



# Aperture controls your depth of field

Did you know there is a control on your camera that, when fully understood and correctly used, can give you tremendous creative potential in your photography?

It's called the aperture ring, and it controls the f-stops, or the amount of light entering the camera and reaching the film.

Confusing as it may sound, a low number f-stop is really a large lens opening that allows a lot of light to enter through the lens. A high number f-stop is a small opening that lets only a little light in through the lens.

You may be asking yourselves, "So what? As long as I'm using any proper combination of aperture and shutter speed to deliver the correct amount of light to the film for proper exposure, what difference does it make which f-stop is used?"

WELL, IT MAKES a big difference because the aperture controls what is called depth of field. Depth of field can be defined as the distance between the nearest point and the furthest point of a picture that can be rendered acceptably sharp and in focus.



In this outdoor portrait of his son, Nagler used an extremely shallow depth of field. Note how the sleeves are in focus while the collar is not.

A small aperture (for example f-16) will deliver far greater depth of field than a large aperture (f-2). Remember, as you change apertures, a corresponding change in shutter speed is required to obtain correct exposure. A small aperture will require a slow shutter speed; a large aperture a very fast shutter speed.

On automatic exposure cameras, changes in aperture/shutter speed combinations are done for you. With manual "match-needle" cameras, it's up to you.

Having control over depth of field is very important in your photography. You can greatly improve a scenic picture of a distant mountain and lake by framing the shot with the branches of that beautiful tree in the foreground.

In the example of the City-County Building, you would need a small aperture to give you a large depth of field in order to get everything in focus.

Reversing our reasoning, in the outdoor portrait, where the center of interest is the subject's face, a large lens opening is needed. Remember, a large aperture produces shallow depth of field so that what might have been a distracting background behind the subject will become a pleasing blur of color.

HOW CAN YOU determine what the depth of field will be? There are two basic ways.

First, most cameras have a depth of field "preview control" which enables you to actually see through the viewfinder what will be rendered sharp in the picture before you release the shutter. Consult your instruction manual for its location and use on your camera.

Second, using the depth of field scale on the lens barrel will help you to determine the zone of sharpness you want. The scale will appear as pairs of f-stop numbers with "bracketing" marks. When the lens is in focus, a quick check of these numbers tells you what will be in focus and what will not.

In addition to f-stop changes, two other things affect depth of field. The first is subject to camera distance. The further you place your camera from the subject, the greater the depth of field.

The second is changing the focal length of the lens. The shorter the focal length (wide angle lenses), the greater will be the depth of field.

So improve your depth of understanding of photography by developing your knowledge of depth of field.

The writer is an area businessman and president of the Greater Detroit Camera Club Council. Send questions to Monte Nagler, 6916 Alderley Way, West Bloomfield 48033.



Everything from the statue in the foreground to the court tower of the City-County Building is in sharp focus. A small lens opening and slow shutter speed gave Monte Nagler great depth of field.

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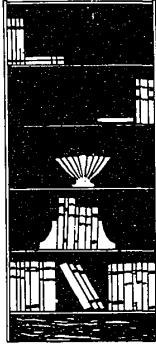
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