PRESET WARP MODES offer a good range of possibilities: there are plenty of useful presets to help you get started, and they're found in the pop-up menu on the tool's Options bar (it will read Custom by default). Often, however, they don't give us precisely the control we need for a particular job. But Custom Warp can be unwieldy, given so many available control points; the result can just be a confusion of lines and anchors.

In these circumstances, it makes sense to begin with the preset warp mode that best fits the image you're working on, and then switch into Custom Warp mode for fine tuning the effect.

Warp can be used for even the simplest task. The illustration above was for the Sunday Telegraph: the fishing pole was drawn as a straight line, then bent using the Arc preset, fine-tuned with Custom mode.

Here's the problem: we want to distort this lamp post so it looks as if the dog is pulling it over. We'll need to attach a lead as well, of course. Before Image Warp, this simple task would have involved a lot of chopping and fiddling about: now, it's a straightforward job.

On the Tool Options bar is a button that changes the direction of those presets that have directional effects. Press it, and the Rise warp will switch from vertical to horizontal. Drag the control handle, top left, to the angle you want the lamp post to have.
2 Enter Free Transform mode and press the Image Warp button on the toolbar. It would, just, be possible to distort this lamp post using solely the Custom Warp handles, but frankly it's barely worth the bother. You're more likely to get yourself in a terrible mess, such as this one.

3 Instead, we can start with the preset warp that most closely fits our needs. In this case, it's the Rise warp, so choose it from the pop-up list that currently says Custom. You'll notice that the layer disappears off the bottom of the page: we need to change the way Rise bends.

5 Now change the pop-up menu back to Custom Warp, and you'll find that the custom handles reappear around the perimeter – but with the Rise warp still applied. It's now a relatively easy matter to move the top handles and vertices to bend the top of the lamp post over.

6 The dog's leash is created by drawing it as a pen path first. Then, with the path still visible, switch to the Brush tool and choose a small, hard-edged brush; pressing Enter will stroke the path with that brush, using the current foreground color.

HOT TIP
The trick here is to try to keep the top of the lamp, with the five glass globes, as undistorted as possible. It does involve some fiddling with the anchor points and handles to achieve this: you may find it easier simply to copy the top from the original lamp post, then rotate it and stick it in place afterwards.
PHOTOSHOP’S CLONE TOOL, sometimes referred to as the Rubber Stamp, has had a facelift in CS4: the tool now shows a preview of the area it’s going to reproduce. The biggest change, however, came with Photoshop CS3, which brought the ability to store up to five clone sources per image as well as the capability to rotate and scale images as we clone them.

None of this would be any use, of course, if we couldn’t see what we were doing before beginning the clone operation. So the Clone tool now has the option of showing a ghosted overlay on top of the image, showing not just the clone area but the entire image rotated and scaled according to our settings.

Here’s our starting image: an old stone building, with a pair of windows casting their light on the ground. We’re going to duplicate the near window in perspective, to achieve a seamless blend as it slots into the existing wall.

Open the Clone Source panel, and click the Show Overlay button. This will produce a ghosted version of the image to be cloned. Just to be on the safe side, make a new layer so we don’t work directly on the base image; and be sure to set the Clone tool to Sample All Layers on the Options bar.

The new Clone tool now allows us to rotate the clone source as well. Click in the Rotate field, and press the up and down cursor keys to change the angle: the overlay will rotate as you do so. In this case, an angle of -3.0° produces exactly the right rotation.

The overlay now shows the ghosted image to be cloned in place, with the scaling and rotation as we set them. The advantage of the overlay system is clear: we can see exactly what we’re going to get before we begin to clone.
3 When we move the cursor back into the image, we can see the overlay: it follows the cursor around as we move it. Hold `Ctrl` and click the bottom right corner of the existing image to mark the clone source. Now click where you want the cloning to begin painting on the image.

4 In step 3, we clicked to mark the point where cloning should begin. Undo that with `Z` to remove the first cloning operation: the overlay will stay in place. Because the window is too large for its perspective, we need to reduce it. A scale of around 80% works well here.

5 Here's the result of reducing the scale of our window. This is still the overlay: we haven't started cloning yet. But we can see a problem here. In order to match the perspective in the scene, we need to rotate the cloned copy slightly so that it matches the distortion caused by the camera lens.

8 Time to start cloning. Choose a brush appropriate to the size of the window, and begin to paint the new one in. When you release the mouse button, the overlay will reappear; hold the Space Bar to hide it temporarily.

9 The light cast by the window, as seen in the overlay in step 7, is too far from the window itself, resulting in a poor impression of perspective. So, back in the Clone Source dialog, tweak the Offset numbers in order to bring the light closer to the wall.

10 With the offset corrected, we can now continue to clone the light onto the floor. Because we're using a soft edged brush, the blend is seamless; but it's just as well to clone onto a new layer, so we can edit out mistakes if we need to.