

Action Shots

In this lesson, we'll be taking a look at **Action Shots**.

Estimated Completion Time: 5 minutes.

Action Shots

Capturing a good action shot is generally about using a fast **shutter speed**.

Shutter speed is a setting that changes how long the camera shutter opens. A fast shutter speed opens the shutter only for a fraction of a second, allowing you to freeze the action. A slow shutter speed can open the shutter for 30 seconds or more, and allow you to capture in low light, or for dramatic effect.

Not all cameras have a lot of shutter speed control. Generally, only the higher end compact cameras, big zoom cameras, or DSLR cameras have the ability to change shutter speed.



A water drop, frozen at 1/4000 of a second.

Action Shots

If your camera allows it, you can select your own shutter speed, based on exactly what it is you are photographing.

It may range from 30 seconds, right through to something like 1/8000s of a second.



*Most cameras will allow you to select a custom shutter speed. Rather than setting the camera into a completely manual mode, you may have a mode called **Shutter Priority** - you select the shutter speed, and the camera selects all other settings to match (if it can).*

Action Shots

If you cannot set shutter speed directly, most cameras have the ability to set a mode - such as sports, night, portrait, landscape, fireworks, amongst perhaps many others.

Selecting a sports mode will more than likely ensure that the shutter speed is set high to allow you to freeze the action. This can give good results - but it's not the only way action shots can be taken.



Most cameras will allow you to select a sports, or action mode.

Action Shots

Using a fast shutter speed - say, from 1/250 of a second (many cameras will allow shutter speeds as fast as 1/3200 or more), allow you to freeze the action.



These photographs were taken at 1/1000 of a second.

Action Shots

You can also get some great effects using a slow shutter speed. Below, we've taken this shot at 1/20 of a second, and this photo gives a great feeling of movement.



This photograph was taken at 1/20 of a second.

Action Shots

Using a slow shutter speed, while following the subject with the camera, can help to freeze the subject, but still give a great feeling of movement.



This photograph was taken at 1/20 of a second.

Action Shots



The shutter speed selected here (1/10 of a second) allows the photo to tell a real story.

Action Shots

For most action shots, the closer you can get to the action, the better. In an action scenario, there is a lot of movement, and it can be difficult to get a focus.

The more you have to zoom in, the harder it will be to get a focus, as the depth of field is smaller. Combine this with a lot of movement, and correct focus is very difficult.

When you move in close, and don't zoom in the camera much, more of the photograph will be in focus by default.



If you have trouble focusing in action shots - particularly where there is a lot of movement, try to get as close to the action as possible - or use a tripod.

Action Shots

When you know exactly where the action will take place, then of course you can prefocus the camera.

Hold the shutter half way down - which will set the focus and other settings - and wait (preferably using a tripod). Then, when the action starts, press the shutter all the way for a quick action photo.



1/400 of a second.

Action Shots



1/200 of a second, 800 ASA, 175mm focal length.

Action Shots

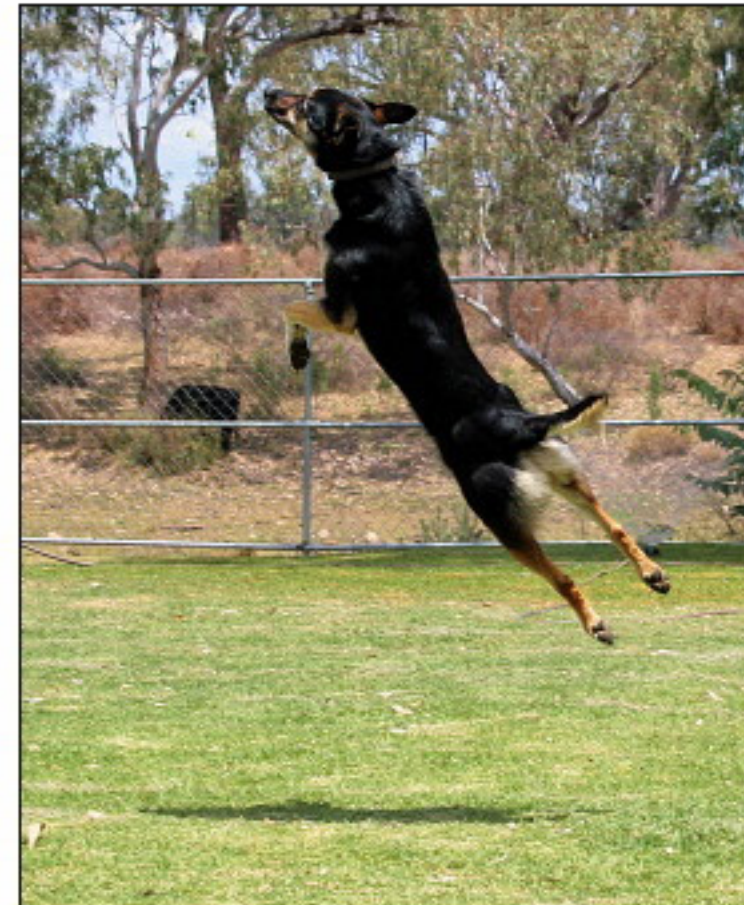
If your camera supports burst shooting - it can continually take photos while you hold down the shutter, then this is fantastic for action shots. You can not only capture a series of related shots, but it is more likely to get that one great shot.



Here, we've used burst mode to ensure we captured the snakes tongue (10 shots per second, in this case).

Action Shots

Patience is also something that is required to get that good action shot. We had to watch this dog for a while - he loves to chase butterflies - until we could get him the right position.



Action Shots



1/500 of a second, 200 ASA, F/11.

Action Shots



1/2000 of a second, 400 ASA, F/5.6.

Action Shots



1/640 of a second, 400 ASA, F/4.9.

Action Shots

Fireworks are a popular photographic target. They are surprisingly easy to shoot. Generally, shutter speeds between 1/60 to 1/100 are fine. Slower shutter speeds, with a tripod, can also give interesting results.

Many cameras now have a special fireworks mode - check your camera manual.



1/60 of a second, 100 ASA, f3.5.

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1/60 of a second, 100 ASA, f/3.5.

Action Shots

If you ensure you have a high enough ASA setting (1600, in the photo below), you can use a high shutter speed to capture fire nicely.

Fire can look great with slow, and fast shutter speeds - each gives a different effect.



1/640 of a second, 1600 ASA, F/16.

Action Shots

You can also use the flash to help freeze the action. This works when the light is low. The flash, because it is so quick, highlights the action for only a fraction of a second, so you are able to get time frozen in your photograph.



Flash freezes the action. Actually, in this example, we had help - shutter speed was 1/4000 of a second.

Action Shots

You can also use the flash to help freeze the action. This works when the light is low. The flash, because it is so quick, highlights the action for only a fraction of a second, so you are able to get time frozen in your photograph.



1/50 of a second.

Action Shots

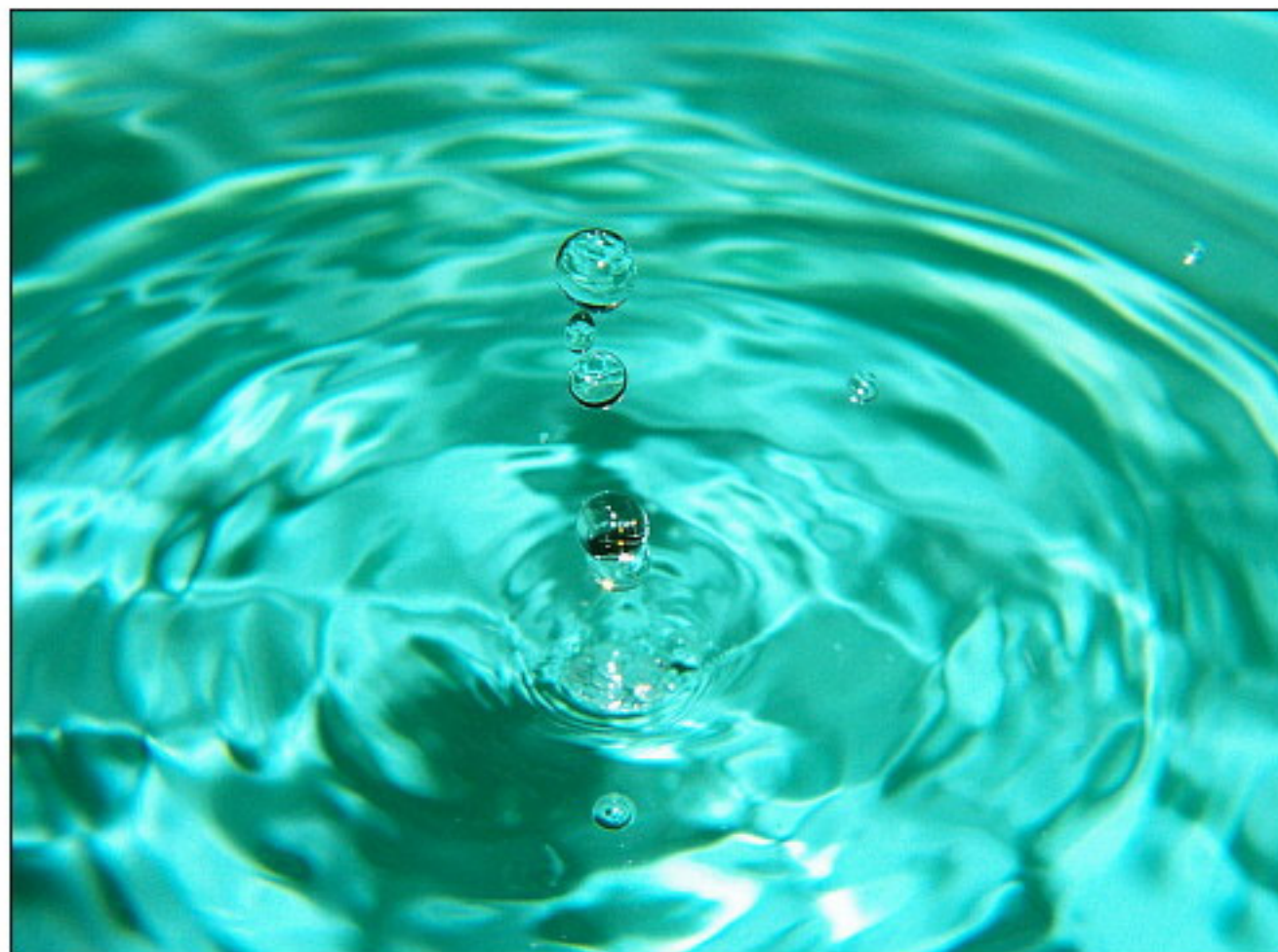
You can also use the flash to help freeze the action. This works when the light is low. The flash, because it is so quick, highlights the action for only a fraction of a second, so you are able to get time frozen in your photograph.



This photograph was taken at 1/180 of a second, but the flash makes it seem quicker.

Action Shots

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This photograph was taken at 1/31 of a second. All was dark, and we used a flash, which, as in the last photo, makes it appear as though the shutter speed was much quicker.

Action Shots

Well done. You've now completed this lesson.

In this lesson, we took a look at **Action Shots**.

