

Take Better Pictures!

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With almost every cell phone having a camera, and the affordable price of digital cameras, picture taking is easier than ever. However, if you're taking pictures to share or to print, you may find that the results aren't what you expected. Here are some hints to help you take better pictures:

- 1) Pick the right light: The best time to take a picture is early morning, or late afternoon. Try to avoid the harsh noon sun. Soft/diffused lighting is best—shoot your subject under a tree or in shade to eliminate harsh contrast. A bright, overcast day is great for eliminating shadows.
- 2) Use your flash correctly: Outdoors, turn on your flash to provide a “fill” that eliminates shadows. Indoors, turn off your flash and open window shades for more natural lighting. Turn on more lights, if you need them. Make sure you adjust your white balance for the lighting—fluorescent lights cast a green tint, for example.
- 3) In low light situations, even with a flash, you may want to stabilize the camera to get a picture without blurs. For cell phones or small digital cameras, brace it against a pillar, a tree, or even the edge of a table. For larger cameras, a tripod or monopod may be the best way to keep your camera from shaking. Keep in mind that if you zoom in on a subject, even the tiniest shake is magnified. It's better to move closer to your subject than to use the zoom.
- 4) Your subject is the whole point of the photo. Get close to your subject to fill the frame with it, and reduce the amount of background visible. Most cameras will allow you to focus on your subject by holding the shutter button halfway down, and then you can frame the shot before you push it down all the way. If you have aperture control, open it as wide as you can to reduce depth of field so it will make the background less distracting—unless the background is part of the reason you're taking the picture.
- 5) Don't shoot with the sun directly behind you—it makes your subject squint. Try to keep the sun at a 45-degree angle between you and the subject—over your shoulder, instead of at your back.
- 6) Action! A picture of your subject performing a task is much more interesting than the standard group shot.
- 7) Adopt a new perspective! Lie on the ground and shoot up at your subject. Stand on a chair and shoot down at them. Take a picture of a child or a pet at their level.
- 8) Take a lot of pictures. A picture may look good on the tiny screen on your camera, but it may look a lot different when you look at it full-sized. With digital cameras, those extra shots don't cost you any more money, as they did with film. Change your perspective for some; change the angle of the subject. Play with the difference between vertical and horizontal framing. You may capture that winning picture when you least expect it.
- 9) If you're planning to edit or print pictures, set your camera to save them at the highest resolution you can. This means you need more memory per picture, but many cameras use removable flash cards, and most can handle 32MB or more. Advanced users may want to save the files in .RAW format instead of .JPG. This will give you the most control in editing. You can always save them in another format to share.