

Soft-focus lens. This lens type does exactly what the name says it does: It softens the image focus. There are many other ways to do this for a lot less money. You can deliberately put your subject slightly out of focus with every exposure, for example, or you can buy a special soft-focus filter to fit on the front of your lens and get a somewhat similar effect. But the advantage of a **soft-focus lens** is that it creates consistently soft and controllable results without having to mess with focus or filters every time you take a picture.

A soft-focus lens might appeal to a photographer wanting an impressionistic look rather than a realistic one. For example, portrait photographers may try to blur skin blemishes, such as acne or wrinkles, with a soft-focus lens. Landscape photographers also can use these lenses for a more romantic “look.”

There are many different models of soft-focus lenses available, most in slight-to-moderate telephoto focal lengths, such as 85mm (which is often used by portrait photographers) and 135mm. Use a soft-focus lens like any other. You will generally get the softest effect at the widest aperture. Some models even have a ring you turn to vary the amount of softness the lens will produce.

Perspective-control lens. Due to the effects of perspective, pointing a camera up or down causes vertical parallel lines of the subject to converge. For example, if you aim your camera up at a tall building, the top of the building will seem to come to a point. Or if you aim the camera down at the legs of your subject, the top of the legs will seem “fatter” than the ankles.

A **perspective-control (PC) lens** allows you to minimize or eliminate such distortions. Most are short in focal length (24mm, 28mm, 35mm), because perspective is more pronounced with wide-angle lenses. Also, wide-angle lenses are often used for photographing architecture, for which eliminating distortion is a priority.

In use, you shift a PC lens off its center—up, down, and sideways—by turning a thumb-screw on the lens barrel. If you’re photographing a building, for example, you can keep the camera level and turn the screw so the lens moves up; you don’t have to physically aim the camera up, which is the action that causes distortion.

PC lenses provide some of the same controls that view cameras do, although view cameras are more flexible. One common view-camera control is available in a special PC lens, called a **tilt-shift lens**. Among other things, it allows you to tilt the lens forward and back to increase the front-to-back sharpness of certain subjects without closing down the aperture.