

CANDID CHRISTMAS

Tips for taking great holiday photos

By Cody Storm Cooper



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When it comes to capturing the precious holiday moments of your family and friends that will last a lifetime, most people turn to their camera, switch it to automatic and start snapping. But with a few helpful tips, even novice photographers can take amazing pictures that will be treasured for years and generations to come.

When you reflect on the holiday season, your pictures should show time spent with your family and friends opening presents, laughing, kissing under the mistletoe, and enjoying big holiday parties; plus glimpses of the delight and enchantment children display over the season. You want to remember the moment for what it was, and not for the thumb that was in the picture, or the child with red eye in front of the tree.

You don't have to be a professional photographer to capture great candid and posed shots of all your holiday activities. Remember that family members take some of the best holiday shots in those unexpected moments during the holiday season, and by trying some of these helpful tips you can capture those moments in a way you never imagined.

- Be sure to carry your camera with you wherever you go, so you'll be ready for some candid shots.
- Try to take pictures in well-lit areas. That will allow you to avoid using your flash and over-exposing your subject(s).
- Take lots of pictures, even if it seems like you're taking the same shot. It's those subtle differences that can make a good picture a great picture.
- When taking candid shots of family and friends, try not to be seen. You'll often be able to catch genuine interaction.
- Don't forget extra batteries for your camera because it seems they always die when you need them most.
- If using a digital camera, bring along extra memory cards (be sure they're empty).
- Get creative, frame images with foreground elements. For example, choose someone smiling in the background, and frame his or her head with a festive wreath.
- Pretend you're documenting the holidays from start to finish by using your camera. Take pictures of everything, from setting up for a Christmas party, to wrapping presents, to decorating your home.
- Be aware of the background in your pictures. Be certain there is nothing too distracting (examples: shelves or the TV) or something "growing" out of your subject's head (like a tree branch).
- To reduce red eye, make sure your subject is lit with more than just the flash or use natural light (from a window), extra lighting in the room, or shoot the picture with no flash.
- Stay away from the delete button. Pictures through that tiny screen on the back of your camera never look the same as they do on a computer screen – you might be surprised by what you have captured.
- When shooting pictures of little ones, be certain to get down to their level. If you stand, you'll likely end up taking a picture of the top of their head. Crouching will allow you to capture their entire face.

Whether you're celebrating Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or just spending time with family and friends this holiday season remember, be safe, have fun, and take lots of pictures.



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- a. The Louch boys use Liam to measure their Christmas tree.
- b. Lindsay, left, and Megan Raymond with Santa.
- c. A young Tina Slater
- d. Shawn with Tigger, left, and Curtis Payerl ring in the new year.
- e. The Stewarts, who cottage on Brown's Lake, often fill their home with wrapping paper Christmas morning.
- f. Gage Everson as photographed by his mother Misty.
- g. Mackenzie Clark