

10 top tips for taking great family photos

[Stuart Nicol](#), former head of pictures for The Daily Telegraph, is a world-renowned photographer who has captured images from celebrities to the Royal Family during his forty year career). He has also taken more family photos than he can remember.

Here are his top tips for taking family photos you'll want to print.

1. Another level



Always look to compose your group pictures so you have friends and family seated or standing on different levels. That way you'll end up with a much more dynamic picture forcing the viewer's eye to jump around the scene.

A composition like this allows people to adopt their natural stance meaning you can capture an authentic family shot rather than a forced pose. You'll end up with a much more dramatic and fun group photo...you'll capture a true-to-life shot.

2. Forget boring head-on shots



Get creative and look for inspirational angles, or get really close. Climb on top of the table and shoot down onto the group, or lie down on the floor and shoot up. I love shots of families huddled in a circle with the photographer on the floor looking up. I know this is a favourite with the selfie generation! Look around you and take advantage of any platforms and props to give your photo edge but be safe!

3. Have some fun



Ask your family to jump, run, dance, play fight and, basically, have fun. Incorporating movement instantly relaxes your subjects, which improves the chances of getting a natural shot. Plus you'll transform what could be a very traditional and boring shot into something creative, fun and unexpected.

4. Steal a moment in time



The greatest thing about photography is that a picture steals a moment in time. Some of the best family photos are the ones where subject doesn't know they are being photographed, or where subjects look like they're sharing a genuine moment. A great example is the one Kate Middleton's dad took of Kate, Prince William and Prince George, as their first official family photo. The three of them looked relaxed, happy and completely absorbed in an authentic family moment. One way to do this is to organise your photograph around an activity you all enjoy, like eating a meal, chatting around some patio furniture, or all piled onto a picnic blanket.

5. Take the lead



Too many cooks spoil the broth and this is true when it comes to family photos. You need to be the 'director' you need to assert who stands where, especially in a family group where everyone has an opinion! As director you need to pull the group together and make the photo quick and painless. Make it clear everyone knows who's in charge and I'd recommend that this always the one taking the photo.

6. Get in close



When families are physically close, it gives the impression of warmth; exactly what you should be aiming for. Squish your group together get everyone to hug each other is a great way to get capture a fun family group.

7. Indoor lighting



Sun light is the cheapest and most flattering form of lighting. If you're shooting inside try and position your group facing, or parallel to, a window to make the most of the sun. If the sun is very bright and causing very harsh shadows, try hanging a white sheet onto the curtain pole to soften the light.

If you need to use a flash, try and point the flash at the ceiling to 'bounce' the light. This will eliminate harsh shadows

8. Use the sun to add feature



The great thing about shooting outside is that you can use the sun to add interest. For example if you position the group so the sun is behind them, you'll end up with a lovely silhouette. Getting the group to jump high with their arms out wide can create great pictures.

If you're taking the photo though, avoid having the sun behind you or your family will end up squinting at the camera. And if the sun is especially bright, look out for a shaded spot like a porch, beach umbrella or gazebo. Natural shade will convey a lovely summery feel and save your subject's' retinas!

9. Use props to unite the family



It sounds really cheesy but small gestures do help to unite the group and say 'yes, we're a family'. I often ask groups to wear neutral or pastel colours. You don't want everyone matchy matchy as this looks very forced. But a sense of unity can be conveyed through matching splashes of colour.

10. Watch for blinking



Make sure you take lots of versions of the same shot to ensure you have at least one where everyone is wide-eyed and smiling (as opposed to blinking and mid-smile). It's hard to get everyone together at the right time, the right place, so make sure you take advantage of the opportunity and take 10-15 versions at a time, to ensure at least one can be saved for prosperity.