

**Week
1**

Focus Points & Image sharpness

"There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept."

- *Ansel Adams*



Various DSLR cameras have different focus mode options but they can all be set on either *all point* focus or *single point* focus.

Which one to choose? Well the problem with *all point* focus, is that your camera will always focus on the object closest to it, which may or may not be your subject.

Single point focus or *manual selection* allows you to toggle the focus points until the focus is exactly where you want it, thus giving you complete control over where your camera is going to focus.

Using your camera manual, learn to change from auto AF point selection to manual AF point selection and practise toggling the focus from one AF point to another before proceeding.

There are 2 different methods of obtaining focus:

Focus & recompose

Make sure that the centre focus point is hovering over your subject or the object you want to focus on, even if that is not exactly the way you want to frame or compose your photograph.

Hover the focus point, press halfway down on the shutter release (this locks the focus) now recompose the shot the way you want it framed. Ensure that you do not change your depth of field by moving position i.e. leaning in closer or further away from the subject after focusing. This will help to make sure that the plane of focus you selected will remain in focus.

Toggling your focus points

This is a bit more difficult but will most often give you a sharper image. Compose your shot and then manually select the focus point by toggling the points until your focus is where you want it.

Remember to keep the focus point on the eyes or face of your subject and if it's a still life, then over the centre of interest.



AF mode options

One shot AF (Canon) / AF-S (Nikon) - Used for still subjects

AI Servo AF (Canon) / AF-C (Nikon) - The lens focuses continually, this mode is useful for moving subjects and sports.

AI Focus AF (Canon) / AF-A (Nikon) - Detects whether the subject is moving or still and acts accordingly



How to get tack sharp images

Clean Lens - A clean lens helps your camera's auto focus to work. Imagine trying to see something through a dirty window!

Lens choice - Prime lenses tend to be sharper than zoom lenses. The better the lens, the better the sharpness and image quality.

Aperture - A higher aperture (smaller hole) will give you more depth of field and result in more of the image being in focus.

Shutterspeed - Another way to maintain sharp images is to observe the handheld camera and shutterspeed rule:
When handholding your camera, don't use a shutter speed that is less than your focal length. i.e. Don't shoot slower than 1/60th of a second if the focal length of your lens is 60mm or don't shoot slower than 1/200th of a second when using a 200mm lens.

The larger the mm's the heavier your lens will be and the more difficult it will be to hold it steady.

Steady camera - Hold your camera correctly (See the visual guide from *Digital Camera World* on how to hold a camera). Use a tripod if your shutterspeed is too slow to handhold the camera.

ISO - Keep a low ISO to avoid digital noise which can soften your image.

Centre AF point - the centre focus point is the most precise of all the points and is sensitive to both horizontal & vertical lines.

★ HOT TIP

When using your camera's auto focus, ensure the focus mode switch on your lens is set to AF not MF (manual focus)

★ *With many cameras the centre focus point is more sensitive than all the others and will give you the sharpest images*



IN A NUTSHELL...

- ★ *Single point focus mode gives you control over where your camera focuses*
- ★ *Toggling your focus points will give you sharper images.*
- ★ *You can change your AF mode to suit the shooting situation, a still subject or a moving subject*
- ★ *Achieve sharp images by:*
 - *Cleaning your lens*
 - *Using a good quality lens e.g. prime lens*
 - *Using higher/narrower apertures*
 - *Maintaining an acceptable shutterspeed (handhold rule).*
 - *Holding the camera steady.*
 - *Keeping a low ISO*
 - *Using the centre AF point to focus*

How to hold a camera

It's worth taking a few minutes to practise holding your camera before you start shooting – you'll get sharper shots

FINGER

The camera body is designed to be gripped with your right hand and your index finger over the shutter release. You should be able to press the button without having to reposition your grip.

HAND

Rest your lens in your left hand. You should be able to twist the barrel of the lens to zoom or focus with this hand, leaving your right hand to grip the camera body.

ELBOWS

Tuck your elbows into your body to keep your camera sturdy. The further out your elbows are, the more unstable you will be.

EYEBROW CONTACT

Lift the camera up to your eye and rest the viewfinder against your eyebrow. This makes another point of contact on the body for more stability.



PORTRAIT

If you need to switch your camera to a portrait orientation then turn it over so the shutter release sits at the top. If you do it the other way around your arms will become all twisted up!



LEGS

Place your legs a little apart so you're balanced. If you're leaning in to take a shot then move one foot forward to create a sturdier body shape.

TAKE A MAT

When kneeling to take shots outdoors, you might get a wet or dirty knee. Take a mat or a plastic bag to place under your knee for comfort and to avoid ruining your clothes.



BACK PANEL CONTROL

With your hands in the correct position, your thumb is well placed to access the controls on the back of the camera to alter the shooting settings.



BRING ONE LEG UP

By coming down into a crouching position and bringing your leg up you can turn your body into a human tripod. Place your elbow on your knee to connect your leg and arm together, creating a braced position so you don't wobble around.



REST ELBOWS

If you have a surface area in front of you, lean your elbows onto it to steady yourself. Look for level surfaces, such as a table or wall.



CONTROL YOUR BREATHING

Breathe out when you take a shot. If you hold your breath or breathe in, you'll find you move around a lot more. It's amazing how much of a difference controlling your breathing can make.



LEAN IN

Leaning against a wall creates instant support for your camera. This can be useful when shooting at slow shutter speeds without a tripod.



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