

Lenses for portraiture

[Home](#) / [Tips](#) / [Lenses](#) / [Lenses for portraiture](#)

Although most lenses can be used for portraiture, fast telephoto lenses with moderately short focal lengths have long been the first choice of professional portrait photographers. Focal lengths typically considered ideal range from about 70mm to 135mm in 35mm format, with a bias in favour of the 85-105mm section.

There are several reasons to choose short telephoto lenses for portraiture:

1. They provide a good working distance, enabling the photographer to fill the frame with the subject's face (or head and shoulders) without imposing on their personal space.
2. The slight compression of perspective provided by a telephoto lens is usually flattering. With careful posing of subjects, prominent noses and chins appear smaller in relationship to the rest of the face.
3. Fast maximum apertures (f/1.8 to f/4) provide optimal depth of field control, making it easier to draw attention to key features like the subject's eyes or profile, while allowing the rest of the scene to drift gradually out of focus.

LENS REVIEWS



Nikkor Z 24-70mm
f/4 S lens



Nikkor Z 35mm f/1.8
S lens



Fujinon XF 18mm f/2
R lens



Recommended cameras and
lenses



Wide aperture settings (f/2.8 in this case) with a short telephoto lens provide the classic recording tools for head-and-shoulder portraits. (Source: Tamron.)

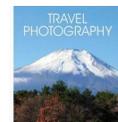
However, that doesn't mean other lenses can't be used for portraiture; just that they need to be used more thoughtfully. Longer lenses will generally be preferred for candid portraits, while wide angle lenses can produce attractive environmental portraits, particularly when the shots show people at work or engaged in an activity that doesn't require them to look straight at the camera.

Backgrounds can make or break portrait shots. Longer focal length lenses will make blurring away a distracting background easier, as will wide aperture settings. Longer lenses also make it easier to fill the frame with the subject's face, creating a sense of intimacy. It's important to achieve an optimal balance between depth of field and background blur, bearing in mind that the subject's eyes and mouth should always be in focus.

PHOTO GUIDES



Low Light
Photography 2nd
Edition



Travel Photography
3rd Edition



Photo Printing
pocket guide

COMPETITIONS



Skateboarder



Spider on a Rose



In the Spotlight



A portrait taken with an 85mm lens on a camera with an APS-C sized sensor, which provided the equivalent to a 135mm lens in 35mm format. This allowed a good working distance for photographing this type of subject.

PHOTO TIPS



Creative cropping



Go panoramic



Working with video footage

PHOTO REVIEW NEWSLETTER

**PHOTO
REVIEW**

eNEWS

Latest news, reviews, tips, and new ways to improve and inspire your photography.

[\(JOIN HERE \)](#)

NEW ISSUES



A 250mm equivalent focal length and f/5 maximum aperture have been used to isolate the subject from a potentially distracting background. The camera was focused on the subject's eyes.

Zoom or Prime?

Prime (single focal length) lenses are usually preferred by photographers who are serious about portraiture. As well as offering superior image quality, their main advantage over zoom lenses is their significantly greater speed (light transmission).

All leading manufacturers offer 85mm lenses for the 35mm format with maximum apertures of f/1.4 and f/1.8, which is considerably (two to 2½...") f-stops) faster than the typical f/3.5 maximum aperture for a short telephoto zoom lens. Fast lenses require less stabilisation in low light levels and can be used with lower ISO settings. In addition, the faster the lens, the greater the potential for it to produce attractive background blurring ("bokeh") that makes potentially distracting objects behind the subject less noticeable.

However, prime lenses tend to be relatively large, bulky and expensive and when the focal length isn't ideal for the subject you must change to a different lens. This takes time and can create potential for dust



Photo Review March-May 2021 Issue
87

[Read More](#)

Zoom lenses are much more versatile than primes "" and usually more affordable, although their prices are dictated by optical speed and build quality. One zoom lens will take up less space and weigh less than several prime lenses that cover the same range of focal lengths.



A 'convenience' zoom lens made it easy to compose and take this candid portrait shot without attracting the subject's attention. Photographed with a focal length of 185mm on an APS-C DSLR camera using a relatively wide f/6.3 aperture to produce background blurring.

Focal Length Analysis

Explore Litigation Insights

Docket Alarm provides insights to develop a more informed litigation strategy and the peace of mind of knowing you're on top of things.

Real-Time Litigation Alerts



Keep your litigation team up-to-date with **real-time alerts** and advanced team management tools built for the enterprise, all while greatly reducing PACER spend.

Our comprehensive service means we can handle Federal, State, and Administrative courts across the country.

Advanced Docket Research



With over 230 million records, Docket Alarm's cloud-native docket research platform finds what other services can't. Coverage includes Federal, State, plus PTAB, TTAB, ITC and NLRB decisions, all in one place.

Identify arguments that have been successful in the past with full text, pinpoint searching. Link to case law cited within any court document via Fastcase.

Analytics At Your Fingertips



Learn what happened the last time a particular judge, opposing counsel or company faced cases similar to yours.

Advanced out-of-the-box PTAB and TTAB analytics are always at your fingertips.

API

Docket Alarm offers a powerful API (application programming interface) to developers that want to integrate case filings into their apps.

LAW FIRMS

Build custom dashboards for your attorneys and clients with live data direct from the court.

Automate many repetitive legal tasks like conflict checks, document management, and marketing.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Litigation and bankruptcy checks for companies and debtors.

E-DISCOVERY AND LEGAL VENDORS

Sync your system to PACER to automate legal marketing.