



Aperture Photography Group  
Camera Skills  
Focusing

[www.aperturephotographygroup.co.uk](http://www.aperturephotographygroup.co.uk)



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# Camera Skills

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Tonight:

- ❖ Focusing
- ❖ Recap the key points from the Nick Rains video
- ❖ Q&A

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# Focusing

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- ❖ Focusing is an important technique to understand in photography, especially when you're starting out.
- ❖ If you don't focus properly, you will end up with blurry photos, even when all your other camera settings are correct.
- ❖ Focusing can be easy or difficult, depending on your subject.



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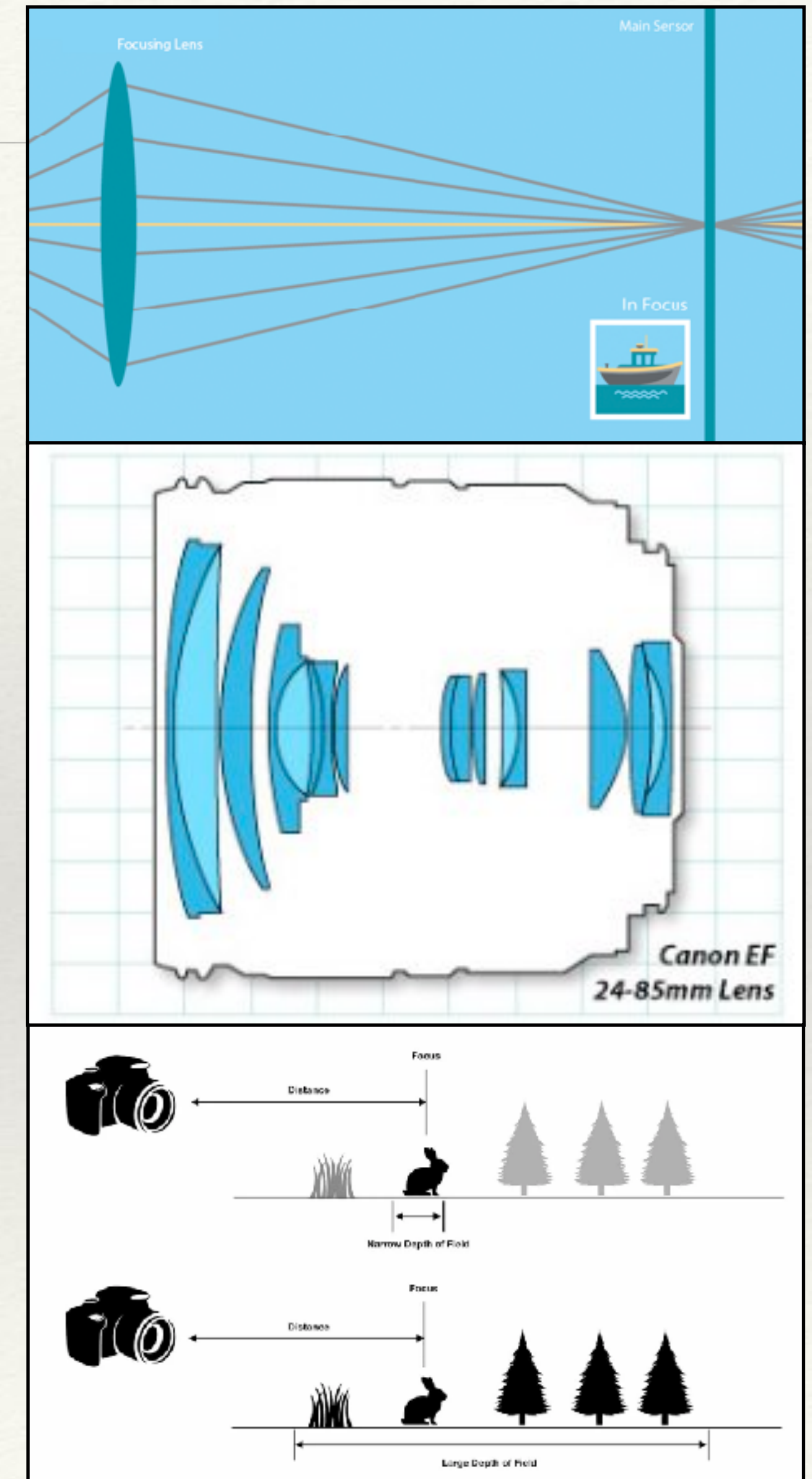
# Goal of Focusing

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- ❖ To place the sharpest point in the picture where we choose it to be.

# Focusing - What is it?

- ❖ Focus in photography is the process of adjusting the position of the lens to find maximum detail and sharpness in an image.
- ❖ Focusing typically takes place within your lens.
- ❖ In every photo you take, there will be a **plane of focus** - the region in space with the potential to be as sharp as possible in a photo.





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# Factors affecting Focusing

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- ❖ Depth of field
- ❖ Position of subject
- ❖ Subject contrast
- ❖ Subject movement

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# Where to Focus

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- ❖ Most of the time, you should simply focus on your main subject.
- ❖ Typically, if you're photographing a person, focus on one of their eyes.
- ❖ Sometimes, you'll have a bit of artistic freedom when you focus, e.g. you're photographing a flower.
- ❖ The sharpest objects in your photo stand out - use this to your advantage.
- ❖ There are no unbreakable rules for where you should focus - it's a creative, artistic decision.



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# Types of Focusing

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- ❖ Manual Focusing
- ❖ Auto Focusing
- ❖ Semi-manual Focusing
- ❖ Most photographers use autofocus, but it's a good idea to be familiar with all of these methods.





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# Manual Focusing

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- ❖ Set your camera to manual focus and use the focus ring to set the focus on your subject.



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# Why use Manual Focusing

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- ❖ If you have the time and want to take control.
- ❖ If your camera is having trouble focusing - e.g. in the dark, or due to an obstruction.
- ❖ To more accurately control what is in focus (depth of field).
- ❖ To enable you to focus for a series of photos.
- ❖ When shooting macro - get your focus approximately right, then gently move the camera backwards and forwards until the subject is focussed.



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# Manual Focusing - Pros and Cons

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## ❖ Pros

- ❖ Very accurate
- ❖ Cannot be fooled
- ❖ The camera will not swap focus to something else in the frame

## ❖ Cons

- ❖ Learning curve involved
- ❖ Can be slower
- ❖ AF lenses not as easy to control - no stop at infinity as the focus ring does not have a hard limit at each end of the focus scale



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# Auto Focusing

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- ❖ Where the camera focuses on the subject for you.
- ❖ You need to tell the camera where to focus - it doesn't know what you want the subject to be!

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# Auto Focusing - Types

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- ❖ **Single Auto-focus**
  - ❖ Also known as One-Shot (Canon) and AF-S (Nikon).
  - ❖ Once your camera acquires focus, it doesn't readjust until you let go of the focusing button and try again.
  - ❖ Ideal when your subject and camera are completely still, and there is no need to keep adjusting from moment to moment for proper focus.



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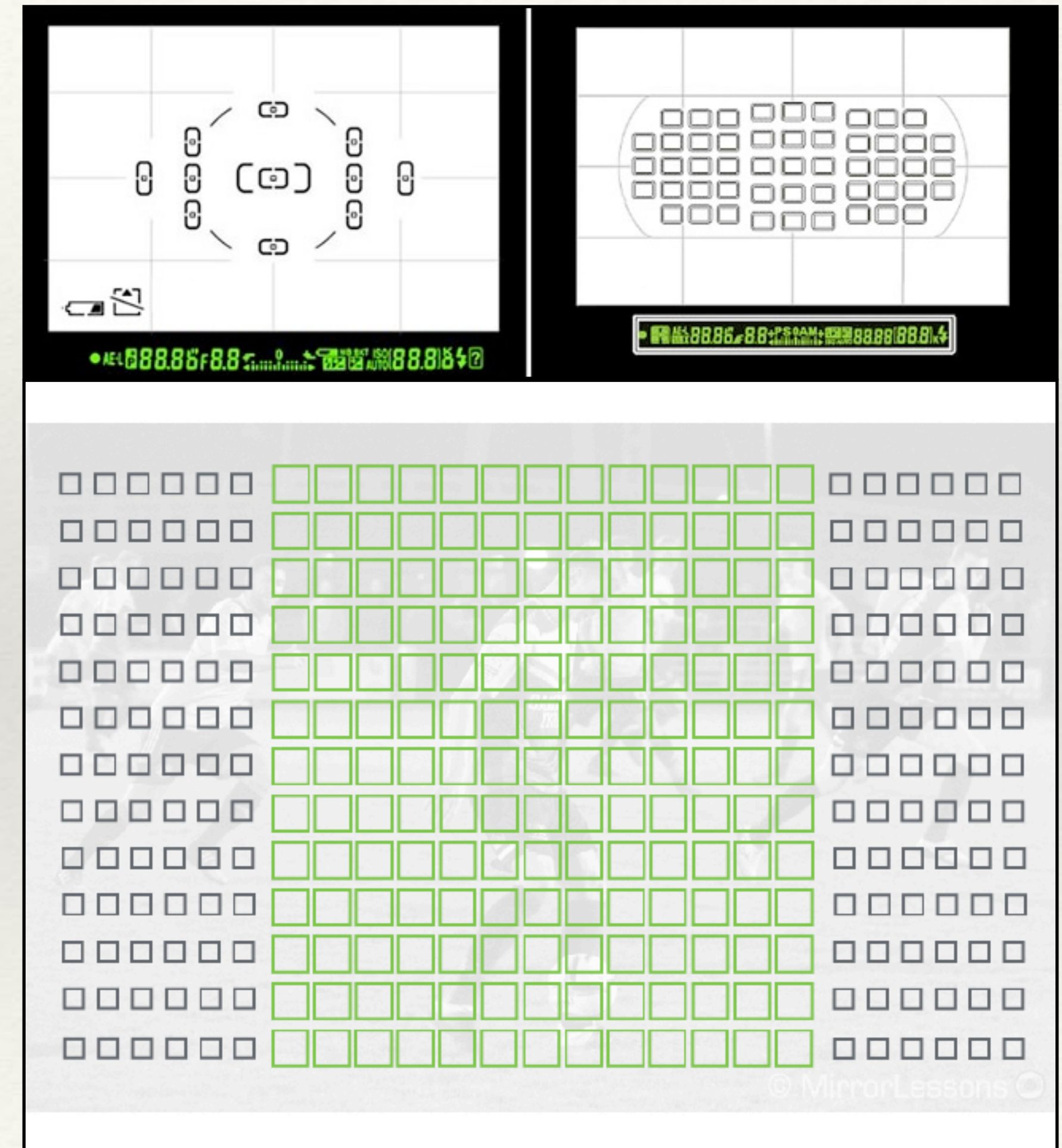
# Auto Focusing - Types

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- ❖ **Continuous Auto-focus**
  - ❖ Also known as AI Servo (Canon) and AF-C (Nikon).
  - ❖ Your camera continuously adjusts focus whenever you hold down the focusing button.
  - ❖ Good for moving subjects and enables subject tracking.

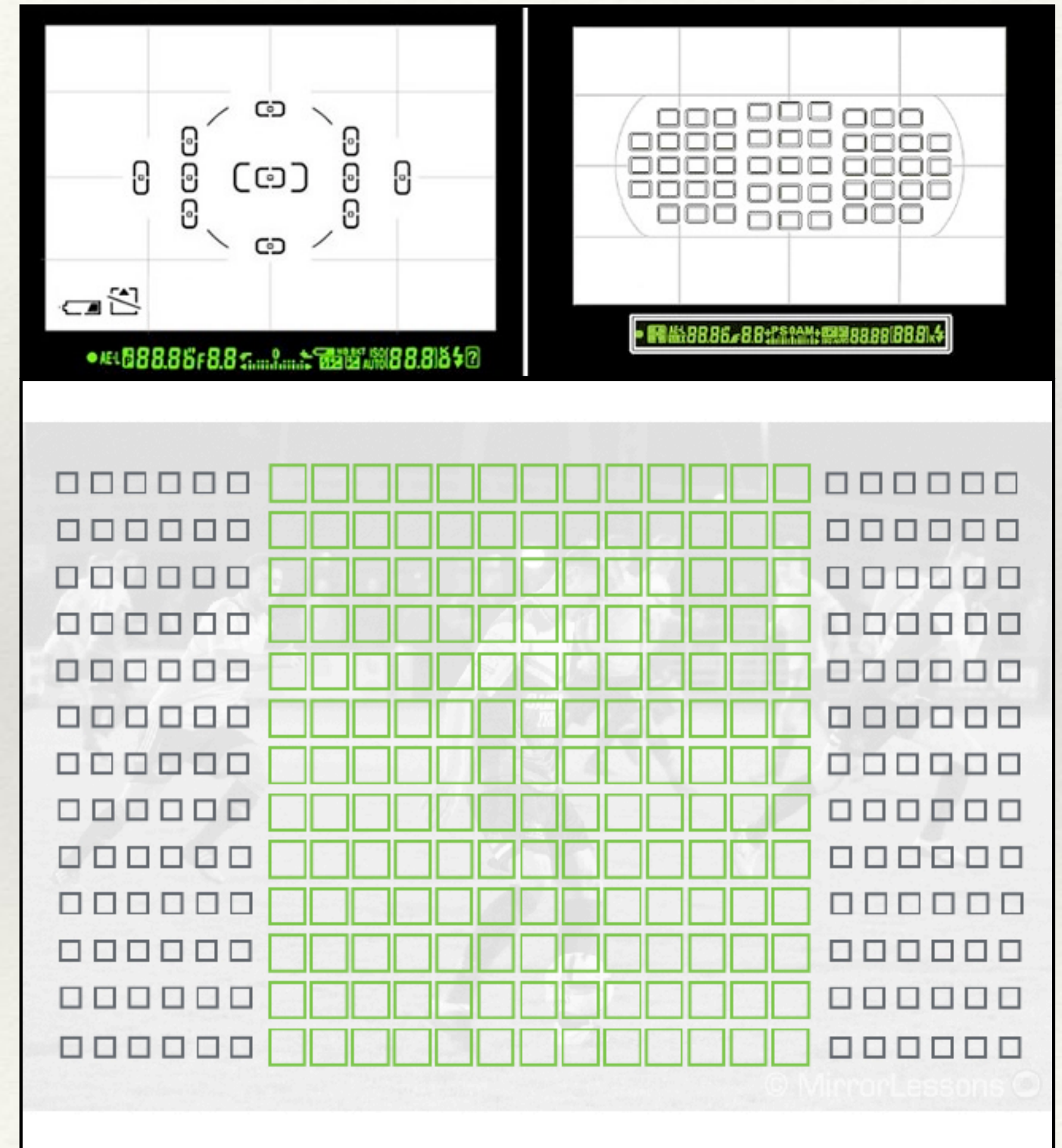
# Auto Focusing - Autofocus Area Modes

- ❖ Usually:
  - ❖ A greater number of focusing points is better.
  - ❖ A larger spread (overall coverage area) is better.
- ❖ It's easier to track a moving subject when your camera has many focusing points covering a large portion of the image.



# Auto Focusing - Autofocus Area Modes

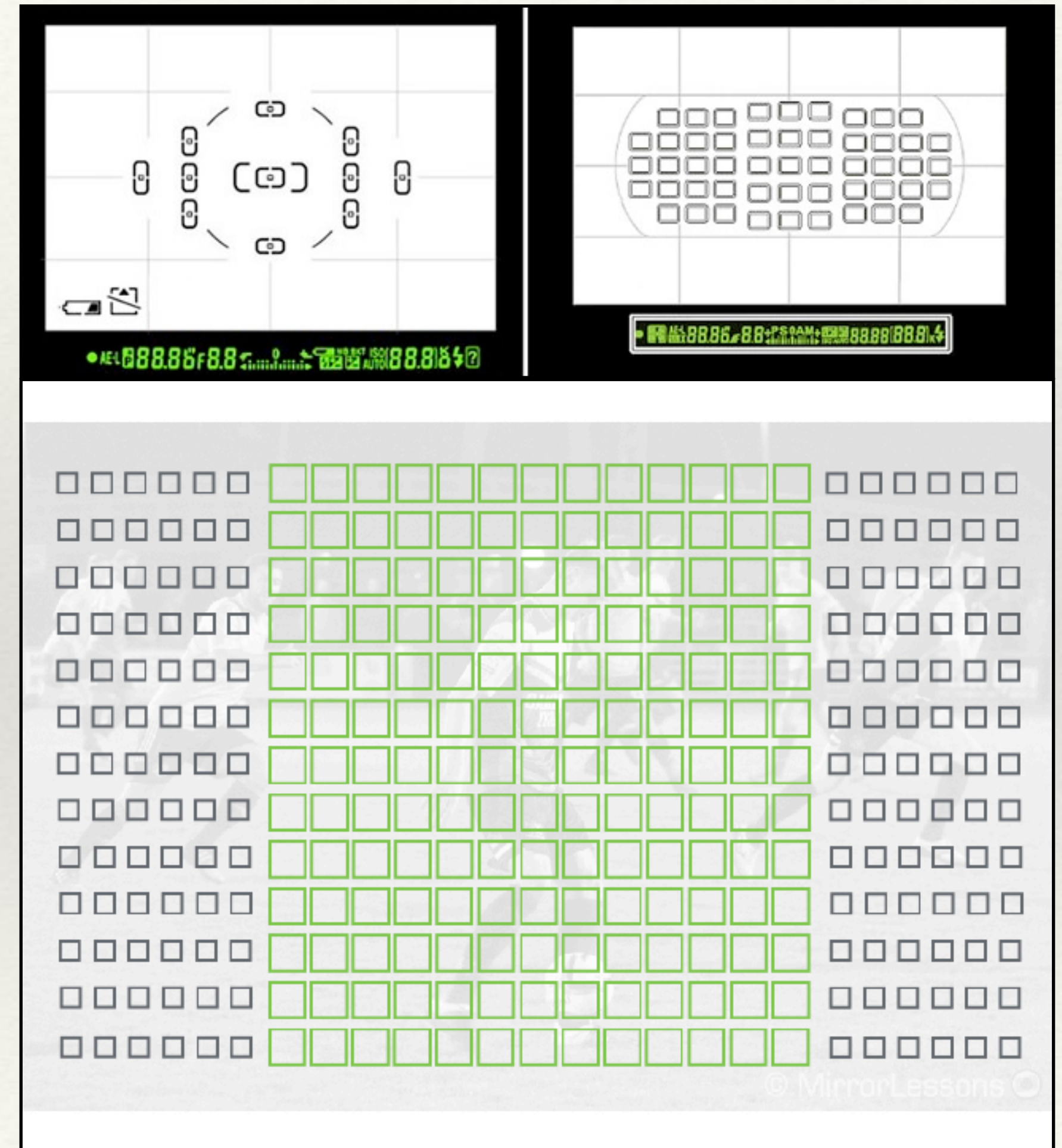
- ❖ **Single-Point autofocus**
  - ❖ The camera uses a single focusing point to autofocus.
  - ❖ This is good when your camera and subject aren't moving, and you don't need any tracking capabilities.
  - ❖ It *can* work with continuous autofocus, but it doesn't track fast-moving objects across multiple points.





# Auto Focusing - Autofocus Area Modes

- ❖ **Multi-point autofocus:**
  - ❖ You select a group of focusing points for the camera to use.
  - ❖ It can track your subject if it moves into some of the surrounding points (you usually can specify how many points the camera pays attention to).
  - ❖ This area mode, combined with Continuous Autofocus is good for wildlife / sports photography.





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# Auto Focusing Pros and Cons

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- ❖ Pros

- ❖ Quick and easy
- ❖ Can track subject

- ❖ Cons

- ❖ Can be fooled (eg photographing people with glasses)
- ❖ Loss of focus takes time to regain focus
- ❖ Off centre focussing is slower



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# Semi-manual Focusing - How to....

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- ❖ Set the camera to manual focus,
- ❖ Use the **AF-ON** button on the back of your camera to auto-focus,
- ❖ Lift off the **AF-ON** button,
- ❖ Recompose your picture,
- ❖ The manual focus will mean the focussing will not change when you press the shutter.

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# Back-button Focusing

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- ❖ The shutter release button by default is used for two different purposes – one to focus and one to take a picture.
- ❖ Back-button focus is a technique that takes the autofocus function away from the shutter release button, and re-assigns it to another button on the back of the camera.
- ❖ Most advanced digital cameras on the market today have a dedicated **AF-ON** button that is specifically designed for back-button focusing.



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# Back-button Focusing - When does it help?

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- ❖ **If you want to lock focus across several photos.**
  - ❖ Press the AF-On button to focus, and then don't press it again until you've captured your desired set of photos.
  - ❖ This is quicker than switching your lens to manual focus every time you want to lock things down for a series of images.



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# Back-button Focusing - When does it help?

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- ❖ **If you want to focus and recompose.**
  - ❖ If you want a composition where your subject is at the extreme edge of the photo, it's unlikely that your autofocus points will reach far enough.
  - ❖ So, just focus using one of your existing points, then reposition the composition how you want. This is easier with the AF-On button – which you can let go of after you've focused.

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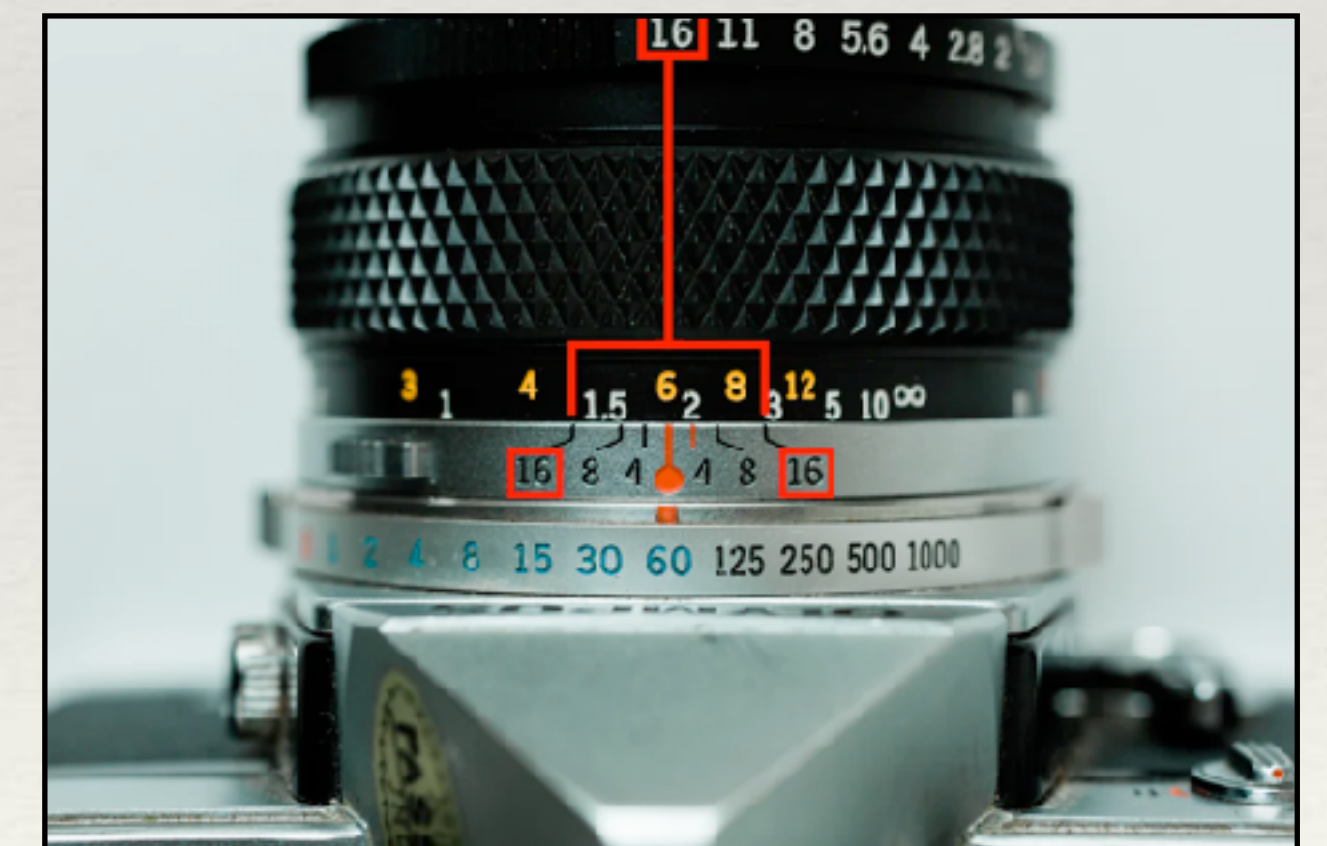
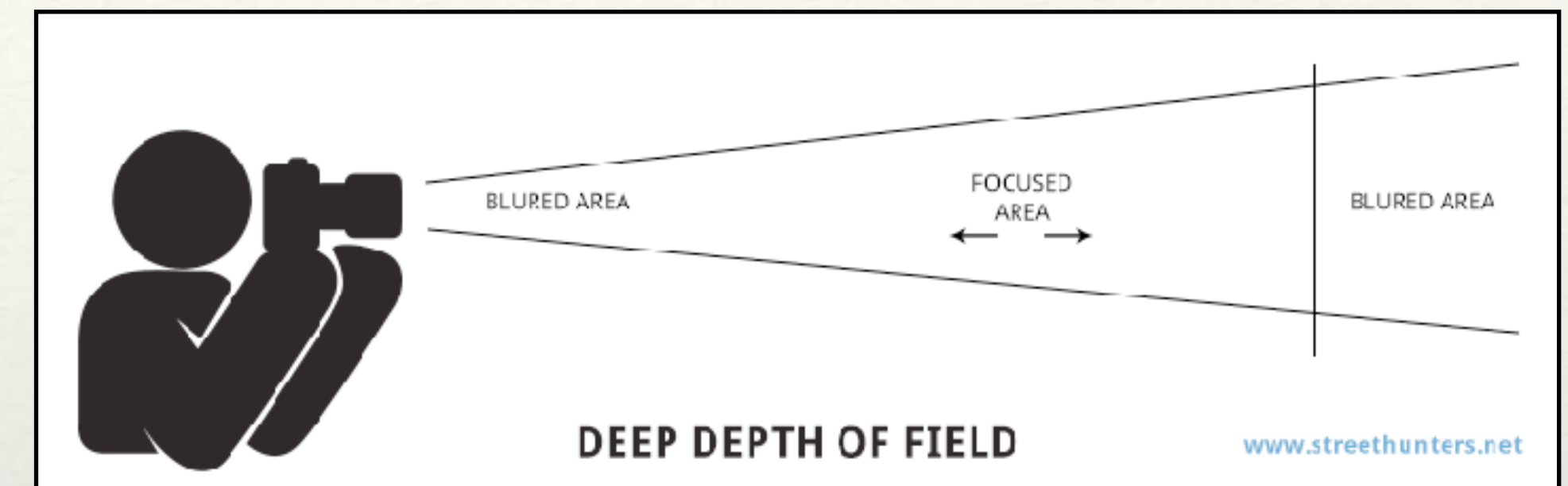
# Back-button Focusing - When does it help?

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- ❖ **If you need to wait a bit before capturing the photo.**
  - ❖ If you need to focus, and then wait some amount of time before capturing the photo, e.g. you're photographing a bird, and you're waiting for it to fly.
  - ❖ With the AF-On button, you can focus at the right spot and wait, then take the photo as quickly as possible when the right moment arrives – while still being prepared to refocus quickly if necessary.

# Zone Focusing

- ❖ Zone focusing is the act of turning your camera to manual focus and choosing a set distance away to be in focus - typically somewhere around 8 to 10 feet away.
- ❖ Try to maximise your depth of field to make it more likely that your subject is sharp - the more depth of field in your image, the easier zone focusing will be.
- ❖ Wide-angle lenses, such as 35mm work best.
- ❖ The closer you focus, the smaller the depth of field, so smaller apertures (f8 - f16) are recommended.
- ❖ Wait until your subject enters the focused area, then shoot.







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# Focusing - Summary

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- ❖ Goal of focussing - To have the sharpest point in your image where you choose it to be.
- ❖ Most of the time, focus on your main subject.
- ❖ The sharpest objects in your photo stand out - use this to your advantage.
- ❖ There are no unbreakable rules for where you should focus - it's a creative, artistic decision.
- ❖ Manual focussing- Accurate, but speed varies
- ❖ Auto focussing- Fast, accuracy varies
- ❖ Practice, Practice, Practice! - Photograph anything, try focussing on anything - try judge subject distance and set your camera accordingly.



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# Shutter Speed

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❖ Q&A