

# BACK BUTTON FOCUS

And Other Simple Tricks to Improve  
High Speed Photography

High speed photography presents a wide array of challenges. Slow focus times, slow shutter release times, and having to continually refocus your camera do not need to be among those problems, however.

# Back Button Focus

- ❑ Back button focus allows you to use a different button to tell your camera to focus on a subject.
- ❑ By default, most cameras use the shutter button to tell the camera to focus.
  - This means that when you press the shutter, the camera has to focus before it will take a photo.
  - This delay can sometimes stop you from getting the shot you wanted, especially in high-speed situations, such as sports photography, child photography, or animal photography.
- ❑ Setting a different button for focusing allows you to tell the camera to focus at the same time that you are telling it to take a photograph.
- ❑ Also, as long as the distance between the camera and the subject doesn't change, you do not need to refocus between shots.
  - This allows you to continue to focus on your subject when someone or something gets between the camera and the subject.
  - It also means that you do not need to hold down the shutter button to keep your subject in focus.

# How To Set Back Button Focus

- Canon:
  - The settings can often be found in a *Custom Function* menu (C.FnIII in the Canon 6D, for example).
  - Scroll through until you find the custom controls.
  - Set the shutter button to *Metering Start*.
  - Set the AF-ON button to *Metering and AF Start*.
- Nikon:
  - Select your *Custom Settings* menu.
  - Select the *Autofocus* menu.
  - Select the *AF Activation* menu.
  - Select the *AF-ON Only* option, and you are done.
    - UNLESS you don't have an AF-ON button. In that case, you can go to the *Custom Settings* → *Controls* → *Assign AE-L/AF-L Button*, and scroll down to AF-ON, and press OK.
    - Now the AE-L/AF-L button on the back of the camera will act like an AF-On button.
- However, it is important to note that every camera is slightly different. Consult your camera manual for more specific instructions.



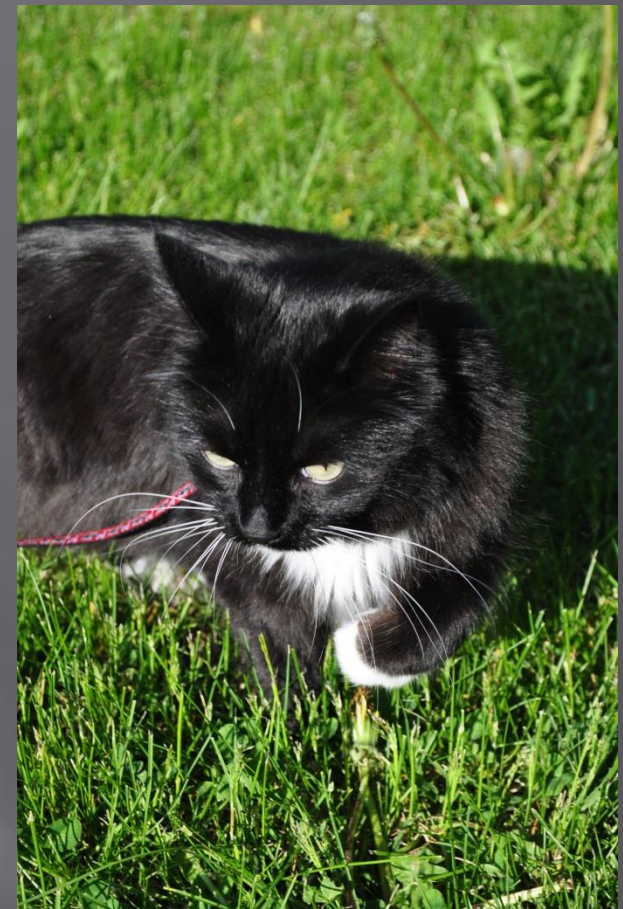
Here we can see that this technique allows us to maintain focus on the cat, even when she is behind the grass.

# Continuous Focus

- ▣ A continuous focus mode allows you to track a moving subject, and keep it in focus.
  - This will prevent a fast-moving subject who is moving towards the camera from moving out of focus within the frame.
- ▣ To do this, you hold the focus button down in continuous focus mode, and the camera will continue to focus on your subject.
- ▣ It is often useful to change the autofocus area mode to the dynamic area focus mode as well.
  - This allows you to tell the camera what your preferred focus point is, but if the subject moves out of that area of the frame, then the camera will look at the other focus points to see if the subject is there.

# How To Set Continuous Focus

- ▣ Canon:
  - Continuous Focus is called *AI Servo*.
  - Press the AF button, and use the top dial to scroll to AI Servo.
- ▣ Nikon:
  - Called *Continuous Servo*, or *AF-C*.
  - Press the Info (i) button on the camera.
  - Use the arrow buttons to highlight the focus mode.
  - Select AF-C.
- ▣ Again, the specific instructions for your camera may vary.



Here we see that even though the cat is moving towards the camera, we can still keep her in focus with relative ease. This is because the photographer was using continuous focus, which makes it easier to keep up with action.



# How To Set Dynamic Focus Area

- ▣ Canon:
  - Called *Automatic AF Point Selection*.
  - Press the AF button on top of the camera.
  - Rotate the main dial until the desired AF mode is selected.
  
- ▣ Nikon:
  - Called *AF Area Mode*.
  - Press the Info Button.
  - Use the arrow buttons to select AF Area Mode.
  - Select a version that allows more points of focus, or has the entire plane of view highlighted.



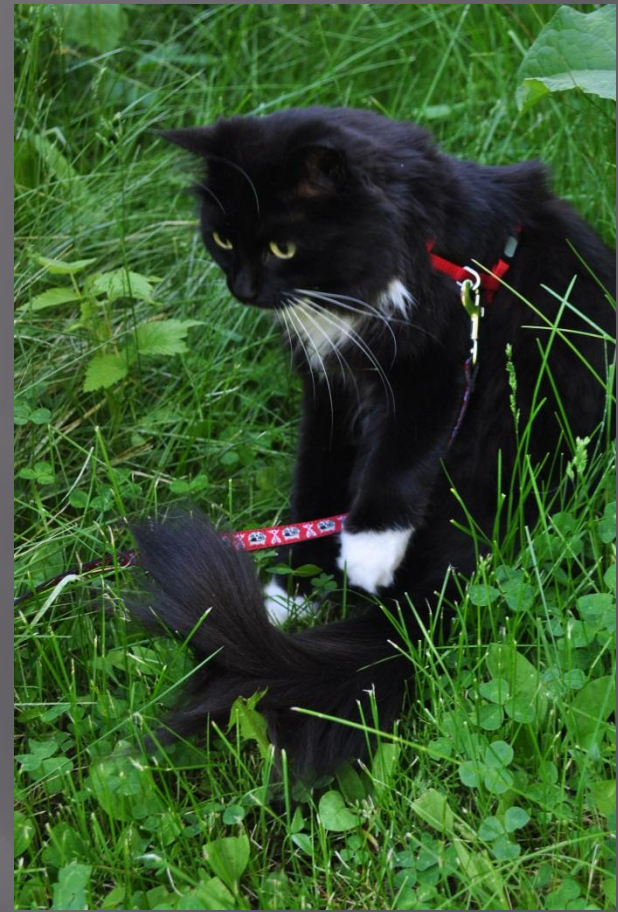
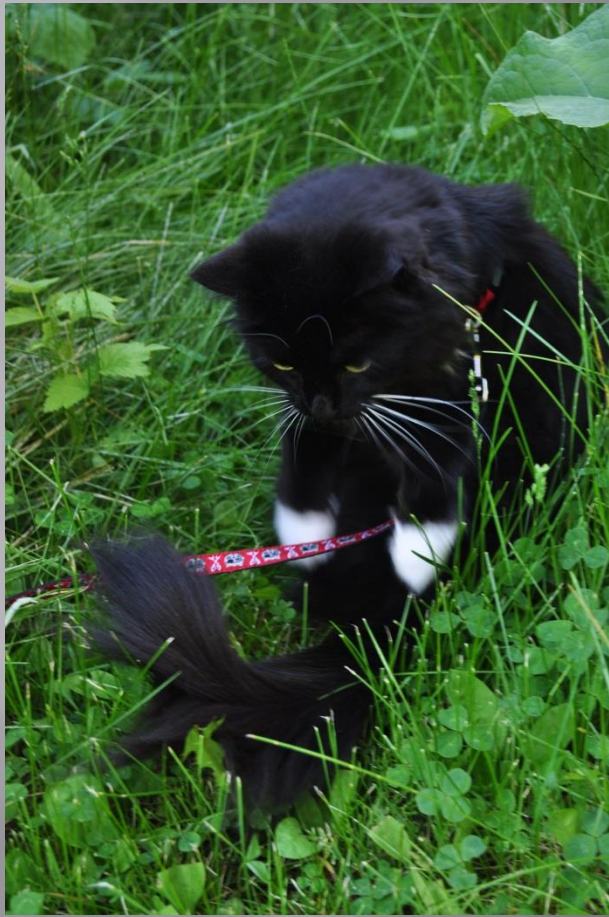
Using a dynamic focus area allows the photographer to track a subject that moves through the frame, as we see here.

# Continuous Shooting Mode

- ▣ Also known as Burst Mode, this allows the photographer to shoot several shots in rapid succession.
- ▣ When shooting action shots, this increases the likelihood of capturing the shot you are going for.
- ▣ This also allows the photographer to capture a series of shots in order to tell an action-packed story.
- ▣ It is important to note that most cameras can only shoot a limited number of photos in burst mode.
  - If you go over the limit, your camera will stop taking photos until it has finished saving the photos you've taken to your memory card.
  - Check your manual to find out how many photos your camera will take.

# How to Start Continuous Shooting

- ▣ Canon:
  - Press the Drive button on top of the camera.
  - Rotate the main dial until you get the Continuous Shooting icon, which looks like stacked up rectangles.
  - Arrange your shot, and press and hold the shutter button.
- ▣ Nikon:
  - ▣ Called Continuous Release mode.
  - ▣ Press the Info button on your camera.
  - ▣ Use the arrow buttons to select Release Mode.
  - ▣ Select the Continuous Release Mode.



Here we see a photo sequence, telling the story of a pounce that was reconsidered partway through. Continuous shooting makes it easier to tell these sorts of stories, which take place in a relatively short span of time.



As you can see, continuous shooting makes it quite easy to get a variety of expressions and poses. After that, you only need to choose your favourites.

# Sources

- ▣ [Back Button Focus Explained: Take Your Focus to the Next Level!](#)
- ▣ [Back Button Focusing - Easier Than You Think!](#)
- ▣ [DSLR Camera Basics - Autofocusing](#)
- ▣ [Focus Modes in Nikon Cameras](#)
- ▣ [Benefits of Using the AF-ON Button for Autofocus](#)
- ▣ [Continuous Focus Mode](#)
- ▣ [Understanding Nikon's Autofocus, AF Area, and Release Modes](#)
- ▣ [DSLR Autofocus Modes Explained](#)
- ▣ [How to Use Continuous Shooting Mode on A Digital Camera](#)
- ▣ [Setting Up Your Camera for Continuous Shooting and Autofocus](#)