

TIPS AND TRICKS NO 8.

Depth of Field

In photography, depth of field is an important concept. The depth of field is the area of a photo that is in focus. Areas outside of the depth of field are blurry, with the blurriness increasing the further away they are from the focal plane. The sharpest area of the photo is the location your camera focused on. This area, parallel to your camera lens, is called the focal plane. The depth of field extends in front of this point, towards the camera, and behind this point.

There are three factors that affect depth of field.

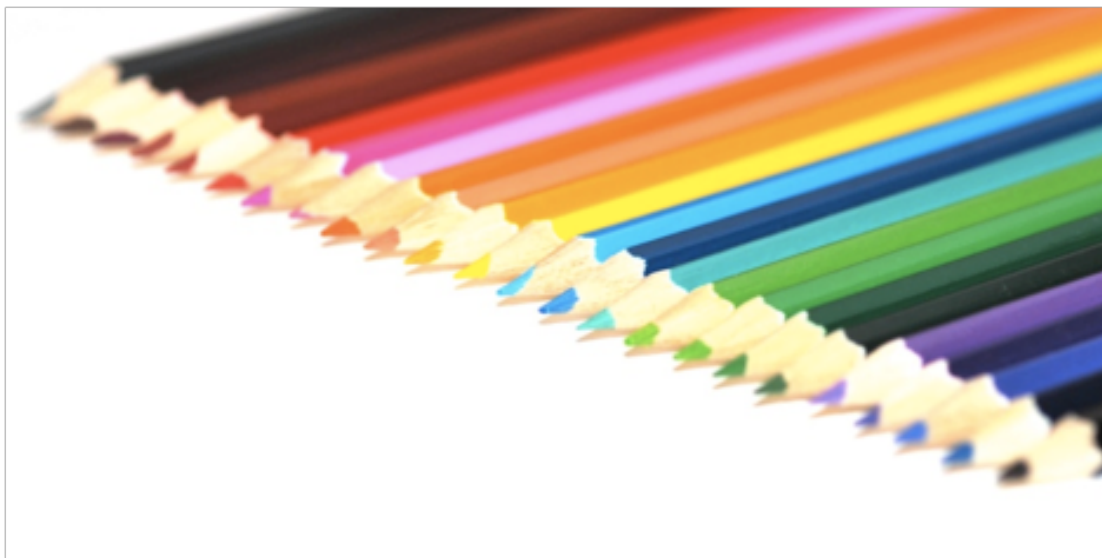
Aperture – the smaller the aperture, the greater the depth of field.

Focal Length – the shorter the focal length of the lens, the greater the depth of field.

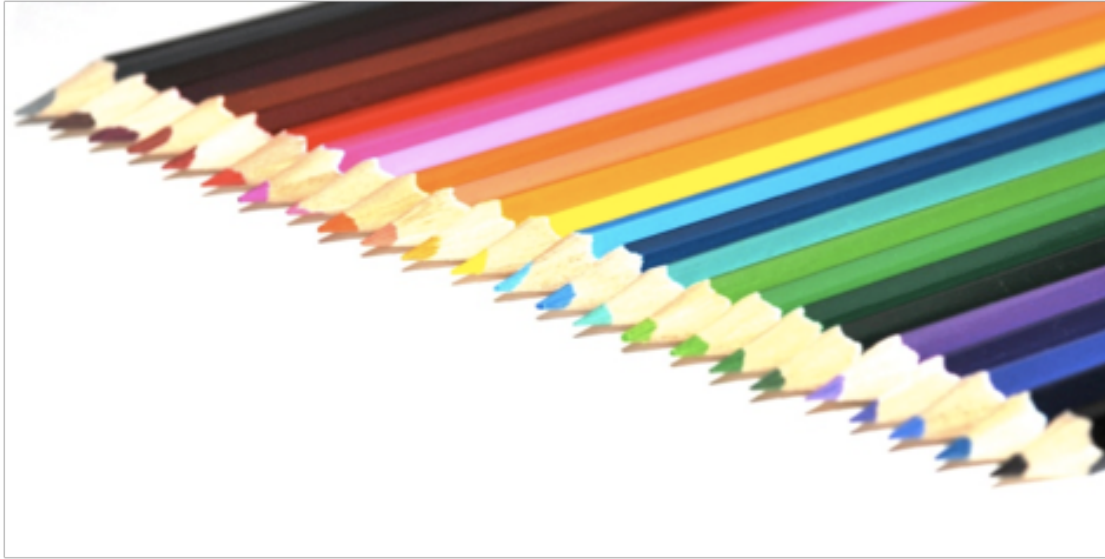
Distance – the further away the subject, the greater the depth of field.

To demonstrate the effect of aperture on depth of field, consider the photos below. Each one is shot with the same lens from the same distance focusing on the light blue pencil in the middle.

f 4



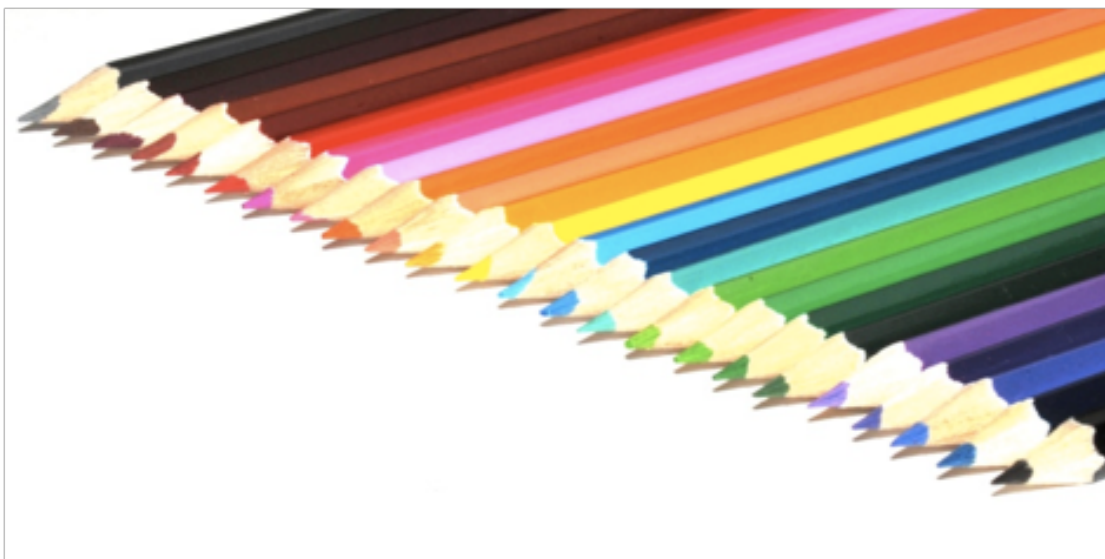
f 8



f 16



f 32



At an aperture of f 4 the light blue pencil and 2 either side are in focus. At f 32, all pencils are in focus.

Compact cameras and mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras have more depth of field at the same aperture as a digital SLR, due to their smaller sensors.

Being able to control depth of field is important for composition of your photographs. You can use it to blur a distracting background to isolate your subject or you can use it to have the whole of your image in focus.

Ask Paul a question about Underwater Photography Tips and Tricks »