

5



ISO 400
1/3200 sec.
f/2.8

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Moving Target

THE TRICKS TO SHOOTING SPORTS AND MORE

Now that you have learned about the professional modes, it's time to put your newfound knowledge to good use. Whether you are shooting the action at a professional sporting event or a child on a merry-go-round, you'll learn techniques that will help you bring out the best in your photography when your subject is in motion.

The number one thing to know when trying to capture a moving target is that speed is king! I'm not talking about how fast your subject is moving, but rather how fast your shutter is opening and closing. Shutter speed is the key to freezing the moment in time—but also to conveying movement. It's all in how you turn the dial. There are also some other considerations for taking your shot to the next level: composition, lens selection, and a few more items that we will explore in this chapter. So strap on your seatbelt and hit the gas, because here we go!



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PORING OVER THE PICTURE



Shooting sports under the lights requires high ISO values, even though it looks like there's enough light.

In low light, you will have better success with focusing by using the center Automatic Focus point.

ISO 1600
1/250 sec.
f/4.8

100mm lens
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A photograph of a baseball player in a grey uniform sliding into first base at night. The player is wearing a black helmet and is in a low, horizontal position on the dirt. The background shows stadium seating and a large cylindrical object covered in a tarp. The scene is illuminated by bright stadium lights, creating a high-contrast environment.

Things always look brighter under the big lights. The reality is that the human eye adjusts rapidly to lower light levels, which can make you feel like there should be plenty of light. That was the case when I began shooting this ballgame. As it got later and later, I kept raising my ISO higher and higher. After I reached 800, I checked my menu to ensure that the High ISO Noise Reduction was turned on. I set my focus point for the middle and then just tried to anticipate the action so that I would be ready to catch photos such as this.

A large aperture helps you key in on the main action.

Use the fastest shutter speed possible to capture the action, like this dive back to first base.

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PORING OVER THE PICTURE

This was not the first race of the day, and I had already watched horses clearing this jump in the race before. I really wanted to capture that moment as they broke through the top of the jump, sending small pieces of shrubbery flying through the air. I set up on the side of the jump, with the sun coming over my left shoulder. I knew this would provide the best vantage point for the jump. Due to my position, I could not focus on the horses as they came toward the jump so I decided to pre-focus on the front of the hedge. I was already set up to shoot in the continuous shooting mode so I waited until just before they jumped and then held my finger down and let it rip.

ISO 400 was selected to allow for the faster shutter speeds and a wide-open aperture setting.

You can see the point of sharpest focus is right at the front of the hedge jump, where I had pre-focused for

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The large aperture helps to blur the spectators in the background, keeping the emphasis on the horses and riders.

Flying hedge pieces are frozen in the air by the very fast shutter speed.

ISO 400
1/3200 sec.
f/2.8

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STOP RIGHT THERE!

Shutter speed is the main tool in the photographer's arsenal for capturing great action shots. The ability to freeze a moment in time often makes the difference between a good shot and a great one. To take advantage of this concept, you should have a good grasp of the relationship between shutter speed and movement. When you press the shutter release button, your camera goes into action by opening the shutter curtain and then closing it after a predetermined length of time. The longer you leave your shutter open, the more your subject will move across the frame, so commonsense dictates that the first thing to consider is just how fast your subject is moving.

Typically, you will be working in fractions of a second. How many fractions depends on several factors. Subject movement, while simple in concept, is actually based on three factors. The first is the direction of travel. Is the subject moving across your field of view (left to right) or traveling toward or away from you? The second consideration is the actual speed at which the subject is moving. There is a big difference between a moving sports car and a child on a bicycle. Finally, the distance from you to the subject has a direct bearing on how fast the action seems to be taking place. Let's take a brief look at each of these factors to see how they might affect your shooting.

DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

Typically, the first thing that people think about when taking an action shot is how fast the subject is moving, but in reality the first consideration should be the direction of travel. Where you are positioned in relation to the subject's direction of travel is critically important in selecting the proper shutter speed. When you open your shutter, the lens gathers light from your subject and records it on the camera sensor. If the subject is moving across your viewfinder, you need a faster shutter speed to keep that lateral movement from being recorded as a streak across your image. Subjects that are moving perpendicular to your shooting location do not move across your viewfinder and appear to be more stationary. This allows you to use a slightly slower shutter speed (**Figure 5.1**). A subject that is moving in a diagonal direction—both across the frame and toward or away from you—requires a shutter speed in between the two.

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ISO 400
1/1000 sec.
f/5.6
120mm lens



FIGURE 5.1
Action coming toward the camera can be captured with slower shutter speeds.

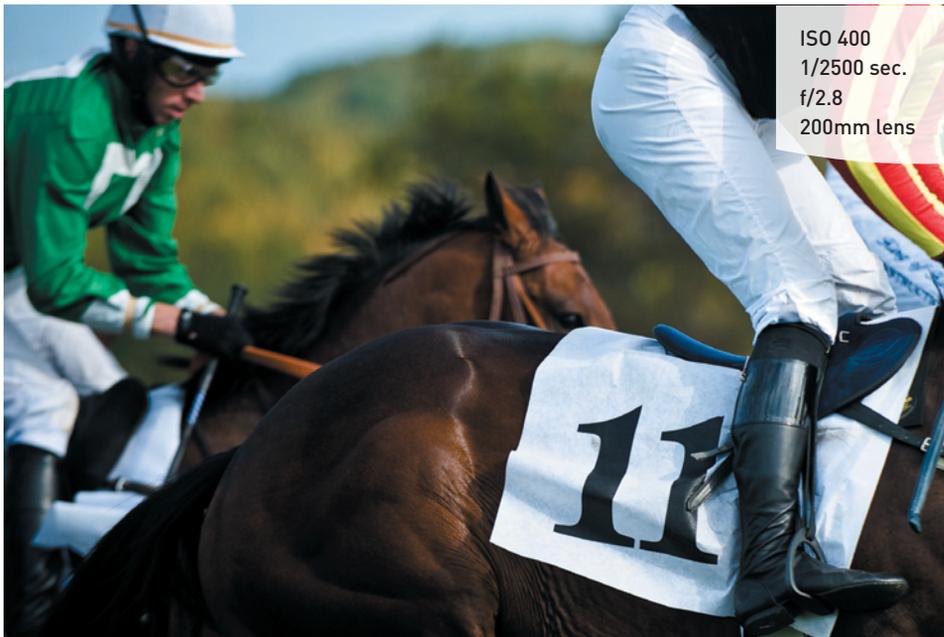
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SUBJECT SPEED

Once the angle of motion has been determined, you can then assess the speed at which the subject is traveling. The faster your subject moves, the faster your shutter speed needs to be in order to “freeze” that subject (**Figure 5.2**). A person walking across your frame might only require a shutter speed of 1/60 of a second, while a cyclist traveling in the same direction would call for 1/500 of a second. That same cyclist traveling toward you at the same rate of speed, rather than across the frame, might only require a shutter speed of 1/125 of a second. You can start to see how the relationship of speed and direction comes into play in your decision-making process.

FIGURE 5.2

A fast-moving subject that is crossing your path will require a faster shutter speed.



SUBJECT-TO-CAMERA DISTANCE

So now we know both the direction and the speed of your subject. The final factor to address is the distance between you and the action. Picture yourself looking at a highway full of cars from up in a tall building a quarter of a mile from the road. As you stare down at the traffic moving along at 55 miles per hour, the cars and trucks seem to be slowly moving along the roadway. Now picture yourself standing in the median of that same road as the same traffic flies by at the same rate of speed.

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Although the traffic is moving at the same speed, the shorter distance between you and the traffic makes the cars look like they are moving much faster. This is because your field of view is much narrower; therefore, the subjects are not going to present themselves within the frame for the same length of time. The concept of distance applies to the length of your lens as well (**Figure 5.3**). If you are using a wide-angle lens, you can probably get away with a slower shutter speed than if you were using a telephoto, which puts you in the heart of the action. It all has to do with your field of view. That telephoto gets you “closer” to the action—and the closer you are, the faster your subject will be moving across your viewfinder.



FIGURE 5.3
Due to the distance from the camera, a slower shutter speed could be used to capture this action.

USING SHUTTER PRIORITY (S) MODE TO STOP MOTION

In Chapter 4, you were introduced to the professional shooting modes. You’ll remember that the mode that gives you ultimate control over shutter speed is Shutter Priority, or S, mode, where you are responsible for selecting the shutter speed while handing over the aperture selection to the camera. The ability to concentrate on just one exposure factor helps you quickly make changes on the fly while staying glued to your viewfinder and your subject.

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There are a couple of things to consider when using Shutter Priority mode, both of which have to do with the amount of light that is available when shooting. While you have control over which shutter speed you select in Shutter Priority mode, the range of shutter speeds that is available to you depends largely on how well your subject is lit.

Typically, when shooting fast-paced action, you will be working with very fast shutter speeds. This means that your lens will probably be set to its largest aperture. If the light is not sufficient for the shutter speed selected, you will need to do one of two things: select a lens that offers a larger working aperture, or raise the ISO of the camera. Working off the assumption that you have only one lens available, let's concentrate on balancing your exposure using the ISO.

ZOOM IN TO BE SURE

When reviewing your shots on the LCD, don't be fooled by the display. The smaller your image is, the sharper it will look. To ensure that you are getting sharp, blur-free images, make sure that you zoom in on your LCD display.

To zoom in on your images, press the Playback button located below the rear LCD display and then press the Zoom In button to zoom (Figure 5.4). Continue pressing the Zoom In button to increase the zoom ratio.

To zoom back out, simply press the Zoom Out button (the magnifying glass with the minus sign on it) or press the Playback button again.

FIGURE 5.4

Zooming in on your image helps you confirm that the image is really sharp.



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FIGURE 5.5
The only way to stop action under the lights is to crank up your ISO.

Let's say that you are shooting a baseball game at night, and you want to get some great action shots. You set your camera to Shutter Priority mode and, after testing out some shutter speeds, determine that you need to shoot at 1/500 of a second to freeze the action on the field. When you place the viewfinder to your eye and press the shutter button halfway, you notice that the f-stop has been replaced by the word "Lo." This is your camera's way of telling you that the lens has now reached its maximum aperture and you are going to be underexposed if you shoot your pictures at the currently selected shutter speed. You could slow your shutter speed down until the Lo indicator goes away, but then you would get images with too much motion blur.

The alternative is to raise your ISO to a level that is fast enough for a proper exposure. The key here is to always use the lowest ISO that you can get away with. That might mean ISO 200 in bright sunny conditions or ISO 1600 for an indoor or night situation (**Figure 5.5**). Just remember that the higher the ISO, the greater the amount of noise in your image. This is the reason that you see professional sports photographers using those mammoth lenses perched atop a monopod: they could use a smaller lens, but to get those very large apertures they need a huge piece of glass on the front of the lens. The larger the glass on the front of the lens, the more light it gathers, and the larger the aperture for shooting. For the working pro, the large aperture translates into low ISO (and thus low noise), fast shutter speeds, and razor-sharp action.

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ADJUSTING YOUR ISO ON THE FLY

1. Look at the exposure values (the shutter speed and aperture settings) in the lower portion of your viewfinder.
2. If the word “Lo” appears where the aperture normally is, press the **i** button on the lower-left portion of the back of the camera (if the camera’s info screen is not visible, press the info or **i** button).
3. Press up or down on the Multi-selector button to highlight the ISO option and then press OK (**A**).
4. Press down on the Multi-selector to select a higher ISO setting, and press OK to lock in the change (**B**).
5. If you now see an aperture setting in the display, shoot away. If you still see the word “Lo,” repeat steps 2–4 until it is set correctly.



USING APERTURE PRIORITY (A) MODE TO ISOLATE YOUR SUBJECT

One of the benefits of working in Shutter Priority mode with fast shutter speeds is that, more often than not, you will be shooting with the largest aperture available on your lens. Shooting with a large aperture allows you to use faster shutter speeds, but it also narrows your depth of field.

To isolate your subject in order to focus your viewer’s attention on it, a larger aperture is required. The larger aperture reduces the foreground and background sharpness: the larger the aperture, the more blurred they will be.

The reason that I bring this up here is that when you are shooting most sporting events, the idea is to isolate your main subject by having it in focus while the rest of the image has some amount of blur. This sharp focus draws your viewer right to the subject. Studies have shown that the eye is drawn to sharp areas before moving on to the blurry areas. Also, depending on what your subject matter is, there can be a tendency to get distracted by a busy background if everything in the photo is equally

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sharp. Without a narrow depth of field, it might be difficult for the viewer to establish exactly what the main subject is in your picture.

Let's look at how to use depth of field to bring focus to your subject. In the previous section, I told you that you should use Shutter Priority mode for getting those really fast shutter speeds to stop action. Generally speaking, Shutter Priority mode will be the mode you most often use for shooting sports and other action, but there will be times when you want to ensure that you are getting the narrowest depth of field possible in your image. The way to do this is by using Aperture Priority mode.

So how do you know when you should use Aperture Priority mode as opposed to Shutter Priority mode? It's not a simple answer, but your LCD screen can help you make this determination. The best scenario for using Aperture Priority mode is a brightly lit scene where maximum apertures will still give you plenty of shutter speed to stop the action.

Let's say that you are shooting a soccer game in the midday sun. If you have determined that you need something between 1/500 and 1/1250 of a second for stopping the action, you could just set your camera to a high shutter speed in Shutter Priority mode and just start shooting. But you also want to be using an aperture of, say, f/4.5 to get that narrow depth of field. Here's the problem: if you set your camera to Shutter Priority mode and select 1/1000 of a second as a nice compromise, you might get that desired f/stop—but you might not. As the meter is trained on your moving subject, the light levels could rise or fall, which might actually change that desired f-stop to something higher like f/5.6 or even f/8. Now the depth of field is extended, and you will no longer get that nice isolation and separation that you wanted.

To rectify this, switch the camera to Aperture Priority mode and select f/4.5 as your aperture. Now, as you begin shooting, the camera holds that aperture and makes exposure adjustments with the shutter speed. As I said before, this works well when you have lots of light—enough light so that you can have a high-enough shutter speed without introducing motion blur.

THE ISO SENSITIVITY AUTO CONTROL TRICK

There is a very cool trick that can get you the best of both worlds, and that won't sacrifice your shutter speed or aperture. By setting up the ISO Sensitivity auto control feature, you can set the camera to automatically select an ISO that keeps you at your preferred shutter speed, while using the largest aperture and lowest ISO possible. It will also put an upper limit on the ISO to keep you from getting too much noise in your images.

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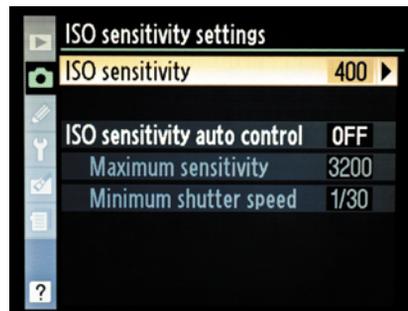
Here's the way it works. If I am shooting an activity that requires a shutter speed of 1/250 of a second, I set that as the minimum in the auto control settings. Then I decide that I can deal with the noise that is produced with an ISO up to 1600, so I set that as my maximum sensitivity. Since I would always like to use the lowest ISO, I set the low ISO sensitivity to 200. Once everything is set, the camera will now adjust my ISO without any interaction from me, letting me shoot at my desired shutter speed at the lowest possible ISO and largest aperture setting possible.

SETTING UP THE ISO SENSITIVITY AUTO CONTROL FEATURE

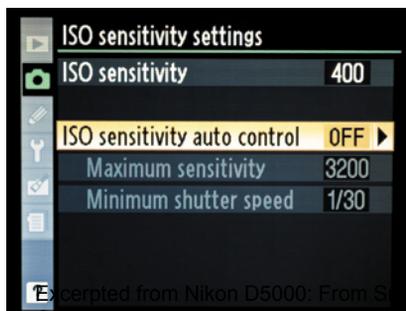
1. Press the Menu button and then use the Multi-selector to get to the Shooting menu.
2. Press the Multi-selector to the right to enter the menu and then locate the ISO sensitivity settings feature (A).
3. Press the Multi-selector to the right to enter the set-up screen.
4. Press the Multi-selector to the right and select the lowest ISO that you wish to use (ISO sensitivity) and press the OK button (B).
5. Press the Multi-selector down to highlight ISO sensitivity auto control and then move the selector to the right and select On to activate the feature (C).
6. Use the Multi-selector to choose the Maximum sensitivity (D). This will be the upper limit of your ISO.



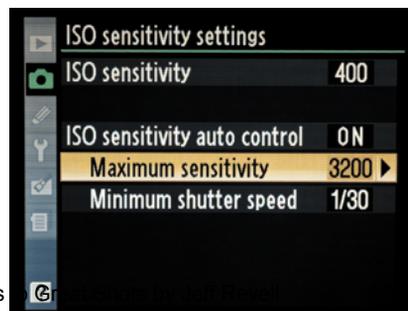
A



B



C

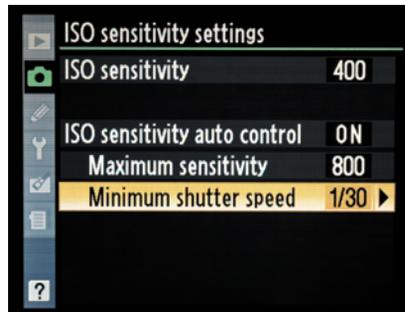


D

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7. Finally, select the Minimum shutter speed that you want to use while shooting (E). This will be completely dependent on the speed necessary to stop the action you are shooting.



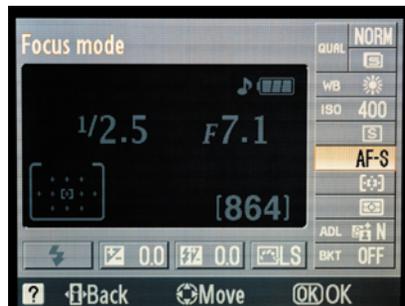
With everything set up, you can begin shooting without fear of constantly having to change the ISO. This technique is also quite helpful when working in varying light conditions. As you are shooting, you will notice the ISO AUTO warning in the lower portion of the viewfinder along with the adjusted ISO setting.

KEEP THEM IN FOCUS WITH CONTINUOUS-SERVO FOCUS AND AF FOCUS POINT SELECTION

With the exposure issue handled for the moment, let's move on to an area that is equally important: focusing. If you have browsed your manual, you know that there are several focus modes to choose from in the D5000. To get the greatest benefit from each of them, it is important to understand how they work and the situations where each mode will give you the best opportunity to grab a great shot. Because we are discussing subject movement, our first choice is going to be Continuous-servo AF mode (AF-C). AF-C mode uses all of the focus points in the camera to find a moving subject and then lock in the focus when the shutter button is completely depressed.

SELECTING AND SHOOTING IN CONTINUOUS-SERVO AF FOCUS MODE

1. Press the **i** button on the lower-left portion of the back of the camera (if the camera's info screen is not visible, press the info or **i** button).
2. Press up or down on the Multi-selector to highlight the focus mode (A) and then press the OK button.
3. Use the Multi-selector to select AF-C and press OK.



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4. Locate your subject in the viewfinder, then press and hold the shutter button halfway to activate the focus mechanism.
5. The camera will maintain the subject's focus as long as it remains within one of the focus points in the viewfinder or until you release the shutter button or take a picture.

You should take note that holding down the shutter button for long periods of time will cause your battery to drain much faster because the camera will be constantly focusing on the subject.

When using the AF-C mode, you can use the AF point mode set to Dynamic area, which uses a focus point of your choosing as the primary focus, but uses information from the surrounding points if your subject happens to move away from the point.

SETTING THE AF-AREA MODE TO DYNAMIC

1. To set the AF-area mode, press the **i** button on the lower-left portion of the back of the camera.
2. Press up or down on the Multi-selector to highlight the AF-area mode and then press the OK button (**A**).
3. Use the Multi-selector to choose the Dynamic AF mode and press OK (**B**).



To select a focus point you want to use, simply move the Multi-selector up, down, left, or right until the desired point is highlighted in your viewfinder. Pressing the OK button in the center of the Multi-selector will reset your focus point to the center position.

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Note that the AF mode is used to select the method with which the camera will focus the lens. This is different from the AF point, which is a cluster of small points that are visible in the viewfinder and are used to determine where you want the lens to focus (Figure 5.6).

STOP AND GO WITH 3D-TRACKING AF

If you are going to be changing between a moving target and one that is still, you should consider using the 3D-tracking AF mode. This mode mixes both the AF-S and Dynamic modes for shooting a subject that goes from stationary to moving without having to adjust your focus mode.

When you have a stationary subject, simply place your selected focus point on your subject and the camera will focus on it. If your subject begins to move out of focus, the camera will track the movement, keeping a sharp focus.

For example, suppose you are shooting a football game. The quarterback has brought the team to the line and he is standing behind the center, waiting for the ball to be hiked. If you are using the 3D-tracking AF mode, you can place your focus point on the quarterback and start taking pictures of him as he stands at the line. As soon as the ball is hiked and the action starts, the camera will switch to tracking mode and follow his movement within the frame. This can be a little tricky at first, but once you master it, it will make your action shooting effortless.

To select 3D-tracking, simply follow the same steps listed for selecting Dynamic but instead select the 3D-tracking mode. It is important to know that the 3D-tracking AF mode uses color and contrast to locate and then follow the subject, so this mode might be less effective when everything is similar in tone or color.



FIGURE 5.6
The Automatic Focus (AF) points are the 11 small boxes arranged in your viewfinder.

CHOOSING A FOCUS MODE

Selecting the proper focus mode depends largely on what type of subject you are photographing. Single point is typically best for stationary subjects. It allows you to determine exactly where you want your focus to be and then recompose your image while holding the focus in place. If you are taking pictures of an active subject that is moving quickly, trying to set a focus point with Single point can be difficult, if not impossible. This is when you will want to rely on the Dynamic and 3D-tracking modes to quickly assess the subject distance and set your lens focus. This can be especially helpful if the subject distance is varying constantly.

MANUAL FOCUS FOR ANTICIPATED ACTION

While I utilize the automatic focus modes for the majority of my shooting, there are times when I like to fall back on manual focus. This is usually when I know when and where the action will occur and I want to capture the subject as it crosses a certain plane of focus. This is useful in sports like motocross or auto racing, where the subjects are on a defined track and I know exactly where I want to capture the action. I could try tracking the subject, but sometimes the view can be obscured by a curve. By pre-focusing the camera, all I have to do is wait for the subject to approach my point of focus and then start firing the camera.

Take a look at **Figure 5.7**. The horses in the steeplechase race were traveling from my right to left and were partly obscured by the hedge, so tracking them with 3D-tracking would have been difficult, if not impossible. To get my shot, I simply focused on the front of the hedge and waited for the horses to come into range. As they began their jump over the hedge, I started shooting and captured the horses and riders at the height of the action.

Here's another example (**Figure 5.8**), where I used manual focusing to determine where I wanted the skater to be critically focused. The camera angle was extremely low, so I used the Live View feature on the LCD with the camera at ground level, and then focused on the exact spot where the skater would be at the highest point—just above the boards on the ground. The wide-angle lens gave me a larger depth of field with the chosen f-stop, so I was able to capture the action with great focus.

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ISO 400
1/8000 sec.
f/2.8
200mm lens

FIGURE 5.7
Pre-focus the camera to a point where you know the subject will be and start shooting right before they get there.



ISO 200
1/1600 sec.
f/5.6
28mm lens

FIGURE 5.8
Live View lets you use your camera in places where you normally wouldn't be able to see through the viewfinder.

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DRIVE MODES

The drive mode determines how fast your camera will take pictures. Single shot is for taking one photograph at a time. With every full press of the shutter release button, the camera will take a single image. The continuous mode allows for a more rapid capture rate. Think of it like a machine gun. When you are using the continuous mode, the camera will continue to take pictures as long as the shutter release button is held down.

KEEPING UP WITH THE CONTINUOUS SHOOTING MODE

Getting great focus is one thing, but capturing the best moment on the sensor can be difficult if you are shooting just one frame at a time. In the world of sports, and in life in general, things move pretty fast. If you blink, you might miss it. The same can be said for shooting in Single frame mode. Fortunately, your D5000 comes equipped with a continuous shooting—or “burst”—mode that lets you capture a series of images at up to four frames a second (**Figure 5.9**).

Using the continuous shooting mode causes the camera to keep taking images for as long as you hold down the shutter release button. In Single mode, you have to release the button and then press it again to take another picture.

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FIGURE 5.9

Using the continuous drive mode means that you are sure to capture the peak of the action.



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SETTING UP AND SHOOTING IN THE CONTINUOUS SHOOTING MODE

1. Press the **i** button on the lower-left portion of the back of the camera.
2. Press up or down on the Multi-selector to highlight the Release mode and then press OK (**A**).
3. Use the Multi-selector to choose the Continuous mode and press OK (**B**).



Your camera has an internal memory, called a “buffer,” where images are stored while they are being processed prior to being moved to your memory card.

Depending on the image format you are using, the buffer might fill up, and the camera will stop shooting until space is made in the buffer for new images. The camera readout in the viewfinder tells you how many frames you have available in burst mode. Just look in the viewfinder at the bottom right to see the maximum number of images for burst shooting. As you shoot, the number will go down and then back up as the images are written to the memory card.

A SENSE OF MOTION

Shooting action isn’t always about freezing the action. There are times when you want to convey a sense of motion so that the viewer can get a feel for the movement and flow of an event. Two techniques you can use to achieve this effect are panning and motion blur.

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PANNING

Panning has been used for decades to capture the speed of a moving object as it moves across the frame. It doesn't work well for subjects that are moving toward or away from you. Panning is achieved by following your subject across your frame, moving your camera along with the subject, and using a slower-than-normal shutter speed so that the background (and sometimes even a bit of the subject) has a sideways blur but the main portion of your subject is sharp and blur-free. The key to a great panning shot is selecting the right shutter speed: too fast and you won't get the desired blurring of the background; too slow and the subject will have too much blur and will not be recognizable. Practice the technique until you can achieve a smooth motion with your camera that follows along with your subject. The other thing to remember when panning is to follow through even after the shutter has closed. This will keep the motion smooth and give you better images.

In **Figure 5.10**, I used the panning technique to follow this horse as it ran in front of me. I set the camera drive mode to the continuous drive mode, and I used Shutter Priority mode to select a shutter speed of 1/60 of a second while the focus mode was on Dynamic. I wasn't worried about a narrow depth of field, because I knew that the movement of my camera at the slow shutter speed would blur the crowd in the background.



FIGURE 5.10
Following the subject as it moves across the field of view allows for a slower shutter speed and adds a sense of motion.

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MOTION BLUR

Another way to let the viewer in on the feel of the action is to simply include some blur in the image. This isn't accidental blur from choosing the wrong shutter speed. This blur is more exaggerated, and it tells a story. In **Figure 5.11**, I was interested in capturing the spinning motion of the dancers as they twirled about. A fast shutter speed would have surely frozen the action, but it would not have told the story of the movement involved in the dance. Instead of moving with the action, I let the movement of the dancer create the blur as I held the camera in a stationary position.

Just as in panning, there is no preordained shutter speed to use for this effect. It is simply a matter of trial and error until you have a look that conveys the action. I try to get some area of the subject that is frozen. The key to this technique is the correct shutter speed combined with keeping the camera still during the exposure. You are trying to capture the motion of the subject, not the photographer or the camera, so use a good shooting stance or even a tripod.

FIGURE 5.11

The movement of the dancer coupled with the slow shutter speed conveys the action of the dance.



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TIPS FOR SHOOTING ACTION

GIVE THEM SOMEWHERE TO GO

Whether you are shooting something as simple as your child's soccer match or as complex as the aerial acrobatics of a motorcycle jumper, where you place the subject in the frame is equally as important as how well you expose the image. A poorly composed shot can completely ruin a great moment by not holding the viewer's attention.

The one mistake I see many times in action photography is that the photographer doesn't use the frame properly. If you are dealing with a subject that is moving horizontally across your field of view, give the subject somewhere to go by placing them to the side of the frame, with their motion leading toward the middle of the frame (**Figure 5.12**). This offsetting of the subject will introduce a sense of direction and anticipation for the viewer. Unless you are going to completely fill the image with the action, try to avoid placing your subject in the middle of the frame.

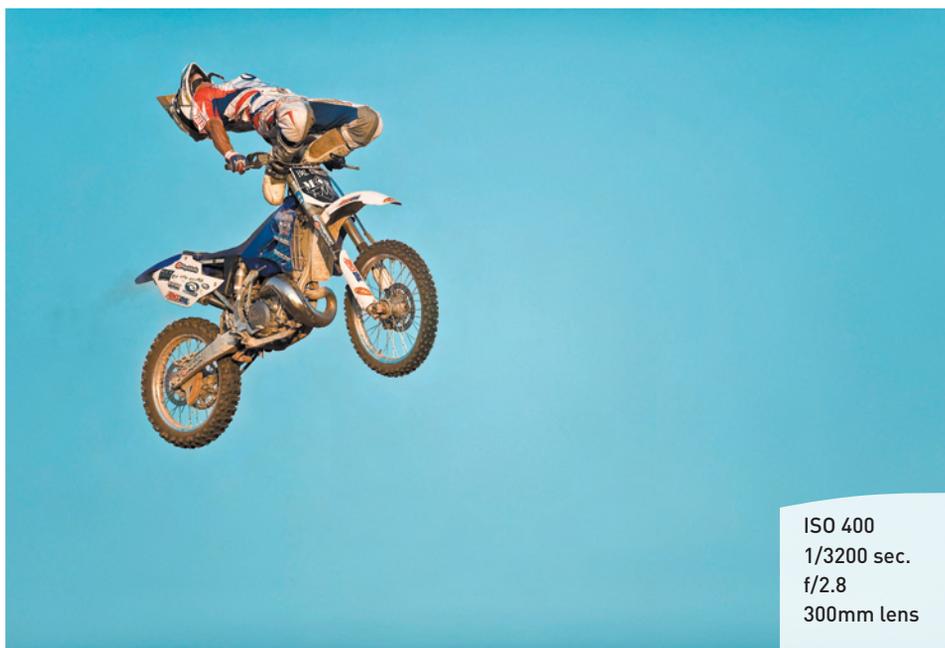


FIGURE 5.12

Try to leave space in front of your subject to lead the action in a direction.

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FIGURE 5.13

Shooting from the front with a telephoto gives a feeling that the action is coming right at you.



GET IN FRONT OF THE ACTION

Here's another one. When shooting action, show the action coming toward you (**Figure 5.13**). Don't shoot the action going away from you. People want to see faces. Faces convey the action, the drive, the sense of urgency, and the emotion of the moment. So if you are shooting action involving people, always position yourself so that the action is either coming at you or is at least perpendicular to your position.

PUT YOUR CAMERA IN A DIFFERENT PLACE

Changing your vantage point is a great way of finding new angles. Shooting from a low position with a wide-angle lens might let you incorporate some foreground to give depth to the image. Shooting from farther away with a telephoto lens will compress the elements in a scene and allow you to crop in tighter on the action. Don't be afraid to experiment and try new things.

The image in **Figure 5.14** is one of my favorite action shots, and it all happened because I tried something different.

As I was waiting for the race to begin, the horses started running out of their holding area and passing within a few yards of me. I had a wide-angle lens on the camera, and instead of pointing it up to eye level, I just held it down to my side and started

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shooting frames in continuous mode. The AF focus mode was picking up the horse and getting great focus, and I knew that my shutter speed was set very high from the last race. The wide-angle lens was capturing the horse in the foreground, the trees in the middle ground, and the great-looking sky overhead. The horse was positioned to the right of the frame, running toward the empty space on the left. It was also placed in the lower third of the frame, giving an excellent “rule of thirds” balance. (See p. TK for more on the rule of thirds.) And this image is the result—just because I said, “What the heck?” and tried something a little outside the box.



FIGURE 5.14
Putting your camera
in a different place can
yield pleasing results.

ISO 500
1/8000 sec.
f/28
18mm lens

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Chapter 5 Assignments

The mechanics of motion

For this first assignment, you need to find some action. Explore the relationship between the speed of an object and its direction of travel. Use the same shutter speed to record your subject moving toward you and across your view. Try using the same shutter speed for both to compare the difference made by the direction of travel.

Wide vs. telephoto

Just as with the first assignment, photograph a subject moving in different directions, but this time, use a wide-angle lens and then a telephoto. Check out how the telephoto setting on the zoom lens will require faster shutter speeds than the lens at its wide-angle setting.

Getting a feel for focusing modes

We discussed two different ways to auto focus for action: Dynamic and 3D-tracking. Starting with Dynamic mode, find a moving subject and use the mode to get familiar with the way the mode works.

Now repeat the process using the 3D-tracking AF mode. The point of the exercise is to become familiar enough with the two modes to decide which one to use for the situation you are photographing.

Anticipating the spot using manual focus

For this assignment, you will need to find a subject that you know will cross a specific line that you can pre-focus on. A street with moderate traffic works well for this. Focus on a spot on the street that the cars will travel across (don't forget to set your lens for manual focus). To do this right, you need to set the drive mode on the camera the continuous mode. Now, when a car approaches the spot, start shooting. Try shooting in three- or four-frame bursts.

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Following the action

Panning is a great way to show motion. To begin, find a subject that will move across your path at a steady speed and practice following it in your viewfinder from side to side. Now, with the camera in Shutter Priority mode, set your shutter speed to 1/30 of a second and the focus mode to Dynamic. Now pan along with the subject and shoot as it moves across your view. Experiment with different shutter speeds and focal lengths. Panning is one of those skills that takes some time to get a feel for, so try it with different types of subjects moving at different speeds.

Feeling the movement

Instead of panning with the motion, use a stationary camera position and adjust the shutter speed until you get a blurred effect that gives the sense of motion while still being able to identify the subject. There is a big difference between a slightly blurred photo that looks like you just picked the wrong shutter speed and one that looks intentional for the purpose of showing motion. Just like panning, it will take some experimentation to find just the right shutter speed to achieve the desired effect.