The bish, bash, bosh guide to aperture

The aperture is a hole in your lens that you can make smaller or larger to control how much light enters your camera. Aperture works in exactly the same way as the pupil in your eye, which dilates in darker conditions and contracts in brighter conditions.

As well as controlling the amount of light entering your camera, aperture creates a very distinctive visual effect, which we'll come to in a second. So just like shutter speed, which has a 'Shutter Priority' mode, aperture has its very own 'Aperture Priority' mode, which is **A** or **Av**.

The great thing about 'Aperture Priority' is that it allows you to change the aperture while your camera figures out the shutter speed.

Here's how to change your aperture:

BISH Select 'Aperture Priority'. Most cameras have a mode dial. For those that don't, you'll be able to access your modes through the menu.

BASH Lightly tap the shutter release button to make your camera come to life. This is the button you press to take pictures.

BOSH Scroll one way to make your aperture wider. Scroll the other way to make it narrower.

The exact size of the hole is measured in 'f-stops'. At first, f-stops can be a little confusing, as the higher the number, the narrower the hole, and vice versa:

WIDE **APERTURE**/FOCUS NARROW

f/2.8   *f*/4   *f*/5.6   *f*/8   *f*/11   *f*/16   *f*/22
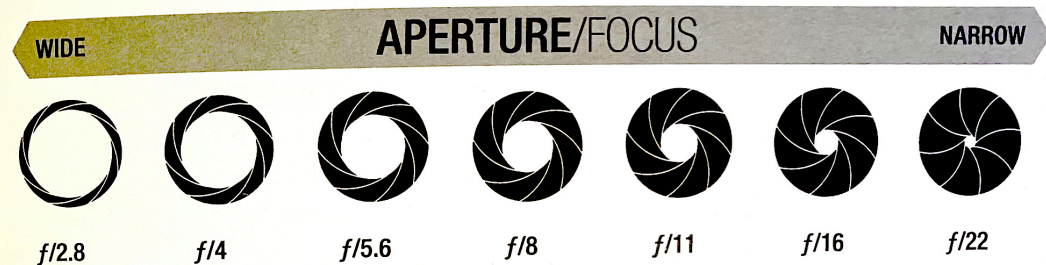
The aperture is in your lens, not your camera, so depending on your lens you might find that you have a different range of f-stops (or 'f-numbers', as they are also called).

Now here's the thing: as you change the aperture, notice what's happening to the shutter speed. It's changing too, right? When you select a wide aperture, such as *f*/5.6, the shutter speed is faster, and when you select a narrow aperture, such as *f*/22, it's slower.

This is because the camera is varying the shutter speed to compensate for the fact that you're letting in more or less light through the lens. It's a balancing act, and exactly the same thing was happening to the aperture when you were using 'Shutter Priority'.

But the plot thickens. Changing your aperture also radically alters the 'depth of field' in your image and I think this is something you're going to like.