

# Through The Lens

*A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts.  
After the click of your camera, you're only half done!*



## **Say Cheese! How to take better people pictures**

*by Lynda Buske*

There is no doubt that taking photos of people can be challenging so here are some tips that I have found to be helpful.

### **Shooting strangers**

Having a few locals (and even tourists) in your travel photos can add a lot of richness and context. Besides, we all like looking at other people...it's human nature.

The safest way to shoot strangers is from behind or with indistinguishable faces. I would especially recommend this with children when you do not have parental permission. The additional advantage to shooting behind is your eye goes past the person and through to the end of the photo. Therefore, this technique is useful even when photographing people you do know.

For shop owners, artisans or anyone else who is dependent on tourist dollars, I typically offer a small amount of money or buy something from their shop. People are then amazingly cooperative to pose or move so you can get a great shot. If I haven't asked for permission, I take a few shots quickly and move before I'm notice. Removing the sound from your camera can help in this situation. In most instances I will shoot wide so it looks like I'm taking the general scene, then crop later to the individual.



### Consider black and white.

Often colours can detract from the areas of greatest interest. The distracting colours below draw us away from the man's face and the fish. It was not my intention to have your eye go to his yellow hat or orange belt before his face, but it probably did. I think it works better in black and white.



### Family events

If you are asked to take pictures at a family event, I recommend that you team up with someone. It is difficult to pose people, get them relaxed and also be thinking of which camera settings would work best in a particular lighting situation. When Chris and I did two family weddings, I posed the people and he took most of the photos.

Shooting children is probably easiest outdoors where they have the freedom to move around and you have enough light to catch the action. If you have to a more formal pose, the best way to get a natural looking smile is to make them laugh. Doing or saying goofy things may work such as poking fun at their parents.

Look for triangles when posing a single person either standing or seated. Angle the body and move a leg forward or back, reposition an arm, etc.



## Group shots

With the exception of perhaps a bride, most people do not want to spend a lot of time posing so, if possible, scout out a site out beforehand and plan where best to position people based on light and traffic flow (i.e., keep away from the bar area). Check indoor and outdoor backgrounds for garbage cans, parking lots, signs, cars, etc. Outside it is best to find well lit areas that aren't in the direct sun to avoid harsh shadows cast by chins and noses. However, don't choose under a shady tree if there are shadows casting ugly black stripes across people's faces and bodies. Inside, an area with natural light is best but try not to have people backlit against a window. If it is unavoidable, underexpose a bit and adjust in photo editing later.

If you are in a living room or hotel lobby that has a couch, shoot from the corner to minimize the empty spaces between heads and fit more people in. Even standing, you can shoot from the edge of the group, rather than in front, to minimize gaps. If folk are facing the camera, have them angle their bodies and even tilt their heads slightly towards the next person.

Another tip is to place a group of people on stairs since much of our height differences are in the legs. For a really large group, you can climb on a ladder or go up to a second story and shoot down.



## Crop tightly

When you are editing your pictures on your computer later, make sure the faces are well lit and crop tightly to see expressions clearly. Don't hesitate to chop off elbows or legs or even hair.





**Bad Photo**

People looking in different directions, large gaps between some. Cluttered background. Neither full length nor cropped.



**Better Photo**

More coordination, smaller gaps, better cropping, easier to see expressions, less cluttered background.