

Capture Your Holidays



LESSON

1

capture lights

LESSON 1 OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- ★ Use two techniques to create light bokeh
- ★ Create a star burst light effect

I love holiday lights. They add the magic to Christmas.

Knowing a couple of techniques will help you photograph lights in beautiful ways. We'll start with blurring lights and then explore creating a star burst effect. You can use these techniques throughout your holiday photos and in our future lessons.

Please enjoy this process. If you find yourself frustrated over the settings, ask questions. Make this holiday about capturing your memories with as little stress as possible! We are here for you!



LIGHT BOKEH

The blurred lights in a photo's background are called bokeh. Christmas lights give bokeh a unique, artistic look.

The aperture of your camera determines the size and shape of the circular light effect. The wider your aperture (the smaller the f/ number), the larger and more circular the light will be.

Grab your fastest lens, the one with the smallest f/ number. I'll explain four ways to achieve bokeh:

- ★ Manual Focus Bokeh (the easiest and most artistic method)
- ★ Aperture Priority Mode Bokeh
- ★ Manual Mode Bokeh
- ★ Point & Shoot Bokeh

Try them all or just give one a shot. Each method will work with any lens, but the lens with the widest aperture (smallest f/ number) will give you the best results.

Please turn your flash off for each of these methods.

LENS CHOICE

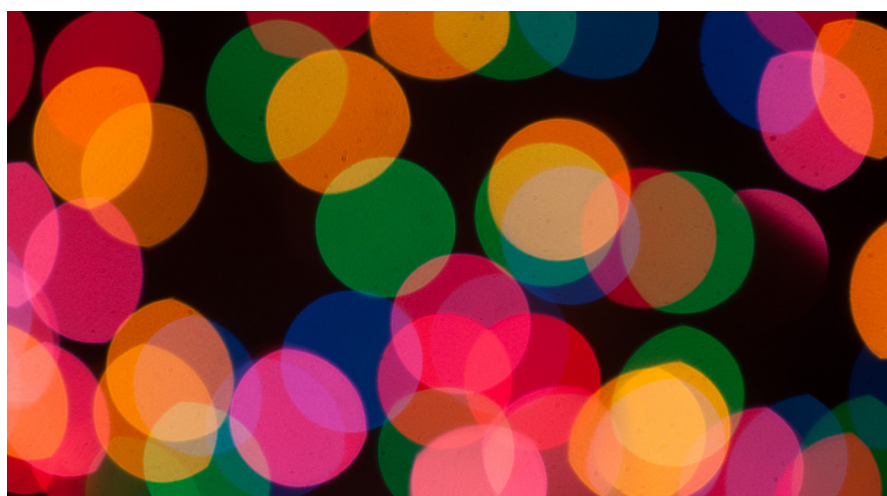
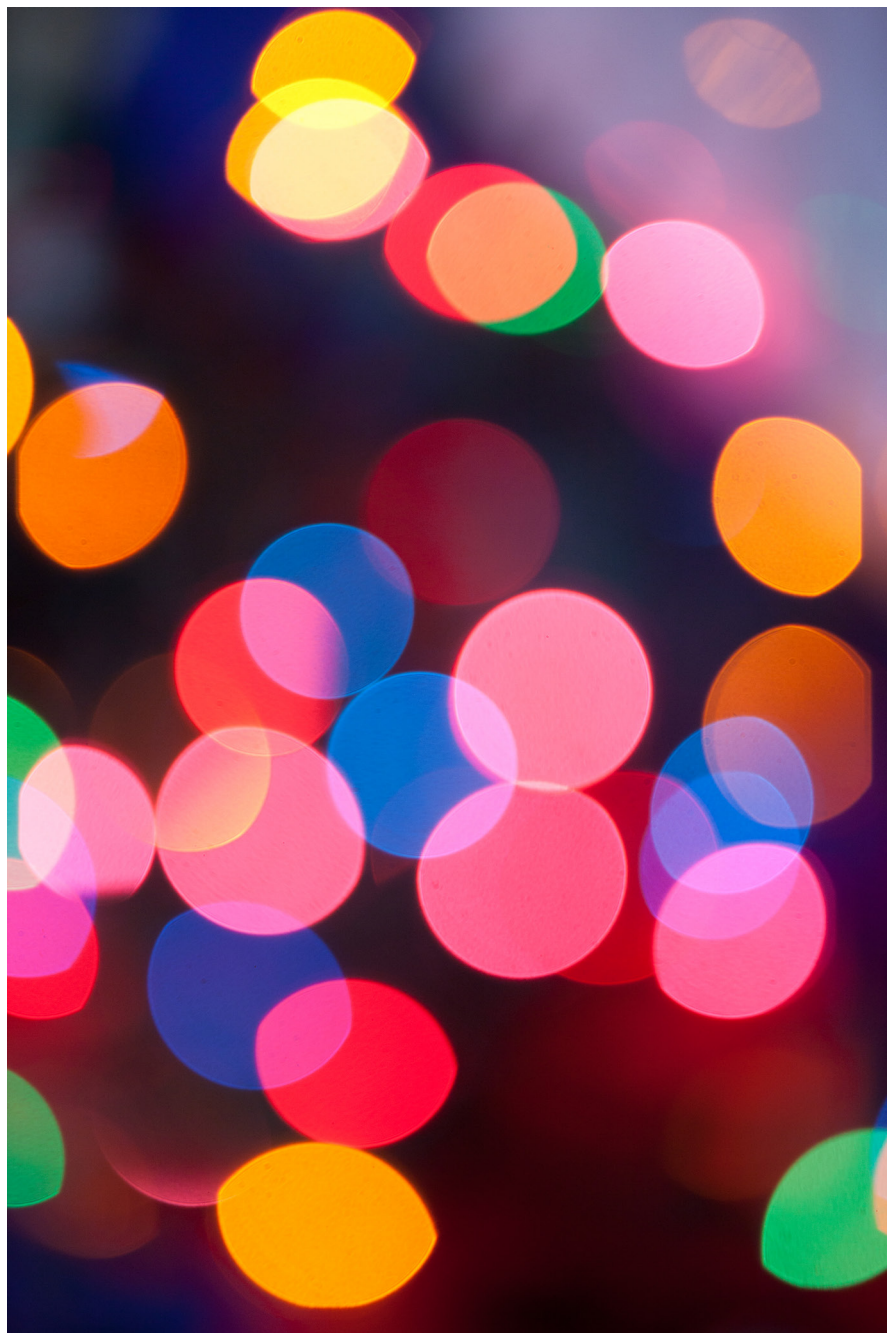
Any lens can create light bokeh. Lenses with longer focal lengths (the mm number) will create creamier bokeh.



Manual Focus Bokeh:

The key to manual focus bokeh is to have a lot of lights in your frame. A small portion of your Christmas tree or a string of lights will work for this. Multi-colored lights work especially well. A specific aperture is not important with this method.

- 1 Select Program (P), Aperture (AV or A).
- 2 Select Spot Metering.
- 3 Turn your lens to Manual Focus.
- 4 Turn your lens focus ring until the lights form large circles.
- 5 Press the shutter button.
- 6 Check your results.



Round Bokeh In Aperture Priority Mode (AV or A):

With this method you will leave distance between your subject and the lights to create bokeh. The more lights, the more glowing circles you will have.

- 1 Turn your lens to Auto Focus.
- 2 Select Aperture Priority Mode. (AV or A on the top dial)
- 3 Select Spot Metering.
- 4 Move your Aperture to f/1.4, or your widest aperture (smallest f/ number). Your camera will select the shutter speed when you point your lens toward your subject.
- 5 Double check your shutter speed.
 - ★ If it is faster than 1/50th move to the next step.
 - ★ If it is slower than 1/50th, and you are hand holding, move your ISO up until your shutter speed equals or is faster than 1/50th
- 6 Press the shutter button.
- 7 Check your results.



Round Bokeh In Manual Mode (M):

- 1 Select your widest aperture (the smallest f/number).
- 2 Select Spot Metering
- 3 Meter on your subject for a correct exposure.
- 4 Looking through your viewfinder, adjust your shutter speed until it indicates a correct exposure (the middle line on your light meter). Adjust your ISO and shutter speed, leaving your aperture at its widest number.
- 5 Shoot.
- 6 Review your results.

Round Bokeh with a point and shoot:

Point and shoot bokeh is a bit trickier, but not impossible!

- 1 Choose the Macro mode (flower mode).
- 2 Turn off the flash.
- 3 Focus.
- 4 Shoot.
- 5 Check your results.
- 6 Play with changing your distance to change the light effect.

METERING MODES:

Follow [this link](#) to read more about metering modes.





STAR BURST

To create star bursts you will use a small aperture and slow shutter speed. The combination results in blur if you hand hold your camera, so grab your tripod or flat firm surface.

Since we are using a narrow aperture (large f/ number) any lens you have will work!

You can use this method inside or out any time of year.

One quick note on LED lights! If you have LED lights on your tree, the starburst effect will be difficult to achieve.

Star Burst In Aperture Priority Mode (AV or A):

- 1 Place your camera on a tripod or stable surface.
- 2 Select A or AV (Aperture Priority Mode).
- 3 Select Spot Metering.
- 4 Select an ISO of 400 to 800.
- 5 Move your Aperture to $f/22$, your camera will select the appropriate shutter speed.
- 6 Select your self timer mode. (This helps to avoid extra camera shake!)
- 7 Shoot and wait the several seconds it may take your camera to take the photo.
- 8 Check your results.

NO TRIPOD?

Place your camera on a bag of rice to hold it steady if you don't have a tripod.

Star Burst In Manual Mode (M):

- 1 Place your camera on a tripod or sturdy surface.
- 2 Set your camera to M (Manual Mode).
- 3 Select an ISO of 400 to 800.
- 4 Move your aperture to $f/22$ or narrower (larger $f/$ number).
- 5 Meter for your subject, using spot metering.
- 6 Looking through your viewfinder, adjust your shutter speed until it indicates a correct exposure (the middle line on your light meter).
- 7 Focus on your subject. Manual focus may be necessary in your low light situation.
- 8 Press the shutter (or use your self timer or a remote release).
- 9 Review your result.

What did you find? You should see a star burst around each of the lights in your photo.

Try playing with your aperture and shutter speed combination to see what you find. The wider your aperture (smaller the $f/$ number), the less of a star burst you are going to see.



INSPIRATION & IDEAS

Here are a few bokeh ideas to try:

- ★ Photograph lights against a solid background.
- ★ Find lights in your everyday life and grab a photo of someone in front of them. (The photo on the left was at Target when my son was still small enough to fit into a cart!)
- ★ Place an object (ornament, figurine, cup, stuffed animal, present) in front of bokeh lights. (leave 5-10 feet between the object and the lights) You will need a bit of light to illuminate your object. Try a lamp, window light, or a diffused flash. In a pinch the light from your phone can work.
- ★ Place your lights in a shape and use the Manual focus technique.

Looking for more bokeh examples?

- ★ [Flickr Lights of Christmas Gallery](#)
- ★ [Capture Your Holidays Pinterest Board](#)