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Viewfinder.

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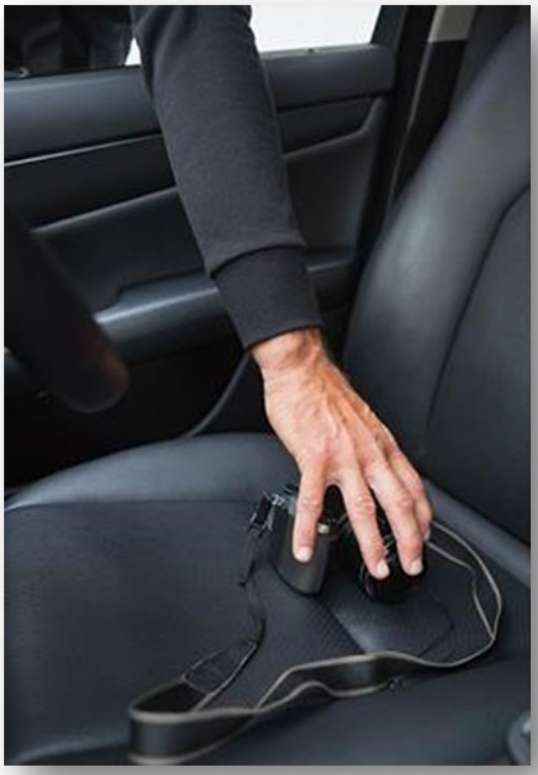
VIEWFINDER INDEX

Cover Photographer
Debbie Henderson

What To Do When Your Camera is Stolen

by David Peterson



I am not ashamed to say that this is something I have literal nightmares about. I've left my camera in my car, or in a hotel room, or horror-of-horrors, I left it hanging on the back of my chair at a restaurant. Some unscrupulous person found it there and decided to claim it for his own, or worse, he broke into my car or home and took my most beloved possession. I generally wake up from these dreams in a cold sweat, and sometimes I even go check on my camera to make sure that my dream wasn't based on any kind of reality.

We don't want to think about it and we like to believe that it won't happen to us, but the fact is that camera theft is big business. Cameras are big-ticket items, which makes them desirable to thieves, which means that we have to take steps to protect them. Here's how.

Preventative measures

I'm sure that you have heard the expression "prevention is the best medicine." These words of wisdom are not just for our own health and well-being, they can also be applied to the health and safety of the things we love. So no discussion of stolen cameras would be complete without a little talk about prevention, even if it is stuff that really ought to be obvious.

First, make sure that you have insurance. If you're a professional, this usually means buying an insurance policy specifically for your gear. If you're a hobbyist, your gear should be covered under your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy. To make it official, ask your agent for a rider and list the model, serial number and receipts (if you have them) for each piece of gear you own. Don't worry if you don't have those receipts—you can still file a claim if it comes to it, it just means you'll have more hoops to jump through.

Remember that if the worst happens, you may need to file a police report—even if your insurance company doesn't require one, it will make your claim easier.

If you're a pro you do need to individually insure your equipment, which is more expensive than simply adding it to your home insurance policy. But a pro insurance policy has added benefits—for example, if you drop your camera on someone's head you'll be covered if they decide to sue you for damages.

Now let's not forget that your gear is not the only thing at risk if your camera is stolen. Your camera's memory card may be even more valuable to you than the camera itself, especially if your primary subjects are your children or other loved ones. I would personally far rather lose even my nice DSLR than the photos that are kept on the memory card inside that DSLR. So one thing you can do to protect yourself right away is take the card out of your camera whenever you aren't us-

ing it. At home, store your cards separately from your camera gear, so if a thief does break into your home he won't take the cards along with the camera. And I know I don't have to stress to you the importance of backing up. It's not enough to simply copy your files to an external hard drive—this will protect you in the event that your primary hard drive fails, but if someone breaks into your house I can almost guarantee they will take the hard drive along with your camera equipment. You can back up your files to DVDs and store them in your book shelf for some protection (a thief isn't likely to take a binder full of DVDs) but this requires diligence. Instead I recommend using a cloud service that will automatically back up your files for you, without any effort from you at all. It really is a small price to pay for the knowledge that your photos will be protected even if your hard drive disappears.

And my other tips are just common sense—hopefully you're already putting them into practice. When you're out with your gear, travel light if you can. If you must carry around extra lenses, make sure they're in a bag that doesn't scream "camera gear!" Wear your camera cross-body or keep it secure in a case that you also wear that way. Never hang it from the back of a chair and avoid leaving it unattended in your car whenever you can. If you must leave it in your car, make sure you conceal it (I like to throw a sweatshirt or a jacket over it so it's not obvious if someone decides to look through the window) and make doubly sure you lock up. Having an alarm for your car doesn't hurt.
And keep your gear secured inside your home, too. There's no reason why you have to make it easy or obvious for a thief who does succeed in getting through your home's first defenses—so consider buying a safe to store your gear in, and keep your safe somewhere inconspicuous such as the back of a closet or inside a cabinet. Most thieves aren't going to spend a lot of time searching, they're going to grab the things they can see and leave while they have a chance. A safe is a tempting target but an impractical one—it's heavy and if the intruder does succeed in getting it out of the house, he might never be able to open it. It's much easier for him to just grab the flat screen TV and go.

Finally, it doesn't hurt to add an identifying mark to your camera—something that isn't obvious, such as an ink mark or (gasp!) a scratch. Then document that identifying mark with a photo and

Links of Interest:

Viewbug - http://www.viewbug.com/
ePHOTOzine - http://www.ephotozine.com/
Federation of Camera Clubs [NSW] - http://www.photographynsw.org.au/
Australian Photographic Society - http://www.a-p-s.org.au/
Gurushots - https://gurushots.com/
Free Lessons with Serge Ramelli - http://photoserge.com/free-lessons/all

keep it with your serial number information. You can use the mark to identify any equipment someone might be selling online—most thieves are going to avoid posting images of a serial number, but they might not think to avoid posting images of a scratch or ink mark.

What to do if your camera is stolen

Let's say you've taken all these precautions and you still end up losing your camera to a thief. Sadly, the odds aren't in your favour. Most stolen cameras are not recovered—they end up in pawn shops in distant cities or sold on eBay or just in the hands of someone who wanted a free camera. But that doesn't mean you should just sit back and play the helpless victim—there are actually some things you can do to improve your admittedly slim chances of getting your camera back. First, check one or more of the free photo-tracking services that are available online. You already knew that your camera's EXIF data was useful (it can help you understand your camera's settings or identify the time and date you took a photo, for example). But also embedded in your camera's EXIF data is its serial number, so if the person who stole your camera then posts a photo he shot with that camera online, one of these services might be able to track that person through the EXIF data. If your camera has GPS you may even be able to find out where and when it was used, which can help you narrow down its current location.

It's always a good idea to keep a record of all your serial numbers, but just in case you didn't you can find that number in the EXIF data for any photo you took before your camera was stolen. Some services will even extract that data for you by simply asking you to upload an image taken by the missing camera. The two most popular camera finding services are StolenCameraFinder and CameraTrace—it's worth checking both to see if someone has posted images from your camera online. If you do find a match, you may be able to locate the person through his Flickr account (or account elsewhere, depending on where the photos were posted) but this is a tricky business and you might have better luck asking the camera finding service to assist you in recovering the camera. Sometimes you can even get the police involved—a letter to that person requesting return of the gear in lieu of prosecution may be enough to get your stuff back, if not to get actual legal justice. Unfortunately I do want to add that not every place where you can post photos online can help you recover a stolen camera—for various reasons (one of which is privacy), Facebook actually strips EXIF data whenever you upload an image. That means that if your camera's thief decided to post some pictures on Facebook, none of the camera finding services would be able to track it that way. It's unfortunate, because Facebook is probably the most likely place where images from a stolen camera might appear.

Craigslist and eBay

Many thieves steal gear not because they want it for themselves, but because they want to sell it to someone else. If you lose a camera or other piece of photographic equipment you should check your local Craigslist immediately, and keep checking until several months have passed. Some thieves will post a sales listing right away, while others will wait knowing that their victim is going to be on the lookout for his stuff. And don't forget to check eBay, which is another favorite place to sell stolen merchandise. Look closely at the listing photos for that identifying mark I hope you added to your camera. Once you spot an ad or listing for your camera, I recommend soliciting help from local law enforcement or an online camera finding service—don't try to go this alone or the thief may suspect and disappear. And don't delay—remember you have just until the eBay auction is over or the thief finds a Craigslist buyer to act or it may be too late.

Pawn shops

Just because we live in a high-tech world doesn't mean that thieves no longer use low-tech routes to sell stolen goods. Don't discount your local pawn shop or a camera shop that sells used gear. It's best not to tell a broker that he has your stolen merchandise—instead tell him you're interested in buying and ask him to hold the merchandise for you. Then contact police and let them know you've located your stolen property. Remember that your serial number and identifying photo-

graphs will be important in this situation, but don't expect that you will simply be able to collect your gear and walk out. Some shop owners will be honest and work with you (especially when you get the police involved) but others may not be so accommodating—after all they're going to be out some money too if they have to give your gear back to you. Check the laws in your state or country—in some places you have to buy the merchandise back and then go through the courts or even after the thief for restitution (the law often requires anyone who does business with a pawn broker to give identifying information such as a thumbprint and driver's license number), and in other places the pawn broker is required to give your property back to you provided that you have proof of ownership.

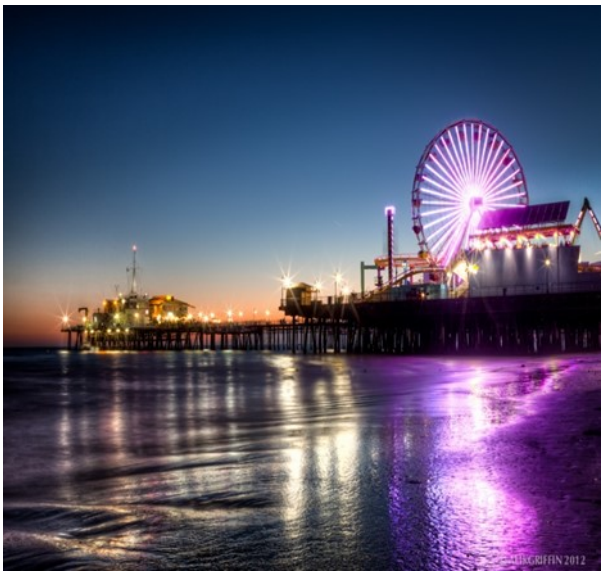
Conclusion

Now I don't want to get your hopes up because although there are plenty of dumb thieves in this world, there are also smart ones—and it may be that your stuff is gone for good. That's why it's so important to make sure everything is insured, and to make sure that your photos are safely backed up and stored outside your home. It's never going to be possible to protect yourself 100%—even a well secured home is not completely invulnerable and even the most cautious photographer sometimes lets his guard down. So always take those preventative measures and hopefully you'll sleep secure in the knowledge that if the worst does happen, you'll be covered
http://www.digital-photo-secrets.com/tip/5790/what-to-do-camera-stolen/

UV Filter or Not.

In this guide I'll cover several important reasons why you should use a UV filter on your DSLR or mirrorless camera. But also when using a UV filter is completely unnecessary.

UV filters are supposed to cut down UV light, but really modern lenses and sensors now have advanced coatings on them so it's no longer necessary to add extra filters for UV light. They were really more designed to be used with Film.



Using A UV Filter Really Depends On The Lens And Situation. Let Me Explain!

This is one of the biggest topics of debate when it comes to photography and lenses. Should you use a UV filter on your dslr? Well some big photographers do not. Some do. I do sometimes. Here is my experience and opinions on when you should or should not use them.

3 Reasons To Use UV Filters

1. Use A UV Filter To Help Weather Seal Your Lens

Some lenses like the Canon 16-35mm have a moving front element when zooming. This creates a vacuum that sucks dust and other matter into the lens. Using a UV filter will minimize the material caught in your lens and lengthen its life.

2. Protect Your Lens

And this is important in more than one way. First and most obvious, it's nice to have them in case you accidently bump your lens on something breaking your cheap UV filter instead of chipping the front element of your lens. This is even more important when you have expensive lenses. Also as mentioned in #1, they will help weather seal your lens.

3. Keep Your Lens Clean

UV filters aren't just used to protect your lens from physical damage but also can be used to keep them clean.

Here is an example. I was shooting the Santa Monica pier one night when the waves were about three to four feet. It was throwing up a salty mist that would collect on my dslr and

my lens creating a sticky film. When I tried to wipe this film off it would smear everywhere. Then it gets on your micro fibre cloth and you have to keep using clean cloths to try to get it off, in my case the inside of my shirt.

Luckily I had a few filters so I could just swap them out and put on a new one instead of having to clean the existing one. The last thing you want to do during a sunset is waist vital minutes cleaning lenses and filters.

Other lenses like the new Canon 40mm pancake lens also can be difficult to clean. The lens is set into the body making it easy for edges to collect a lot of dirt and dust which are hard to get out. If you have a UV filter on, then you only have to clean a large broad piece of glass.

3 Reasons Not To Use UV Filters

There are a few reason photographers stay away from UV filters.

1. They Can Increase Flaring

This is especially true if the filter isn't coated very well. If you get a UV filter make sure you **get one that is multi-coated**. This helps get rid of the flair and reflection.

To summarize – glass reflects some light, so the more glass you add on your lens the less light gets to your sensor, like 4%-1.5%. The advanced multi coatings keep light from reflecting allowing more light to pass through the lens resulting in a higher contrast image. So an advanced coating, multicoated both sides will only reflect 0.5% of the light.

2. You Might Not Actually Need Them For Protection

Some say a lens hood can provide all the protection you need from physical damage. And this is true. On many lenses I use, the hood is so massive that there is really no reason you'd ever have to worry about something hitting the front element.

3. You Shoot In a Studio

In a studio environment it really doesn't make any sense to use a UV filter. You don't have to worry about the weather or UV light and the flaring from poorly coated cheap UV filters could create extra problems with the studio lights. But beware of dust.

Do You Need A UV Filter?

Well, it's up to you. I use them sometimes because I am a run and gun type of photographer. I throw my lenses in my camera bag without lens caps. I always am shooting near

the beach or water falls or in the rain. So for me, it just makes sense in those situations. When I shot in Death Valley or the desert I did not use one. (Lesson learned, dust!) Now if I was strictly a studio photographer, I would never use one.

Best UV Filters to Buy

I've heard so many photographers say, "If you spend all this money on your lens you better get a good UV filter to protect it and not some cheap one." The world of making filters is a lot like the sunglasses industry. A lot of times you're just spending the money on the brand name.

There are companies that sell you them for $150 dollars, and some that sell you them for $20 dollars. I've had them all and honestly, as long as they are multicoated I can't tell the difference. Putting something over your lens won't really change the clarity or sharpness of your image by much, like said above 4%-0.5%.

I have one really expensive B+W UV filter, but lately, I've started buying the cheaper ones off Amazon. Like Tiffen, and Hoya.

So should you use a UV filter on your dslr? It's up to you.

From https://alikgriffin.com/guide-for-using-uv-filters-when-when-not-to-use-them/

Panorama Photography Tips

You can take a panoramic image with a very wide-angle lens or you can take a series of shots and stitch them together. The great thing about creating a panorama by stitching photos together is the incredible detail than can be preserved. Using a sequence of shots also makes it possible to create 360×180 degree panoramas.

"Smokey Mountains Panorama" captured by PictureSocial member Todd Ward

Here are some tips for creating a standard panorama composed of multiple shots stitched together:

- Select a focal length between 18mm and 55mm.

- Use the same exposure, white balance, and focus for all the shots.
- Expose and focus on the focal point of your composition. Whatever is most important in the composition needs to be exposed properly. Everything else will have to use the same settings. Don't vary the settings or you will be able to easily see separate photos. Some point-and-shoot cameras have a panoramic mode built-in. For these cameras, you may need to take a photo of the focal point then start the panoramic sequence.
- Always shoot from left to right. The software that you will use to stitch the images together will expect the first image in the sequence to be on the far left.

Imitate the field of view that we see with our eyes. The normal field of view for human sight is nearly 180 degrees.

"Panorama Moorea" captured by PictureSocial member Roland

- Overlap the images by about 1/3. This means that the second picture will repeat about 1/3 of the first picture. The third picture will overlap the second picture by 1/3, etc. If you have a tripod that shows degrees, each photo should be 25 to 30 degrees apart. You should take four to five shots–the number of shots depends on your focal length and the degrees between shots.

Use a tripod. It is possible to hand-hold panoramic shots, but the images probably won't line up very well. Point-and-shoot cameras with a panoramic mode usually show you a ghost image of the previous shot to help see the overlap, but you have to guess with DSLR cameras.

"Portofino Panorama" captured by PictureSocial member Jack Harwick

Some camera manufacturers, such as Canon, bundle software with the camera that can be

used to stitch photos together. You can also use Adobe Photoshop to stitch the images together by selecting *File* > *Automate* > *Photomerge*. A free alternative is to use Hugin to stitch together complex panoramas such as 360×180 degree panoramas.

If you become obsessed with taking panoramas, you may want to get a special panoramic head for your tripod. These heads are specifically designed for taking panoramas and allow you to position the entrance pupil/no-parallax point of the camera's lens over the pivot point of the tripod in order to eliminate parallax errors.

"Columbia Gorge Panorama" captured by PictureSocial member Jack Harwick

There are even robotic heads that automate the process and take the pictures for you. Parallax errors become most obvious when there are really close objects in your scene. I have taken many panoramic shots of landscapes and seldom see parallax errors, but if you are a perfectionist, you will probably want to invest in a one of these heads.

Using and Abusing Lens Flare

by David Peterson

Raise your hand if this has happened to you: you're out shooting some photos in the late afternoon. The light is beautiful (it's that magic hour), your subjects are particularly photogenic and you just know you're going to end up with some amazing pictures. Then, when you get home and review your shots, you realize that you failed to take one little factor into account: the sun.

Yes, the sun. It makes the grass green and the tomatoes red. It gives us that beautiful, natural light that can never truly be matched in a studio. And it creates lens flare.

Now if you're like a lot of photographers, you try to avoid lens flare, and when you have a senior moment like the one described above, you probably just delete the photos, grieve for them a little and then move on. But lens flare isn't always the disaster that your Photography 101 instructor might have told you it was. In fact some photographers regularly use lens flare as a creative tool. So instead of avoiding lens flare, how can you rein it in and make it a part of your creative process? Let's see how!

What Causes Lens Flare?

Lens flare happens when stray light reflects on some of the internal elements of your lens. This stray light can create light streaks, "sunbursts" or re-duction in contrast and saturation. For most of the his-tory of photography, lens flare has been a much maligned anomaly. Photographers learned all sorts of little tricks to avoid it or minimize it. Lens hoods were invented to give photographers a weapon to use against it. For some reason, it wasn't until the very re-cent past that someone noticed that under the right cumstances, lens flare is actually pretty cool.

How to add Lens Flare to your Images (on Purpose)!

Fortunately for those of us who want to use lens flare creatively, it's pretty easy to do. That's why so much attention has been devoted to how to avoid it, because it's one of those "problems" that crops up all by itself under fairly common circumstances. To get lens flare to show up in your images on purpose, try these tricks:

Remove your lens hood. Your lens hood is there because the people who designed your lens decided that you don't like lens flare and will attempt to avoid it under pretty much all circumstances. Don't blame them, they're tech guys, not creative geniuses. Happily, they were kind enough to also design your lens hood to be removable. So unscrew your lens hood and put it in your bag.

Position your subject with his or her back to the sun. By positioning your subject in such a way, you're inviting that stray light to do its reflecty thing on those internal lens elements. Depending on how you meter the scene, this may actually turn your subject into a silhouette, which might also be pretty cool.

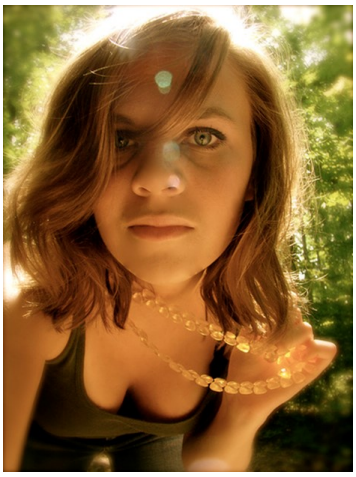
Adjust your subject's position and/or your camera angle. Depending on your creative goals, you may want an extreme effect on your image - washed out colors, low contrast and all. Or you may simply want a few of those polygonal suburst strategically positioned in the corner of the frame, or perhaps you'd like some streaks to create a sort of heavenly effect. You can control this to some degree by moving your subject so that some or all of the light is behind him/her. Or you can simply adjust your own position so the sun is angled behind a tree or building.

Take more than one shot, even if your subject isn't moving. Like a fast-moving subject, lens flare can be unpredictable. Set up your subject and shoot multiple images as you make slight adjustments to your camera's angle. This will change the overall position and strength of the lens flare, which will give you multiple final images to choose from.

Switch to spot metering. If you don't want your subject to succumb to that often lovely but sometimes unwanted silhouetting effect, make sure you switch to spot metering mode and then take a reading off of your subject's face before you make the shot. Unless your subject is dead-centered in the frame (ahh rule of thirds violation!), you'll need to use exposure lock to lock in that meter reading before you recompose and make the exposure. And don't forget to bracket - this is a tricky lighting situation and your meter might not make the same decision you would have made if you were a metering system. So shoot one shot where your camera tells you to, one shot that's a stop overexposed and one shot that's a stop underexposed.

Block the light so you can focus. Your autofocus system is probably going to have some trouble locking onto anything when there's all that stray light bouncing around, so you may need to position your hand in such a way that it blocks all that lovely lens-flare long enough for you to actually focus on your subject. When all else fails, turn off the autofocus system altogether and manually focus on your subject instead.

When is lens flare bad?



OK, as cool as lens flare can be under those right conditions, you and I both know that there are still cases where it will detract from your image rather than add to it. You don't, for example, want lens flare to cover your subject's face, especially his or her eye(s), and you don't want it leaving a strange and unattractive trail from his forehead to his chin. You don't want your subject to be so washed out as to be unrecognizable (although you might be aiming for that artistic effect). Obviously there's a lot of creative choice involved in your decision to include lens flare or exclude it, and ultimately it's going to come down to what looks right to you in the final image. That's why it's so important to take multiple shots whenever you think you might want to include lens flare as a part of your composition. You're probably not going to know exactly which camera angle or subject position works in any given situation until you actually see the final image on your LCD, or on your computer monitor. That's where creativity and guesswork come together to make that serendipitous final image

The First Step to a Quality Portrait

It would take a much longer article than this to tell you everything about how to pose your subject, because one of the hardest pictures to take is one where you have to pose the human body. You want the portrait to be as captivating and natural as possible. Please consider the following points that will help to lift your portraiture to a higher standard.

- The best portraits are the ones that not only capture the physical likeness of a person, but his or her **character**, as well. At least one element revealing the personality of the subject, or maybe his or her attitude, mannerisms, or other features will make a super portrait, as it will tell us something about them.
- It is the portrait photographer who has never met the subject before that is presented with the biggest challenge. He or she must work on the proficiency of **studying people**, their mannerisms, expressions, reactions, body language, and anything else that can be presented in front of the camera.
- If you can develop a skill in **understanding human nature**, it would be a great asset to your photographic profession. Developing this skill mandates getting quickly involved in conversation with the subject, questioning their interests, perhaps evoking reactions or excitement, and really bringing out his or her natural personality.

This process results in a more relaxed presence in front of the camera for the subject, with a more at-ease and natural attitude. At this point, it is important to remember not to rush through the portrait session. Do your work, avoiding idle conversation that would take up your time and his or hers. Always **boost confidence** by telling the person that the session is going well.

Be confident in yourself and portray your confidence at all times during the session. Be relaxed but ready to photograph when the subject is ready. Remember that you are the person in control, and the subject needs to see you that way.

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How to Use Leading Lines for Exceptional Composition

by Christina Harman

Leading lines are a powerful tool that experienced photographers use to improve the balance, and overall composition of their images.

Lines are often used to lead the viewer's eye through the photograph, towards points of interest. Our eyes our trained to "read through" images, just like we read through the words on a page. Lines can help to facilitate this, making it easy to "*visually read*" an image. Because of this leading effect, lines are also used to convey a sense of depth and distance in a photo.

While most well-composed photographs have lines that help to lead viewers through the photo, lines have another somewhat surprising effect. Lines can also be used to affect the overall mood and feel of a composition, and can be used to add a sense of drama, excitement, stability, or even harshness to an image. Lines really are a powerful, and versatile, compositional tool!

Leading lines can be found just about everywhere, in both natural and manmade settings. Everything from jagged coastal shorelines and winding rivers, to roads and architecture contain lines. While they aren't always immediately obvious, even implied lines can be surprisingly effective – and by intentionally looking out for leading lines in your compositions you'll soon become adept at spotting them.

photo by Antoine Beauvillain

In order to get the most out of this compositional tool, it's important to know where to place them, and how to use them effectively.

Let's explore the three main purposes of leading lines in a photograph, and see how lines can help to add depth, draw attention, and change the overall mood of a photo. Find out how you can use leading lines to enhance your compositions!

Create Depth

Lines are often used to add a sense of depth to a composition. Despite the fact that photography is very much a two dimensional medium; leading lines help to create a real sense of distance and depth in a photo.

Converging lines – lines that reach the disappearing point at the horizon, are a great way to convey depth and distance. The further away the lines are, the smaller they get, drawing the viewer through the scene and adding a sense of perspective to the photo, helping the viewer to feel as though they are there.

Draw Attention

Leading lines essentially form a visual path, and are often used to help draw attention to various aspects of a composition. Because of their attention-grabbing capabilities, lines are often used to draw the viewer through the image, to varying points of visual interest, or to a main focal point looming in the distance.

Change the Image's Dynamic

While lines are most commonly used to draw the eye through the photo, lines have another hidden talent. That is, they are sometimes able to affect the overall dynamic of an image. Our minds tend to associate different lines with different moods – jagged often means harsh or ominous, while horizontal tends to convey a feeling of restfulness, or calm. While this isn't always the case, and there are other factors that play into a composition's overall mood, it's worth paying attention to the effect that leading lines can have on the overall feel of an image.

Let's look at a few characteristics that are often associated with different types of lines.

Horizontal

Horizontal lines are the most common lines in photography. They tend to convey a sense of

calm, rest, and stability in a composition. Think of the peaceful feeling that the stability of a horizon line adds to the overall feel of the image.

Diagonal

Diagonal lines can add a sense of energy and motion to your photo. They spark interest and convey action or drama. Tilting the camera slightly to capture a car that's heading around a corner adds to a composition's visual dynamic. Composing an image with a bridge, trail, or other element that spans across the frame diagonally will help the image to come alive – adding a certain visual energy to the composition.

Vertical

Vertical lines convey a sense of height and strength. A classic example of this would be photographing a building from the ground up, highlighting just how tall and imposing the building is.

Curved or Jagged

Curved lines, most often found in windy rivers or roads add a sense of relaxed, natural beauty to an image – while jagged lines like rugged mountain peaks tend to convey a harsh mood.

When incorporating lines into your photos, it's a good idea to pay attention to the mood that the overall composition conveys, and to make sure that the lines are helping to further your compositional goals, rather than distracting from them.

Tying It All Together

One of the first things to do when composing your photograph is to survey the scene, look for leading lines – or any compositional elements that can help to add balance and direction to your image. Then, determine how the lines can help you to tie everything together. Ask yourself how you could use the lines to direct attention to the subject, or to lead the viewer through the image and into the background. Also keep in mind the dynamics and the overall feel that you want to convey.

If you're trying to capture a dramatic storm, look out for lines that are consistent with the overall feel. Incorporate jagged mountain peaks, streaky dark clouds, or a spooky looking tree as lines that will reflect the mood that you're trying to capture.

For a smooth, relaxing sunset image, include the horizon line, or a meandering coastline to add to the calm, relaxing feel that you're trying to convey.

Making the Lines Work for You: Adjust Your Angle

It's amazing how a simple adjustment can have a big impact on the resulting image. Simply angling the camera a bit higher or lower, or moving to a different place can dramatically alter the shape of the lines, and help your composition to take a completely different turn.

Learning to Spot Leading Lines

While lines aren't always obvious, it's important to be on the lookout for leading lines that you can use to further your compositions. While some lines – like waterfalls or roads are easy to spot, it's worth looking a bit closer. Some of the most effective lines are more subtle, but lines don't have to be obvious to be powerful. In fact, some of the best images have leading lines that are less-than-obvious!

There are lines all around, and with a little practice, you'll soon start to notice linear opportunities as they jump out at you when you're composing your images.

Remember to adjust your perspective to change the direction or angle of the line to achieve your desired result. Have fun,

https://contrastly.com/leading-lines-composition/

Use a Low Camera Angle for Landscape Photography

It seems as if everyone is trying to be a landscape photographer these days. With the advent of digital imaging and the corresponding ease in cranking out pictures, photography is everywhere. Because of this, it's getting harder and harder to create landscape images that are different and not the same old stereotypical stuff that everyone else is shooting.

Photo by Mike Boening Photography; ISO 100, f/22.0.

Many photographers go to great lengths to put their own creative stamp on their work, using such things as camera filters or complex computer editing techniques to gain a unique style. These are all well and good, but it's often amazing how much difference there can be in a photograph by getting a different perspective with a lower camera angle.

Humans are very much creatures of habit. If we have a camera in our hands and we see a pleasing scene, we raise the camera to our eye, compose, and shoot. If we're using a tripod, we extend the legs to eye level and shoot the picture. Well it's time to break the old habits. The next time you're out doing landscape photography, try simply dropping to one knee in order to incorporate, and put more emphasis on, interesting foreground elements. If you're using a tripod, try *not* extending the legs in order to keep the camera closer to the ground. You might be surprised at the difference this simple little step will make.

Now that you're getting the idea, take it a step further and try some shots lying flat on the ground. Now you're getting some perspectives that are different than the majority of the casual snapshot shooters out there. Things like rocks, flowers, logs, and even blades of grass are examples of objects that can be incorporated into the image to make it more interesting. Obviously the scene and the foreground elements will dictate how low to go. Experiment and have fun. That's the whole idea, isn't it?

As you incorporate more foreground elements into a scene by using this technique, depth of field, also known as depth of focus, will become an issue. It can be difficult to keep both near-

by objects and the distant landscape in focus. Use as small an aperture as possible. This increases depth of field. You can try using a wider angle lens which also increases the appearance of a wider focus area.

If these aren't sufficient, try moving back a little from your foreground elements which will make it easier to keep them in focus. Utilize the depth of field preview button, if your camera has one, to see how much of your scene will be in focus. If there's any doubt, make sure that the closest objects are sharply focused. The human eye can often accept distant objects that are a little out of focus but blurry foreground elements will nearly always spoil the scene.

Photo by Steve Betts; ISO 100, f/14.0, 1/160-second exposure.

The point is, you don't need exotic gear, nor do you need to learn complex post-processing techniques to take digital landscape photographs that have a unique perspective. You just need to see a little differently, and using a low camera angle is one very simple way to achieve this.

About the Author:

This article was written by photographer Dean Eppen (deaneppen dot com).

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NOTE. A watermark cannot be used on a photo that is to be submitted to a competition.

8 Quick Tips for Long Exposure Photography

by Michael Gabriel

If you like shooting outdoors or at night, knowing how to properly do long exposure photography will be a big help. Once you discover the wonders of long exposure photography can do to your photos, you'll thank yourself for finding time to learn it.
Long exposure photography is a technique that produces stunning effects and dramatic moods. Even when you shoot at night, you'll still be able to create detailed photos with beautiful light effects. It works best for landscape photography.
Although mastering the technique is not easy and involves a lot of training and practice, there are no complex skill sets or procedures needed for long exposure photography. All you'll need is a reliable tripod and a good camera that can do long exposures.
You can choose to go on a formal workshop, but since there are no special skills involved, self-practice is the best option because you can control your pace. Additionally, there are tips you can follow to ensure that you're doing things the right way.

Long Exposure Photography Tips

To help you start out, here are quick tips you should follow and keep in mind. These do not assure that you'll become a master long exposure photographer, but they can help you do things right. These can help you make the proper start to your long exposure practice. Follow all these tips so you won't wonder where you went wrong or why the shot didn't come out the way you expected it to.

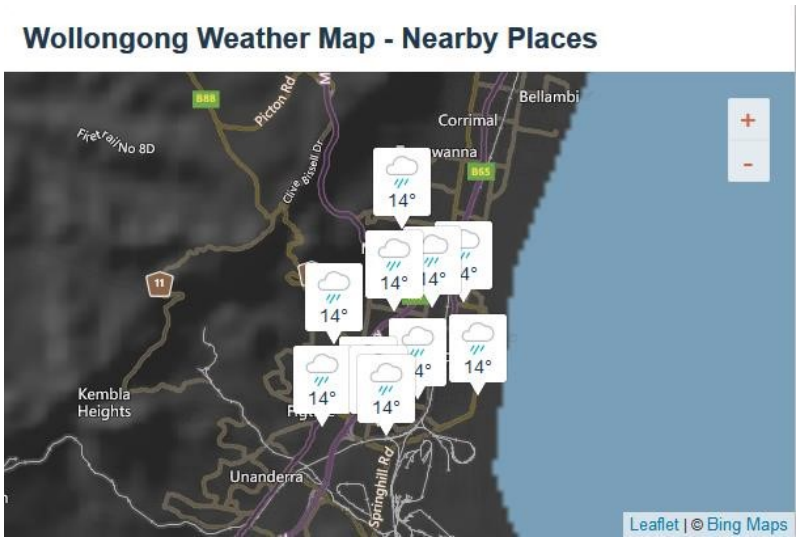
Avoid vibration of any kind

Make sure that your camera and tripod are on a steady, balanced surface. Some photographers even put something heavy on the tripod (like sand bags) to add some weight to it. The extra weight will make the tripod and camera sturdier.

In addition to the extra weight, it will help if you use a remote shutter so there won't be a need to press the shutter manually. Pressing the shutter can cause some vibration. You can prevent vibration from manifesting in the photos by using the shutter delay (at least 2 seconds), but using a remote is still the most practical option.

2. Be mindful of the weather

Days before the shoot, get all the information you can about the weather. Find ways to monitor the weather, especially if it has been raining for days or if it's the rainy season. Do not schedule a shoot when the sky is cloudless or when the rains are pouring heavily. But pay attention to the weather forecast because conditions can change in a matter of minutes or hours.
I suggest you use AccuWeather (the app or the website). It can forecast up to 90 days. AccuWeather can tell you the weather on an hourly basis. It can also predict the chance (percentage) of rain, snow, and cloud cover.
Do a location inspection several days before the shoot – study and familiarize it. This will give you ideas on how to set up the shoot and which shots to take. Likewise, an ocular inspection will give you the opportunity to study your concept, as well as to determine whether the location is perfect for what you want to achieve.



3. Visualize and compose your photo

Pay attention to the surroundings of your location and try to visualize how they can be incorporated into the shot or photo. This is important because you need to find a way to improve the scene or location for the long exposure shot. It is essential to pay attention to the total picture and not just the ones that are your focal interest.

4. Lock the focus and look for leaks
Make sure that your photo is well-composed. Do not lose your focus on the subject. You can manually lock the focus or use the shutter button if you are on autofocus mode. Be sure to lightly press (not full press) the button until the focus you want is achieved.
Be mindful of the leaks. If there are leaks on the camera's viewfinder (or anywhere else), you need to seal them off. To do this, you need to bring with you a black tape and any opaque material that you can use to cover the leaks. Or if you have a strap with an eye-piece cover (that black rubber thing), use it. Here's a full tutorial on how to use it.
Even if the leaks are tiny ones, they can still affect the outcome of your long exposure shot.
5. Pay attention to the light
Whether you shoot in the daytime or at night, it is important to be mindful of the light. Is there ambient lighting? How much light can I get if I shoot at night? What man-made light sources can I use? Asking these questions will help you determine how much of your light requirement need to be improved and which ones should be utilized.
6. Do several test shots
Do not shoot right away when the set up is finalized. Rather, take time to do some practice or test shots. Do not forget to prepare your camera by setting it to M (Manual) or A/Av (Aperture Priority) mode. The aperture value should also be set appropriately. Take note of the results.
7. Choose and add ND filter
Add a ND filter according to the result you want to achieve. Remember, using a very strong ND filter (i.e.: 8 to 10 stops) won't allow you to see the live view. No worries, though, because the camera will see everything for you – remember, you're keeping the shutter open long enough for your camera to record a lot of information from the scene.
8. Take the shot
Before clicking the camera, however, be sure that you have changed the setting to B or Bulb for the shooting mode. This will help you keep the shutter open for more than 60 seconds or for as long as you want to. However, make sure that no other setting is changed. As you start taking the shot, keep in mind what you've learned from your practice shots.
As in everything else, you can master long exposure photography if you practice. So, practice, practice, and practice. And keep shooting beautiful images!

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https://petapixel.com/2015/02/10/levitation-photography-tutorial/

Let's show you guys how to go about creating some of the mystical floating images you see n photos. We use Photoshop and Lightroom in this tutorial although you can use an editing program of your choice, the masking technique is the same throughout.

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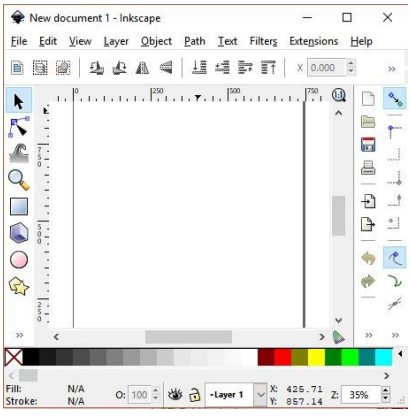

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