

Total time:
3-8 hours



Difficulty Level:
Easy to challenging

Skill Points:

- Identifying the depth of field window – shallow and deep
- Using DOF to indicate the primary subject – using shallow DOF
- Recognizing an improper use of DOF

USING DEPTH OF FIELD



PHOTZY.COM

Depth of Field (DOF) is the 'window' of apparent sharpness in a photograph. It is affected by three photographic elements: aperture (f/stop), lens focal length, and camera to subject distance. Here, we will focus on the aesthetic use of depth of field versus the technical considerations.

KEY LESSON: DOF can guide the viewer into and through the image. It can also indicate the stopping point within the composition. A narrow window of focus is properly referred to as "Shallow DOF", and a large window of focus is properly referred to as "Deep DOF".



Window of focus is TOO narrow:

- 1- Here, the DOF window did NOT cover both women. This could be a positive, or a negative. If the intention was a portrait- this DOF placement would be a mistake.
- 2- This beach image could be improved with a deeper DOF: Close down the aperture, widen the focal length of the lens, or move the camera further away from the subject to increase DOF.



The importance of settings and equipment:

- 1- Minimal DOF, (a shallow window), was achieved by using a telephoto lens. The longer the focal length of the lens- the shallower the DOF window will be from a given camera to subject distance.
- 2- DOF is a huge consideration in macro photography, because the camera to subject distance is minimal. Macro photography is shot at smaller apertures: usually f/16 – f/32, depending on the lens.



Focusing on the important details:

DOF increases as the lens focal length becomes shorter, the camera-to-subject distance increases, or the aperture becomes smaller. Shallow DOF can be used to isolate a subject from a busy background or to focus on a specific message. A viewer's eyes will migrate toward the sharpest part of an image: The puppy nose is the main subject and there is a minimal DOF window. The head of the dog is a frame to the subject.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Shoot a shallow DOF photograph where the technique improves the image by separating the subject from a distracting background.
- 2- Choose a subject, and change the DOF window: 1- Change the aperture, (adjust the exposure via the ISO and/or shutter speed), 2- Change the lens focal length, 3- Finally change the camera to subject distance.
- 3- Photograph a location where a deep DOF improves the photograph.
- 4- Create a close-up or macro photograph where you carefully place the DOF window.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you use DOF to separate a subject from its background?
- Were you able to create a deep DOF picture with a successful composition?
- Did you fully understand how to use DOF to point a viewer toward your subject?