

# Nikon D750 Experience

The Still Photography Guide to Operation  
and Image Creation with the Nikon D750

an e-book by:  
Douglas J. Klostermann



***PREVIEW of***  
**Nikon D750 Experience**

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Image Creation with the Nikon D750*

by  
Douglas J. Klostermann

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## Nikon D750 Experience

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### **Nikon D750 Experience**

*The Still Photography Guide to Operation and Image Creation with the Nikon D750*

by: Douglas J. Klostermann

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the Nikon D750 brings about a new position in Nikon’s full frame dSLR line-up. Rather than being a direct successor to the previous D700, the D750 now sits between the D610 and the D810 and borrows from both of these cameras. Features have been included that will assist photographers in many of the demanding situations that the D750 can be used, including a responsive 51 point autofocus system and fast continuous frame rate, the *Group-Area AF* Autofocus Area Mode where five autofocus points work together to focus on a subject that may elude a single point, and the *Highlight-Weighted* Metering Mode to help retain highlight details on brightly lit subjects such as in theater and concert scenes. The inclusion of the *i* Button allows photographers to quickly access mode-specific settings, whether shooting through the Viewfinder or working in Live View or Movie mode. Filmmakers will be able to take advantage of the numerous video improvements including a *Flat* Picture Style designed to best retain shadows and highlights for post-production, and “zebra stripes” for displaying overexposed areas of the scene when viewed on the camera’s LCD Monitor.



*Figure 1 - Detail of the Nikon D750 full-frame digital SLR.*

The D750 also boasts a 24.3 megapixel sensor, with a wider native ISO sensitivity range (100 to 12,800), enabling photographers to capture cleaner images in low light situations. It offers a maximum 6.5 frames per second (fps) continuous shooting speed when capturing images in both FX and DX Image Area size, excellent for sports and action photographers. And the camera includes the *Quiet Continuous* (Qc) Release

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Mode for taking a burst of images up to three frames per second and with decreased shutter noise, which can be useful in performance and wedding situations. For recording HD video, the D750 now supports the 1080/60p size and frame rate, simultaneous output to an optional external recorder, and includes built-in stereo microphones with selectable frequency ranges. And the *Power Aperture* feature will allow cinematographers to smoothly change the aperture size while recording to either an external device or to the camera's memory cards.



*Figure 2 - 1969 Ford Mustang Shelby GT 350 - Falmouth Auto Show on Cape Cod, Falmouth, Mass. - D750: Shutter speed 1/125, Aperture f/4.0, ISO 800.*

The D750 boasts a ruggedly built, weather-sealed body with a magnesium alloy frame, dual SD memory card slots, an articulating rear LCD Monitor, a big and bright 100% coverage Viewfinder with a clearer OLED viewfinder display, remote Speedlight flash control, and numerous customization options. The camera's high-resolution, high-quality image sensor along with its highly versatile and customizable 51 point autofocus system, scene-recognition exposure metering system, powerful Expeed 4 processor, and extremely high ISO capabilities in low light will serve the needs of dedicated photographers of every level, from enthusiasts to professionals. The advanced features and customizable controls of the Nikon D750 will enable photographers to consistently capture sharp, clean, and well-exposed images in most any shooting situation.

But the D750 is merely a tool. It is up to you to make use of its features and capabilities to create the images you envision. While the camera's manual can tell you about all the



settings and controls, how to change them, and their intended functions, this guide will build upon that and explain when and why you may wish to use them. Every button, dial, menu item, and Custom Setting of the D750 is there for a reason: to help you consistently capture the images you want. Some of them are more useful to different types of photographers and shooting situations and you don't necessarily need to learn and use them all immediately, but this guide will help to give you the knowledge to confidently use the ones that turn your Nikon D750 into an image capturing tool that works best for you.

### ***1.1 Take Control of Your Camera***

Since the camera is a tool to take the images you want to take, you obviously can't always allow the camera to make decisions for you. You have to take control of the camera to ensure that you capture exactly the images you intend - by autofocusing precisely where you intend, setting the aperture or shutter speed that you want, and obtaining the exposure you desire. While the D750 is an intelligent camera, it cannot read your mind and your intentions and does not know that you wish to focus on and properly expose the yellow flower in the foreground, while making the background appear out of focus, and the flower petals to be caught still and not be blurred from the motion of the wind, on this bright, sunny day (see *Figure 3*).



*Figure 3 - Flowers, Arlington, Mass. - Autofocus modes, exposure metering mode, aperture, shutter speed, ISO, and white balance all considered, even in creating this simple image. D750: Shutter speed 1/1250, Aperture f/4.0, ISO 100.*

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You have to tell the camera to do all of this, through the various controls and settings, such as the Autofocus Mode and AF-Area Mode (lock focus on the center of the flower), the exposure metering mode (properly expose the petals), the aperture setting (the out-of-focus background), the shutter speed (freezing the motion of the flower from the wind), the ISO (bright day) and the white balance (sunny day). Taking control of all of these functions and settings will enable you to consistently create the dramatic and compelling images you envision.

Learning to use and get the most out of an advanced digital SLR (dSLR) camera like the D750 takes time, practice, patience, mistakes, and experimentation. If you have upgraded from a previous dSLR such as the D7100, D90, or D300 (or one of their predecessors), you are in for a treat. Its full-frame sensor will allow “uncropped” performance of your FX lenses while delivering extremely high quality images. Its additional features and capabilities will more easily help you to successfully capture scenes and situations that you may have been limited in consistently attaining before. Its sophisticated and accurate autofocus system coupled with its fast continuous shooting speed, plus its exposure metering system and high ISO capabilities will help you get sharp images of subjects and moments that previously you may have missed, especially in lower light situations.

If you are relatively new to dSLR photography and are still in the process of learning all the controls of a dSLR and the exposure concepts of digital photography, you have perhaps jumped right into the proverbial deep end of the pool by choosing the highly advanced D750! But don't worry, this book will help guide you through its features, controls, and capabilities. Be sure to take it slowly and patiently as you learn the features and concepts that I will explain. With practice and experience you will soon be shooting with confidence and can begin to take advantage of the camera's more advanced functions. Even if you are an intermediate photographer, don't expect to just pick up all the new information at once, in one or two readings of a single book. (In fact, you wouldn't want to, as the never ending journey of learning and mastering photography is a big part of what it's all about!) Try not to become frustrated if you don't quite understand something or aren't always getting the results you desire. Instead learn the controls, functions, settings, and concepts bit by bit, try them out in real life shooting situations, and return to this guide, the *Nikon D750 User's Manual*, and other photography books to address questions and problems you encounter. Continue to learn and to photograph often and it should all begin to come together, sometimes slowly and sometimes in rapid bursts of discovery and understanding.



*Figure 4 - 1966 Ford Mustang GT - Falmouth Auto Show on Cape Cod, Falmouth, Mass. - D750: Shutter speed 1/125, Aperture f/4.0, ISO 100.*

### **1.2 Using This Guide**

There are many different ways to use a dSLR camera and its controls to capture images, and many diverse situations in which photographers work. I'm going to concentrate on the techniques that I believe are the most practical, useful, and effective for the majority of enthusiast photographers using the D750, while also explaining how settings can apply to advanced and specialized uses. The settings and techniques I discuss can apply to various types of photography including general photography, action, portrait, and travel photography. Once you have a firm grasp of the controls, settings, and techniques you will have the tools and knowledge to address different issues, specific situations, and challenging scenes. I encourage you to then experiment and continue to learn, and to find the techniques that work best and are most comfortable or intuitive for you.

The D750 is a highly sophisticated tool that deserves to be used to its full potential, and that involves taking control of the camera and its functions, which means taking it off the automatic and Scene modes, and off automatically selected autofocus points (when not needed). While this may be more challenging at first, these are the techniques that are necessary to take full advantage of the capabilities of any dSLR including the D750, and will lead you to having more control and consistency over your image making. Hopefully this will inevitably lead to better images!

This guide is intended to be used with the camera in your hands. That is the best way to directly follow and understand the controls, functions, and settings as they are being explained. It is also intended to be used in conjunction with and in addition to the camera's manual, not to completely replace it, so every bit of information in the *Nikon D750 User's Manual* will not be repeated here. Among the official manual's often brief descriptions and sometimes frustratingly incomplete and disjointed explanations, there is some very valuable information, as well as the basics for buttons, controls, and how to access and change all the settings. And I will refer to the manual for very specialized or rarely-used functions that are well-explained there. Note that the *D750 User's Manual* can also be obtained as a PDF file from the Nikon website, at the webpage and the direct link, below:

[https://support.nikonusa.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/19237](https://support.nikonusa.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/19237)

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*Figure 5 - View of the Nikon D750 dSLR, showing the tilting rear Monitor, extended.*

As you can see, there is a lot to make sense of regarding terminology and controls, so I recommend that you familiarize yourself with the controls and displays of the camera body, as shown on pages 1-17 of the *D750 User's Manual* and explained in the **Camera Controls** chapter below, as well as read through the manual at some point and attempt to understand or absorb as much as possible. Yes, much of it may appear complicated and confusing at first, but this guide will explain and clarify the numerous buttons,



### 3. MENUS and CUSTOM SETTINGS

#### 3.1 Setting Up the D750

The Menus and Custom Settings of the Nikon D750 allow you to have greater, more precise control over how your camera functions. They are an important part of what makes the D750 a much more powerful and exacting tool than mid-level dSLR cameras, and they allow you to customize the camera to work for you, to work how *you* work. Using them you can also fine-tune settings and operations including white balance, metering, exposure, and autofocus. I highly recommend that you carefully go through these menus and change the settings to the options that allow you to use the camera in the manner that works best for you and your shooting needs.

Some of the Menu items are only used when shooting, reviewing, or processing images, but several of them should be set up in advance. Below are explanations and recommended typical settings for the Menus and Custom Settings of the Nikon D750. I realize that reading this section at the beginning of this book presents a conflicting situation in that these menu items need to be explained first so that you can initially set up your camera, but you may not yet have the knowledge to fully understand all these menu items until you read through the rest of this guide! So don't get overwhelmed if you don't yet understand the settings or terminology used to describe the Menu and Custom Settings and their options. You will likely wish to return to them later after you have begun to better understand your camera and its controls and start to determine how you want to work.

And I understand that it is not as compelling to read through these lists of menu items as it is to read the more-flowing instructional text later in the book. But you will begin to learn much about the D750 as you patiently work through this Menus and Custom Settings chapter. As I mentioned in the **Introduction**, this section will often refer to upcoming chapters and sections, but it is not necessary for you to jump ahead. This is merely a "heads-up" that the menu item or function that you are currently setting up will be explained in detail later in the guide, in the applicable section of the text (such as **Autofocusing** or **Metering Modes**, etc.).

Also, if you don't yet understand some of the settings or why you might wish to change them, leave those on the default or recommended settings for now. If you have worked with a Nikon D700, D800/D800E, D610/D600, or even a D7100/D7000 body before using the D750, you will find that many of these Menus and Custom Settings options are similar, and you may wish to continue to use most of the same settings that you have determined work best for you. However there are some new additions with the D750.





Figure 28 - Whipple Hill, Lexington, Mass. - Shutter speed 1/160, Aperture f/2.8, ISO 400.

**Important Note:** As with most current dSLR cameras, the D750 has a couple menu settings “quirks” or conflicts that may drive you crazy if you are not aware why they are occurring. Most notably, some settings will be greyed-out in the menus and you will not be able to select them if a “conflicting” setting is enabled, or if you are currently using an automatic shooting mode, a Scene Mode, or an Effects Mode. Examples include certain functions like White Balance Bracketing and HDR shooting, which are not accessible when the camera is set to capture files in the *NEF (RAW)* image format. You will need to change the Image Quality to *JPEG* only. Also, if you are working in Auto shooting mode or the Scene or Effects modes, certain Menu items will be inaccessible. If you only have one memory card inserted, a Menu item such *Copy Image(s)* will be greyed-out. And if you are using a third-party lens or a non-G, E, or D Nikon lens, a lens correction item such as Auto Distortion Control will not be accessible. These are actually not arbitrary quirks, but are typically logical conflicts. I will mention these conflicts in the applicable settings.

Be sure to place your Mode Dial on A, S, or M Shooting Mode before you go through these settings because they all may not be accessible in the Menu if your camera is set on one of the Auto, Scene, or Effects Modes.

### 3.2 Setup Guide Spreadsheet

In conjunction with this book, I have also created a comprehensive *Nikon D750 Setup Guide* spreadsheet, with recommended settings for the applicable Menus, all of the Custom Settings, plus some shooting and exposure settings. It has complete and separate camera setup recommendations for different types of shooting, including:

General / Travel / Street  
Landscape / Architecture  
Action / Sports  
Moving Wildlife / Birds  
Studio / Portraits  
Concert / Performance

The *Nikon D750 Experience Setup Guide* spreadsheet can be downloaded from my blog here:

<http://blog.dojoklo.com/2014/09/25/nikon-d750-setup-guide-with-recommended-settings/>

Most all of the suggested settings on the spreadsheet are further explained in this chapter and throughout this guide, so it is best to use the spreadsheet hand-in-hand with the explanations in this book. And as you read through the Menus and Custom Settings, perhaps make notes of how you may wish to set them or adjust them for the different types of scenes and situations you photograph. Please keep in mind that the reason the Nikon D750 offers so many menu items and customization options is that photographers have different needs and work in different ways, and it is best to determine which settings *you* need or prefer rather than simply rely solely on the suggested settings from another photographer.

### 3.3 Playback Menu

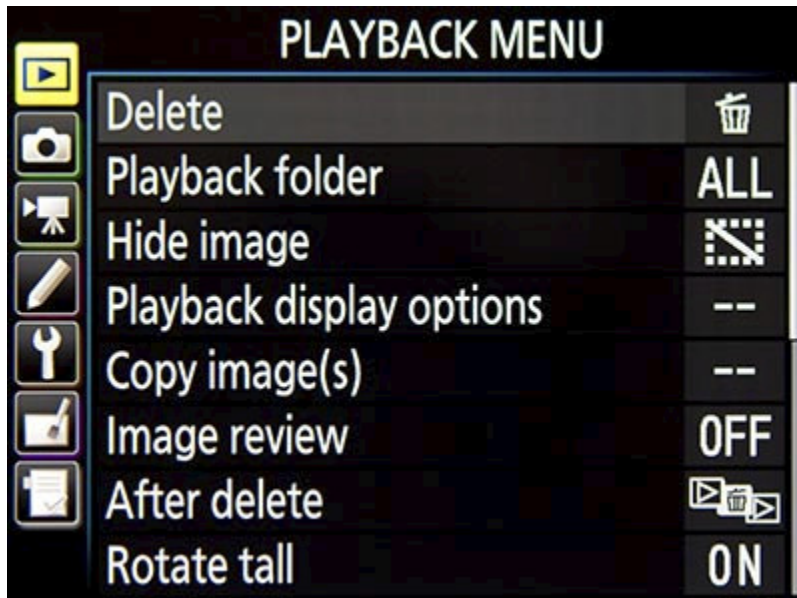


Figure 29 - Playback Menu

#### Delete

Use this to delete a single image or a selection of images (*Selected*), or all images in the current playback folder on the selected memory card (*All*), (see *Figure 30 - left*). See the Playback Folder menu item next to determine which images are included in the current playback folder just mentioned. If you have two memory cards inserted, you will be prompted to choose which memory card to delete, *Slot 1* or *Slot 2*. If selecting images, use the Multi Selector to navigate to the desired image, and press the Zoom-out Button to select it. You can continue to select multiple images, then press the OK Button to delete (see *Figure 30 - right*).

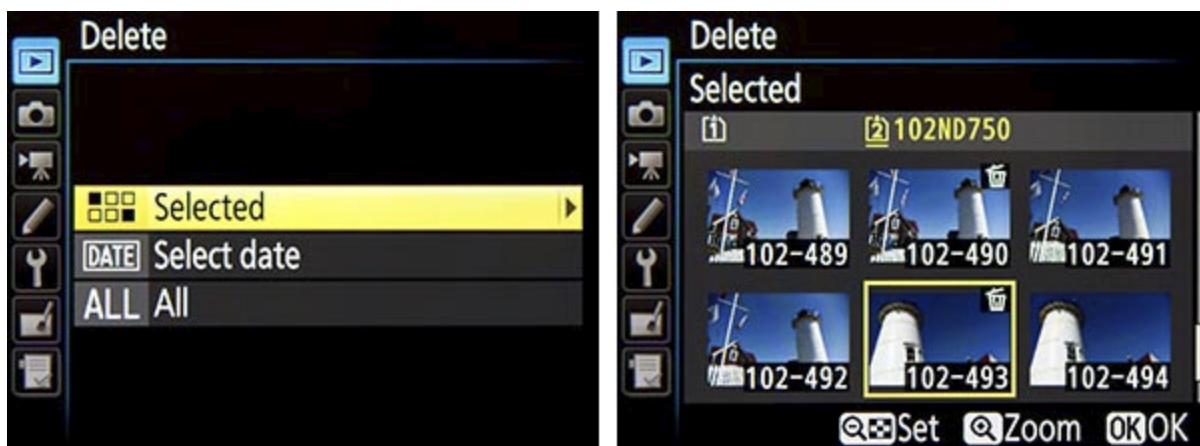


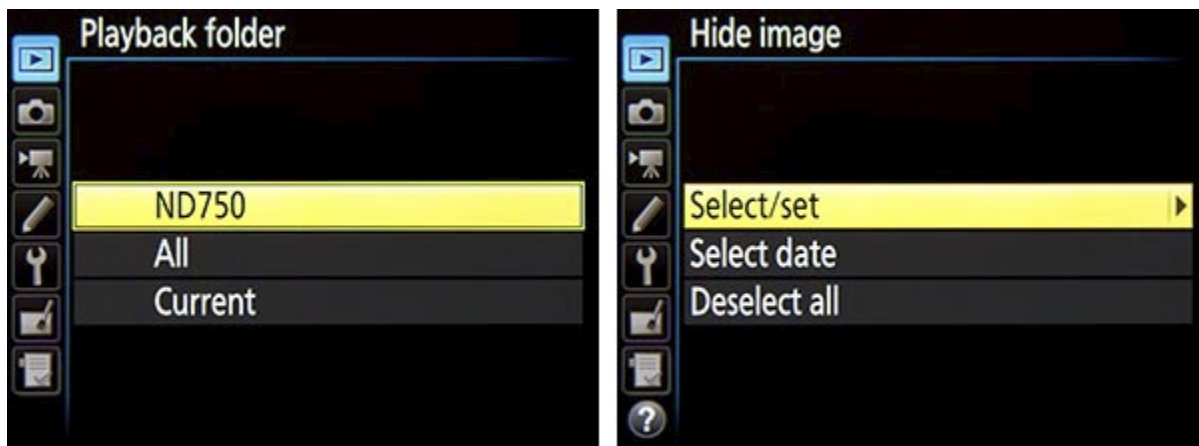
Figure 30 - Left: Delete Menu Item, used to delete user Selected images, all images taken on a Select Date, or All images in the current folder. Right: When selecting images, the trash can icon indicates the image(s) selected for deletion.

However, if you are deleting a single image or just a few, you can more easily do this using the Delete Button on the rear of the camera. If you are deleting all the images on a card, it is better to use *Format Memory Card* (explained in the Setup Menu below). Use large enough memory cards so that you don't need to worry about deleting images in camera while working, and instead it may be best to manage them on your computer after downloading all the images.

Please know that many of the “secondary” types of button uses for menus and on-screen settings don't need to be learned or memorized, as the camera will often display tiny icon reminders on the applicable menu or screen. For example in *Figure 30 - right*, the icons at the bottom of the screen indicate that pressing the Zoom-out Button will mark (*Set*) the image for deletion, pressing the Zoom-in Button will magnify the selected thumbnail for a closer look, and the OK Button will complete the operation.

### Playback Folder

This sets which images will be visible during Playback (see *Figure 31 - left*). Leave at the default setting, *ND750* and all the images taken with this camera will be visible. If you are sharing memory cards between different cameras (which is not at all recommended as it may lead to confusion and file management headaches) then you can select *All*. If you just wish to view only the images in the current folder, select *Current*. You can select and create individual folders for organizing your photos in the *Storage Folder* item in the Photo Shooting Menu. Most users will likely wish to leave this set for *ND750*.



*Figure 31 - Left: Playback Folder options, to determine which images are visible during image playback. Right: Hide Image options, to hide images from view during image playback.*

### Hide Image

This is used to hide images from view during playback, which could help prevent accidental erasing of that image (see *Figure 31 - right*). You can select the images to hide using *Select/set*, then use the Multi Selector and Zoom-out Button to select the desired images. You can also select all images taken on a specific date, using *Select date*. Be aware that hidden images will be deleted by formatting the memory card. View



all the previously hidden images by choosing *Deselect all*, which will also remove protection from images that you previously chose to Protect. It is typically best not to use this feature so that you don't lose track of any of your images and accidentally erase hidden images when formatting a memory card.

### Playback Display Options

During image playback on the rear LCD Monitor you can scroll through various information displays in order to view your images either full screen or with various shooting data or histograms. This menu item is used to select which of these views will be available during playback (see *Figure 32*). I recommend that you select all of the *Additional photo info* options, at least initially. Then after some use you can determine which information views you prefer and deselect the ones you don't need. These will all be illustrated in the **Image Playback** section.



*Figure 32 - Playback Display Options, allowing you to select which information and displays are available to view during image playback.*

*None* will display a full screen image with no information, which helps you to inspect the image. *Highlights* will display blinking areas to alert you of where the image has been overexposed, which can help you determine the proper exposure for the subsequent shots. *RGB histogram* will display histogram graphs of the various individual color channels to also assist you in determining proper exposure and help prevent the over-saturation of areas of specific colors. *Shooting data* displays additional information including the lens and focal length used, flash information, and Picture Control settings. This screen is not necessarily very informative immediately after taking the shot since you already know most of these settings, but can be handy when later reviewing an image in-camera. *Overview* displays a thumbnail of the image along with the combined RGB histogram and shooting information (see *Figure 33*). This is perhaps the most important and useful information screen to use while shooting to help determine that



you obtained the proper or desired exposure of an image. All the different elements of displayed information in these various information screens will be discussed and explained throughout the guide, particularly in the **Exposure** chapters and in the **Histogram** section.

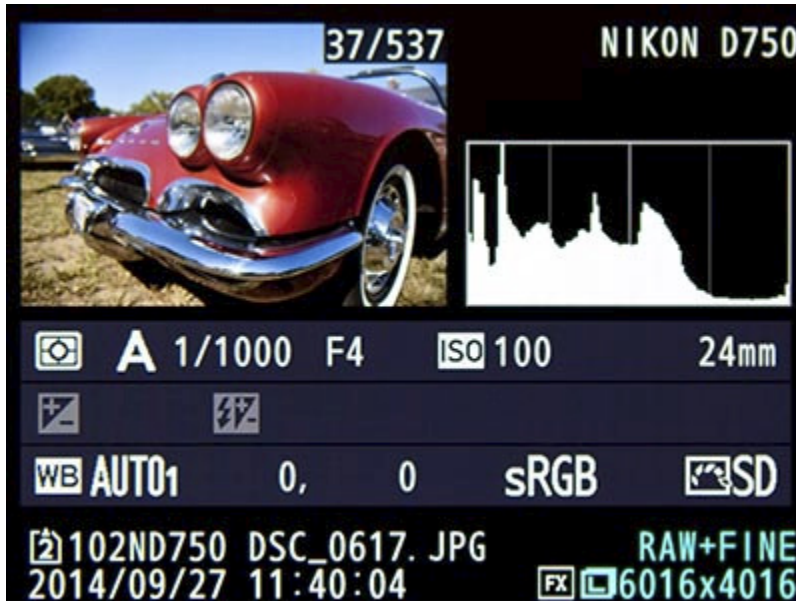


Figure 33 - The Overview information display screen during image playback, showing a thumbnail of the image, the combined RGB Histogram, and shooting and file information.

The first item on this menu, *Focus point*, will show you which Focus Point was used when capturing an image, and will thus verify if you properly focused where you intended (unless you recomposed after locking focus). It is that tiny red square or squares superimposed on your image when you view it on the rear LCD Monitor, but will not be on the actual image (see *Figure 34*). It is most helpful for when you let the camera select the autofocus point, such as in action situations, and/ or when using an AF-Area Mode other than Single Point AF - and then you can see if the camera focused where you wished. But if you manually select your own AF point, as you typically should in many situations, you will already know where the camera focused. If the camera did not achieve focus, or if Auto-Area AF mode was used with AF-C focus mode, no Focus Point will appear.



Figure 34 - File information view during image playback, with Focus point display enabled to show which Focus Point was used for autofocusing with this shot, indicated by the tiny red square located at the Thunderbird medallion on the side of the car.

Keep in mind that if you selected a Focus Point, locked focus, and then recomposed the image before taking the shot, the image on your rear LCD will display which AF point was used, but the displayed Focus Point will not actually be located in the same place on the image that the camera focused (before you recomposed), so it won't actually be helpful! This will be illustrated and explained in the **Autofocusing** chapter of this text.



Figure 35 - Copy Image(s) Menu Item - Work your way down the options (left) to select the source card and the specific images (right). Then select the Destination Folder and choose “Copy image(s)” to complete.

### Copy Image(s)

This is used to copy images from one memory card to the other when two cards are inserted in the camera, and can be used to back up specific images or the entire card at once (see Figure 35 - left). This could be useful to create back-up copies of your images

### Reset Custom Settings

As with the other menus, this will allow you to reset all of the Custom Settings to their default values, which are listed on pages 295-298 of the *Nikon D750 User's Manual*. An asterisk notation shown next to a setting in the Custom Settings menus will indicate that a setting has been changed from its default value.

#### *a* - Autofocus



Figure 66 - Nikon D750 Custom Settings menu.

The Autofocus-related Custom Settings will be explained here, and the autofocus system of the D750 will be explained in detail in Chapter 5 - **Autofocusing**. Remember to review these Autofocus-related Custom Settings once you have become more familiar with the autofocus system, including the *Autofocus Modes* and *Autofocus AF-Area Modes*.

#### **a1: AF-C priority selection**

This setting determines if attaining focus is top priority when you are working in Continuous-servo AF Mode (AF-C Autofocus Mode), or if you just want the shots to be taken even if exact focus is not attained for each shot (see *Figure 67 - left*). It is designed for when you are capturing a burst of images using a continuous Release Mode. Specifically, when you press the Shutter Button, this setting determines if the images are taken immediately (*Release*) even if the first image is not yet in focus, or if the camera waits for focus to be attained before taking each photo (*Focus*). For example, if you are tracking a moving subject such as a runner or an animal, you may wish to just capture a rapid series of shots at all costs in order to ensure getting specific moments, and exact focus of each shot may not be the priority. Or you may wish to make sure the camera has properly focused each shot before the shutter is released. This however may cause a slight (perhaps millisecond) delay for each shot and the exact moments may be missed. If capturing the images at all costs and maintaining the

maximum continuous frame rate are the priorities, set for *Release*. If exact focus is your priority, set on *Focus*.

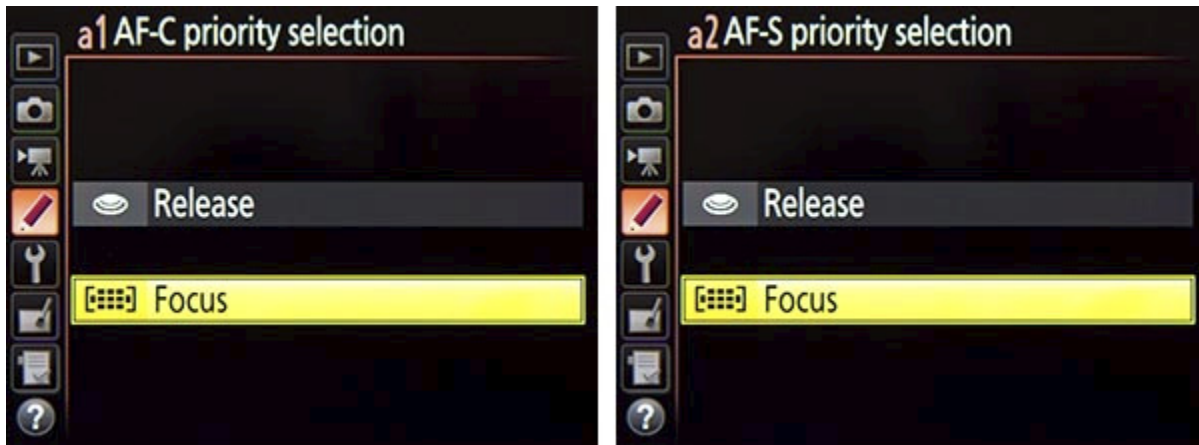


Figure 67 - Left: AF-C Priority Selection options, to determine if shutter release and maintaining the maximum continuous frame rate are the priorities, or if exact focus of each shot is the priority. Right: The similar AF-S Priority Selection options, for when working in AF-S Focus Mode.

### **a2: AF-S priority selection**

This is similar to AF-C Priority above, except that this setting is for when you are working in Single-servo AF Mode (AF-S Autofocus Mode), typically used when your subject is relatively still or when you are *not* tracking a moving subject (see Figure 67 - right). Again, determine if getting the shot (*Release*) or exact focus (*Focus*) is your priority. Since AF-S is typically used with subjects that are not moving, it generally makes more sense to ensure focus is attained, thus you may wish to select *Focus* for this setting. This setting is also important if you wish to either make use of or avoid “trap focus,” a focusing technique which will be explained in Chapter 5.

### **a3: Focus tracking with lock-on**

This setting determines how the autofocus system reacts to sudden, dramatic changes in the distance of the subject when you are working in AF-C autofocus mode. The camera can be set to wait a brief period of time before refocusing at the new distance - 1 (*Short*), a long period of time - 5 (*Long*), or steps in-between, from 1 to 5 (see Figure 68).

For example, you may be tracking a football player across the field when another player much closer to you comes between you and your intended subject. This setting will determine if and how quickly the camera then focuses on this nearer player, or if it continues to focus at the original distance as the closer player passes through your field of view. If you do not wish for the camera to suddenly change focus to the nearer player, set to a longer period such as 4 or 5. If you wish to switch focus to a sudden closer or farther object, such as perhaps a flock of moving birds where focusing on any bird and not a specific bird is the priority, then set for a shorter period, 1 or 2, or even set for *Off* and focus will immediately change. Keep this option in mind with the various



AF-C Autofocus Mode and AF Area Mode configurations (discussed in the **Autofocusing** chapter), as your preference will likely change depending on your subject and situation. Sometimes you may not want the camera to quickly refocus on a closer or more distant subject, while other times you might.

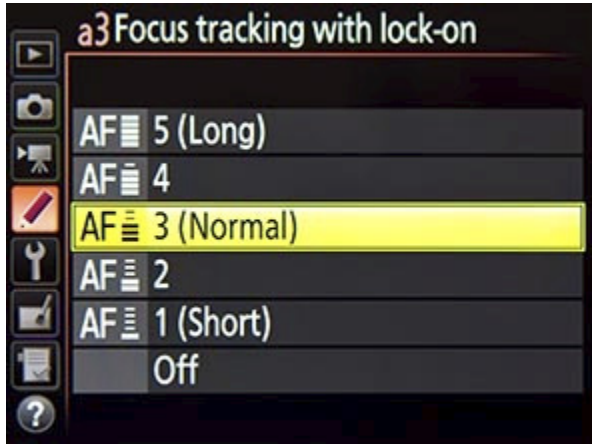


Figure 68 - Focus Tracking With Lock-On setting to determine how long the camera waits before refocusing on a subject at a different distance, when working in AF-C Autofocus Mode.

### a4: Focus point illumination

This is used to determine if and how the active autofocus point or points are displayed in the Viewfinder while shooting, when using various autofocus AF-Area Modes (see Figure 69).



Figure 69 - Left: Focus Point Illumination options, to choose how the AF points are displayed in the Viewfinder, for various situations. Right: The Focus Point Illumination sub-menu options for Manual Focus Mode.

*Manual focus mode* - If enabled, this will display the active AF point in the Viewfinder even when the camera and lens are set for manual focus. While an AF point is not needed for autofocusing in that situation, it can be used with the Electronic Rangefinder feature of the D750 to help confirm when the subject is in focus. This is explained in the



**Autofocusing** chapter. If this option is set for *Off*, you will only be able to view the Focus Point as you are selecting it with the Multi Selector.

*Dynamic-Area AF Display* - When making use of the *Dynamic-Area AF Modes*, which will be addressed in the **Autofocus AF-Area Modes** section, you can choose to view just the selected AF point, or view the selected point plus the potentially active surrounding points. For example, when using *9-Point Dynamic-Area AF* and *AF-C* Autofocus Mode, you will select an AF point to focus on the subject, and the surrounding 8 points can help retain focus on the subject if it briefly leaves the selected point. Using this Custom Setting item, you can choose to view just the selected point in the Viewfinder (*Off*), or view the selected point plus the locations of the surrounding 8 points (*On*) (see *Figure 70*).



*Figure 70 - Custom Setting a4: Focus Point Illumination - Simulated view of the D750 Viewfinder - Use the “Dynamic-Area AF Display” item of Custom Setting a4 to display just the single active AF point, or to display all of the points of the Dynamic-Area, as shown here with 9-Point Dynamic Area. Background image shown at 50% opacity to better see Viewfinder elements. Shutter speed 1/1600, Aperture f/4.0, ISO 200.*

*Group-Area AF Illumination* - The new *Group-Area AF Area Mode* of the D750 allows you to use a group of five points to focus on a subject when it may be too challenging to locate the subject at a single point. When using this mode, the Viewfinder will display the four outer points of the group. This menu option can be used to instead display four smaller dots rather than the larger AF squares (see *Figures 71 and 72*). The larger

squares might help you to better see the size and locations of the active AF points, while the smaller dots may be useful if the larger squares prevent you from best viewing the subject, although the small dots can be challenging to see in the Viewfinder when photographing.

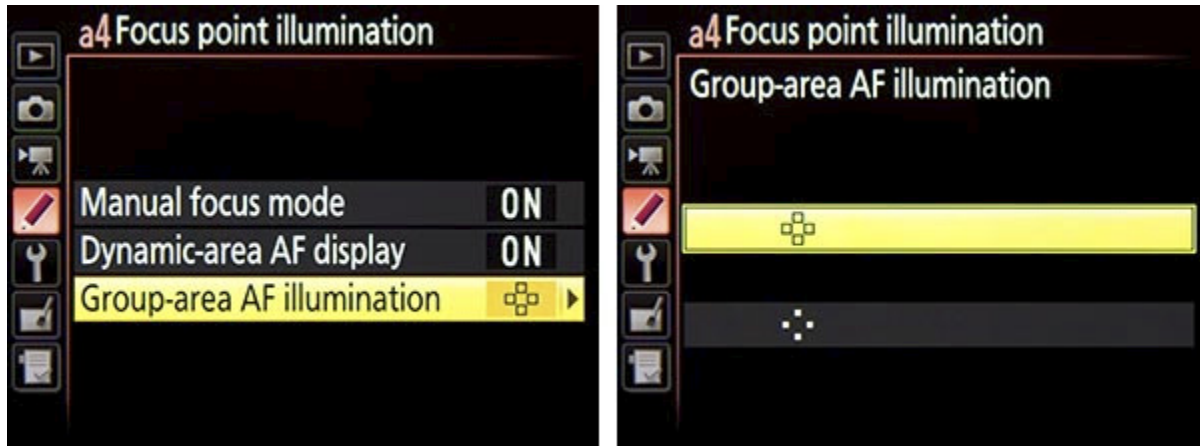


Figure 71 - Left: The Group-Area AF Illumination menu item, to select how the AF Points are seen in the Viewfinder when using the new Group-Area AF Autofocus Area Mode. Right: Choose to display the Group points as larger squares or smaller dots.

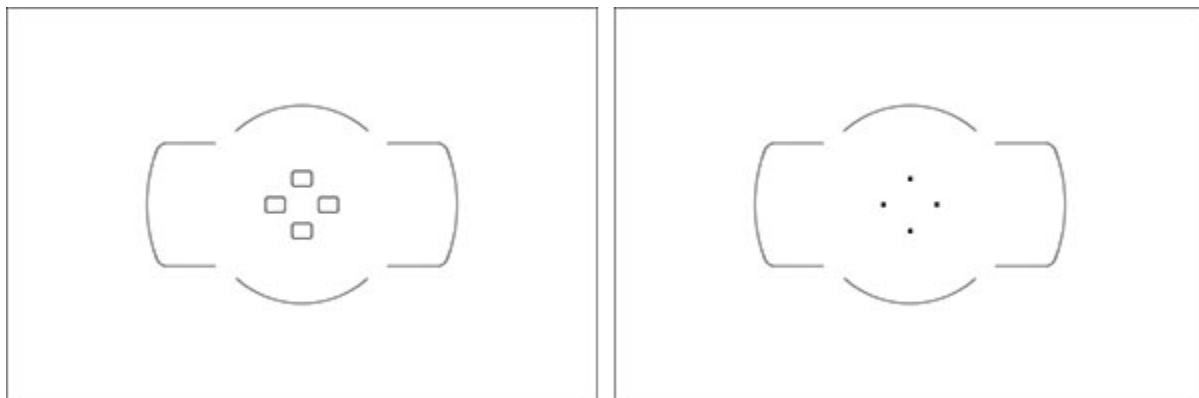


Figure 72 - Simulated view of the D750 Viewfinder - Use the “Group-Area AF Illumination” item of Custom Setting a4 to display either larger AF squares or smaller dots in the Viewfinder, when using Group-Area AF.

### a5: AF point illumination

This is used to set whether or not the selected autofocus point (Focus Point) is illuminated in red in the Viewfinder when the Shutter Button is half-pressed or when the Focus Point is being selected with the Multi Selector (see Figure 73 - left). This can help the selected Focus Point to stand out against the background. Setting for *Auto* will highlight the AF point only when the camera determines that is necessary to differentiate it from the background. *On* will ensure the active Focus Point is always illuminated, thus making it easy to see in most every situation. If set for *Off*, the active AF point will always remain black. Since you pretty much always want to know and easily see where the active Focus Point is and where your camera is focusing, I suggest

that this should typically be set for *On*. Note that the brackets around the AF points and the optional grid display will also illuminate. If you set this to *Off* and do not wish for the AF points to illuminate, you can alternately make use of Custom Setting f1 - *OK Button > Shooting Mode*, which can be set to highlight the active Focus Point, when needed, by pressing the button in the center of the thumb pad.



Figure 73 - Left: AF Point Illumination, to choose when the selected, active AF point will light-up in the Viewfinder. Right: Focus Point Wrap-Around, to choose if AF point selection stops at the edges or not.

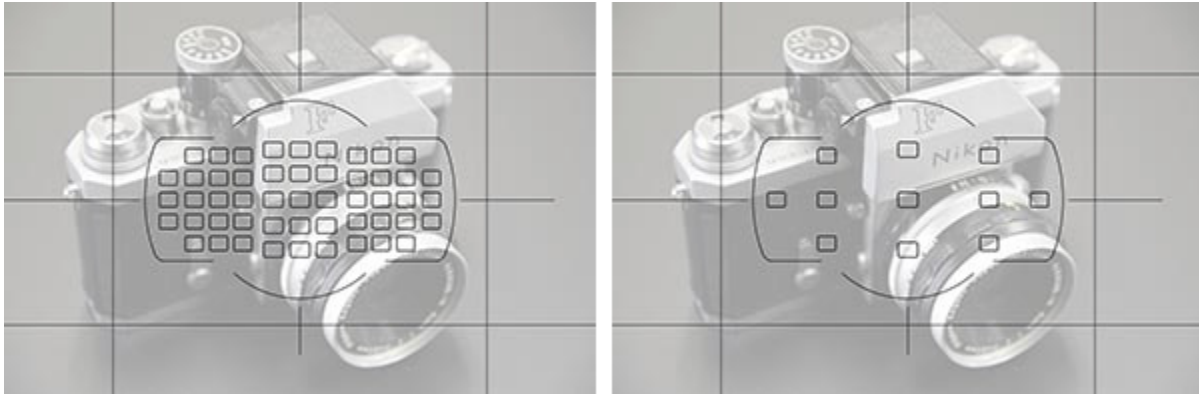
### a6: Focus point wrap-around

This determines if the Focus Point selection will “wrap around” to the other side of the screen when you reach an edge (see *Figure 73 - right*). In other words, if you are selecting your AF point (as I will explain, you should be doing much of the time) and you reach an AF point on the far right, when you click right again, do you want to “wrap around” to a Focus Point on the far left (*Wrap*), or do you wish to stop at the edge and not continue to the other side (*No Wrap*)? I do not like my selection wrapping around to the other side, since it is unlikely the subject suddenly goes from the right of the frame to the left side or from the top to the bottom, so I suggest setting this for *No Wrap*. But if you find it quicker to select your Focus Points by wrapping around from one side to the other or from top to bottom, change this to *Wrap*.

### a7: Number of focus points

This setting determines the number of autofocus points that are available for selection in your Viewfinder (see *Figure 74*). If you are manually selecting your Focus Point (as you typically should) you may find that it is quicker and easier, at least at first, to limit the number of AF points to *11 points*. But to take full advantage of the D750 autofocus system, you will want to make use of all 51 AF points, as will be explained in the **Autofocus** chapter. If you prefer to have all the AF points available for your selection, set this at *51 points*. If you set to *11 points* your selection will be limited to those 11 AF points, but all 51 points will still be used by the camera in subject tracking (such as when working in AF-C Autofocus Mode and in certain AF Area Modes), so the camera is still potentially taking advantage of all the Focus Points of the autofocus system. However, if you set this to *11 points*, when you are using the different AF-Area Modes

such as *Group-Area AF* or *9-Point Dynamic-Area AF*, you will still only be able to manually select from the 11 points for your initial point.



*Figure 74 - 51 AF points vs. 11 AF points - A simulated view of the D750 Viewfinder showing the configuration of all 51 Focus Points (left), and the 11 Focus Points (right) available when the 11 Points setting is chosen in Custom Setting a7 - Number of Focus Points. Background image is shown at 50% opacity to better view the AF points. Note that only the single selected Focus Point will be visible in the Viewfinder during actual shooting.*

### **a8: Store points by orientation**

This can be used to have a specific AF point be automatically selected when you hold the camera in a certain orientation (see *Figure 75 - left*). If you set this for *Off*, the current AF point that you have selected will remain the active AF point when you change camera orientation, as you would generally expect. However, if you enable this feature, the camera will return to the AF point last selected when the camera was in that orientation.

So, for example, set this for *Yes*, then hold the camera in the standard orientation and select a far-right AF point. Then position the camera vertically with the grip side up and select a far-left AF point. When you return the camera to the standard horizontal orientation, the camera will return to the far-right point as the active AF point. When you return the camera to the grip-up orientation, it will jump again back to the far left point.

The camera will recognize three different orientations: horizontal, vertical with the camera grip side of the camera up, and vertical with the camera grip facing down. This can be handy in situations such as when you are taking portraits and you switch between horizontal and vertical camera orientation, yet you want an AF point at the relative “upper-right” position to remain selected, near where you have located the model’s face.

However if you enable this option and then use your camera later and forget that you have it set this way, the AF points will seem to be acting extremely erratically as you change camera orientation, until you remember to set this back to *No*.



## 5. AUTOFOCUSING

### 5.1 Using Autofocus

One of the essential steps in taking a successful and sharp photo is controlling where and how the camera autofocuses. The versatile and customizable autofocus system of the D750 is a major part of what makes it such a powerful camera, and in P, A, S, and M shooting modes you can, and should, take control of the autofocus system. The autofocus system is comprised of the autofocus related controls (see *Figure 179*), the Autofocus Modes (such as *Single-servo AF* also called AF-S), the autofocus Focus Points and AF-Area Modes (such as *9-Point Dynamic-Area AF*), and the autofocus related menu and Custom Settings items described at the beginning of this text, which customize how the AF system works. You will select an Autofocus Mode generally based on whether the subject is still or moving, and select an AF-Area Mode based on where and how you want the camera to locate and focus on your intended subject - ranging from a single point, to a wider Dynamic-Area, to all the available 51 AF points. You can set the Autofocus Modes and AF-Area Modes in a variety of combinations based on what and how you are shooting.

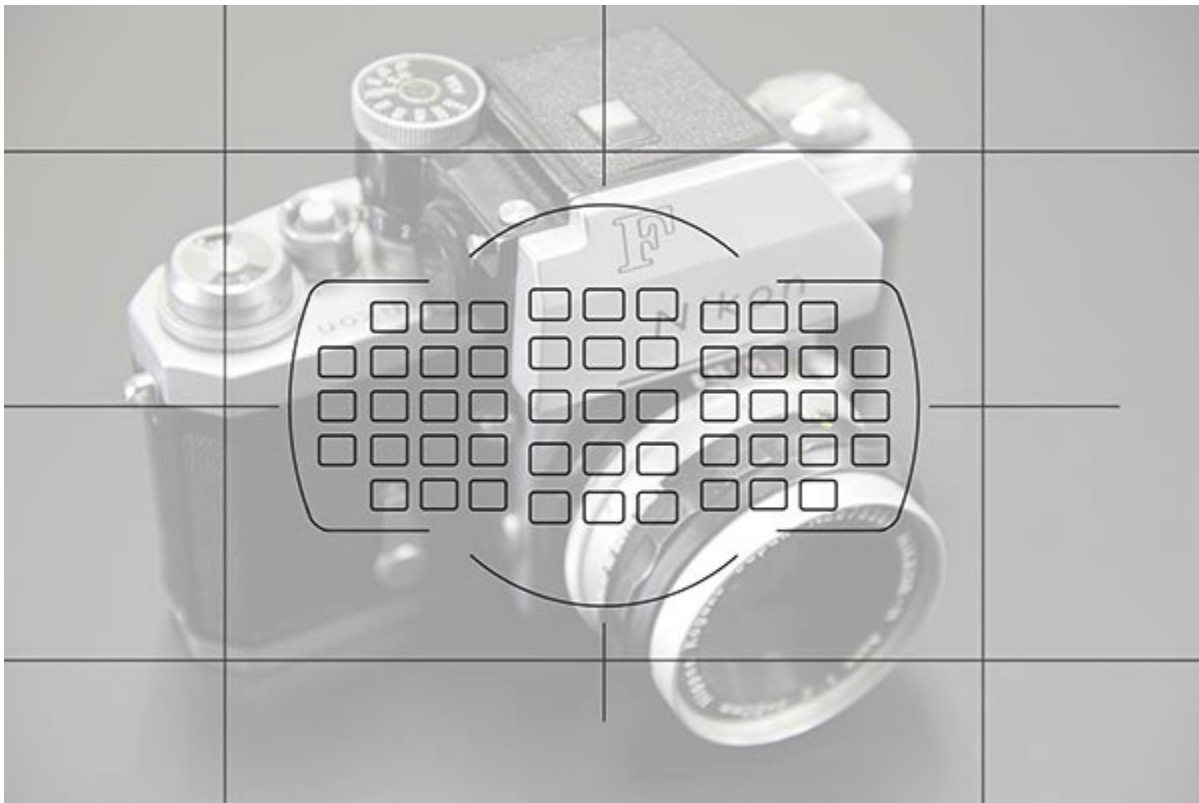


*Figure 179 - Autofocus controls and other shooting-related controls of the Nikon D750.*

If you allow the camera to autofocus by automatically choosing its own Focus Point(s), such as when using Auto-Area AF autofocus area mode, it typically focuses on the closest object. This may or may not be what you want to focus on, so you should select

or at least narrow down where the camera focuses using the autofocus Focus Points, or Group-Area AF, or one of the Dynamic-Area groups of points. By doing so you are telling the camera exactly where to autofocus or where to look to find a moving subject to track. For example, you often want to focus on a subject's eyes, but if you allow the camera to choose the autofocus point by itself, it may select another part of the face, or somewhere else on the body, or even a raised hand that is nearer to the camera than the face to focus most sharply on. If you are capturing an image of a bird in a tree the camera has no idea that you want the autofocus system to zero-in on the bird so that it is in sharp focus, and not on the branches or leaves near it or perhaps even the leaves closer to you.

Be sure to read the **Menus and Custom Settings** section first to make sure your camera is properly set up to make use of all the autofocus points, to always illuminate your active Focus Point if desired, and various other recommended autofocus settings. Most of these settings are in the Custom Setting *a: Autofocus* menu.

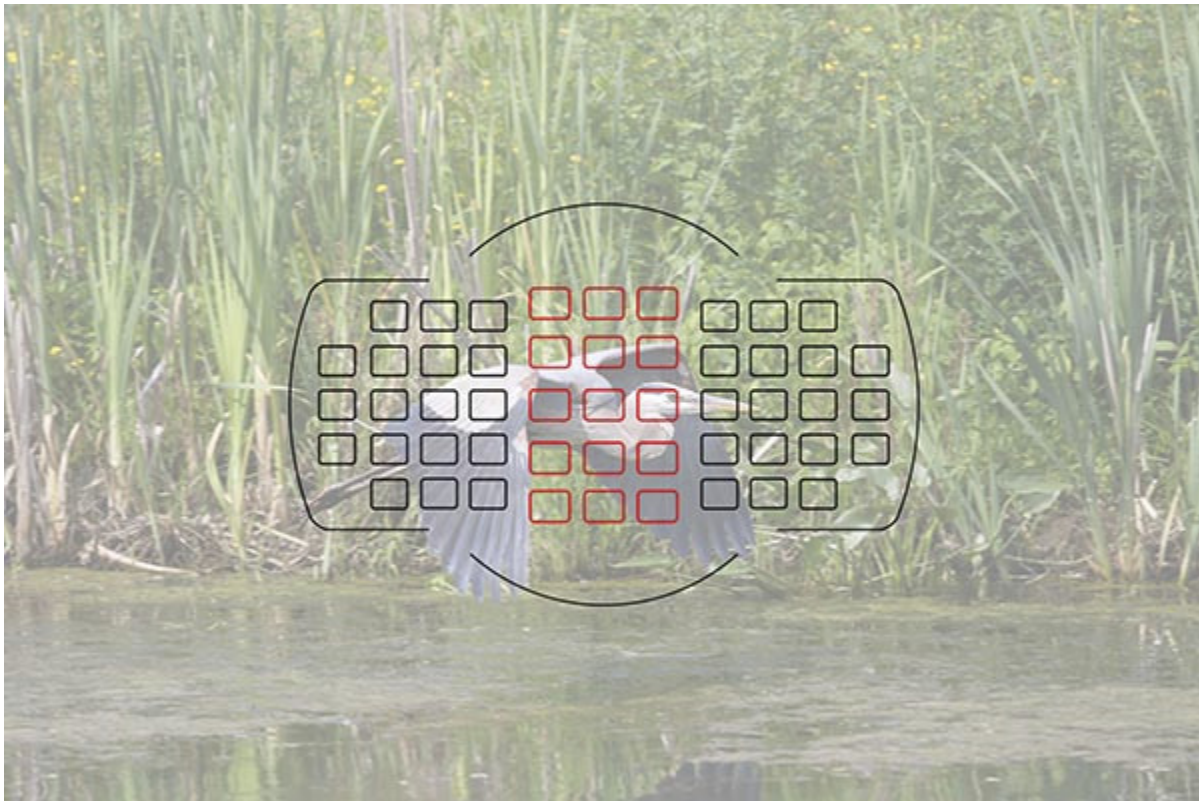


*Figure 180 - Simulated view of the Nikon D750 Viewfinder, showing the location of all 51 AF points and the optional grid display. Note that you will not actually see all 51 AF points, only the active one(s).*

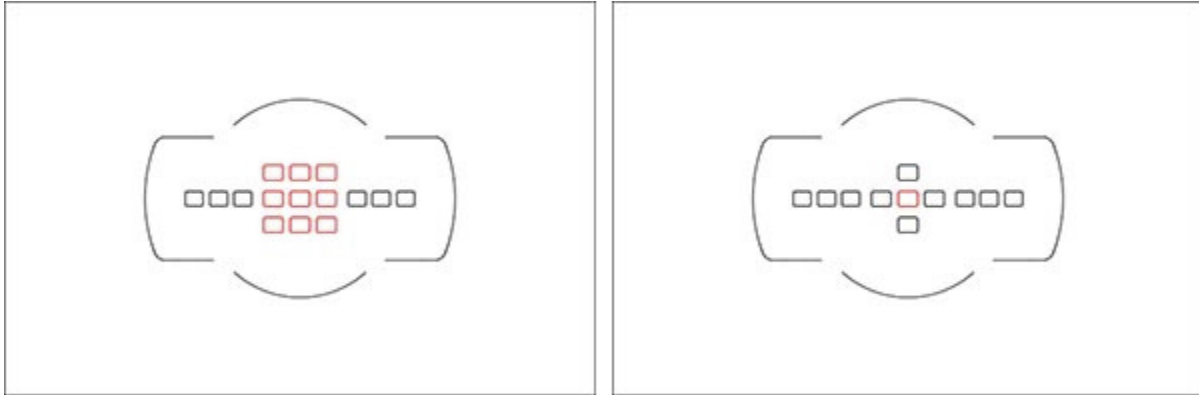
Autofocus works in part by looking for contrast so try to focus (locate your Focus Point as you view it in the Viewfinder) on a texture or a detail with a pronounced line or some amount of contrast between light and dark. It may not be able to focus on a large area of consistent color - such as a white wall or clear blue sky, or even a uniformly colored

and illuminated shirt - or on a subject or scene that is too dark. It can be disrupted by regular patterns and fine detail, or confused when looking through close objects to objects farther away, such as looking through a screen or fence. And it sometimes fails to work well in highly contrasting or dim light, though the *Built-in AF-Assist Illuminator* of Custom Setting a9 can assist in this situation.

The fifteen centrally located AF points are more sensitive cross-type points (see *Figure 181*). A cross-type AF point detects contrast in both the horizontal and vertical directions, as opposed to AF points which are only sensitive to contrast in one of these directions. However, when using a lens or a lens-teleconverter combination slower than f/5.6 (a lens whose maximum aperture is f/5.6 or narrower), both the number of available AF points and the number of cross-type AF points is reduced (see *Figure 182*). So for example, if you are using a 500mm f/4 lens and a 2x teleconverter, the teleconverter causes a 2-stop loss, effectively turning the lens into an f/8 lens. The number of available AF points is severely reduced to 11 points, with only one, centrally located cross-type point (see *Figure 182 - right*). The available Autofocus AF-Area Modes are thus limited as well, with *3D-Tracking* and *Auto-Area AF* no longer an option. If set for these modes the camera will actually use *Single-Point AF*. This will impact bird and sport photographers making use of long lenses plus teleconverters.



*Figure 181 - Cross-Type Autofocus Points - The fifteen more sensitive cross-type AF points are shown here in red, located in the central area. (Simulated view of D750 Viewfinder, background image shown at 50% opacity. Note that all of the AF points will not actually be visible in the Viewfinder.)*



*Figure 182 - Autofocus Points - Left: When using a lens or lens-teleconverter combination with a maximum aperture between  $f/5.6$  and  $f/8$ , only these AF points will be available, with the 9 central AF points acting as cross-type points. Right: When using a lens or lens-teleconverter combination with a maximum aperture of  $f/8$ , only these AF points will be available, with the 1 central AF point acting as a cross-type point.*

Autofocusing when working in Live View and Movie Live View works differently, with different Autofocus Modes and AF-Area Modes. This will be explained in the **Live View** chapter.

I will use the term “recompose” a few times throughout the text. By this I mean moving the camera after you have set the focus, such as with a half-press of the Shutter Button, but before you fully press the Shutter Button and take the picture. This means that what you see in the Viewfinder changes from when you do those first actions to when you take the picture; you have re-composed the view you see in the Viewfinder.

Before diving into the autofocus system, I’ll briefly explain how autofocus point selection works. You will manually select your desired autofocus point (also called Focus Point or AF point) using the Multi Selector, as you look through the Viewfinder. If you set Custom Setting f1 - *OK Button > Shooting Mode* for *Select center focus point*, you can use the OK Button to quickly select the center AF point.

Make sure the Focus Selector Lock switch surrounding the Multi Selector thumb pad is **not** set to *L*. Set the Focus-Mode Selector switch, near the base of the lens, to *AF* (see *Figure 183*). Make sure the focus mode switch on your lens is also set for autofocus (*A* or *M/A*). If it ever seems that your camera or lens is not autofocusing, be sure to check these two switches - one on the camera body and one on the lens. Press the AF-Mode Button inside the Focus-Mode Selector switch and set the Autofocus Mode to *AF-S* (Single-servo AF) using the rear Main Command Dial, and set the AF-Area Mode to Single-Point AF using the front Sub-Command Dial. Look at the top Control Panel to view the settings as you change them. You will see *AF-S* for the mode, and a large *S* for the area mode. If you first press the Info Button to turn on the Information Display, you can also view and change the settings there.





Figure 183 - Additional autofocus controls of the D750.

1. Set the Exposure Mode to P (Program), or to the mode of your choice (A or S) if you are familiar with them.
2. Tap the Shutter Button with a half-press to wake up the camera and start the exposure metering.
3. Looking through the Viewfinder, use the Multi Selector thumb pad to select the Focus Point that is nearest to where you want to focus.
4. Place that point over your intended subject.
5. Press and hold the Shutter Button halfway down and see that point blink red. The Focus Indicator circle should light up in your Viewfinder (at the lower-left). You have locked the focus.
6. Keeping the Shutter Button pressed halfway, recompose if necessary, and take the shot by fully pressing the Shutter Button.

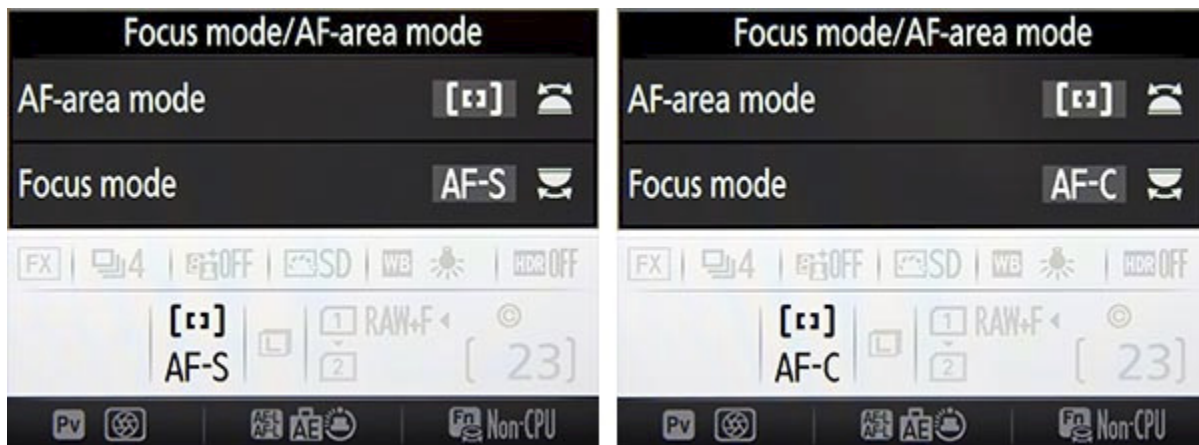
If the In-Focus Indicator does not light up and the camera does not take the photo, the camera may not be finding something to focus on, may not be finding enough contrast to lock in on, or you may be too close to your subject for the lens to focus.

There are reasons to make use of all the Focus Points and not just the center one all the time, which will be discussed. It may sound difficult to manually select the Focus Point each time, but it is actually very quickly done and will become instinctive. You may

even start to set your AF point as you approach a scene before even bringing your camera to your eye, using your thumb on the Multi Selector. For example, press right multiple times so that when you bring the camera to your eye, a far-right AF point is already selected. But if you wish, you can start by always using the center AF point and recomposing before taking the shot. And remember that Custom Setting a7 - *Number of Focus Points* allows you to limit the number of selectable points to *11 Points* to perhaps make this process more manageable at first.

### 5.2 Autofocus Modes

The D750 has three different Autofocus Modes to choose from, typically depending on if your subject is still, or if it is moving and you wish to track its movement and remain continuously focused on it. It also has several different autofocus AF-Area Modes (discussed in the next section) to specify how many of the Focus Points are active and how they follow or track a moving object. You can set these two functions in various combinations. First the Autofocus Modes. Select the Autofocus Mode by pressing the AF-Mode Button (the button located inside the Focus-Mode Selector switch that says *AF M* on the camera body near the base of the lens) and rotating the rear Main Command Dial while monitoring the settings on the top Control Panel or in the Viewfinder. If the Information Display is on (by pressing the Info Button), you can also view the settings on the rear Monitor (see *Figure 184*).



*Figure 184 - Autofocus Modes, as viewed on the rear LCD Monitor while changing - Left: AF-S mode. Right: AF-C Mode.*

#### **Single-Servo AF (AF-S)**

Use this mode when your subject is stationary, or is still and not going to move, or if your subject is not going to move very much, or if the distance between you and the subject is not going to change between the time you lock focus, recompose, and take the shot. Lock focus on the subject by half-pressing the Shutter Button and recompose if necessary. This mode can even be used for moving people or subjects if you quickly take the shot after establishing or locking focus. When using AF-S, you can select from three AF-Area Modes: Single-Point AF where you select the Focus Point, Group-Area

AF to select a small group of points, or Auto-Area AF, where the camera selects the AF point(s) for you. I suggest you nearly always select your own desired Focus Point or Group, so that the camera autofocuses exactly where you want it to.

As noted above, focus on your subject by pressing the Shutter Button halfway. The active AF point will illuminate (blink), and the Focus Indicator light at the lower left in the Viewfinder will illuminate as well. Continue to press the Shutter Button all the way to take the shot. If you half-press the Shutter Button to lock focus on your subject, the camera will remain focused at that distance as long as you keep half-pressing the Shutter Button. You can recompose the shot as you wish and then fully press the Shutter Button to take the photo. Again, if the Focus Indicator light does not light up and the camera does not take the photo, the camera may not be finding enough contrast to focus on, you may be too close to your subject for the lens to focus, or the lighting may be too dim for the AF system to work well.

However, if you are photographing a subject that is approaching or receding from view at a relatively constant rate, or photographing fast or erratic or unpredictably moving subjects, or photographing sports, action, or wildlife you will usually want to use Continuous-Servo AF (AF-C) Autofocus Mode.

### ***Continuous-Servo AF (AF-C)***

This mode, used in conjunction with the various AF-Area Modes, can help you to capture sharp images of action and motion (see *Figure 185*). To take full advantage of this mode you will need to also understand the AF-Area Modes, as described in the **Autofocus AF-Area Modes** section just below. Continuous-Servo AF mode is used to track and maintain continuous focus on moving subjects, and is ideal for capturing sports and wildlife including birds. If the subject is moving towards you or away from you, the camera will keep evaluating the focus distance. And if the subject is moving from side to side or throughout the frame, the camera can track it as it passes from one AF point to other ones (depending on the selected AF-Area Mode). Custom Setting a3 - *Focus tracking with lock-on* will even allow you to tell the camera exactly how fast to react to changes in focus distance, such as new subjects that come into the frame or pass between you and your subject.

You first need to select which Focus Point the camera uses to start tracking the subject, place that point over the subject, and press the Shutter Button half-way. Then as long as you keep the selected AF point on the subject and the Shutter Button pressed half-way, the camera will continuously evaluate the focus distance so that the subject will be in focus when the shot is taken. If the subject is going to be difficult to follow or keep located as a single AF point, you can use Group-Area AF so that five AF points work together to focus, sort of like a large AF point. Or you can make use of the Dynamic-Area AF Area Modes so that some or all of the surrounding points will help retain focus if the subject temporarily moves away from the selected Focus Point. If the subject will be moving across your field of view as you keep the camera relatively still, you can make use of the 3D-Tracking mode. The Focus Indicator light in the Viewfinder will illuminate when using AF-C mode when the subject is in focus, or the triangles

surrounding the Focus Indicator dot will illuminate to show that focusing operation is in progress.



*Figure 185 - Continuous-Servo (AF-C) Autofocus Mode can be used to track and retain focus on a moving subject, such as this dog running in the snow. Shutter speed 1/1600, Aperture f/5.6, ISO 400.*

This subject tracking of AF-C will even work in conjunction with continuous shooting. If you keep the Shutter Button fully pressed and continue to take photos, even at 6.5 frames per second, the camera will keep focusing on the moving subject. As you can imagine, this is ideal for tracking a player running across a field, a dog running toward you, a toddler in action, or a bird moving across the frame. Note that when shooting with Continuous High Speed, not every shot may be in sharp focus as the camera sometimes can't keep up and accurately predict the subject's speed or location. But you should be able to capture more sharp images than previously possible with an older camera. And setting Custom Setting a1 - *AF-C priority selection* to the *Focus* option will help ensure that all images are in focus.

As you will see, when using AF-C mode your compositions will be partially dictated by the positions of the autofocus points in your Viewfinder. The subject needs to be at one of these AF points in order for the camera to maintain focus on it. That is why making use of all 51 Focus Points is important with moving subjects. And also why in certain situations, when your subject is located away from the Focus Points as viewed in the



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### *About the Author*



**Douglas Klostermann** is a travel, culture, and humanitarian photographer, as well as the author and publisher of *Full Stop* e-book camera guides including the best-selling *Nikon D810 Experience* and *Nikon D7100 Experience*. He has photographed for numerous organizations in the United States and in Latin America, been recognized by the *United Nations Development Programme* for his humanitarian photography, and been published in magazines and books including *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Sherman's Travel*, *South American Explorer*, and *Viva Travel Guides*. He also lectures and gives individual instruction on digital photography. Doug is a member of the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA).

Learn more about photography techniques and equipment on his blog *Picturing Change* at <http://blog.dojoklo.com/>, view his photography and e-books at [www.dojoklo.com](http://www.dojoklo.com), and follow him on Twitter at [@dojoklo](https://twitter.com/dojoklo).

This book is dedicated to my wife Laura, for her unconditional love and never-ending support!