



# Photography Pointers

## from the Pros

Sporting events, holidays, even casual get-togethers—this time of year is filled with plenty of great photo-taking opportunities. If you're ready to move beyond quick snapshots and **take your photos to the next level**, study these pointers from photographers in the know. Then grab your digital camera and get ready to take some terrific shots.

### » Get to know your camera.

Even point-and-shoot digital cameras are packed with features that most people aren't familiar with. Study the manual to learn what your camera can do—and practice as you read so you know how to effectively use the settings.

### » Fill the frame.

"If you're taking a picture of a person, fill the frame with their head or face rather than a lot of extraneous stuff," recommends Jacqueline Stoken, a professional photographer. And be sure to shoot at eye level—even if that means getting down on your knees or standing on a stool—to avoid distorting your subject's body in the photo.



### » Look to the edges.

"Be careful about what's on the edges of your photographs and in the background," Stoken says. Fall foliage might be gorgeous, but not if it looks as if it's growing out of your subject's head. Try moving slightly to the left or right to create a more pleasing photograph.

### » Pick the right light.

When you're taking photographs outdoors, the sun should be at your back and shining on your subject. Early morning and late afternoon are the best times for outdoor shots, according to advanced amateur photographers Dwight Tomes and Jayne Owen. Taking photos indoors? Rather than relying on harsh artificial light, place subjects a few feet away from a window so they're bathed in soft illumination.

### » Keep shooting.

"Take more exposures," Tomes recommends. "It's easy to delete those you don't want." Professional photographer Curtis Stahr agrees. "Taking lots of photos increases your chance of getting good composition. Be creative. Try new ideas," he says. "Remember: shoot, shoot, shoot! The opportunity may not occur again."



### » Experiment.

Stahr recommends playing around with the basic elements of composition, including subject, perspective, lines of sight, and more. For instance, having diagonal lines in the photograph—perhaps with a sidewalk shown at an angle rather than straight on—suggests movement. Pay attention to the horizon line, too. "A lot of times, the line of the horizon is right smack in the middle," Stoken says. "You want it a little higher or lower than the middle of the picture."

### » Use a tripod.

Even if you have a point-and-shoot camera, setting it up on a tripod helps you hold the camera steady and allows you to more carefully frame your photos. "Using a tripod makes the pictures really sharp because there isn't any movement," Stoken explains.

### » Think details.

Sure, posed photos are great. But to really capture an event or setting, spend some time capturing what's going on outside the group shots. At a party, snap some pictures of the gift table, the food, the decorations, or people playing party games. If you're taking photos of a sporting event, Tomes says, "include activity—the game action, the huddle, or the big win."