



How to take good pictures

1. Get a good, inexpensive camera. For less than \$200 you can get a camera that will do a good job, and you and your family will get plenty of other use out of it, too. *(Not a cell phone: Cell phones do not take pictures that print well.)*

2. Shut off the date/time stamp. It's like having your underwear tag sticking out.

3. Check your pictures on the spot. A picture that looks good on your little viewfinder display may not look nearly so good when you see it full sized later. *See below for how to preview your pics.*

Here's how to avoid taking pictures that can't be used: Take one picture, then switch your camera to "display" and use the zoom function to blow it up as much as you can. Does it still look bright and sharp, or is it blurry? Pan around and check out different parts of your picture. You'll know if you're ready to start shooting, or if you have to make some adjustments.

4. Don't shoot into the sun. Having it right behind you creates some problems, too: People may have to squint, and you don't want your own shadow stretching into the picture. But when the sun is directly behind the people you are photographing, the shadow will keep you from seeing their faces. *This also goes for people indoors in front of a window:* The light from behind them will be bright and their faces will be dark. When in doubt, take a few test shots and preview before you shoot.

5. Take *lots* of pictures. The great thing about digital photography is that you can take a whole lot of pictures to make sure you get that one special shot. *Take at least five pictures of everything,* and take more than five pictures of anything that really matters. **Take *lots* of pictures.**

6. Try to keep people from posing for you. If you are writing about an author appearing at a local bookstore, take pictures during the lecture or while books are being signed. If it's a story about a state park, take pictures of people looking at the view, taking a tour or having a picnic, close enough so you can see them, but far enough back that you can also see the landscape. *Pictures of people doing things are almost always better than pictures of people standing there smiling at the camera.*

7. It's not about you. Unless the story is about something you are doing, stay out of the pictures. When you interview someone famous, you should certainly get a shot of the two of you for your own scrapbook. But that's not the picture that will be on your article. Take some others that you're not in.

8. Don't fix the pix. If you want to crop and change the lighting for your NexGen post, go ahead, but please save the original, just as it came off the camera, in case your changes won't work for print.