

TIPS FOR GREAT PHOTOS

By Kelly Butler Coe

BE A PICTURE DIRECTOR

Take control of your picture taking and watch your photos dramatically improve. A picture director takes charge. Be purposeful in including all ages, genders and races. A picture director picks the location: "Everybody go outside to the backyard." A picture director adds props: "Girls, put on your sunglasses." A picture director arranges people: "Now move in close, and lean toward the camera."



Just as a composer uses all the instruments in a symphony to create a stirring piece of music, you should compose each picture so that its parts work together to create a work of beauty. Each item in a picture has an effect on the whole, so don't just point and shoot. Take a little time to compose each picture into the masterpiece it could be. You'll be surprised how willing people are to take the time to get it right. Just ask!



TELL A STORY

Any important event can become a picture story. A church picnic is the perfect event for a photo story. Show the arrival, the departure, a variety of events during the day and the tired kids on their way home.

CAPTURE THE EMOTION

Catch the grins, tears, surprises and hugs that make for memorable pictures. Keep your camera handy and turned on so you'll be ready for those spontaneous expressions.



PHOTOGRAPHING GROUPS

In general, it's easier to take group pictures outdoors. So, if you have a choice, move everybody outside. If this isn't an option, try to keep the group in a tight arrangement so that the flash will reach each person. Place individuals with darker skin tones toward the front of the group. Remember to avoid "lining 'em up and shooting 'em!"

CHOOSE A MAIN POINT OF INTEREST

Although you know what your subject is, it can be hard for a viewer to determine your intent if there are too many elements in your picture. Eliminate all unimportant elements by moving closer, zooming in or choosing a different shooting angle.



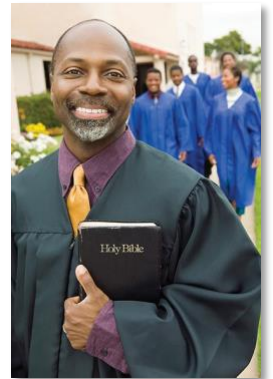
USE A PLAIN BACKGROUND

A plain background shows off the subject you are photographing. When you look through the camera's viewfinder, force yourself to study the area surrounding your subject. Make sure tree branches are not growing out of your favorite church member's head!

MOVE IN CLOSE

Thou shalt not take pictures from the back of the sanctuary! Step right up and take that picture. Zoom in on your subject. Your goal is to fill the picture area with the subject you are photographing. Up close, you can reveal telling details, like a sprinkle of freckles or an arched eyebrow.

But wait! Don't get too close, or your pictures will be blurry. If you get closer than the closest focusing distance of your camera, your pictures will be blurry (check that manual!).



LOOK YOUR SUBJECT IN THE EYE

Direct eye contact can be as engaging in a picture as it is in real life. When taking a picture of someone, hold the camera at the person's eye level to unleash the power of those magnetic gazes and mesmerizing smiles. For children, that means stooping to their level. And, your subject need not always stare at the camera. All by itself, that eye level angle will create a personal and inviting feeling that pulls you into the picture.

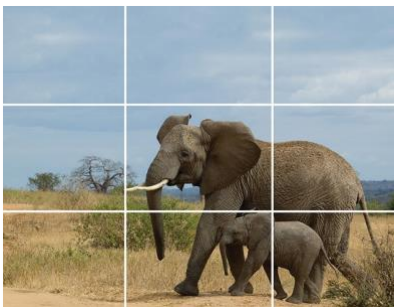
ALTER YOUR POSITION

Change your position to emphasize or exaggerate how big or small your subject is. Crouch down and shoot up at someone and that person towers over you. Shoot down on your pet and it seems so comically small. You can also move your camera right or left only a few feet to change the composition dramatically.



MOVE IT FROM THE MIDDLE

Center-stage is a great place for a performer to be. However, the middle of your picture is not always the best place for your subject. Bring your picture to life by simply moving your subject away from the middle of your picture. Imagine a tick-tack-toe grid in your viewfinder. Now place your important subject at one of the intersections of lines.



WATCH THE HORIZON

Just as an off-center subject is usually best, so is an off-center—and straight—horizon line. Avoid cutting your picture in half by placing the horizon in the middle of the picture. To accent spaciousness, keep the horizon low in the picture. To suggest closeness, position the horizon high in your picture.



WATCH THE LIGHT

Next to the subject, the most important part of every picture is the light. It affects the appearance of everything you photograph. On a great-grandmother, bright sunlight from the side can enhance wrinkles. But, the soft light of a cloudy day can subdue those same wrinkles.

Don't like the light on your subject? Then move yourself or your subject. For landscapes, try to take pictures early or late in the day when the light is orangish and rakes across the land.

USE A FLASH OUTDOORS

Bright sun can create unattractive deep facial shadows. Eliminate the shadows by using your flash to lighten the face. When taking people pictures on sunny days, turn your flash on. Use the picture display panel to review the results.

On cloudy days, the flash will brighten up people's faces and make them stand out. But, also try taking a picture without the flash, because the soft light of overcast days sometimes gives quite pleasing results by itself.



KNOW YOUR FLASH'S RANGE

A cloudy day at camp meeting or a dimly lit sanctuary make for difficult picture-taking. What to do? Make sure you are taking pictures within your camera flash's range. The typical digital camera flash range is 6 to 10 feet. What is your camera's flash range? Look it up in your camera manual. Can't find it? Then don't take a chance. Position yourself so subjects are no farther than 3 or 4 steps away.

AVOID FLASH REFLECTIONS

When you use flash, avoid windows and mirrors in the background. They'll reflect the flash, creating glare that can ruin an otherwise great shot. If you can't avoid them, stand diagonally from your subject to take the picture.

Is your subject wearing eyeglasses? Here's a tip: slide the earpieces upward, creating a slight, downward tilt to the glasses. It may feel a little strange, but will usually eliminate the glare on the glasses.



AVOID RED EYE

Ask your subject to look at your shoulder rather than directly at the camera. Turning on all the room lights also helps. If your camera has a "red-eye reduction" feature, use it.

HOLD IT!

To avoid blurry pictures, hold that camera still! Digital cameras usually take a few moments to actually capture the photo. Hold your camera in both hands, keeping both elbows close to your sides to give your camera the most stability. Take a gentle breath, hold it and take your shot. Another option to ensure sharp photos is to brace your camera on a railing, the back of a pew, a table, or against a column or tree. Keep your camera steady and in position until you hear that your camera has stopped processing your picture. If your subject is moving, wait for the action to slow or stop before you take the picture.

TAKE SOME VERTICAL PICTURES

Is your camera vertically challenged? All sorts of things look better in a vertical picture. From a lighthouse at sunset to your four-year-old niece jumping in a puddle. So next time out, make a conscious effort to turn your camera sideways and take some vertical pictures.



DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY: GLOSSARY

Pixels, megabytes, resolution, JPEG. If you're unfamiliar with this lingo, take a quick look at this glossary.

- ❑ Pixel—The smallest element of a digitized image. One small dot of light among the many dots that make up an image on a computer screen.
- ❑ Megapixel—A unit equal to one million pixels. The higher the resolution, the more pixels in an image and therefore the greater the image quality. An image file that is 1 megapixel (MP) can make a photo realistic print of 5 x 7 inches; a 2 MP file can make an 8 x 10-inch print; a 3 MP file can make an 11 x 14-inch print.
- ❑ Resolution—The number of pixels in an image. A higher number correlates to a higher quality image.
- ❑ JPEG—A standardized format used by many digital cameras for storing images. This format is also commonly used for images on the web and images attached to e-mail messages. JPEG, which stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group, the group that established this file standard, is one of the most widely used formats today. JPEG is a standardized image compression mechanism designed for compressing images. Because JPEGs use lousy compression, some visual quality is lost in the process and may result in damaged image quality.
- ❑ LCD—Liquid Crystal Display. A full-color display screen on cameras used to preview and review pictures and view information, such as menu options and camera settings.
- ❑ Memory Card—A storage device used to store data, such as picture and movie files. Three popular brands are the Memory Stick, CompactFlash, and SD.

LAMP LETTER SPECIFICATIONS

- ❑ Provide digital images, in any the following formats: JPEG, PNG or TIFF.
- ❑ Set your camera to take photos at the highest resolution available.
- ❑ Do not crop, color correct or sharpen photos before submitting them.
- ❑ We love choices! Send us several photos to choose from.

