

Shoot Small

Underwater camera lenses have a restricted close focus, so you must use an extension tube or close-up lens to extend the focus and a framer to show your field of view. Different camera manufacturers offer various combinations of tubes, framers or close-up lenses so you can capture images of different-sized animals. Most of these tubes and framers have to be attached between the camera and lens before you enter the water, but many close-up lenses and framers can be changed underwater.

The biggest problem divers have when shooting small is incorrect subject framing. The focus point is at the front edge of the framer and the picture area is just less than the framer indicates. This is to ensure that the framer will not be included in your photos. Do not look through the viewfinder to line up your shot because you will have incorrect depth perception. Instead, view the scene from 45 degrees off to the side of the camera. This allows you to better place your subject at the front edge of the framer.


Try to shoot level to your subject rather than pointing down. Place your framer parallel to the subject to maximize your focus area. The depth of field on these framers is relatively shallow, so your subject placement is critical. Higher speed films will help by increasing your f-stop and depth of field if you are still having some trouble.

Since your camera is close to the subject, you will need to illuminate your animals with a flash placed virtually on top. This often will create deep shadows underneath your subject. We've developed a reflection system – called Framer Enhancers and marketed by Aqua Vision – that bounces the light to fill in the shadows.

SUCCESSFULLY CAPTURING CLOSE-UP IMAGES UNDERWATER REQUIRES THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT AND PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS.



The area illuminated by your flash is very small, so correct strobe placement is critical. Turn your camera system around and place your eye in the center of the framer. Adjust the angle of the strobe accordingly so it aims directly at the framer.

Using macro framers gives you the freedom to capture a small world. Best of all, though, they help encourage you to stop and marvel at the wonders of the reef community. 

Strobe to Subject

You need to adjust your strobe positioning when using an extension tube for macro photos because light is lost as it travels down the lens assembly. To get the proper exposure, move the strobe closer to the subject than the

normally recommended strobe-to-subject distance. An extension tube that is 2:1 or 1:1 requires your strobe be in tight, about 4-5 inches from the subject. With a 1:2 tube you should double the strobe distance to 8-10 inches away. A 1:3 extension requires about 9-10 inches. These are just guidelines, however,

and the actual distance you need will depend on the power of your flash and the photo subject. You may want to move in closer when shooting a dark-colored subject or back when shooting a light one. Photo tip courtesy of Sea & Sea Underwater Photography: 760-929-1909 or on the Web at www.seaandsea.com.