

Bokeh Christmas lights

PUBLISHED - 20 DEC 2016

Christmas lights can add extra sparkle to your festive shots, and with the right camera settings you'll be able to create a soft, evocative backdrop for your subject that really brings out the Christmas spirit!



- Bokeh means the soft, smooth, out-of-focus background highlights you get when shooting your subject with the lens at its widest aperture. It comes from the Japanese word 'boke', meaning 'blur'. For the best bokeh effects, use a fast lens with an aperture of at least f/2.8,

and shoot as wide open as it will go e.g. f/1.8 – which means shooting in aperture priority (A) or manual (M).

- You can get great results in natural daylight, but if you're shooting at night you can create a lovely dark background for the diffuse fairy lights by switching off all the other lights in the room and just using one light angled towards your subject (so its light doesn't spill into the background). If your camera is setting a slow shutter speed, use a tripod and fire the shutter with a remote release to guard against camera shake.

- If you're shooting with a COOLPIX camera that doesn't have manual or aperture priority options, choose macro mode to decrease the distance between the camera and your subject, creating a more shallow depth of field. Remember to turn off the flash to encourage the camera to open up the aperture as wide as possible. Again, you might need to steady it on a tripod.

Quick tips

- For the best results, position your subject as far in front of the lights as you can, with as short a focal length as possible between camera and subject.
- Shoot in RAW so any white-balance problems can be corrected on the computer.
- With a dark background, you may need to add in some exposure compensation to prevent underexposure.