

SLR DISCOVERIES

Capture pets on the move

Mark Hamblin helps you add dynamism to your pet pictures by shooting them in action

Action shots may be a little difficult with a goldfish or, indeed, an aloof cat, but there's nothing a dog likes more than racing up and down a beach or across the lawn in pursuit of a ball. So if you have an active dog or other pet that likes to run around, this is your chance to capture some action-packed images.

Shutter speed is the all-important setting here: it will determine whether or not you freeze the movement. A shutter speed of around 1/500 sec or faster is usually required for a sharp shot. Anything slower than this, and you're likely to get some blurring of the subject.

However, this can be used to create effective motion blur shots where only part of the subject is sharp – ideally the head and eyes – with blurring in the rest of the animal as well as in the background.

ACTION STATIONS

To ensure the subject stays in focus, switch from One Shot or Single Shot mode to a continuous focusing mode, such as Servo. This means the camera autofocus system will track the subject and continually adjust the focusing. It's also helpful to use the camera's highest motordrive setting so that you can fire off a rapid burst of frames.

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Mark Hamblin

Above Getting down to your dog's level allows you to fill your frame and doesn't leave you with an image that looks like it was taken too far away

How to... Photograph your pet in motion

To capture exciting pictures of your pet in action, follow these three steps for successful images



01 Get ready for action

You can use any lens, but a mid-telephoto allows you to shoot from distance, which will help track the animal. Switch to Continuous Focus and use the central focusing point. An aperture of $f/4$ will help make the animal stand out from the background.



02 Freeze the action

For pin-sharp shots, use a shutter speed fast enough to arrest the movement. 1/1,000 sec or quicker should freeze the action. Track the animal and maintain focus by keeping your finger on the shutter button, taking a burst of shots at the height of the action.



03 Capture motion blur

When the light levels are low, set a shutter speed of around 1/30 sec in Shutter Priority (Tv) mode. As the subject moves, pan smoothly so the subject stays in the same part of the frame. This technique is best done with the camera on a tripod.