

# Top 10 Tips for Taking Great Picts!

Presented by Laura Barta, Communications Coordinator • August 7, 2006

1. **Get to eye level.** When taking a picture of something get down to “eye level.” If you are taking a photo of a child, get down to their level for the shot. Direct eye contact is always engaging and can bring a viewer into your picture, but it’s not always necessary for the subject to look at the camera. Also look for an interesting angle; if you can, shoot from below or up above to create interest.



Too High



Better

2. **Use simple backgrounds.** Try to avoid taking photos where your subject is in front of a busy background. Making sure the background is simple will make your subject you are shooting stand out. Sometimes the background creeps into foreground, making your main subject look awkward (For example: A flag poll directly behind a child might look like it’s coming out of his/her head).



Distracting Background



Better

3. **Up close and personal.** You want to make sure you fill the photo with the subject you are photographing. Sometimes you want to try and capture too much by taking a picture of the whole event (or classroom). Zoom in on one or a couple children doing a task. You can physically put yourself within about three to four feet away from your subject, or use the camera’s zoom to get you there.



Good



Better

4. **Flashing.** Get to know the flash on your camera. Sometimes if you are too close a camera’s flash can over expose your shot. Likewise, if you are too far away, your zoom may get you there, but your flash will leave your photos dark and out in the cold. Experiment with the camera’s flash settings if possible. Believe it or not, but sometimes using a flash outside can help eliminate shadows and help lighten up areas. The maximum flash range for most cameras is 15 feet or less.



Too Close



Too Far

5. **Shoot off-center.** You can create more interest in a photo if you off-center your subject. Making sure everything is in the center is fine, but just shifting your camera a little to the left, or right, top or bottom, can make it even better! Use the rule of thirds when taking a photo (*see attached illustration*). Visualize a grid over the viewfinder. Place your subject in the top or bottom, left or right third of the photo—or where you would see the lines intersect.



Good--But Boring



Better--More Interesting

6. **Get focused!** Since most cameras auto focus to the center, you will need to lock your focus on your subject and then move your camera if you want to off-center your subject as previously recommended. To focus most cameras, you will need to center on your subject, press the shutter button halfway down, reposition your camera if you want to move your subject away from the center (continue to hold the shutter button halfway down), and finally continue pressing the shutter button all the way to take the photo.



Subject Not In Focus



Better--Subject In Focus

7. **Seeing the light.** Pay attention to the lighting situation that is around you. Typically if windows are behind your subject and you take a photo, the subject will develop dark. Often times this can be corrected by moving yourself or the subject, or by pulling the shades and turning on lights. Photos outside can be tricky with the sun. Again move yourself or the subject to adjust for the sun's location. Photos outside turn out best when taken earlier in the morning, later at night or a bright overcast/ cloudy day.



Subject Too Dark



Better

8. **Turn it around.** Don't be afraid to rotate your camera from horizontal (most comfortable position) to vertical. Sometimes you miss out on some important aspects of a photo by keeping it horizontal. Try taking a photo using both horizontal and vertical positions. Also, if you know the orientation in which your photo might be used, make sure to shoot it using that orientation (For example: If you are shooting a photo to fill a cover of a catalog or to fill a vertical 11x17 poster, then shoot a photo in the vertical position—horizontal photos are much more difficult to fill this space.)



Horizontal



Vertical

9. **Direct your shots.** You want to make sure you get the best shot. Don't be afraid to ask people to move, reposition or hold something for a photo. If you want them to, ask a child to look at the camera and smile, or if you don't want them to look at you, ask them to continue working as if you are not there. You are in control of your shots. If something just happened that you missed, like a child hugging a teacher, ask them to do it again so you can capture it. You just might be surprised what some kids will do for a camera—especially kids!



Good



Better

10. **Have patience!** How many times have you taken a photo just before that child smiled or something great happened like a hug with a teacher and student? Remember to have patience! Often times you can get that great shot if you just wait a couple more seconds. Be prepared, have your camera focused on your subject (hold the shutter button halfway down) and follow your subject. This is where you bring everything all (all nine tips) together and turn out fabulous shots!



Girl in Back Blinked



Better

*Just remember to have FUN!*



**5. Shoot off-center: Rule of thirds.**