

8 Family Portraits Tips



The sun is out and shining bright. The sky is blue and the grass is green. Summers here and it seems everyone is wanting a new family portrait on the beach, at the park, or in downtown.

Here are some things to keep in mind when creating family portraits:

1. **Think in “mini-groups”.** A family portrait is simply multiple “mini groups” within one large group. Use groups of two’s and three’s to compose your family shot.
2. **Remember “levels”.** One of the most important elements of a group shot is to vary the levels of your subjects. Placing some faces higher than others will allow you to make the shot more intimate in spacing.
3. **Consider “color”.** While color coordination is by no means necessary for group shots, it can help the overall flow. Have your subjects go by types of color, such as “vibrant”, “bold”, “pastels”, etc.
4. **Watching even lighting, but don’t stress about it.** So long as all the eyes are visible, and faces are lit relatively the same, your good to go.
5. **Pick shade:** As the sun doesn’t set until late in the evening, you’ll have to wait for good sidelight until about 5 pm. If your stuck shooting before this time, find awnings, the shaded back side of buildings, or tree cover to diffuse the harsh sunlight.

6. **Move quickly:** It's very helpful to try story-boarding your group shots ahead of time according to the number of people you have. The more people you have in a shot, the less time you have to create it. Story-boarding is more about knowing what you want, than it is about formal posing.
7. **Be fun and spontaneous!** Plan to take shots of the families walking, striking a dance pose, linking arms, or jumping in the air. These shots capture genuine expressions among the entire group and help to keep your subjects happy and interested.
8. **Background work:** The larger the party, the less control you have with eliminating your background. Simplify as much as you can by changing the angle you take your shot. Taking the shot from the ground or directly down on your subjects may eliminate enough background to feature the group without distraction.

Most of all, spend some time asking questions of what the family wants. Make a general determination if they are looking for more casual shots, or formal arrangements. So long as you know the general direction of what the family is looking for, you can score big in the capture.