

Taking Group Photos

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There's a name for those times when all the important people in your life come together at the same time and place. It's called "insanity."



Make your group photos a little easier on everyone by taking a few minutes to prepare and set everyone's expectations. Here's what to do:

1. Location, Lighting and Technique

Find the best spot based on the number of people in your group. Make sure everyone can squeeze in - even those excitable furry friends. Take the time to rearrange furniture before you call everyone. You'll be repaid with ear-to-ear smiles rather than impatience.

Remember to:

- Use your fill flash to fill in shadows on faces and counteract the problems with indoor lighting affecting your exposure.
- Let in as much sunlight as you can for improved exposure during the day.
- Set your white balance to the type of indoor lighting.
- Remove reflective surfaces like large glass picture frames and windows at night from the field of view to avoid specular highlights.
- Avoid backlighting and bright backgrounds that will cause silhouetting and muddy exposures.
- Consider alternative locations; for example, stairs can work really well for cramming large groups into your viewfinder.
- Send all tall, gangly people directly to the back row.
- Frame your group nice and tightly, especially with digital cameras because on most digitals more area is captured in the photo than shows up on the LCD screen.

2. Timeliness

The best times are as soon as everyone arrives or before the meal when everyone is focused and looking and feeling their best. Hungry people are also easier to corral.

3. Pump It Up

Convince everyone your group photo will be the best group photo ever. Sell it. Ask people for their input. Get them involved by offering to take a photo with their camera and always offer to share your photos with them by e-mail. Bribing kids with goodies can help, too.

4. Take Your Time

Take the time to get your photos right. About 5 minutes will usually be all it takes to snap 3 to 4 quality photos - set everyone's expectations that it will take a few minutes. Rotate and use everyone's camera for added insurance.

Don't forget to use your red-eye mode if the light is dim and explain how it works to people so they keep their eyes open. Also, don't forget to use your timer then jump in the photos yourself.

5. Check Your Photos

With all your preparation and winning tactics, you'll likely have some really great group photos. It's still a good idea to double check though, so take 5 minutes right after your photo shoot to check your photos on your computer. If you have everyone's e-mail address, it can be fun to share the photos with them right away, so they're there waiting for them when they get home.

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