

Autofocus Modes

Face detection – The camera automatically detects the person's face. The focus and exposure can then be adjusted to fit that face no matter what portion of the picture it is in.

Multi-area focusing – The camera focuses on up to 5 focus areas per selected AF area pattern. This is effective when the subject is not in the center of the screen.

1-area-focusing (high speed) – The camera quickly focuses on the subject in the AF area on the screen. This setting is useful when your subject is moving all over the viewfinder, as at a sporting event.

1-area-focusing – The camera focuses on the subject in the AF area on the screen.

Spot-focusing – The camera focuses on a limited narrow area in the screen.

AF Tracking – Focus and exposure can be adjusted to a specified subject. Focus will keep on following the subject even if it moves.
(Dynamic tracking)

The reason for all of these autofocus modes is to make it easier for photographers to create off-center compositions and still get the focus right.

Many autofocus systems will light up the point the camera is using, which is a great visual cue about where the camera is focusing.

Don't forget your AF/AE Lock setting if you have it in your camera.

One Shot vs. Continuous Autofocus

One shot autofocus is the mode to use for non-moving subjects. You press halfway down on the shutter release button, the camera picks an autofocus spot to use, focuses and then (unless you've disabled it) beeps at you.

If you want to change where the camera is focusing, you must release the shutter button, point the camera at something else, push halfway down on the shutter again and let the camera autofocus.

This works great for landscape, portrait, macro (close-up) or still-life work -- any time your subject is still and you have enough time to get accurate focus.

Continuous autofocus is perfect for a subject in constant motion -- children, pets, sporting events. In this mode you press the shutter release button halfway down, the camera picks an autofocus point and focus is set.

The big difference between this and one-shot mode is that if you continue to hold down the shutter button halfway, the camera will *continue to adjust focus* as your subject moves around the viewfinder.

This is especially helpful if your subject is charging right at you – if you've got the camera on one-shot AF mode, you'll NEVER get anything in focus in this situation.

Key Difference – There's one more significant difference between these two digital SLR autofocus modes that's worth pointing out:

In one-shot mode the *camera will not take a photo until the focus is set.*

In continuous mode, *you can take photos even if the subject is not in focus.*

That is why it's possible to wind up with a LOT of blurry photos when you use the continuous autofocus. However, when you're dealing with action subjects it's far better to use continuous autofocus and wind up with half your photos blurry than using one-shot mode which can result in ALL your photos being blurry.

Shooting Fast-Moving Subjects

You can either shoot in:

Sport mode 

or in Continuous or Burst mode. 

You can usually access the Burst mode on the top or side of your camera. I use Burst when I'm shooting subjects like rodeos or flying ducks, for example. You may want to use it when taking pictures of children and or pets.

We have discussed various autofocus modes: auto, continuous focusing, etc. However, there are situations when **manual focus** is better than auto focus.

1. **Macro Work** – Extreme close-ups: The narrow depth of field in these shots mean that you need to be incredibly precise with focusing and being just a smidgeon out of having your camera choose to focus on the wrong part of your subject can completely ruin a shot.

To use it you'll probably want to use a tripod to eliminate any movement of the camera which can make focusing either in manual or auto mode frustrating.

Manual focusing puts the control completely in your hands when shooting in this very precise setting.

2. **Low Light**: Shooting in dimly lit environments can be difficult for some cameras when it comes to focusing.

You'll know when your camera is struggling in Auto mode when every time you go to take a shot the camera will whirl from one end of its focusing options to the other and back again before deciding on where to focus.

This can really lengthen your shooting process and make taking quick candid shots quite frustrating.

Switch to manual mode and you can quickly find your focusing point and get the shot you're after.

3. **Portraits**: When shooting portraits focus needs to be precise.

The majority of your shots of people will need to have their eyes in perfect focus and so switching to manual focus will give you complete control. To enable this to save you from having to line up the focusing points on your camera on the eyes, press halfway down and then frame your shot.

Manual focusing in portrait work helps to ensure the viewer of the image is drawn to the part of the face that you want them to notice.

4. **Shooting Through Glass/Wire Fences**: If you've ever shot through anything like a window or a mesh/wire fence, you'll know how cameras will often get confused on where to focus your shot.

Whether it's shooting out of a plane window, taking a shot of an image at a museum or photographing animals through fences at the zoo, you might find your camera confused.

Manual focusing will avoid this completely and allow you to get things just right – focusing upon the subject behind that glass or fence. If you do this in conjunction with a large aperture (which decreases depth of field) and get in close to the fence or glass, you might well eliminate it completely from being noticeable in your shot.

5. **Action Photography**: Shooting fast moving subjects (like racing cars, planes, bikes, running animals, etc.) can be a frustrating experience when shooting with autofocus.

Even the continuous focusing modes can get left behind or confusing if you're not panning with your subject smoothly.

One way to overcome this is to switch to manual focusing and pre-focus on a point that the subject will move through – and shooting at that point. You need to get your timing just right – but you'll find that it'll often give better results than relying upon autofocus modes (particularly if you shoot in continuous shooting/burst mode).

Macro Setting with Wide Angle vs. Manual Focus

Using the macro setting on my camera utilizing the wide angle on the zoom will make everything in the picture in focus. The advantage to using manual focus is that you can control the depth of field, i.e. part of the subject in focus and part out of focus.

