

# Interactive

Dale Morris answers your questions about macro photography.

Got a question about digital imaging? Drop us a line.

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**M**acro photography is easier than it looks says Dale Morris. And no matter where you are, there is never any shortage of amazing subjects to shoot. He shares his secrets for capturing life's small wonders.

Macro photographers get to witness an often overlooked world full of perfect little plants and amazing little animals; a world in which an ant is every bit as intriguing as an elephant.

And taking great macro shots is easier than you think. If you're a compact camera user, this is one area where the smaller sensor in your camera has an advantage over the big DSLR sensors. Switch your camera to macro mode and you'll find that it's not too hard to fill the frame with the smallest of subjects. You'll need a specialist gear if you own a DSLR, but there are plenty of affordable macro lenses out there and the results are well worth it. If you're on a tight budget, cheap extension tubes can be bought from most photography shops and attached between the lens and the camera body. These simple and relatively cheap accessories will help you to get up close to the smallest of bugs.

So, what else do you need to take great macro shots? Why not invest in a half decent 'off-shoe' flash gun; one you can hold in your hand. Often in macro

photography, the subject is only a few centimeters away from the front element of the lens, and the camera's pop up flash may not be able to cast a light at such short distances.

Using a light source that is not attached to your camera will allow you to illuminate your subject from whatever angle you want. If a flash isn't in your budget try using a simple gold or silver reflector to bounce natural sunlight onto your subject or even use an LED torch.

Achieving sharp focus in macro photography can be challenging because depth of field is normally very narrow and the subjects rarely keep still. High f-stop numbers require longer shutter speeds which in turn leads to blurry shots. Try hand-holding your camera and turn off the autofocus setting. Focus on the subject by fractionally moving your body and set your shutter speed to around 1/80s and your flash to auto.

Try to imagine the world from the perspective of a tiny animal. You'll soon discover a world you didn't know existed. ●

**1** Try looking for pleasing compositions, colours and patterns within the finer details of a larger subject. Here, I photographed the eye of a paper nautilus I found washed up on the beach. (Nikon D300, 105mm macro lens, rear curtain flash. Exposure: 1/50s @ f22.)

**2** When photographing insects, try to get your lens at eye level – it makes for more engaging images. Nikon D100, 100mm lens. Exposure: 1/60s @ f18.



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**3** This isn't a macro but it's relevant as I took it while shooting macros. Sometimes it pays to step back and look at the broader picture. A slight soft focus filter was applied in Photoshop using nik color effects filters. (Nikon D200, 400mm lens. Exposure: 1/400s @ f4.5.)

**4** Low angles make small subjects seem larger. (Nikon D200, 90mm macro lens and flash. Exposure: 1/80s @ f13.)

**5** Look for simple backgrounds. In this case the bright yellow background of the flower draws our eyes to the subject. (Nikon D200, 90mm macro lens and flash. 1/80s @ f22 (for optimum depth of field).)