

Topic 94

5C's of Cinematography- Close ups

Close-up

a photograph or part of a film in which the camera seems to have been very close to the picture it took

What is close up photography?

Close up photography, is the act of photographing objects such as flowers or insects in close range so the subject you are photographing fills the frame. In other words, it's the act of photographing subjects close up. This is easily achievable with any lens, even a 300mm telephoto lens.

Close-up photos pull you directly into a subject so you can examine its details from a unique perspective. A close-up tends to focus on a specific thing—an insect, a plant, a flower, or a face, for example. Or it can highlight something we don't usually pay much attention to, but which turns out to be captivating, dramatic, or revealing when intimately observed.

Close-up photos can tell a powerful story in a single shot: Taking a photo of a person's weathered hands, for example, might be a way to convey the fact that they have worked hard all their life.

Close-up vs. macro

Often we hear the word *macro* used in reference to—or even interchangeably with—close-up photography. But there is a key difference. A close-up is an image shot at close range, where the subject is isolated from its environment. Any camera and lens can shoot a close-up. A macro

photograph, however, is an extreme close-up that portrays the subject as life-size or greater-than-life-size.

Macro photos are characterized by both closeness and magnification. If you wanted to photograph the details of an insect's eyes, for example, you would take a macro photograph.

A macro photo is generally expressed as a ratio—a 1:1 ratio is when the image is life-size. To take a high-quality macro shot, you must use a special macro lens whose performance is specifically geared to close-focus shooting. A normal lens can't focus when it's very close to the subject and thus can't take an image at a ratio greater than 1:1. A macro lens, however, can focus when positioned very close to the subject, allowing it to achieve greater-than-life-size magnification, a shallower depth of field, and thus clearer focus on tiny details.

Equipment

If you're aiming for high-quality macro shots, then consider investing in a dedicated macro lens. Almost all manufacturers of DSLR cameras offer a variety of lenses, including macros ranging from short (30mm to 60mm) to medium (60mm to 105mm) to tele macro (105mm to 200mm).

However, for regular close-ups, zoom lenses like a 55mm to 200mm or a 70mm to 300mm lens will work well. Even a fixed 50mm lens with an f/1.8 aperture can produce some nice close-ups.

Macro mode

Certain point-and-shoot cameras or DSLRs let you switch into macro mode simply by turning the dial to a macro setting (usually a tulip symbol). This allows you to focus at a very short distance from the subject. The quality of this macro setting, however, is very different from the

quality you get when you use a dedicated macro lens. A camera's macro setting will not shoot a subject so that it appears greater than life-size.

Focus and composition

For a great close-up, isolate your subject from its background by using a shallow depth of field (set the aperture to a low number) and/or picking a nondistracting background, if possible. Focus carefully and pick a specific focus point so your subject comes out looking sharp against a softer background. If you use a camera or lens with autofocus, make sure the lens is focusing on the object you want. Without a macro lens, you may have trouble focusing precisely, but you can remedy this by moving the camera a bit farther away from the subject. If you are using a zoom lens, then move back and zoom into your subject.

Lighting and image stability

A common problem with close-ups is that if your light source is behind the camera, it will cast a shadow over the subject. Fix this problem by using a flash or other off-camera lighting. An off-camera flash will help avoid flattening the image and creating a shadow cast by the illumination. In the image on the left, a shadow is cast over the subject. In the image on the right, I took the strobe off the camera to eliminate the shadow from the camera. However, there is still an on-camera flash causing the slight shadow in the background.

Keeping images sharp

Another common problem with close-up photography is image blur. The most common cause of image blur is the lens's inability to focus at such a close proximity to the subject. To prevent that, first switch your camera to the macro setting (if it has one) and try again. If that fails, move the camera a little further away from the subject, or if you're using a zoom lens, back up and zoom

into the subject. Image blur can also be caused by slow shutter speed, low light, or a moving subject. To prevent this kind of blurring, set your camera up on a tripod or raise your shutter speed.