The F-stop or F-number is one bit of photography jargon that can feel inaccessible to beginners. But for you I think it will take just a little introduction to help you start taking advantage of it right away. Ask me (or Bill, Jenny, Erin ...) if you want more details than I include here.

**The hardware side:**
Obviously there is a hole between the lens and the interior of the camera for letting the light in. This is called the aperture, and it is adjustable. The F-number is a value that relates inversely to the diameter of the aperture. It can be written three different ways: N=#, F#, or f/#.

The numbering system is not intuitive without getting into the physics. Don't worry about it.
(larger aperture) <- F1.4 ... F2 ... F2.8 ... F4 ... F5.6 ... F8 ... --> (smaller aperture)

I've simplified this considerably. There is a good article on Wikipedia for f-number if you want to know more about the technical side of things.

**Adjusting the aperture:**
The mode labeled "A" for aperture allows you to manually control the aperture setting (via the F-number scale) while all other settings are controlled automatically. (Ask if you want to know how to adjust aperture in the other shooting modes.)

**The cool thing about choosing your aperture carefully:**
Changing the aperture doesn't just change the amount of light reaching your sensor. For reasons that can be proved with ray tracing diagrams, changing the aperture changes the depth of field of a photograph. The depth of field is the range of distances from an object to your camera that will appear in focus.

**High F-number:**
A classic example is Ansel Adams. One of the many things that is so remarkable about his landscape photographs is how *everything* is in focus. He achieved a large depth of field by using a really small aperture. (see A below)

**Low F-number:**
Sometimes you may want one depth to appear in focus, and the rest to artistically blur out. You can achieve this effect, a narrow depth of field, with a really wide aperture. (see B below)

**Trade-offs:**
Using a small aperture (high F-number so a lot of the image will be in focus) requires a slower shutter speed which risks motion blur! Ansel Adams often (always?) used a tripod!

![](image1)

![](image2)