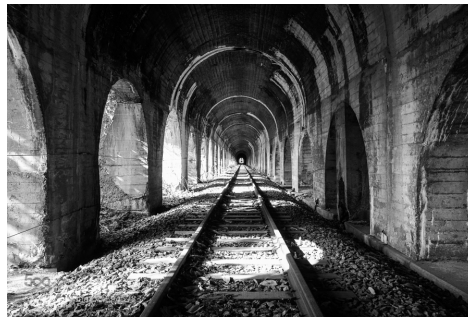
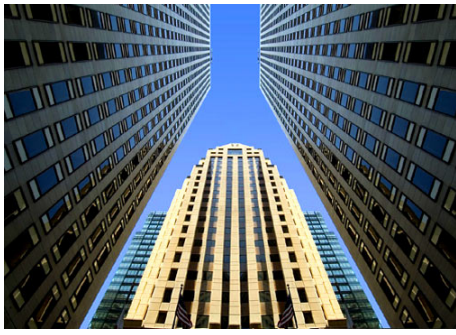
C curves, or semi-circles, are probably the easiest curves to find since almost any curve qualifies. It can be anything from the gentle curve of a seashore, lakeshore, a rounded rock, or grasses blowing in the wind.



Converging Lines

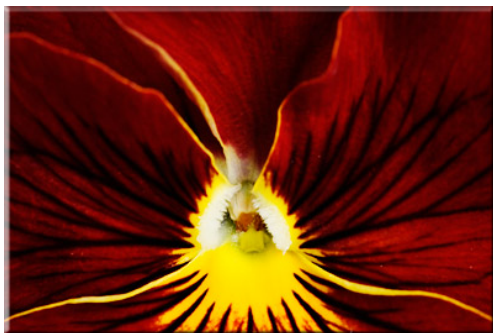
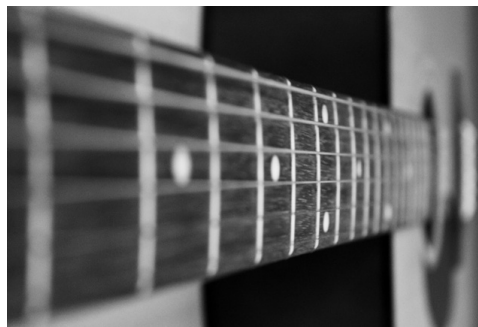
Converging lines will add a certain flow or depth to your photograph. It will also add a sense of distance or scale. Some examples of converging lines are power lines, stairways and the infamous railroad tracks. Our eyes are naturally drawn to where intersecting lines connect. To create a stronger impact and visual interest, it's best to position your subject near converging lines. However, sometimes converging lines are point of interest in itself and there is no need for additional subjects.





Leading Lines

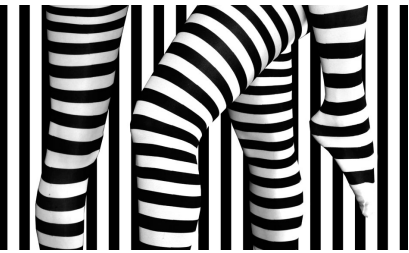
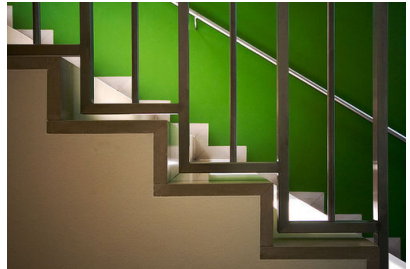
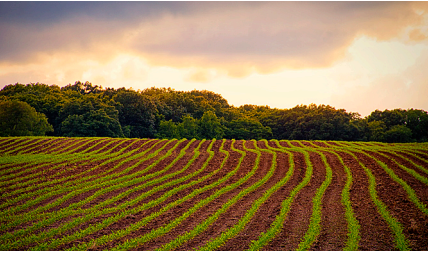
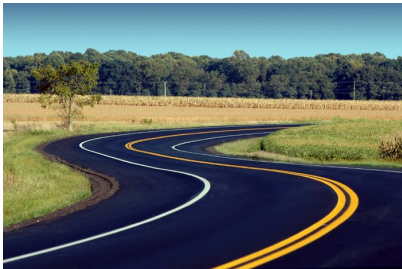
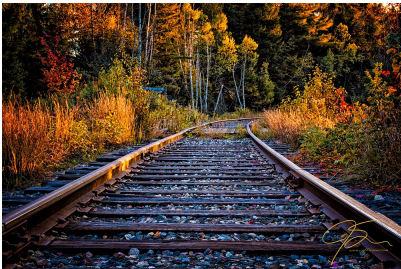
Leading lines are lines within an image that leads the eye to another point in the image, or occasionally, out of the image. Anything with a definite line can be a leading line. Fences, bridges, even a shoreline can lead the eye. If can pair leading lines with a subject that is placed according to the rule of thirds your image should be very strong.



The Use of Lines

Although the use of lines is a very effective means of composition, it isn't necessarily a technique that will come easily to a beginner. Learning how to use lines in photography doesn't just happen. As with any form of composition, you'll have greater success when you couple your knowledge with a creative eye and lots of practice.

Hint: A good way to practice is to go back through older images that you've taken and look for lines that worked well and those that didn't.



Man-made/Geometric

Vertical

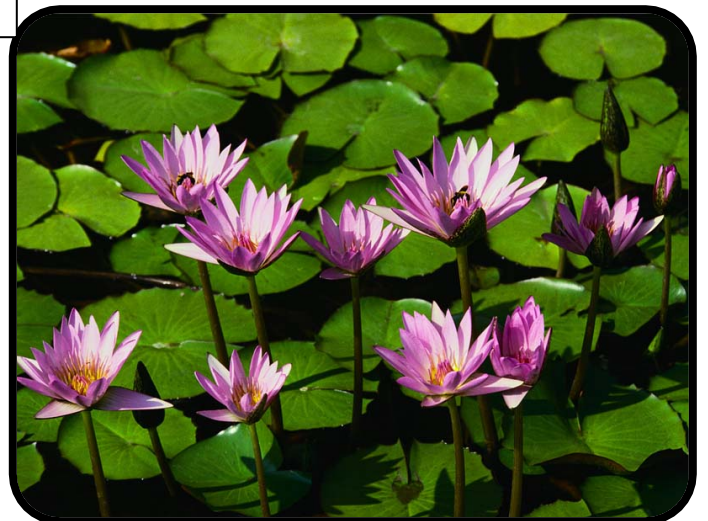
Nature-made/Organic



Horizontal



Diagonal



C-Curves



S-Curves



Leading Lines

