

Tips For Taking Group Pictures At Christmas

There are probably more group photographs taken than any other kind. Think of all the Christmas get-togethers, weddings, birthday parties and other gatherings and celebrations. So what can you do to make your Christmas group shot one that the subjects will be delighted with, rather than moaning that they blinked or had their head cut off? Here are some tips.

Give some thought to where you will pose the group ahead of time. Is it going to be indoors or, weather conditions permitting, is it going to be outdoors? There may be an old tree in the backyard that would make a fabulous background without intruding. See that the background is appropriate and sizable for the group. Make sure there are no odd things like telegraph poles, swing sets or garbage bins in the background, or anything else that may look as if it were growing out of someone's head or hind side. If you do decide on the outdoors, composition and lighting are other important factors to take into account.

To compose a good photo, you must decide which one is the most important, a fabulous background or the subject of your photo. If the scene is more important than the subject, make sure there is enough light and that you are not too far away to capture the background. Sometimes we think that a certain background would be great in a photo, but find it's not much more than a blur or the subject has taken up so much of the photo the background is obliterated. If the subject of your photo is to be the most important, then don't have too much in the background that will distract the eye. A single, large, gnarled tree-trunk often forms a wonderful background for an outdoor snapshot of a group.

Lighting is a crucial point of outdoor pictures. For the most part lighting is great outdoors but watch the play of light and shade, particularly on your subject's face. If you have your back to the sun and it's late, watch that your own shadow is not featured in the snapshot.

Whether you're taking the pictures indoors or outdoors, take multiple shots quickly. Often people sub-consciously pose in a rather artificial manner for the first shot, but tend to relax after that and look more natural. If anyone is wearing glasses, tactfully suggest they remove them; otherwise the flash could reflect off the glass and ruin the shot. For the same reason, never pose people in front of a window.

Vary your shots by taking some of just head and shoulders, some up really close and some a bit further off. If there is a large group, it's an idea to take a shot from the top of a ladder. This will allow you to get more people in and also to focus on heads rather than bodies. If you are outdoors and have an elevated deck you can use this for height. Pose the group below and shoot from the deck.

Always remember to have the short people in the front and tall ones behind. Some can kneel or sit in front, particularly children, who get bored with standing. Just be careful you don't miss them when focusing. It's easy enough to get so absorbed in getting the adults lined up correctly, you find that you've only managed to get the top of Junior's head.

Generally in group photography the celebrant(s) are in the central position and everyone else around them. When your family or group gets together at Christmas reach out to the people in the group for whom this is a special Christmas and put them in the central position. Like the newly weds or newly engaged on their first Christmas, a baby's first Christmas, the recent oldest member of the family, the recent hot-shot graduate, the person who just landed a promotion or dream job, etc.

For sharp focus throughout, keep the group no more than about three rows deep.

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