



Leading Lines, Framing & Symmetry



What are leading lines ?



“Leading lines” refers to a type of composition where the viewer’s attention is drawn to lines that **lead to the main subject of the image**.

A leading line is an easy path for the eye to follow through different elements of the 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.

The viewer’s eyes are naturally drawn along vertical lines, parallel lines, diagonal and horizontal lines.



Why use leading lines ?

They are used to draw the viewer's eye into the photo, to the subject.

They can also make the viewer feel they are standing within the photo.

This helps the viewer to engage with and generate an emotional response to your photo.

They can add impact to your photos !

Horizontal lines

Add calmness and tranquillity

Good for natural landscapes

Be aware that in the west, we scan photos from left to right



Vertical lines

In landscapes, they draw the foreground and background together, creating stability



In portraits they can add power and authority to your subject



Usually, our eye travels from the bottom to the top

Diagonal lines

Use to add movement/change

Use to draw the viewer through the frame

Place the subject at the start/end of the line !

Lines sloping from left down to the right look more natural.

Lines sloping upwards can add tension



Curved lines

Look natural

Add flow

Draw the viewer through the photo



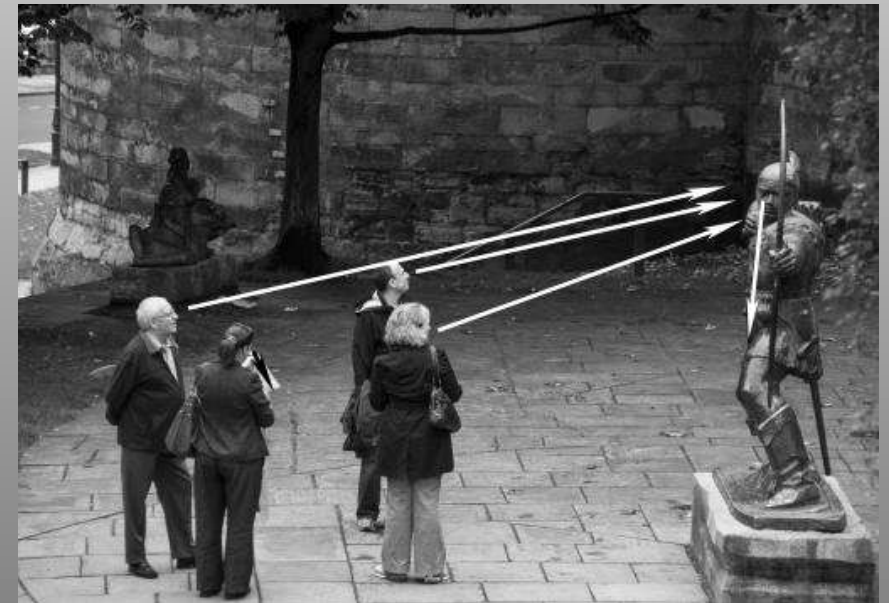
Converging lines

Place the subject at the centre of the lines for a powerful result !



Implied line

Where there is no line visible in the photo, but we follow someone's line of sight



Intersecting lines

Can add tension/confusion

but can also be dramatic !



Using lines in Portraits

Leading Lines are not just for landscapes, you can use them in portraits too !



How can I use leading lines ?

Add depth & perspective by a line joining the foreground to the background

Take the viewer on a visual journey, from one point of interest to another

Place the subject at the centre of converging lines to add power

Use circular lines or spirals to keep attention within the frame



What if the line is the subject ?

If the line itself is the subject

Get close to the line

Use a wide-angle lens /wide focus



Don't use leading lines if....

The line leads out of the frame, or to nowhere

The line doesn't lead to the subject

Lines head in different directions



Also think – does this line add to my photo ?



Framing



Framing is a composition technique of drawing attention to the **subject** by blocking other parts of the image with something in the scene.

This type of Framing is also known as “*sub-framing*”, as the photo itself is also called a “*camera frame*”. It is also called “*picture within a picture*”.

Frames can be anything, from natural frames like rock formations, or man-made ones like windows and tunnels.



Benefits of using frames in photos

1) Leading the eye towards your main focal point

Some 'frames' can draw your photo's viewer into the picture just by their shape.

A frame can not only draw the eye into a picture but it keeps it there longer – giving a barrier between your subject and the outside of the shot.



Benefits of using frames in photos

2) Giving the photo context

For example, framing a scene with an archway can tell you something about the place you are by the architecture of the archway



Including some foliage in the foreground of a shot can convey a sense of being out in nature.



Benefits of using frames in photos

3) Giving images a sense of depth and layers

Framing a shot generally puts something in the foreground, which adds an extra dimension/depth to the shot.





Benefits of using frames in photos

4) Intriguing your viewer

Sometimes it's what you can't see in an image that draws you into it as much as (if not more than) what you can see in the picture.

Clever framing that leaves those viewing your image wondering a little or imagining what is behind your frame can be quite effective

But get it wrong and it can also be quite annoying!



Type of Frames

1) Architectural Frames

Think of the word “frame” and you may automatically think of window-frames or door-frames.

These are easy to find and include in your images.

But also think about using walls, or other structures.



Type of Frames

2) Environmental Frames

Although these tend to be natural objects, such as trees or rocks, you can also use man-made items...





Type of Frames

3) Framing with shapes

Here the shape of the frame is as important as the subject.



Type of Frames

4) Framing with light / shadow

This is more difficult to achieve, but it can be very effective.

The viewer not only notices the subject, but also recognises the light/shadow is acting as a frame.



Should I use framing ?

When considering framing ask yourself the question –

“Will this add to or take away from my image?”

Sometimes framing can just add clutter to a shot and make it feel cramped, but at other times it can be the difference between an ordinary shot and a stunning one.



What Is Symmetry in Photography?

Symmetry in photography is when two parts of an image are reflections of one another.

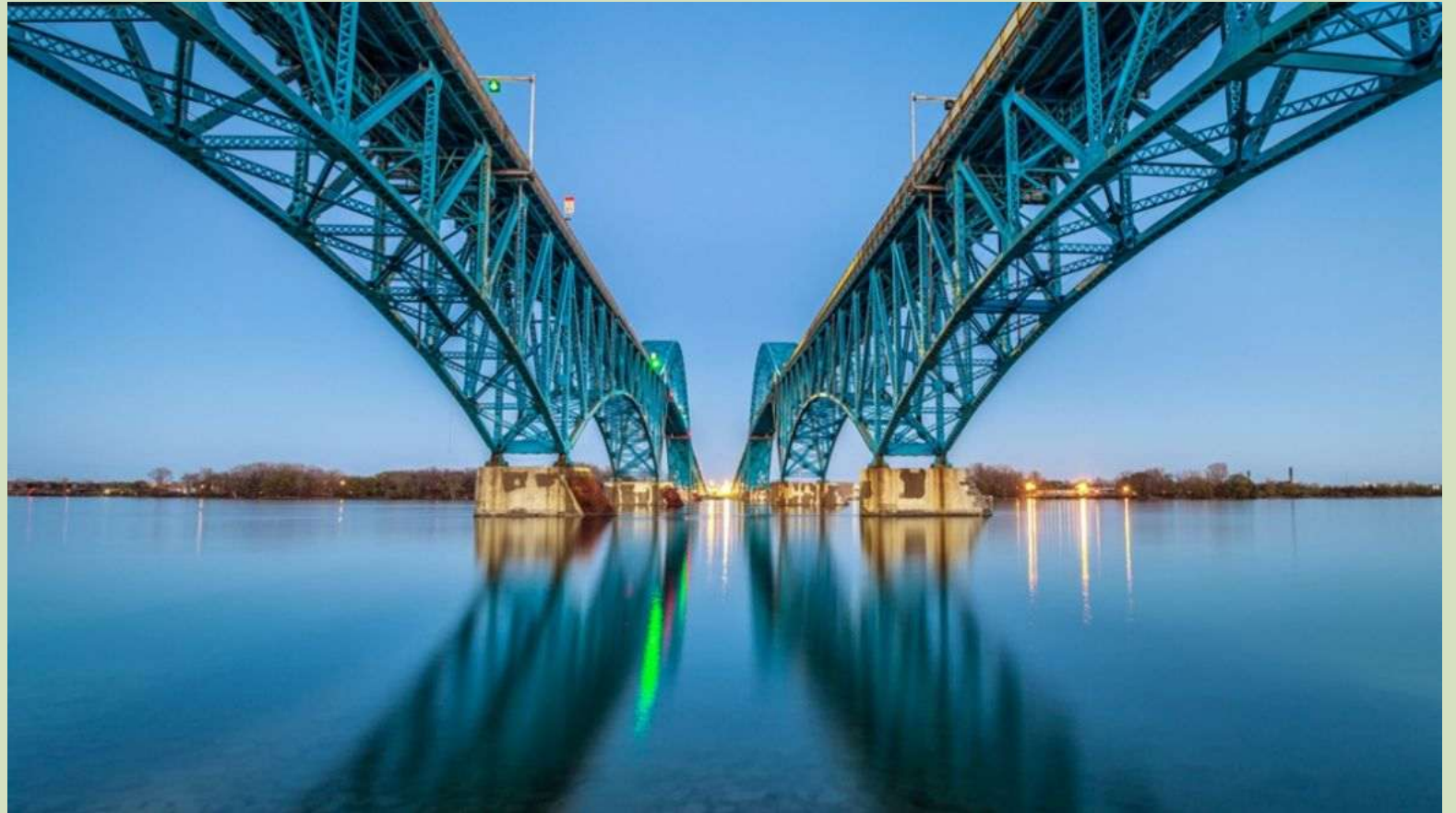
When symmetry is used in compositions, it can produce a strong reaction from the viewer.



Using Symmetry in Composition

Symmetrical photos stand out because they're attractive to the eye.

Humans are drawn to visual perfection and compositions that work in harmony.



Using Symmetry in Composition

Accurate positioning is key :

Slightly off-centre/off-balance will be noticed by the viewer



Using Symmetry in Composition

Leading lines can boost symmetry photos

For reflections, place the horizon in the middle of the frame



Types of Symmetry

There are 3 main types of symmetry

Vertical Symmetry

Horizontal Symmetry

And Radial Symmetry

Each of these will give your images a different feel





Vertical Symmetry

If the line passes through the scene from top to bottom, dividing the subject into identical halves, then this creates a vertical line of symmetry.



Horizontal Symmetry

Horizontal Symmetry is if the line passes through the scene from right to left, dividing the scene into equal halves. This creates a horizontal line of symmetry.



Radial Symmetry

Radial symmetry is a symmetry where the sides exhibit around a central point. Many flowers are radially symmetric.





Reflective Symmetry

Some photographers would also have a separate category for “Reflective” Symmetry. This is all about reflections. Water reflections can be considered part of “horizontal” symmetry, but it is also possible to take reflections at an angle.

When can I use it ?

You can use symmetry in many different types of image.

It is most commonly used in landscapes and in nature Photography.



When can I use it ?

You can even use it in
Portrait photography !



When can I use it ?

You can also get great results when you hint at a symmetrical image.....



Summary

Leading Lines, Framing and Symmetry are 3 composition techniques

They can add interest to your photos.

Look out for them and perhaps think about using them in your own compositions !