

Perspective-control lens. Pointing a camera up or down causes parallel lines of the subject to converge. This is due to the effects of perspective, where a subject at a distance seems smaller than a close subject. For example, if you aim your camera up at a tall building, the top of the building will seem to come to a point. Or, if you aim the camera down at the legs of your subject, the top of the legs will seem “fatter” than the ankles.

A perspective-control (PC) lens allows you to minimize or eliminate such distortions. Most are short in focal length (24mm, 28mm, 35mm), precisely because perspective is more pronounced with wide-angle lenses. Also, wide-angle lenses are widely used for photographing architecture, when eliminating distortion is a priority.

In use, you shift a PC lens off its center—up, down, and sideways—by turning a thumbscrew on the lens barrel. If you’re photographing a building, for example, you can keep the camera level and turn the screw so the lens moves up; you don’t have to physically aim the camera up, which is the action that cause distortion.

PC lenses provide some of the same controls that view cameras do, though view cameras are more flexible. One common view-camera control is available in a special PC lens, called a tilt-shift lens. It allows you to tilt the lens forward and back to increase the depth of field of certain subjects without closing down the aperture.