

BY CHRISTINA GREVE

# DAY 5 | SHARP PHOTOS



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# HOW TO GET TACK SHARP PHOTOS

There's nothing worse than capturing a great photo only to find that the subject/object are out of focus! It's simply frustrating to delete what could have been an outstanding photo... if only the important element in the photo was sharp and sparkling. Perhaps you know the feeling?

By knowing how to get that tack sharp focus in your images, you can take your photography to the next level. You can even get more creative by playing with the focus, so parts of your image is super sharp and other areas are softer looking and out of focus. This is such a fun part of photography. Once you know the strategies for sharp photos you will never have to worry about this again. So let's look at what you can do to improve focus with a few simple steps.







## USE A TRIPOD

Any slight movement in the camera can throw out your sharpness (focus). Often times, you will not notice it until you are uploading the pictures to your computer, and then it is too late! Using a tripod is a great help, especially to get those tack sharp eyes in portraits. Or when shooting flowers details and food close up. When you get more experienced with how to control the camera settings in manual, you can begin to shoot hand-held, even in low light. But as a beginner the tripod is your best friend!

To use a tripod, set it up so it's pointing the camera towards your scene. Use the camera's LIVE VIEW function to see what happens when you compose your image. Take your time, don't rush this process of setting things up because patience is what will give you a great image in the end. When your scene is ready set your focus point to hit the main object in your scene. I used a Manfrotto tripod, but there's many cheaper models on the market that are evenly good. Just make sure it can carry your camera and doesn't tip over when you use it.





## USE A REMOTE

Using a remote for your camera remove all chances of shake as you don't have to touch the camera. When you use the remote together with a tripod it will help you get the sharpest photos possible. Buy a wireless remote that fits your camera brand. They are inexpensive and worth the investment. If you don't have a remote you can also use the in-camera self-timer.



## USE A PRIME LENS

Prime lenses (not zoom) are known for creating sharp photos because they focus faster than zoom lenses. For beginners, I recommend the 50 mm f 1/4. It's a good all-around lens. The price is fair and the quality is excellent + the lens is fast and works well in low light situations. With a prime lens you can create the most amazing out of focus effects by shooting on a low f-stop in aperture mode.

The lens is lightweight and therefore great for field-trips and traveling. It's the perfect lens for getting creative with your photography, because it helps you get a better focus, better light and a playful softness. If you are on a budget you can buy the cheaper version, which is the 50 mm f 1/8. It's not as good, but it will still do the job.





## USE A FASTER SHUTTER SPEED

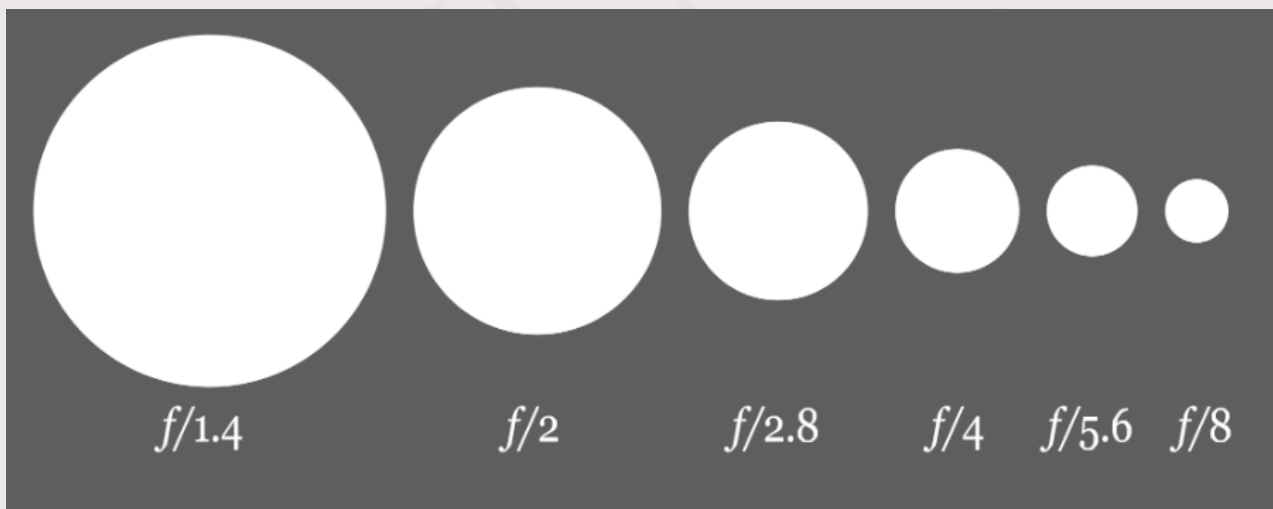
One of the three most important settings in photography is Shutter Speed, the other two being Aperture (F-stop) and ISO. Shutter speed is responsible for two particular things: changing the brightness of your photo, and making sure your object is sharp - even when moving. If you use a fast shutter speed, you can freeze moving objects, like kids, pets or even tiny water droplets which will hang in the air completely sharp.

A good rule of thumb is to always make sure that your shutter speed is set higher than the number of your focal lens. For example, if you shoot with a 50 mm lens, set your shutter speed at 1/60 or above. If you shoot with 85 mm lens, set your shutter speed at 1/100 or above and so on. When you raise your shutter speed the camera will be able to take in less light and therefore your images will get darker. You can compensate for this by lowering your F-stop and raise ISO.









## CONTROL THE F-STOP

If you increase the number of your f-stop, more things will be in focus. Which gives you a better chance to get sharp photos. Then again I do love to shoot with a low f-stop. When I shoot portraits, flowers and food, I mostly set my aperture at f/2.8 - sometimes at f/2.0 or f/1.8.

I rarely shoot at a higher aperture because I love to leave some part of my images a little out of focus. But that is just my preferred shooting style. If you do have more than one person in the frame or if you photograph children, you might have to take your f-stop much higher f/5.0 or above to get everyone in focus.

So remember, when you want a small area to be in focus, go for low f-stop (f/3.5 or lower) and increase the f-stop when you want larger area to be in focus (f/4.0 or above) .



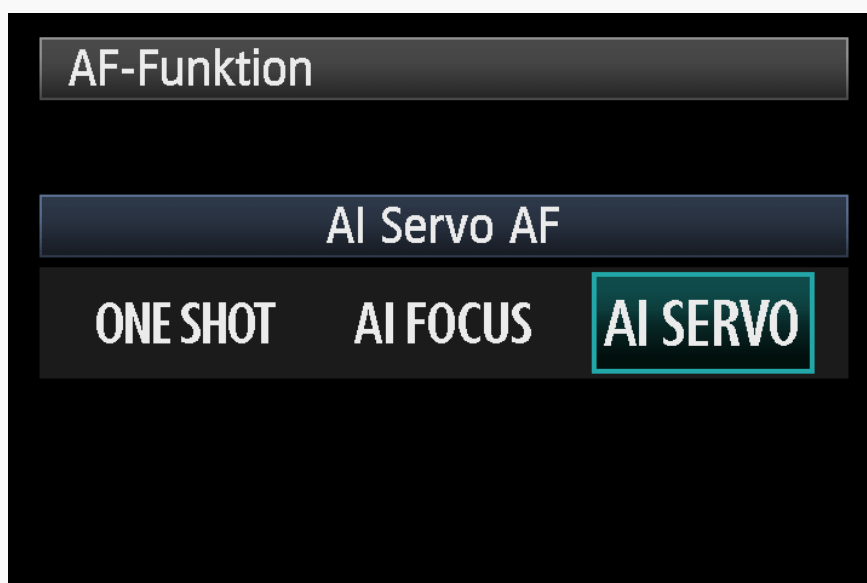
## CHOOSE AI SERVO

You also have the ability to choose between the camera settings called AI servo, One-shot and AI-focus. I have my settings on AI servo (most of the time). Here's a brief explanation to each one of them:

**One Shot** - Use this option for things that do not move. To be honest, I never use this setting, even when I'm shooting still life.

**AI Focus** - An option to shoot for things that are not moving but MIGHT move when you try to take their pictures. A good example is young children or pets. The camera senses movement of the subject and then acts like it's in servo mode. I also never use this setting as I don't think it works very well.

**AI Servo** - An option to shoot things that are constantly moving. AI Servo is for continuous tracking of subjects that are moving closer to or farther away from you. I always use this setting. My personal opinion is that it gives the best sharpness to my images.







## WHEN YOU SHOOT HAND HELD

Okay, so what do you do when you shoot without a tripod? Because let's be real, you will often be in a situation where you just want to capture a few photos without doing a complicated set up, right.

It's important to hold your camera firmly and to use both hands. If possible pull your elbows in to your body and exhale before pressing the shutter. You can also create your own "tripod" by resting your elbow on your knee while in a seated position. Many cameras offer image stabilisation. This setting is located on the side of the lens.

When it comes to camera setting, I personally I like to start every shoot with the following settings for FOOD and STILL LIFE: shutter speed set on 1/100 (or above) because if you go lower you risk camera shake. Then I set my f-stop between f/2.8 and f/4 and take a test shot. If my image is too dark I will raise ISO until I get a good result. If my image is too bright I will raise my shutter speed and keep ISO low.









Christina Greve is a Lifestyle Photographer, Stylist, Empowerment Coach and Holistic therapist. She provides tools, education and inspiration designed to help multi-passionate women, artists and creative souls find direction, push through self-doubt + make a living doing what they LOVE.

Her work has been featured in numerous magazines, blogs and books worldwide. After a decade of working with psychology, Christina's passion for photography evolved into a full-time photography and coaching business.

Today she runs a thriving + fast-growing international empire specializing in professional online training, motivating and engaging female photographers, designers, bloggers, makers and creatives. She has coached thousands of fabulous women from more than 40+ countries.

With her Podcast "The Empowered Creative," her popular Instagram posts, and quickly sold-out workshops, Christina has become the go-to person for many creatives seeking like-minded sisterhood, real support and heartfelt encouragement.

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