

Definitive Family Photography –Candid Family Photos

Formal family portraits definitely have a place in a family album, however, as is the case with most types of group or individual photography, candid family photos can be a more definitive record of a family's life. Only candid family photography can capture the true essence of a crowded, frenetic Thanksgiving or Christmas celebration. Birthdays, weddings and graduation celebrations are often recorded with staid, formal group shots that do little to convey the excitement and fun of the day. These tips for taking great candid family photos may help you to capture the real joie de vivre of family life.

Announce your intentions

While some family members will either play to the camera or run for the hills at its appearance, most will co-operate if asked to relax and pay you no heed while you snap away. So let the family know that you'll be shooting the action and they will be less inclined to feel caught out.

Avoid using a flash

Use the fastest lens you have to avoid using a flash. Nothing is more distracting and intrusive than continuous flash bursts. When shooting fast to keep up with the madness, a flash can often lose you great shots as you wait for it to recharge, so try and use a lens of f2 minimum if you have one.

Use the zoom

Long lenses allow for unobtrusive close ups. Only seasoned pro's can continue with whatever they are doing naturally with a camera 3 feet from their face. Just keep in mind that you're bound to lose some light gathering capacity in the process as few zoom lenses go below f3.5. So try and structure the shoot to get all your close ups when you have the best light and switch to the fast, fixed lens when you move inside or the light starts to fail.

Don't be obvious

Watching a pro work is an education when it comes to candid family photos. They seem to have the inherent ability to shoot hundreds of photos in a crowded room and get a "Man, when did you take that" reaction for most of them. Try and maneuver yourself into a position where you will have to move around the least to keep all the bases covered. A shutterbug leaping over chairs and sliding under tables or popping up unexpectedly between people is sure to lose the element of spontaneity in the photographs.

Keep it RAW

If you are using a DSLR or any camera with RAW shooting capability, make use of the function. Having all the shots raw allows for a lot of leeway in the editing phase and color balance, white levels, exposure and cropping can be manipulated without losing any quality through compression.

What big eyes you have

Focusing on the eyes is one of the cardinal rules when photographing people. Candid family photos are no different. Even if the shot is loaded with action, try and keep the focus crisp on the main subject's eyes.

In the kitchen at parties

If there is one single room in the house that is usually a hive of activity during family get-togethers it's the kitchen. As such it has to figure high on your list of hunting venues for getting candid family

photos. Just keep in mind that this area is usually home to large numbers of some of the most dangerous species on your trophy list. Keep it low key or risk immediate, forceful eviction!

Perhaps the most important tip in capturing truly great candid family photos is to have fun yourself. If you are in the swing of things, sharing in the fun and being a part of the process rather than an impartial observer, the results will be that much sweeter!

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