



10 Tips for Family Portraits

1. If you want that 'traditional' family photograph you are going to need to work the role of director to ensure all eyes and faces are on you. Working with a large group of people can be a bit trying so prepare to be patient and assertive will help in getting a handle of things. When you've got everyone ready don't be afraid to reel of a dozen or so shots or use the burst mode to ensure you have at least one frame with everyone is paying attention. Eye contact isn't always essential though and some shots which intentionally lack it can be more intriguing and relaxed. So rather than force the subjects to look continuously at the camera get them to look in a variety of directions to spice things up.
2. The 'traditional' shot isn't for everyone so flex that creative muscle and engineer some fun, personality fused frames. Putting your subjects at ease is the first step so fire a few pictures in a comfortable or familiar environment. This will help to lend character and narrative to the piece.
3. As with all photography lighting is key. If you are shooting inside and can't afford expensive lighting use the most flattering and cheapest form of light there is – sun light! Position your group facing or parallel to a large clean window, if it is a particularly bright day cover it with a thin veil of material, such as a net curtain or peg a white cotton sheet across to act as a diffuser for softer, more flattering light. If you decide to use flash indoors, perhaps employ a diffuser to soften the effect and avoid bleaching skin or flattening textures.

4. You can really let your imagination run wild when it comes to photographing family portraits outside. Remember your light – as the sun can cause unflattering shadows to fall across the face. With the sun behind the subjects you'll get a creative silhouette or you could add a spot of fill in flash to bring back the details and generates a halo of light around the subjects, separating them from the background.
5. Avoid having the sun behind you as the models will be pictured with odd squinting expressions, instead take a look around the vicinity – is there somewhere that offers some shade? A porch, a beach umbrella or even a white sheet tied above their heads. For this last suggestion you may need to peg the corners of the sheet to four chairs and ask the group to sit underneath but this could convey a summery relaxed portrait.
6. It may sound cheesy, but as well as bearing a similar resemblance; you may want to include other elements to tie the members of the portrait together – to say 'yes we are a family!' Suggestions include: matching splashes of colour, props or even aspects of the environment around them. If you want to style the shot in a more traditional or relaxed fashion then ask the family to wear natural or pastel shades. Opt for bright, bold or clashing hues for a more energetic, frivolous shoot.
7. As well as shooting the family sitting and then standing, experiment by having half the group stand and half sit. By splitting the group onto different levels: the viewer is offered a more dynamic image forcing the eye to jump around the scene. Incorporate props, especially if you have children in the frame. Not only will this again diversify the arrangement but it can help to reveal children's personalities. For example a chair is not just for sitting, one could stand on it, crawl underneath it, lean on it, you could pose several children on it at one time etc.

8. Ideally for traditional group shots a wide angle lens is great for framing the entire family. If it's more relaxed candid's you want then use a zoom to switch between wide angle shots with back drop and close up spilt-second emotive portraits. Dial is a wide aperture of f5.6 or less and throw out the back drop. This offers the chance to play with whom and what is in focus.
9. Forget boring head on shots, be original and look for more inspirational angles. Climb a ladder or chair and shoot shooting downwards. This is great if you have a large group or want to get more creative with positioning. Alternatively hit the deck and lie with you back on the ground and shoot straight up into the middle of huddle. Even slanting the camera at a jaunty angle can produce exciting options. Profile portraits can be quite creative too.
10. Have some fun! Unleash the enthusiasm and ask your family to run, jump, spin, give each other piggybacks, dance, play fight and in general – laugh! Get them doing things that will dispense with any rigidity or formality. Incorporating motion into group shots develops interest and instantly relaxes your subjects and therefore viewers. To freeze action shoot between 1/125 to 1/500, you may need to increase the ISO setting in low light or use flash if necessary.