



WHY ISN'T MY PHOTO SHARP?

The 7-Point Photography Sharpness Checklist

Before blaming your camera or lens, use this checklist to diagnose why an image looks soft or lacks the sharpness you expected.

1. WAS MY SHUTTER SPEED FAST ENOUGH?

Consider both camera movement and subject movement. A shutter speed that prevents camera shake may still be too slow to freeze a moving subject.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

2. DID THE CAMERA OR SUBJECT MOVE?

Camera movement can cause blur, but so can movement by your subject. Image stabilisation can help with camera movement; it cannot freeze a moving subject.

☐ Camera moved ☐ Subject moved ☐ Neither ☐ Not sure

3. DID I FOCUS ON THE RIGHT PART OF THE SUBJECT?

Check where the camera actually focused. Autofocus is a powerful tool, but it may select something other than the part of the scene that matters most to you.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

4. WAS MY DEPTH OF FIELD SUFFICIENT?

A very wide aperture can create a very narrow zone of focus. Ask whether the parts of the subject you wanted sharp were actually within the depth of field.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

5. DID I HOLD AND OPERATE THE CAMERA CORRECTLY?

Consider your grip, stance, support for longer lenses and the way you press the shutter. Small movements can matter, particularly at slower shutter speeds.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

6. IS THIS REALLY A SHARPNESS PROBLEM?

Technical sharpness and perceived sharpness are not always the same. Edge contrast, lighting, subject/background contrast, texture, viewing size and processing can all affect how sharp an image appears.

☐ Technical issue ☐ Perceived sharpness ☐ Both ☐ Not sure

7. AM I EXPECTING POST-PROCESSING TO FIX IT?

Sharpening can enhance existing detail and improve perceived crispness, but it cannot recreate detail lost through missed focus, significant motion blur or major camera shake.

☐ Capture is good ☐ Editing may help ☐ Capture problem needs fixing

THE KEY QUESTION

“What is actually making this photograph look soft?”