

Aperture Control: Depth of field

The goal of this exercise is to experiment with the aperture settings on your camera and to turn an ordinary 'record' shot into a great shot!

Many photographs, particularly landscapes, buildings, groups of people etc. are taken on a setting which gives an extended 'depth of field' i.e. the foreground, the object of interest and the background behind the object are relatively sharp and in focus. This will be particularly true for cameras used predominantly in automatic mode: the camera assumes you want to see the whole image clearly. Whilst great for some subjects, extended depth of field may not do justice to subject matter where you really want to bring the eye to a specific area e.g. a flower or a portrait or, perhaps, you are stuck with an unpleasing background and you want to try to 'lose' it. OK, you can probably 'Photoshop' it afterwards but it is far quicker and more satisfying to get it right in the camera!

Objectives:

- You will become comfortable selecting and working with a much shallower depth of field i.e. the object you are focussed on is sharp while the foreground and background may be deliberately out of focus.
- You will appreciate the ability and limitations of your particular camera and, if you have them, the versatility of different lenses.

Exercise:

- Get down to the beach.
- Build an abstract object using materials around you and line it up with a recognisable background e.g. a row of groynes, shingle or coast line.
- Move back 3 or 4 metres – you will focus on this object whilst changing the aperture settings – make sure the background can also be seen clearly.
- Rest your camera on a solid object or tripod to keep shots consistent and compose your picture.
- Select the highest 'f' number you can (giving the largest depth of field) and take a shot. Reduce the 'f' number to the next 'stop' and take another shot. Repeat until you are at the lowest 'f' number.
- Compact cameras with fixed lenses:
 - Zoom the lens in and out to the extremes and see if other 'f' numbers become available; if they do, take these shot as well.
- SLR with changeable lenses
 - Swap lenses and repeat the process
- Keep notes of all the shots you take using the form overleaf; it helps to start with an empty memory card.
- Download your images and you should be able to clearly define the difference between shallow and extended depth of field.



Find your most pleasing 'shallow' depth of field creation and mail it to mccimages@btinternet.com : we will post a Gallery related to this project

EXAMPLE: number the shots to be able to easily identify them once uploaded

Compact camera	'f' No.	Telephoto Lens	'f' No.	Wide-angle Lens	'f' No.	Other Lens	'f' No.
Shot 1	2.8	Shot 12	4.0	Shot 23	1.4	Shot 31	?
Shot 2	5.6	Shot 13	11	Shot 24	36		
Shot 3	8.0	Shot 14	22				

Complete the following table as illustrated above.....

Compact camera	'f' No.	Telephoto Lens	'f' No.	Wide-angle Lens	'f' No.	Other Lens	'f' No.