

# Tips for Taking Better Photos of Your Kids



Debbie Camba Photography

“We are making  
photographs to  
understand what our  
lives mean to us.”  
~ Ralph Hattersley





*Without light,  
there would be no  
photographs.*

## Look for Light

The quality of light is one of the most important aspects of a great photo. In fact, the word "photography" means painting with light.

When indoors, seek out window light, which produces soft and even lighting that makes for beautiful skin tones. This light will create a glimmer in the eyes, called catch lights, which brings a photo to life. The best way to use window light is to find a north facing window in your home or one that doesn't have light directly streaming into it and place your child nearby, either facing the window or at a forty-five degree to the window.

To avoid unnatural color casts in your photo, it is generally best to turn off all ambient light sources (lamps, overhead lights, T.V. and other screens). Tungsten lights typically produce a very yellow/orange tint, while fluorescent lighting will cause a more blue tint to photos. Avoid using on-camera flash, which creates harsh and unflattering light and dark shadows.



If you are outdoors, look for evenly lit areas and avoid direct sunlight or dappled sun. If possible avoid taking photos at midday when the sun is directly overhead as it will cause squinting and deep shadows under the eyes. Instead, find a spot in open shade, such as an area with some tree cover or next to a building that blocks the direct sun. When the sun is shining, be sure to position your kids with their backs to the sun. This will illuminate their hair.



Take advantage of beautiful early morning or late day light, when the sun is close to the horizon and produces warm golden light with softer shadows. Many photographers, myself included, love photographing during this time, known as "Golden Hour," because of the dreamy quality of light that can be captured. There is also a golden hour after sunrise.

## Evoke Natural Smiles

Unless your goal is cheesy fake smiles, Do NOT ask your child to say cheese. Capturing joy is all about engaging your child in something that will naturally evoke laughter and smiles.

What makes your child laugh? Is it silly knock-knock jokes, making a funny face or noise, or dancing? Don't underestimate the power of potty humor for evoking laughter.



*"You don't take a photograph,  
you make it."  
- Ansel Adams*



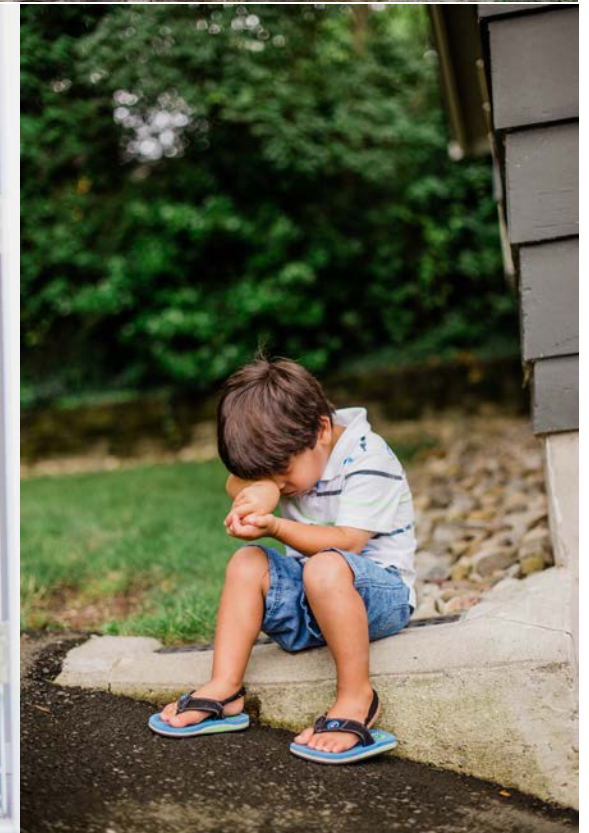
## Capture Candid Moments

Catch your kids during play or doing something they love to get real smiles and laughter. These are the times in which your child's true personality will shine through.

## What Do You Want to Remember When Your Child Is Grown?

Don't forget to capture everyday ordinary moments like eating, sleeping, brushing teeth, doing homework and reading. Sometimes it's the little moment that bring us the most joy.

*"Sometimes you will never know  
the value of a moment  
until it becomes a memory"*  
- Dr. Seuss





## Get Close

One of the easiest ways to improve your photos is to get in closer to your subject. Be mindful of everything that is in your frame before pressing the shutter. Unless the surroundings are helpful in establishing context and telling a story, position yourself to avoid capturing things that are extraneous to the scene.

*"When you photograph a face...  
you photograph the soul behind it."  
- Jean-Luc Godard*





## Remove Distractions

Watch for signs, tree branches, lamps or other objects to be sure they aren't positioned in a way that looks like they could be sticking out of your subject. Unless it's part of the story you want to tell, remove clutter and other things that will be distracting and pull your eye away from your subject. When you remove distractions, the focus will be on your child.

*"A portrait is not made in the camera but on either side of it."  
- Edward Steichen*





## Get Down on their Level

Photos taken at a child's level are generally more flattering. By getting down on their level, you will also be able to capture more connected images of your children. You can kneel, squat, or even lie down on the ground. You may feel a little silly, but I guarantee you will be happily surprised with the results.



## Capture Details

Think baby toes, soft curls, chubby fingers and toes, but don't forget details you will want to remember in older children--maybe your daughter's hands holding a paint brush or your son rolling dough while making cookies.



## Change Your Perspective

Try getting down low and shooting up or standing on something and shooting down to emphasize how small your child is.

*"You can look at a picture for a week and never think of it again. You can also look at a picture for a second and think of it all your life."*

*- Donna Tartt*



*"It is an illusion that photos are made with the camera...  
they are made with the eye, heart and head."  
- Henri Cartier-Bresson*

## Capture Connections

Capturing connection and emotion can instantly elevate your photos by introducing storytelling elements and emotion that evoke nostalgic feelings. Kids grow so fast and you will want to remember what it felt like watching your husband hold your newborn in his arms, seeing your toddler kiss his baby brother, or watching siblings snuggling and laughing. I guarantee these are the types of images that are sure to become your favorites.



*"Photography takes an instant out of time,  
altering life by holding it still."  
-Dorothea Lange*

## Capture Quiet Moments

We all love a great smiling shot of our kids. But don't underestimate the impact of authentic emotion and expression in an image. Thoughtful images have the capacity to make you feel a closer connection with the subject and make you wonder what they are thinking.



Some of my most favorite images of my son are those in which he has a soulful expression. These are often the images I choose to edit in black and white, because when we eliminate color our focus is drawn to the person's face and expression.

*"When you photograph people in color,  
you photograph their clothes.  
But when you photograph people in black and white,  
you photograph their souls!" -Ted Grant*







*"To me, photography is an art of observation. It's about finding something interesting in an ordinary place... I've found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them." - Elliott Erwitt*





*"It's one thing to make a picture of  
what a person looks like,  
it's another thing to make a portrait  
of who they are."  
- Paul Caponigro*





I believe there is beauty in every emotion.

When we photograph more than just joy and milestone moments, our images will truly reflect our story and become a loving legacy to pass down to our children.

*Even when it's not pretty or perfect. Even when it's more real than you want it to be. Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own." - Michelle Obama, Becoming*

## Follow the Rule of Thirds

Composition is a powerful tool for creating more dynamic photos. Using the Rule of Thirds, imagine a set of lines that divides the frame into equal thirds, both horizontally and vertically. Place your subject at the intersection of vertical and horizontal thirds lines. This draws the eye to your subject and gives your photo a more intentional and interesting look.



## Get in the Frame

So often, moms are the family picture takers and end up being absent from family photos. But your kids will want to see photos of you too! Whether you are a mom or dad, be sure to make it a point to regularly get in the frame with your kids. Set up your camera on a table or hand your phone to a friend or even a child and be part of your family photos! Be sure to check out my [Blog Post on Why We Must Exist in Photos Here](#).



## Look for Leading Lines

Leading lines create a natural path for the eye to follow in a photo, drawing the viewer's eyes right to your subject. Look for fences, walls, sidewalks, roads, window panes, shorelines and other structures that have natural lines. Place your subject along the leading line at the rule of thirds for the strongest impact.



## Practice, Evaluate & Practice More

It may sound obvious but just like playing a sport or any other skill, the only way to improve your photography is by practicing. Take lots of pictures. The more you practice, the more opportunities you have to learn and improve.

Consider doing a Project 365 or Project 52 where you take a photo either every day or every week. This is a great way to learn and grow with your photography. Need some inspiration? See some highlights from some of my personal projects [here](#). At the end of your year, you will have a wonderful collection of images to showcase in a book or album. See my blog post on [Where to Print your Photos](#).

Evaluate your photos. A key step to learning is looking at your images and assessing what you like, what you did well, and what could be improved. By being mindful of these three things, you will learn faster and be on your way to improving your photos.

*"Your first 10,000 photographs are your worst."  
- Henri Cartier-Bresson*



*"We don't learn from our good images; we learn from the ones that can be improved on."  
- Jen Rozenbaum*



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## Stay in Touch



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