

Getting Close

The Ins and Outs of Digital Zoom

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An advantage of digital point-and-shoot cameras is that they generally feature a zoom lens. You can now capture variations from wide angle to telephoto with fingertip control. This zoom function works well in clear water when you take a series of images of the same subject. First take an overall image to document the animal and its location. Then zoom the lens, press the shutter and you have an enlarged version of the same animal.

When you reach the limit of the zoom and the subject is still not large enough in the frame, not to worry — digital point-and-shoot cameras have still more tricks to lend you a helping hand. Almost all digital point-and-shoot cameras feature close-up capability. The close-up function may be hidden among the dozens of controls on these electronic marvels, but look for a flower icon, which has become a standard symbol for this function.

With most point-and-shoot digital cameras, this default setting means that the lens will zoom to a wide-angle position. With the lens in this position, you may find yourself very close to your subject in order to fill the frame. You can always zoom back the

Digital vs. Optical Zoom

Many of the point-and-shoot cameras today have a digital zoom function that is supposed to extend the capabilities of the optical zoom of the camera lens. In fact, this feature does no more than crop the image as it is being exposed on the CCD or CMOS chip in the camera. It works the same as cropping images in Adobe Photoshop or Elements. The big drawbacks to using digital zoom are that it cannot be undone and the image quality is much less than with the optical zoom. Since the default for most cameras is Digital Zoom Off, you should leave it that way and zoom the image in your favorite editing program.

lens to give yourself a little working room. If your camera will not take close-ups while in the full telephoto mode, just move the zoom a little and you're in business.

Remember, there are advantages to having the camera close to your subject. Your images will be clearer since there is less water, and thus fewer pieces of particulate matter (commonly called backscatter when lit by a flash) suspended between lens and subject. You will even have more lighting control with the camera close to the subject. Top lighting, side lighting and backlighting your subjects will now be a piece of cake. 