

Olivia Clark
Photography

UNDERSTANDING LENSES: A VISUAL GUIDE FOR *photographers*

DOWNLOAD THIS GUIDE AT
[HTTPS://OCLARKPHOTOGRAPHY.COM/FREE-PHOTOGRAPHER-RESOURCES](https://oclarkphotography.com/free-photographer-resources)

1

WHY LENSES MATTER

- Your lens controls more than just how close you can get to your subject. It affects the mood, depth, perspective, and even how people look in your images.
- In this guide, you'll learn how to confidently choose the right lens for your vision.

WHAT IS FOCAL LENGTH?

- Focal length (measured in mm) describes how zoomed-in or wide your image appears.
- Shorter focal lengths (14–35mm) = wider field of view
- Longer focal lengths (85–200mm+) = more zoom + compression
- Focal length also changes background blur, distortion, and how your subject appears.

PRIME VS ZOOM LENSES

Prime Lenses:

- Fixed focal length (e.g., 35mm, 85mm)
- Typically sharper, wider apertures (e.g., f/1.8, f/1.4)
- Great for portraits, low light, and creative control

Zoom Lenses:

- Range of focal lengths (e.g., 24–70mm)
- More flexible, less need to move
- Useful for events, travel, unpredictable situations

Tip: If you're just starting out, a 50mm prime is a game-changer.

4

WHAT IS LENSE COMPRESSION?

Compression is how a lens flattens or stretches the space between subjects and background.

- Wide lenses (24mm) exaggerate space, making objects look farther apart
- Telephoto lenses (135mm+) compress space, bringing background closer
- This can dramatically change the feeling of a photo — from intimate to dramatic.

5

BEST FOCAL LENGTH FOR PORTRAITS

For flattering faces and soft background blur, use these:

- 50mm – Versatile, natural look
- 85mm – Soft, compressed background (ideal for portraits)
- 135mm – Stunning compression and isolation (for space)

WHAT LENS TO USE & WHEN

<u>Shoot Type</u>	<u>Focal Length</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Landscapes	14–35mm	Capture wide scenic views
Portraits	50–135mm	Flattering compression
Events	24–70mm or 70–200mm	Versatile zoom range
Products	50mm or 85mm	Detail + depth
Street/Travel	35mm	Candid, wide, compact

7

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

- Want dreamy portraits? → Start with 85mm f/1.8
- Shoot a bit of everything? → Try a 24–70mm f/2.8
- Need something compact and versatile? → Go with 35mm f/1.8
- Budget-conscious beginner? → Grab a 50mm f/1.8 — small, fast, and powerful

NOW YOU KNOW!

Lens choice is a powerful creative tool — and now you know how to use it. Whether you're building your kit or just trying to understand your gear better, this guide gives you a foundation to make confident choices.

-  Grab more photo guides at <https://oclarkphotography.com/free-photographer-resources>
- Follow me @OliviaClarkPhotography for more tips like these!



Olivia Clark
Photography

SAVE THIS POST
FOR LATER!