

Practices to improve your pictures

Find meaningful content and take action photos

- It is called a photo op because the opportunity furthers the story more than taking the photo at a different time.
- Be there when the action is going on. **A photo of a 4-H member working on a robot has more impact than five members of the same club posing in front of a brick wall.**
- Be ready when opportunity knocks. **Have your camera with you all the time, and use it! By taking more photos, you will become a better photographer. People will get used to you taking photos and feel less awkward or intimidated when you get your camera out. This will lead to more natural-looking, less "posed" photographs.**

Compose your pictures

- Use the Rule of Thirds. **If you zone the screen into thirds, place the primary points of interest on one of those lines. Try not to let any horizon or other lines cut the picture in half.**
- Check the background for distraction. **Look for trees behind heads, glare coming off the car windows across the street, or anything that pulls interest away from your main subject. Most of the time, moving a few feet to change the camera angle will avoid the distracting element.**
- Keep messes out of the frame of the picture. **You will end up with much nicer, less cluttered photos. For example, remove backpacks and set them just out of the frame, and watch out for trash cans.**
- Don't be a poser. **Try not to put your subject into poses. Posing people usually produces an awkward photo. Try to capture real action instead.**
- Take photos from different angles. **Try many angles. Instead of shooting the object straight on while standing up, try looking down to the object by standing on a chair, from behind the subject, or crouching and looking up. If kids are working on a table, lower the camera to shoot at their eye level.**
- Fill the frame with your subject. **Don't be afraid to get closer to your subject.**

Take lots of pictures

- **Take a ton of photos.** Maybe aim to fill your memory card at an event (unless you have a huge card). The more pictures you take, the better you'll get, and the better your chance of getting useable results and maybe some great shots.
- **You will not wear out the shutter.** It's okay to take 25 pictures just to get one really nice picture. Review and organize your photos right away. Delete the bad mistakes.
- **Consider creating a photo essay with a handful of photographs.** Try to keep a set of photos that tells a story about the event you photographed. This doesn't mean you need to end up with loads of shots that all look exactly the same. A set should have close-ups, wide shots, cool angles, and different points of view. It is always useful to have some alternatives.

Focus

- **Not every picture has to be a masterpiece but every picture needs to be in focus.**
- **Master the auto focus modes of your camera.** Poor focus is one of the most common ways that a good shot is ruined. For an iPhone: you just touch the screen where you want to focus. It is that simple.

- **Stand still and hold your camera (or phone) with two hands and rest your elbows on the side of your chest.** If needed you can stabilize yourself against a nearby wall. Try not to hold the camera up for too long; this will cause your hands and arms to be shakier.
- **Relax when you push the shutter button.**
- **Make sure you have enough light.** The brighter the light, the faster your shutter snaps and the less chance of blur.
- **Advanced smart phone tip:** After you have a sharp shot, try refocusing on an object closer to the camera by touching it the on the screen to limit the depth of field. This will make the background blurry so the subject — which should be in focus — is emphasized.