
EXPERT TIPS

BY THE BOOK

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FOCUS, PLEASE

It's one of the quickest photo killers and easiest things to mess up. So how to get the focus right? Here are three solutions.

- Switch among focusing areas in the viewfinder. In most DSLRs, you'll find several, usually delineated by a box. When your subject is off-center, a dial or toggle lets you select the primary area for focus.
- Use zone focusing. This is for when you can anticipate your subject's trajectory (e.g., in sports such as racing). Focus manually on a point ahead of your subject, then snap the shutter when it arrives.
- Differentiate between single and constant autofocus. Single AF focuses just once when you press the shutter button halfway and is best when you and your subject are still. Constant or continuous mode, also called focus tracking, adjusts to keep your subject sharp when in motion, as long as you're holding the shutter button down halfway.

ADAPTED FROM LANGFORD'S *STARTING PHOTOGRAPHY, SIXTH EDITION: THE GUIDE TO CREATING GREAT IMAGES* BY MICHAEL LANGFORD & PHILIP ANDREWS (FOCAL PRESS, 2009; \$27)

SMALL STUFF

Knowing the technical aspects of macro photography is important, but getting the composition right is what really pulls the image together. Here are a few tips for extreme close-up shots.

- Frame your subject with an out-of-focus foreground and background. A sharply rendered subject surrounded by softer tones and shapes gives it visual weight.
- Fill the frame completely. Sometimes even small gaps or holes disrupt the texture of an image and inadvertently distract the viewer's eye.
- Shoot horizontally, then vertically. Sometimes it's difficult to tell what will make the best composition when you're shooting. Cropping after the fact means you'll lose pixels and image quality, so take pictures in both orientations and decide later which works better.

ADAPTED FROM *UNDERSTANDING CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHY: CREATIVE ENCOUNTERS WITH OR WITHOUT A MACRO LENS* BY BRYAN PETERSON (AMPHOTO BOOKS, 2009; \$26)
