

Camera Focus Modes

In Automatic or Program mode, focus is locked when the shutter-release button is pressed half-way down. The LCD or electronic viewfinder indicates when -- and sometimes what the focus is locked on to. Focus is confirmed by a visual indicator, a led or a change in the color of the focus icon...

Auto focus

Single area focus -- Camera focuses on a subject in the central area of the screen. Focus adjusts according to the distance to the subject.

Continuous autofocus -- Focuses continuously on a subject; useful when shooting slow moving subjects. If you are having focusing problems, switch to single area or spot focus. Continuous auto focus uses up battery power.

Spot focus -- Camera focuses on a spot in the center area of the image.

Multi-area focus -- automatic focus using one or more focus points. The focus positions change according to each subject, focusing on a number of objects within a scene.

Face-priority AF -- In 2005 Nikon introduced face-priority auto focus, which is now in standard in most consumer cameras. A face detection program scans for facial details in a scene and then controls the auto focus operation based on the location of the detected face.

Even if the subject moves, or as the photographer recomposes the picture, face-priority AF keeps focus on a subject's face.

Prefocus

Pre-focusing can be effectively used when there is a pre-determined, similar distance between the camera and subject. Focus is fixed until you press the focus button again or switch to a different focus mode. Digital cameras have different methods of pre-focusing, so check the manual. Some use a light beam and some use a contrast method. The contrast method has difficulties in a low light situation.

Manual focus

Manual focus area -- Focus can be shifted to a portion of a scene not centered in the frame. Some cameras allow a specific area by toggling the rocker cursor button.

Focus ring -- Focus manually, from a few feet to infinity, by turning a focus ring near the lens or on the lens.

Focus button -- Some cameras use the zoom control for manual focus or a dedicated wheel button.