



# Photography With Kids

FOCUSED CAMERA™

# Table Of Contents

Choosing a Camera	2
How & What Do I Teach?	16
Project Ideas for Kids	37

## Introduction

Whether it is your little one or your teen or some age in-between, this guide will help you and your kids get started in photography! From choosing a camera to basic teachable concepts to project ideas to keep them going, this guide has it covered.

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### Choosing a Camera

If your child or teen has taken up an interest in photography, you might be considering a camera purchase.

While a smartphone can take great photos, to really learn photography in terms of exposure, aperture, shutter speed and the like, you need a camera. There are many benefits to purchasing a dedicated camera. For one thing, smartphones are easy to break if dropped, whereas many camera manufacturers make at least one model meant for tough conditions and some are even waterproof. You can also pick up used, older-model cameras for much less expense than a smartphone. Additionally, a good, dedicated camera will produce superior results and have more features, such as the ability to change the aperture on the lens. These features provide a way for your child or teen to grow their photography knowledge over time and a good camera and lens can last for many years.

If your child already has a smartphone and you want to make sure they plan to stick with the interest or hobby before buying a camera, you could try downloading some special apps like Halide, Darkroom, Photo Splash, or others (some are free and some are one-time cost).

If you are still reading, we are now assuming that you plan to buy a dedicated camera for your child or teen. How do you select the right one?

There 5 different types of cameras to consider:

1. SLR/Film Camera
2. Point-and-Shoot Camera
3. Bridge Camera
4. DSLR or Mirrorless Interchangeable Lens Camera
5. Toy or Specialty Camera

If you are unfamiliar with these types of cameras, please see our [Camera Buying Guide](#) which summarizes types of cameras, the differences between DSLR and mirrorless cameras, and offers tips for getting the best deals while avoiding scams.

## Photography With Kids

First, consider the child's age.

While you want a camera your child can grow into and improve their photography, many cameras, even beginner models, are too complex for very young children. When a child is under the age of five, they may view the camera as a toy and their actions are often unpredictable, so you want a camera designed for very young children. Unfortunately, most of these extremely durable toddler cameras have very low image quality. There are dozens of them available on Amazon. We outline some of our specific recommendations below.



## Photography With Kids

If the child is between the ages of five and ten, then a waterproof and rugged point-and-shoot is a great choice. For children over age ten, a bridge camera, DSLR, or mirrorless camera might be a better option because an older child or teen will be able to master more photography skills and understand the more complex skill level needed to use it.

All ages seem to love the “fun” style cameras such as the instant print (Instamax, Polaroid) and action/video cameras (GoPro). I consider these more of a specialty-type camera. Your child can still learn a lot about photography with these types of cameras, but some of their features may be limited and therefore not as beneficial for a more advanced or older learner.

Next, consider the level of interest your child has for photography. Is this a keen interest or a passing fancy?

## Photography With Kids

If your child already has some experience and knows some basic fundamentals of photography, it might be time to upgrade to a DSLR or mirrorless. If your child seems to have more of a passing infatuation or has no prior experience, then a point-and-shoot is a better option.



Last, consider how your child or teen might want to use the camera.

There may be certain features that will be very important, especially if there is a particular subject your child hopes to photograph. If your child wants to take the camera hiking and kayaking, then a waterproof point-and-shoot is a clear choice. If your child or teen wants to take photos of sports, or racecars, or wildlife, then a camera with a long zoom built-in (point-and-shoot, bridge cameras) or a telephoto lens (DSLR, mirrorless) will help them capture those shots. If your child has a wide range of interests, then a DSLR or mirrorless with interchangeable lenses is a good choice. If your child or teen wants to take pictures of him or herself, or vlog, then a camera with video and a rotating LCD screen will be most helpful.

So which cameras would we recommend?

We are going to recommend several cameras, but keep in mind that each camera has probably been through several versions and upgrades over the years and they will continue to offer newer versions going forward.



Therefore we are recommending a model type that as long as you get one from the last few years, even if it is the older model, will still be an excellent choice. You can even go back ten years in models and as long as the camera is 12MP or higher, your child or teen will be able to make some great images using it (once they get some practice, of course!).

No cameras are recommended for under age three.

### **Ages 3 – 5**

#### 1. Pellor Digital Camera

This camera comes in bright colors and a waterproof, dust-proof, and shockproof rubber shell. It is a great size for small hands, but the buttons will require guidance until kids learn how to use it. It is a 5MP camera.

### 2. Drograce

This 5MP camera comes in bright colors and a small compact design with a waterproof exterior. As with the Pellor, a very young child will need guidance with the menus and buttons. With the tripod and accessories, kids can mount the camera to bicycles or scooters.

### Ages 5 - 10

#### 1. Nikon Coolpix Point-and Shoots

These cameras are small/compact and durable. If you purchase a model like the W150 they are also waterproof. The newest models are 13MP or more and most feature built-in optical zoom functions.



### 2. Fujifilm Instax Max

A specialty camera that is super easy to use because it is basically a point-and-shoot. The bulky, easy-to-grip shape makes it good for kids as young as age 5. Kids get excited when their images come out after a few seconds, but that paper can get expensive.

### 3. Canon PowerShot ELPH Point-and-Shoots

While it is child-friendly (starting around age 7 or 8), it might be a bit more complicated and less durable for younger kids. It fits easily in a purse, pocket, or book bag. Most of the newest models are 20MP or more with 8x zoom. Some newer models also offer image stabilization.

### 4. GoPro Hero (like the Hero 8)

A specialty action camera, great for those who take part in outdoor sports and want to capture hands-free video footage. While the newer models have more cutting-edge technology like advanced audio voice commands and image stabilization, the price is still very cost-effective. There is a huge selection of accessories like chest or helmet mounts. These cameras are good for the age 10 and over crowd too.

### Over Age 10

#### 1. Fujifilm Finepix Point-and-Shoots

Like the cameras above, these models are small and fit easily into a pocket. If you purchase an XP model it will have more rugged features such as shockproof and/or waterproof.



#### 2. Olympus Tough TG (like the TG-6) Point-and-Shoots

Small and compact like most point-and-shoots so you can take it anywhere. The TG is especially rugged and advertised as engineered for the world's toughest places. It is waterproof (to 50 feet!), dustproof, shockproof, crushproof, and freezeproof. These cameras are tough enough for those under the age of ten, but the settings can get complex for younger kids. Plus the overall toughness of these models lends itself to very active kids – who go mountain biking, camping, scuba diving, and snowboarding – and thus likely a bit older or more mature.

### 3. Fujifilm Finepix Bridge Cameras

This is the first model that starts to look like a DSLR or mirrorless. The difference is that the lens is still built-in. If you have a child in that in-between-zone where s/he is not quite ready for the complexities of interchangeable lenses, but they want the “look” of a “grown-up” camera, then these are good options.

### 4. Nikon D3500 (or other D3000 range) DSLR

This camera line is a great beginner DSLR for a teen. The controls are too complex for the younger crowd. Automatic settings are available, but the ability to control aperture, shutter speed, and full manual controls will allow your teen to learn more of the fundamentals of photography. The cameras are often sold in a kit with a small zoom lens. Lenses are interchangeable, so additional lenses can be purchased for other uses as your child’s skill grows.

### 5. Canon Rebel (any recent version) DSLR

This is the Canon equivalent of the Nikon listed above. It is great for teens. It also is sold in a kit version with a small zoom lens, usually an 18-55mm. The lenses are interchangeable as well.

## Photography With Kids

### 6. Nikon Z50 or Canon M50 Mirrorless

Since these are newer, they don't have a lot of versions of these mirrorless cameras. They are the mirrorless equivalents of #3 and #4 above and are great for teens, but too complex for younger learners. Mirrorless cameras are more compact camera bodies, but the lenses are often just as bulky. Since these camera types and lenses are the newest technologies they will also be the most costly of the options.



What about Film Cameras (SLRs)? Why are SLRs not included on the list of recommendations?

These days a film camera is almost a specialty camera. Film cameras or SLRs were the precursors to DSLRs and they require a few additional special skills, such as loading and winding the film. Additionally, the film requires a reliable printing or digitizing service. For most kids and teens, an old-school film camera will be much more difficult to learn than the digital options available. We would not recommend a film camera until your child has learned some other fundamentals first, including how to shoot in manual mode on their digital camera and with manual focus on their lens. Many older film cameras use manual controls. If your child really wants to shoot with film, then there are more “automatic” point-and-shoot versions of film cameras available from [reputable used camera sellers](#) or on platforms like eBay.

## Photography With Kids

So there you have our recommendations for an assortment of cameras that should provide a great starting point for your budding photographer. When choosing a camera, you want a camera that will be safe and reliable for their current age, but with enough options for them to grow into the camera as they improve their skills. You know your child best – how well they care for their belongings, how dedicated they are to a new task, and their overall maturity are aspects to consider that only you will know. All of the cameras on our list are durable, but no camera will survive abuse. The cameras we have recommended are all available in new models as well as older models that you can pick up used, making each of them generally affordable. When purchasing a camera beware of scams.

In the next section, we will cover the first steps for teaching and guiding your fledgling photographer, and above all, having fun!



### How & What Do I Teach?

Teaching a child or teen about photography isn't going to be the same as teaching photography to adults. As an adult, we already have some basic concepts of what a good photo includes or doesn't include.

Most of us had some type of art class in high school or in college, and we've had more exposure to art and photography that builds some knowledge that kids, especially young kids, don't have. However, kids are naturally creative and curious and aren't overburdened by rules and expectations which makes them perfect learners for the basics of photography.



## Photography With Kids

With some guidance and feedback your child can go from a rapid-multi-photo-taker to a budding photographer where the camera and the photos it takes have a bit more meaning than just point-and-shoot or selfies. As you give gentle guidance (remember it is more about creativity than learning the rules in the beginning), your child can learn the basics and improve their technique over time. Most importantly, both you and your child will have a great opportunity to spend some enjoyable quality time together! And who knows, the unique perspective that children bring to art (and photography) might also give you some new inspiration!

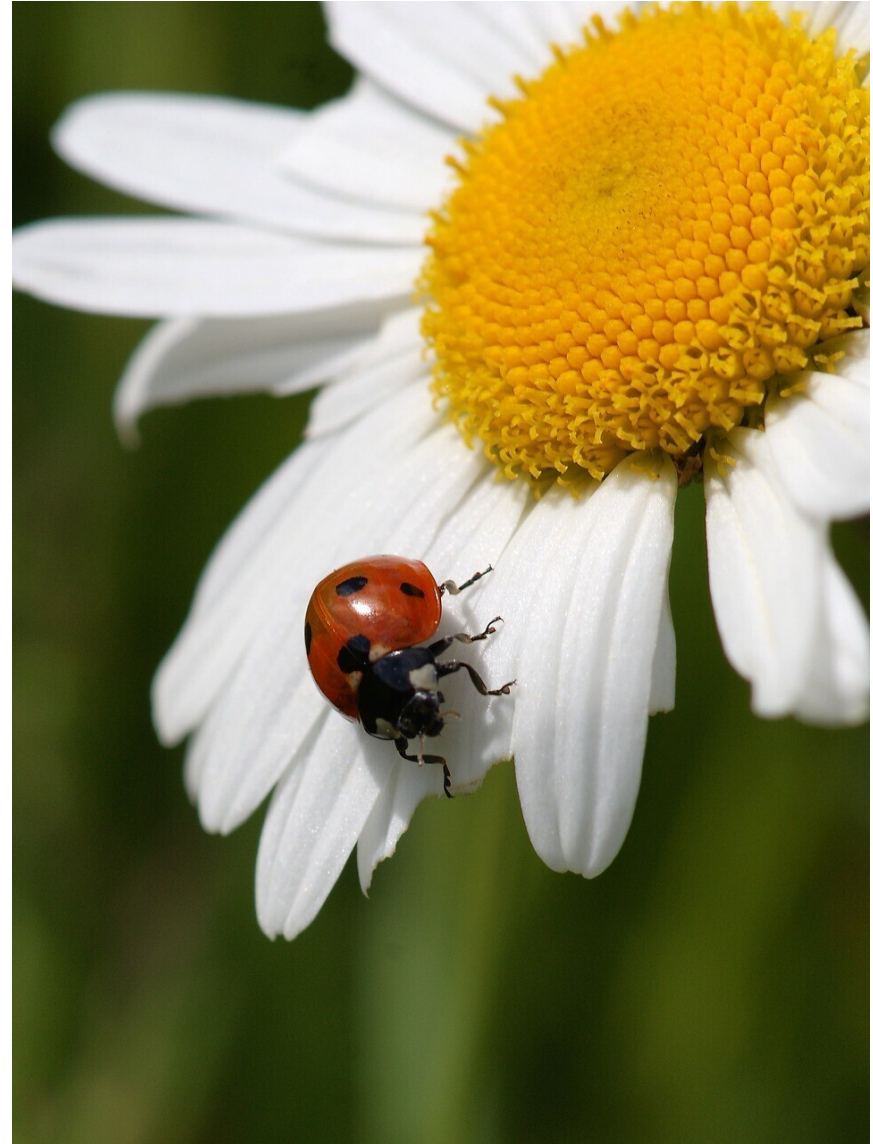
### Motivating Interest

For many kids, simply holding and being allowed to use the camera's technology will be enough to get them motivated. However, for many others, the interest may wane after only a few minutes. We all know how fast kids and teens get distracted these days. To inspire these kids, you will need to be able to demonstrate the functions of the camera in a way that keeps attention at each learning session. One simple way to do this is to create a challenge that goes with each learning goal (our next blog post will give you some ideas) and follow the rest of the tips shared here.

Additionally, don't plan to teach "theory" for long periods of time. Balance theory with practice at a 1 to 4 ratio. For every one minute of theory, allow four minutes of practice (for two minutes of theory allow 8 minutes of practice, etc.), and try not to give more than 5-10 minutes of theory maximum in an hour session. This can be adjusted for less practice time as students age or when they have an especially keen interest in the subject.

### Be Patient & Flexible

You start out planning a lesson on shutter speed, but your child decides s/he would rather follow a ladybug around on a flower. Let them. Save your “lesson” for another day and time and just enjoy the spontaneity of your parent-kid time. There are so many things you can teach your child about photography that any insights you share with them while they follow bugs will still be valuable and useful. If you are too rigid with your plans and lessons, you might end up pushing your child away from photography.



## Photography With Kids

Don't rush. Don't try to teach too much at once. Children and teens require patience, time, and repetition. When planning a lesson or session, keep the concepts gradual and connected. Whatever you left off with at the last lesson, review that material and practice before moving on. It takes at least 5 repetitions for a "student" of any age to really learn a concept and even more repetitions for younger age groups. Don't expect them to remember the lesson you gave one time when it was over two weeks ago and therefore don't get frustrated if they don't seem to grasp what you've shown them. If you express frustration or disappointment, you will get a lack of enthusiasm in return.

### **Simplicity**

Keep it simple. Adults have a way of complicating and over-explaining everything. Teach a single concept, teach it well, and allow lots of practice for deep understanding. With simple beginnings, you can build on each previous lesson. Children also feel more successful and will stay more motivated if they can accomplish one thing or improve one thing.

## Photography With Kids

If you discuss four rules of composition and they only successfully grasp and use one of them, they will feel less successful than if you just gave them that one rule and only that one rule and they worked on it successfully. Even though in the end they still learned one thing, kids won't see it that way. They will remember the three things they didn't accomplish when you give them a long list of concepts.

### **Give Real Life Examples**

Whenever the opportunity arises discuss photos that you see and what makes them beautiful or interesting. These can be photos in magazines, on billboards along the highway, or online. Discuss the positives and negatives of different photos without judgment. Remember, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Your child may love a photo that you hate, but you need to listen to their reasoning. It will give you insight into their thought process and perhaps spark ideas for lessons to try.

## Photography With Kids

Real-life examples of art do not have to be limited to photographs. Museums with sculptures and paintings can also be excellent places to talk about composition, lighting, poses of people, perspective, and more.

### Proper Camera Care

Learning how to take care of the camera and hold it properly are lessons all their own. Show them how to carefully remove and replace the batteries and memory cards without damaging the connectors. Teach them how to properly clean the front of the lens with lens-cleaning cloths or tools. Correct camera hold is important for steady shots, but it is also the correct way to access the camera's controls, as well as reducing the risk of accidental droppage. A wrist strap or a neck strap is also good for photographers of all ages, not just kids!



### Main Components & Basic Controls

Some of the first lessons should incorporate the main or basic features of the camera, such as the shutter button and how to focus or use the zoom on a lens. A full, comprehensive explanation of all the buttons is not necessary to get started. Let them take some initial photos, and then you can start to show them other buttons and controls one by one. Get them familiar with the parts of the camera and what those parts do along with some photography lingo. For example, discuss the lens briefly, what is going on inside (the lens takes in the light and focuses it), and as they learn show them buttons on the lens like vibration reduction, manual focus, the focal length designations, and more. Some common components for most cameras including point-and-shoots include the lens, the body, the shutter/shutter button, a zoom (built-in or a kit lens), the flash, battery and memory card, on/off button, and a viewfinder or LCD (or both).



### Be Positive

Once they take those first few photos, your reactions are critical to their future interest in photography. Obviously, you don't want to overdo it and claim they are the next Ansel Adams, but stick to the positives. What did they do right?

Ask them what they think about their photos and ask them whether the resulting photo looks like what they imagined when they took it. Analyze what could have been done differently if the result did not match their expectation. Give them a suggestion on how to approach the situation differently and let them go experiment with those suggestions. Too much criticism will have a negative effect so stick to the "teacher's rule" of two positives and a negative. Tell them two good things, then point out any basic mistakes or something simple they can work on to improve and empower them. Even if the photo is too dark or completely blurry compliment them on their perspective or choice of subject. Continue to encourage their creativity.

## Photography With Kids

### So Let's Talk Creativity...

The key to creativity is to allow your child to experiment and explore. Make sure they know that photography, like other art forms, isn't "graded" like schoolwork. It's about possibilities, new attempts (and failures), showing others what you "see" and sometimes "breaking" the rules. With digital photography there is little to no reason to limit the number of photos taken, so try things lots of different ways.



There is no film wasted and bad attempts can quickly be erased. Learning by doing and by experimenting is often a better way to learn than other forms of instruction anyway! What if you take a photo from up in the tree? How about photographing the back of the flower instead of the front face? What happens if you slowly move the camera while taking pictures of the birds?

## Photography With Kids

A creativity challenge is also a fun way to get kids interested in photography. Give them a list of tasks or subjects that are all different, or give them one object or subject and challenge them to photograph it in five different ways (different angles, using a different light, changing a camera setting, using a new location, trying a new compositional rule, and more). Use these challenges in moderation. Too many photos taken too quickly will start to make photography feel like a game instead of an art. Encourage them to go slow and put effort and intent into each photo. Give small constructive criticism on each resulting photo – start with the good things and offer one way to improve. This analysis after a photo session is critical. No photographer gets better at the craft if s/he doesn't review their images for areas of improvement. Over time your child will get better and better at self-critiquing their work.

## Photography With Kids



How & What Do I Teach?

### Teach Subject Matter

Photography has many genres – food, product, wedding, portrait, wildlife, sport, event, landscape, street, astro/night, architectural, corporate, real estate, etc. Each subject requires a different kind of technique. The way you photograph a macro image of a bee is completely different than the way you photograph a business woman for a corporate headshot. The way you take photos of an object varies from the way you take photos of a place. Show your child examples of lots of different types of subjects and genres of photography. Encourage them to take photos of a variety of subjects (people, objects, and places).

However, at the same time, teach your child to avoid distracting photos – images that have too much going on all at once. Have them select a single subject per photo. It can be helpful to show them the “fill the frame” method where they get close enough to the subject that it takes up most of the frame thereby automatically reducing the number of distractions and competing objects/people.

## Photography With Kids

Kids understand heroes at an early age. They know from television shows, books, and movies that the person who wins or perseveres is the hero (not necessarily a superhero, but can be the same). In photography, the main subject is the “hero” and everything that distracts from that hero is a “villain.” Have your child consciously work at removing the villains in an image by changing perspectives or rearranging the shot (moving the camera or the subject closer or farther back, left or right, or higher or lower). What you are essentially showing them is that good photography requires attention to detail.

## Photography With Kids



How & What Do I Teach?

### Focus

The one thing you cannot ever truly fix in editing is lack of focus. As soon as they have the basic buttons and functions figured out, there should be lots of lessons and practice on attaining good focus. Show them focus points and autofocus area modes and teach them how to use them. Demonstrate with two objects at different distances and have them put the focus point over each object in turn and focus. They should see the camera refocusing each time. These lessons can later be the basis for teaching about depth of field and aperture.

### Composition

Don't try to cover all the rules of composition at once. Focus on one at a time. Leading lines, rule of thirds, and symmetry are really good ones to start with. Review the previously taught rules periodically and point them out when you see them in your child's images or in other photographs. Ask your child to name compositional rules they see in magazines or on social media. Please read our [Composition Basics](#) e-book for more on this topic.



### Light

Okay, this is the “big one.” Photography does not exist without light. The word itself roughly translates to “write with light.” The entire exposure triangle is all about balancing the right amount of light for each image. The exposure triangle is too complex for most kids to grasp without a lot of background lessons leading up to it. It is a good idea when you are ready to teach the exposure triangle that you work on one aspect at a time, starting with ISO (what it does, how it works, how you change it in the camera). We offer some additional guides on our website that may be helpful when you approach these topics.

## Photography With Kids

A great way to get started teaching about light is to just have your child point out the light sources as they are taking photos and where the angle of light is coming from. For kids and beginners, it is a good idea to have them keep the sun at their back (this way they don't shoot into the sun and hurt their eyes or damage the camera by accident). Have them also pay attention to the shadows that each light source creates. For practice, have your child take a toy or stuffed animal outside and take pictures from all sides and repeat at different times of the day or in different locations (full sun, dappled sun, full shade, dark shade) all the while noting the changes they see. You can also teach them the "hand trick." By holding your hand out in front of you (at arm's length) and watching the light while you slowly turn in a circle, you can see when you have the best light angle.

### **Practice, Repeat, Practice and Above All Else Have Fun!**

You must take a page from the educator handbook – repeat, repeat, repeat, and allow ample time for practice. Why do teachers assign homework? So that children get that practice. The repetition is what makes it stick.

## Photography With Kids



However, remember don't drill-and-kill to the point that the practice feels like a punishment (I will use the rule of thirds, I will use the rule of thirds, written one hundred times on the blackboard will not make a great photographer).

## Photography With Kids

"Your first 10,000 photographs are your worst" according to world-famous photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson and the rule is true for kids and adults alike. Don't be afraid to repeat an explanation of a concept, or explain the concept again in a new way until it sinks in. It can be helpful to have your child repeat the idea back to you in their own words. Encourage them to retake a photo that doesn't "work" and fix what they can about it.

At the end of the day, photography with kids should be FUN. Allow for mistakes and imperfect compositions. Think about what was most difficult for you when you first picked up a camera and the frustrations you had as you were learning. Then try to create a path forward for your child that eliminates those issues as much as possible. Learn to celebrate and enjoy the learning process and more importantly the quality time you will be spending as a family. Be open to their ideas and they might just inspire you to new levels of creativity too!

### The Takeaway

Photography promotes mental well-being, builds self-esteem, increases visual thinking skills, builds on math and science concepts (fractions, rays of light), improves critical thinking skills, and develops creativity. The conclusion?

Photography is good for kids (and for you). Once s/he has a firm understanding from the lessons and concepts we outlined above, they may be ready to really dive into more advanced lessons on exposure, bracketing, or even manual mode. When you get to these concepts, tackle them step-by-step, one concept at a time just as you have been doing all along, and continue to encourage their efforts. Photography can be an incredible learning journey and it's nice to have your loved ones along for the ride.

In the next section, we will discuss some possible projects and inspiration for applying these lessons and sparking creativity in your budding photographer!

### Project Ideas for Kids

The type of photography assignments or projects you give to your children will depend on their age and skill. A beginner or young learner might not be able to do more advanced projects, but something on this list should help them become more familiar with their camera and have fun while doing it. The ideas presented here can be adapted as you like to make them easier or harder for your child. These projects let kids learn through play and while they are intended for kids, grown-ups can get just as much enjoyment and practice from them as well.

### Colors

Choose a color and look for only items of that color to photograph. This can be a great activity for younger kids who are just learning their colors. For an older student consider having them find not only one color, but complementary colors, analogous colors, and more. Color theory is important to the “art” aspect of photography. Have them choose a theme to go with the colors. They can photograph only “warm” colors or only “cool” colors, or find colors that remind them of an emotion like love or sadness. For more ideas on photography with color, check out our [Creativity Cards for Color Theory](#) on our website.

# Photography With Kids



## Project Ideas for Kids



### Alphabet

Choose a letter and find subjects that start with the letter. Stick with that one letter, or try making your way through all of the letters one by one. Students can also find subjects that match their initials or the letters of their name. Older students might enjoy trying to find objects that look like letters, for example, a hula-hoop could be the letter “O.” Another option might be to arrange several examples of an item into a letter shape such as a bunch of acorns to make the shape of the letter “A.” Once they've collected enough photos of letters they can spell words and messages and even arrange a collage on a program like Photoshop or Publisher (see examples created by a 10-year-old student under the next section, published with permission).

### **Pick a Theme**

Select a topic or theme and photograph related objects. For example, you could use the theme soft and take photos of pillows, stuffed animals, squirrels in the yard, feathers, fluffy clouds in the sky, and more. You can select a theme for the day, or create a photography project over a week or a month where you take photos of the same object or subject or the same place every day at the same time, or over time. As an example, your student could take a photo of a flower through its life cycle, or the sunsets every night for a week. Some other possible themes could include reflections, clouds, trees, a pet, shadows, cars, bugs/insects, or even themselves!

A fun alternative to the theme is a “Day in the Life of...” Have your student document their entire day. They should set a timer on their phone (or yours) and take a photo every 30 minutes or every hour. The photo does not have to be of themselves. It might start with a photo of toothpaste or breakfast cereal, then something they see while walking the dog, etc. They can also photograph the “day” of someone else in the family, even a pet! This activity is best for weekends or other days away from school; however, if you check with your school they might be given special permission to document at school or even get a feature in the school yearbook.

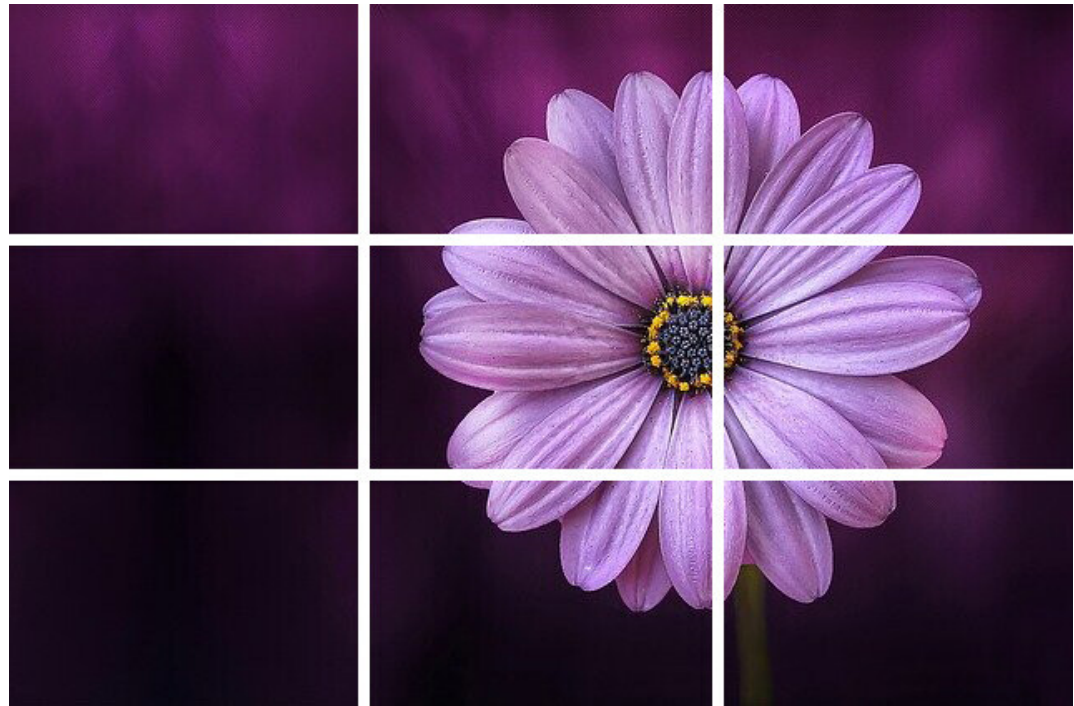




### Composition

There are a few simple “rules” of composition that even the youngest budding photographers can utilize. Showing them more than one composition method will allow them to vary their shots and expand their creativity. One such rule is the Rule of Thirds.

Take a magazine or printed internet photo and draw a tic-tac-toe type set of lines on it with a marker. Have them take photos where the main subject is along any one of the lines (horizontal or vertical) or at the intersection of the lines. You can show them the photo here as an example.



## Photography With Kids

Another simple composition rule is called fill the frame. This means exactly what it sounds like! Fill the frame with the subject. This can be fun for patterns, flowers, and parts of vehicles like tires or tail lights, as well as for portraits of people and pets. The sort-of opposite composition method is called negative space. This means to leave empty space around the subject so the subject stands out. Have your student try both methods on the same subject to see which one works best.

Leading lines are another basic compositional tool. This one is a little more difficult so it might be better for older students. The idea is to look for “lines” that guide the viewer and lead the viewer into or around the frame. These lines might be subtle like a row of trees or fencing or it might be more obvious like a boardwalk heading out into the ocean. Once you start seeing leading lines you will see them everywhere! For example, in the photo on the next page, there are many leading lines – the road, the rays of light, the railing, and more.

Consult our e-book on [Composition Basics](#) for more information and ideas.

## Photography With Kids



### **These Are A Few of My Favorite Things...**

Create a list of favorites such as favorite snack, favorite toy, favorite color, favorite t-shirt, and more. Then have your child photograph them one at a time, or as a set. Ask them to think of creative ways to display the item(s) so they aren't just set out and photographed straight on. The reverse task can also be fun – photograph the things they don't like. Don't be surprised if they photograph things like dog poop, broccoli, and items used for household chores!

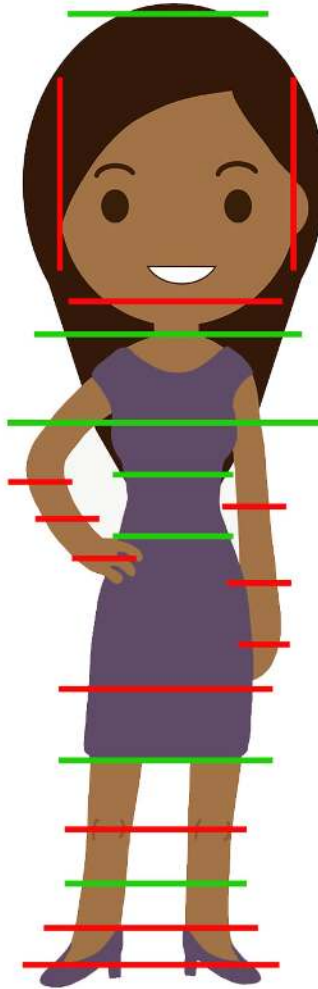
### **Portraits**

This project idea is best for older students especially those with an interest in portrait photography. Ask your student to take portraits of all members of the family including the family pets. There are different styles of portraits – headshots (professional and casual), partial body shots, full body shots, and environmental portraits (the person in their element or with something that signifies an important aspect of their life/identity such as a football player on the field in uniform posed with the ball).



You can have your student practice with different portrait styles. This can be a great time to introduce aperture priority mode for more advanced users. With wider apertures, they can control the depth of field and work on getting the blurry background behind the subject. This is also a great time to warn your student about limb chopping. The general rule is if the part of the body bends (a joint), then don't crop there. Remind them as they practice not to cut off feet or tops of heads and to move with their feet to get the best framing and angles. A [cheat sheet](#) like the one shown here can be helpful.

### WHERE TO CROP PEOPLE FOR PORTRAITS



Knowing where to crop people can make or break a portrait photo. Areas marked with green lines are good locations for cropping, while areas marked in red are bad locations for cropping.

As a general rule, if it "bends" don't crop it. Therefore avoid cropping at joints like toes, fingers, knees, elbows, and wrists. Cropping through a chin can also look strange. Crops look best below the knee, across mid-thigh, along the waist, across forearms, or through the top of the head. If a crop goes through the waist consider having the model bring their arms up so you don't crop through the wrists or fingers.

Crop to flatter the subject and elongate the body. Bad crops make people look larger or "frumpy." Use poses that emphasize the subject's best qualities and de-emphasize their weakest ones.

The subject's eyes should be in the top third of the frame no matter where you decide to crop. Having the subject slightly to the left or the right of the frame can also look better than centered. Take shots both horizontally and vertically. Use a variety of poses and also change your position.

Crop in-camera. This means frame the shot the way you want it to look when you take the photo rather than cropping it in editing. Tight framing results in better bokeh (blur) and reduces distracting backgrounds while preserving the resolution of your images.

Crop deliberately. Crops should always look intentional! If you crop across the forearms, but the shirt sleeves leave only a small sliver of skin below the sleeve, consider moving the crop up or down. Same for shorts or skirts. If the mid-thigh crop leaves a partial strip of skin, consider a different crop or crop slightly higher.

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### Wildlife

Wildlife is everywhere! Wildlife photos don't have to be exotic or hard-to-find creatures like lions or eagles. It can be cats, dogs, insects, lizards, squirrels, or anything else you can find in your yard or local community. If you live near a farm perhaps you can get photos of cows or horses. If you live near a zoo or aquarium your student can practice at those locations as well. Just be aware that zoos and aquariums may have some aspects that can be challenging such as wire fencing, reflective glass, and long distances between you and the subject. Some animals are also a challenge because they are fast-moving. This can be a great opportunity for advanced learners to practice with shutter priority mode and dialing in a faster shutter speed to freeze the animal's movements. Once they have a collection of photos of "wild things" ask your student to make a slide show or display of their images.

### Lighting Styles

Advanced learners might appreciate some tasks related to different lighting styles such as high-key, low-key, or backlighting. Backlight is when the main light is behind the subject. A backlight during “golden hour” creates a nice glow behind the subject. Golden hour is the hour before sunset. Getting the correct exposure of the subject can be tricky which is why this is better for older learners. Have the person face away from the light so the light is behind them. Expose for the subject (focus on their face) to get the glow behind them. If you expose for the sky (focus on the sky) you can create silhouettes.

Low-key and high-key lighting are lighting styles used for dramatic effect. If you'd like a project lesson using low-key lighting, sign up for our newsletter and you will get a Boredom Buster lesson that shows you how to accomplish the effect step by step.

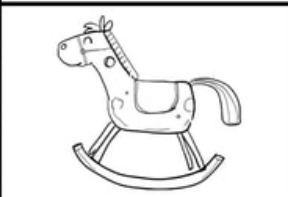
Natural window light is another great type of lighting to work with. When the light is bouncing in (not streaming in directly) you get a nice, soft light that is still very bright. Position a subject – a product, food, toys, flowers, etc. – in the lit area and photograph from different angles. If the light is still too bright you can use white fabric (a sheet or shower curtain) in the window to diffuse the light a bit more. Or use the bright light as is to make big shadows and create drama.

### **Scavenger Hunt**

A photography scavenger hunt can be great fun especially when there are multiple students involved. You don't even need to create a hunt – we made one for you (links to download it are in this [video to go with it](#)). Most of the items on our hunt can be found around the house or yard. Our hunt includes a picture cue version for the youngest and can be used as a hunt for all items or as a BINGO game. The scavenger hunt can be used individually, in teams, as a cooperative or competitive activity and it can be used over and over (as an added challenge instruct the participants to use new photos and ideas each time).

# Photography With Kids

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Submit your work on social media and tag us on [Twitter @focusedcamera](#) or on [Instagram @\\_focusedcamera](#) and use [#imaginationmeetsfocus](#) and [#photofun](#) so we can see it!

Please do not submit images of people, even family members, on social media as part of this challenge (unless you have a signed model release form). Thank you.

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### Perspective and Forced Perspective

Beginner photographers often take all of their photos from eye level – and all the same direction and from the same viewpoint. Encourage your student to try other perspectives such as from up above (bird’s eye view) or down below, even lying on the ground (worm’s eye view). Have them move around a subject and shoot from different angles and sides. Move those feet!

Once they get the hang of changing perspectives have them try using Forced Perspective. Forced perspective requires the photographer to use two subjects of vastly different sizes, yet photograph them from an angle or perspective that forces the viewer to “see” them as the same size. For some great examples, [check out this site](#) and see the photo below.

## Photography With Kids



Photo by Jason W <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fokket> used via <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>

### **Blogging / Art Show**

Once your student has a collection of photos encourage them to share their talents. While social media can be a place to do this, I personally am not a fan or encouraging young artists to share on social media, or use social media at all. The last thing we want is a budding photographer to feel like a failure or give up because a photo they posted didn't get any likes or "enough" likes (what is enough likes anyway?). Instead, I suggest you encourage your student to set up an online gallery or art show through a free service like Weebly or Wix. If your child also likes to write you could help them set up a photography blog (there are lots of free options) where they write about the images they took – how they took the photo, why they took the photo, where they were, and more. These options give them a record of their learning and are much more professional outlets for their creativity that can still be shared with friends and family without the negativity that can be experienced in other places online.



## Photography With Kids

We could have posted a bunch of other ideas for photography projects, but we will save those for another time so this e-book doesn't get overwhelmingly long! Hopefully these ideas will get your child's creative juices flowing and give them some parameters for their photography practice times.

Remember that you can adjust the projects as needed depending on your student's level and maturity.

It is worth reiterating one more time that the key to any of these projects is to keep it fun and enjoyable. If you participate alongside your student as they learn you will also get some great quality time together!

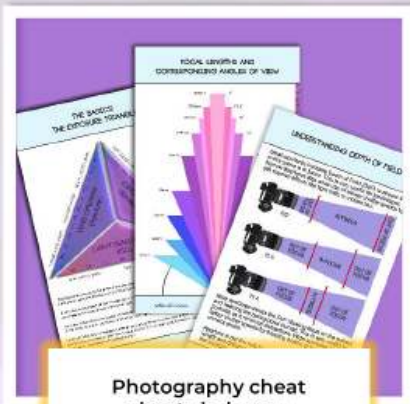
We hope this e-book has brought you some valuable information! Please check out the additional deals and information we have for you on the next page.



Mega Pixel our Superhero Mascot!

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### About the Author

Cheryl Ritzel, founder of FocusEd Camera, is an esteemed instructional coach. Her exceptional talents have garnered recognition and accolades throughout her career. Cheryl's company and her remarkable work have been featured in prestigious publications such as ICM Magazine, Business Insider, Dogster, Spectrum News, and Yahoo News, and on the social media channels of Lensbaby, Canon, and Adaptalux.



# Photography With Kids...

Should be enjoyable, fun, and rewarding for both parent and child!

This e-book will cover everything you need to get started teaching your budding student.

We cover the types of cameras recommended for each age group and skill level, the basic concepts that make learning fun for kids, and give you plenty of project ideas that you can work on alone or together.