

# How To Get Started With Macro Photography

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Macro photography is one of the great art forms of the image-making genre. Most novice photographers rarely try it because they are accustomed to point-and-shoot photography, which is the complete opposite to approach macro photography. But this art form can be achieved by anyone interested in learning how to handle some essential macro photography techniques.

Most compact and 35mm cameras can handle macro photography, especially if they feature a macro shooting mode. A 50mm prime lens works well with 35mm cameras for macro photography. You can also purchase lenses specifically designed for macro photography, but don't let not having a dedicated lens keep you from taking macro shots.



**Macro settings for Canon G9 and Canon 50D**

Most digital cameras have a macro mode feature that can be useful for close-up shots. This setting is usually indicated by a flower icon inside the camera's menu settings on the camera dial settings. Note, however, that using the macro mode or any preset mode your camera may not allow manual control over other settings like the flash. In other words, in these modes, the camera may force you to use the built-in flash if it thinks extra light is needed.

A sturdy tripod and a way to trigger the camera's shutter without pressing the shutter with your finger is very useful macro photography. A camera's self-timer or a wired or wireless remote trigger can also be used for hands-free firing of the shutter.

## Subjects for Macro Photography

When we think of macro photography we usually think of flowers as the subject. But that's not the case. You can start learning macro photography using household items. In fact, practicing macro photography indoors is recommended before venturing outside for nature shots.

The photo below is one of about hundred shots I took of two forks. I simply put them on my kitchen table near a large window with the early morning light coming through. Using the macro mode on my Canon Powershot G9, I spent about thirty minutes shooting from different angles and arranging the forks in different formations. I kept the camera's widest aperture setting of f/2.8 for a shallow depth of field.



## Keep the Camera Steady

Macro photography requires a really steady shot. And though most digital cameras have an image stabilization feature, it can't be counted on for macro photography. The closer you zoom in on a subject, the more likely you will experience noticeable camera shake. So mount your camera on a tripod to get the best and sharpest macro images. Also, check to see if your camera has a self-timer that can be used to fire the shutter, say after to 2 seconds. If you have a remote trigger, that works even better.

## Auto vs. Manual Focus

Sometimes when doing macro photography, depending on the subject, the camera may have difficult time focusing. If camera is not locking the focus automatically, your lens may be too close to the subject. Try pulling back the camera and then zooming in or out. If that doesn't work, try using manual focusing. If the subject itself is lacking distinctive contrast, try locking the focus by pointing the lens to the edge of the subject and the contrasting background, then re-frame the shot after focus has been achieved.

After taking a few shots review and zoom in on them on the camera's LCD screen. Images always look sharper on the LCD screen, but at least it will give you some idea if your shots are out of focus.

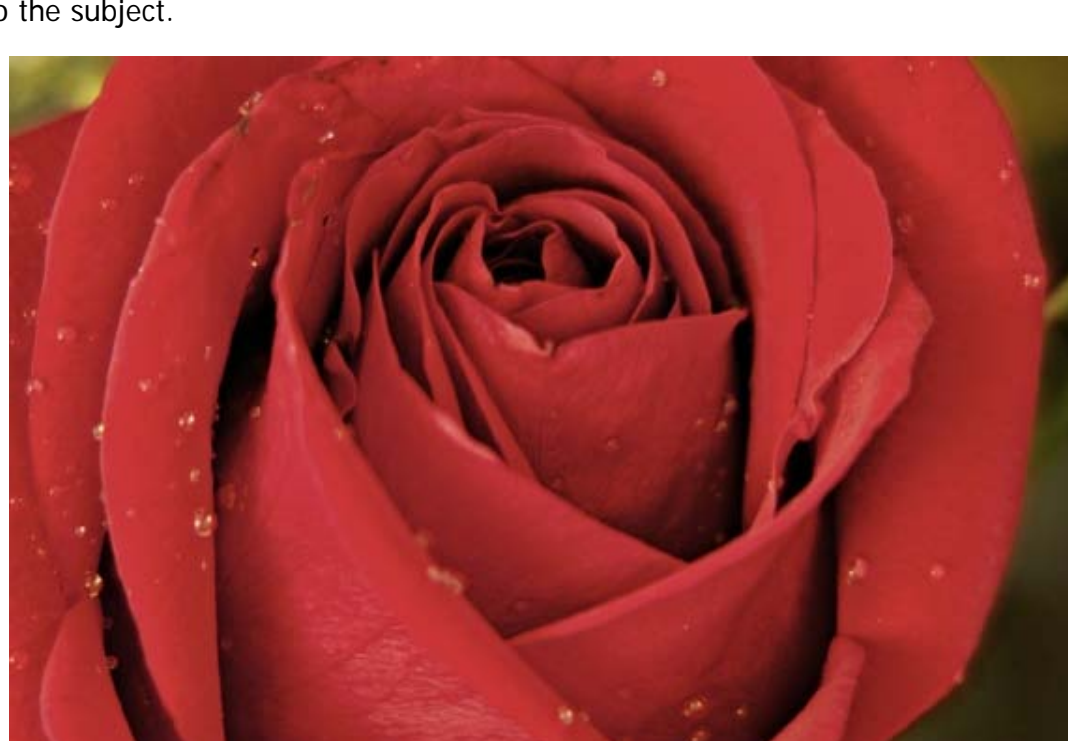


## Low ISO and Wide Aperture

Since you're using a tripod and are typically shooting in well-lit setting, avoid using a high shutter speed. Shooting at ISO 100 or 200 will help keep what is called digital noise out of your photo. It will make the macro shots sharper with less grain or digital artifacts. Also set your camera's setting at about f/2.8 for a nice shallow depth-of-field. That will distort the background and help bring more focus on the foreground subject.

## Floral Arrangements and Rain Shots

If you happen to give or receive a bouquet of roses for Valentine's or some other special day, use the gift for macro photography. Set the flowers near an open window for even lighting. I personally don't like using flash with macro photography, but if low ambient lighting is an issue, trying using an external camera flash to bring more light onto the subject.



During the rainy season, raindrops can also make for awesome and unique macro photography. If there's no raindrops to be had, fill up a spray bottle with water and lightly spray a floral arrangement to get the rain drop effect.

## Post-Processing

As with any other digital images, processing your macro images in Photoshop or similar image editor can greatly improve their contrast, color saturation, and sharpness. Cropping macro shots can also improve the overall composition of the photo.