

## **10 Secrets To Taking Better Photos Of Your Children:**

### **"You don't have to love photography"**

To take good pictures of your friends and family. You simply need a little knowledge-a little practice-and a basic camera.

### **"It's ok to hate photography and cameras"**

But it's not ok to neglect recording those special moments with your family and friends.

### **"The wounded Soldier"**

That's what my wife and I along with 6 of our other children have dubbed our 8 mth. old. Why? because he crawls like one. He uses his right forearm to pull himself forward while at the the same time pushing with his toes and left hand scooching himself across the floor. We've recorded this stage with video and photos because he won't be there very long.

### **"Do it yourself"**

That's the point of writing this little guide. I want to encourage you to begin recording the little events, stages, and expressions of your loved ones.

This guide includes simple methods, and inexpensive suggestions to help you develop the habit of recording family history. Go ahead, get started today and if you need help or clarifications feel free to e-mail or call.

#### **I. Keep a camera handy:**

##### **A. Digital**

1. Keep your battery charged and get extra battery
2. keep the camera in the auto/program mode.

##### **B. Film Camera:**

1. Get a pack of one time use cameras with the built in flash

2. Develop at one of your local stores or favorite on-line developer.

## **II. Fill the frame:**

- A. Many inexpensive point and shoot cameras don't have a built in zoom so take the extra time to move in closer to your subject.
- B. Also, if you are using digital, be aware they differentiate between optical and digital zoom.
  1. "...digital zoom is not really zoom, in the strictest definition of the term. What digital zoom does is enlarge a portion of the image, thus 'simulating' optical zoom. In other words, the camera crops a portion of the image and then enlarges it back to size. In so doing, you lose image quality. If you've been regularly using digital zoom and wondered why your pictures did not look that great, now you know.
  2. Is digital zoom therefore all bad? No, not at all. It's a feature that you might want in your digital camera (in fact, all digital cameras include some digital zoom, so you can't really avoid it), especially if you don't care about using (or don't know how to use) an image editing software. So, as far as digital zoom is concerned, you can do it in camera or you can do it afterwards in an image editing software. Any cropping and enlarging can be done in an image editing software, such as Photoshop." (obtained from <http://www.photoxels.com/article-optical-digital-zoom.html>, 9/20/07)

## **III. Coordinate Clothing:**

- A. This becomes more important if you are planning on trying your hand at portraiture. It requires a little more planning and preparation.
- B. The primary focal point of a portrait is the face and poorly coordinated clothing will jump out and scream for all of the attention.



#### IV. Get down low:

A. This is not necessarily the same as number II. Even if you are not filling the frame because you want to show more of the environment around your subject you need to adjust your camera height. If you don't and you're trying to photograph children you'll always get pictures of **ONE** perspective....looking down on them. It is important to get down on their level in order to give the photograph a more intimate feel.

**B. General rules of thumb for camera height:** This does not necessarily apply only to children.

1. Full Length

- a) For a normal perspective keep the camera height at about the waist level.
- b) To make the person look taller, keep the camera slightly lower than waist height.
- c) To make the person look shorter, keep the camera slightly higher than waist height.

2. 3/4 length

- a) This consists of the the head to about half way between the knee and hip joint.
  - (1) Camera position should be the center of the chest.

3. Head and Shoulders Portrait

- a) Position camera at the height of the tip of the nose.
  - (1) If the nose is a little long position the camera slightly lower. Don't photograph up the nostrils.
  - (2) If the nose is a little short, position the camera slightly higher

than the tip of the nose.

**V. Stay out of direct sunlight:** This is very important for the following reasons:

- A. Your camera's built in meter will easily be tricked and you will most likely have "hot" spots on your subject. (This is a big problem if part of your subject is in direct sunlight and part of your subject is not. An example of where this might occur is under trees with direct light filtering through overhead. You will get patches of hot spots on your subject.)



(Hot spot on shoulder)

- B. Your subject will appear to have "raccoon" eyes especially if the sun is mostly overhead the subject ie.. "high noon".
- C. Suggestions for avoiding harsh light"
1. Wait until later in the day when the sun is lower on the horizon.
  2. Start early in the morning before the sun is too high above the horizon.
  3. Photograph on the west side of an obstruction like a house, line of trees, etc... at times before noon when the sun is primarily higher in the east.
  4. Photograph on the east side of an obstruction after noon when the sun is primarily in the west.
  5. Look for obvious overhangs from porches, trees etc.
  6. Use a diffuser to lessen the severity of the sun on your subject. (This effect is similar to light filtering through a white curtain.)



(After diffuser)

a) For ease of use and convenience you might want to consider using one from [photoflex.com](http://photoflex.com). They fold up and are very portable.

b) Also, you could make your own to any size you want. If you are interested in this approach please contact me and I will be glad to send you some plans and a list of resources that I use to build my own when I need them.

- 7. Window light filtered through a neutral colored curtain or sheers.
- 8. A window in your home that doesn't have direct sunlight shining through it and onto your subject.



(Large Diffuser)

## VI. Use your flash:

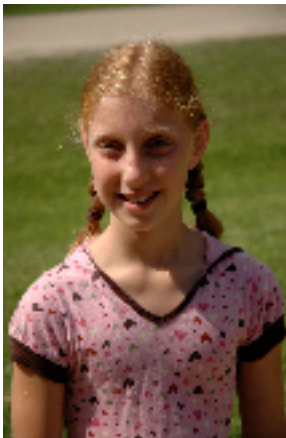
### A. Using Flash outdoors.

1. By using your flash to accomplish several things.

a) you lower the contrast of light on your subject. This means, you do not have one side of your subjects face mostly in shadow and the other side with plenty of light.

b) You help eliminate the problem of raccoon eyes.

(Before Flash)



(After Flash)



## 2. Using Flash indoors.

a) Using flash indoors is a subject that can become very complicated and technical. Please keep in mind that this discussion is geared toward less advanced users. With that in mind here are some very good general rules.

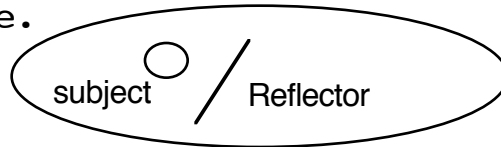


- (1) Bounce your flash. If you have a separate flash for your camera practice bouncing the flash off of a neutral colored ceiling. If your flash rotates, bounce the flash off of a neutral colored wall onto your subject. You can even use a wall behind you if you wish.
- (2) Try visualizing where the light will go by pretending you are bouncing a ball off of the wall that you want to "hit" your subject.
- (3) Use a bounce card if you have a separate flash. You can purchase one at [stofen.com](http://stofen.com) or make your own using a rubber band and an index card. Simply put your bounce card on and point the flash at about a 45 degree angle.
- (4) Put a piece of wax paper over your flash. This will help make your flash less harsh.

## VII. Use a reflector.

- A. Reflectors are great tools that again help control the contrast of light on your subject. They can be used indoors or outdoors.
- B. They are relatively inexpensive or you can make your own out of foam core board.
- C. You can make your reflector a little more powerful if you tape some aluminum mylar to it. This means it can be used at distances farther away from your subject.
- D. If you aren't in to making your own you can go to [photoflex.com](http://photoflex.com) or [lastolite.com](http://lastolite.com) and see some made by them.
- E. Using a reflector:

1. Use simply position the reflector so that it reflects light back into the darker side of your subject to suit your taste. The closer you move it in the brighter the reflection will be. Try to keep the reflector slightly in front of the subject and at a 45 degree angle.



- VIII. Avoid red eye:** Generally, red eye is caused by flash that bounces off of the retina. The wider open the pupil the higher the probability that you are going to get red eye. The cause is somewhat different in pets. The effects however are similar, evil looking eyes.
- A. Use the red eye reduction on your camera. The camera will emit a series of pre flashes prior to the emitting the main flash burst. This can cause people to blink and slow down the picture taking process.
  - B. Raise the ambient light levels if possible. Open the blinds, turn on extra lights.
  - C. If you have a separate flash that swivels try using a bounce card, or bounce the flash off of the a neutral colored ceiling or wall. (Refer to "using flash indoors")
  - D. Ask the subject not to look directly at the flash or in the case of children and pets you may try distracting them with a toy.
  - E. Position yourself near a light source so that when the subject looks at you it will cause there pupils to contract.
  - F. Take more than one picture in quick succession. The first attempt will cause the pupil to contract and the second one should be a picture without red eye. This will only be possible if your flash can recycle quickly.
  - G. Remove the red eye with your favorite software. Windows users may consider a program like "redeye pilot "[www.colorpilot.com/redeye.html](http://www.colorpilot.com/redeye.html)
  - H. Try moving in closer to your subject. This increases the angle between the flash and the back of the eye which will reduce the probability of getting red eye.

- I. Also, you may consider using a red eye removal pen like the ones made my pioneer.  
([www.archivalusa.com/k603370.htm](http://www.archivalusa.com/k603370.htm))

### **IX. Isolate the subject:**

- A. Use a sheet or other material to reduce the clutter and distractions in the picture. This is a good way to simulate your own studio backdrop. If your children are small you can hang the sheet between some chairs using tape. Some of my children actually drape a sheet off the side of a bed and let it flow onto the floor. Adjust the subject distance from the backdrop to control your shadow to your own taste.

### **X. Print Those Photos:**

- A. Ok, this may not be a suggestion-but rather a pet peeve. With the advent of digital photography you may be taking more pictures but what are you doing with them?
1. Leaving them on your memory card?
  2. Storing them on cd's
  3. Storing them on your computer---without doing any backups?
- B. The common problem with all of the above methods is that they're not easily accessible. Because they're not easily accessible you won't have the opportunity to enjoy them. It's more difficult to go fire up the computer, search for the files and then view them at your leisure with friends and family.
- C. My Suggestion? Print them and put them in archival quality books and you can store them in an accessible location. My kids love pulling out these books and flipping through their pages. Yes, you could make dvd movies or slideshows which are really nice to have, but many times electronic media is not as simple to access unless mom and dad have time to find the right disc, load it up etc.

**"Don't Put It Off Any Longer"**

Now that you have some more information hopefully you will have more confidence to begin regularly recording those special events in your friends and loved ones lives.

If you have anymore questions or run into problems feel free to contact me at:

[www.Tandepphoto.com](http://www.Tandepphoto.com)  
(972) 317-0590

I look forward to serving you and answering any questions you may have.

Photographically Yours,

E J Abood