THE SINGLE LENS REFLEX CAMERA aka the SLR CAMERA

Each camera has its own system, and it is a good idea to keep your instruction booklet with the camera until you understand it. If you don’t have an instruction booklet for the camera you are using, try and find it online. Most are accessible. Although some cameras you may use are of the “point and shoot” variety or automatic, you still should understand how the controls-the aperture and shutter-affect the appearance of a photograph. The effect of the controls remains basically the same even on a complex camera.

1. The *lens* is used for focusing, and has aperture setting rings, depth of field scale and distance scale.
2. The *aperture* is an opening in the lens of the camera through which the light passes to expose the film. The opening size may vary to let in more or less light.
3. These openings are represented by “f numbers,” also referred to as “f-stops.” The larger the opening, the smaller the number that represents that opening.
4. A relationship of each number to openings is shown on the back of this handout.
5. Each f-stop lets either half as much or twice as much light into the camera as the opening next to it.
6. Larger lens openings (f2, f2.8, f3.5) are chosen if you wish to blur out the foreground or background in a photo (such as in a portrait or a photograph of a flower). When the opening is large the subject on which the camera is focused will be sharp, whether it is close or far away.
7. *Depth of field* controls sharpness or lack of sharpness in a photo. More of the picture will be in focus with the smaller lens opening such as f11, f16 and f22.
8. The *shutter* *speed button* indicates the speed at which a photo is taken.
9. Numbers such as 2, 15, 30, 60, 500, 1000 or 2000 represent fractions of a second that a shutter is open. Number one represents one second; number 500 is 1/500th of a second.
10. If using a flash, check instructions for the flash synchronization speed (usually 60 or 125) and use the shutter speed at that setting. Failure to use the proper setting will result in half photos.
11. The lowest safe hand-held shutter speed is 60 (1/60th of a second). To control camera shake, the shutter speed should not be slower than the focal length of the lens. (Example: a 125mm lens should be exposed at 1/125th of a second (125), and a 200mm lens should not be exposed at less than 1/250th of a second (250). (There is no 200 on the shutter release.) Focal length can be found on the front of the camera lens.
12. If a photo must be taken at 1/30th of a second or less (30), and a tripod is not available, become a “human tripod.” Brace yourself against something, hold the camera firmly against your forehead, take a deep breath, and gently squeeze the shutter release. If a delayed timer is on the camera, use it to avoid shaking the camera when you press the shutter release. A cable release screwed into the shutter release also prevents touching the camera during exposure. This is an advantage at slow shutter speeds.
13. To stop action (“freeze” everything in the picture), a shutter speed of 1/500th or faster is preferred.
14. To “pan” (stop action while blurring the background), set the shutter speed at 30, then follow the action, moving the camera. Release the shutter and continue to “follow” the action.

