

How to Prepare for Your Family Photo Session

Family photos hold a special place in our lives and in our hearts. These are images we'll look back on for years to come, images that our children and grandchildren will look at to remind themselves of where they came from and how much their family has changed and grown.

Tracking your family's growth is a great reason to take annual family photos. But once you've booked your session, you may be feeling some trepidation. *How am I going to get all the kids to behave? What should everyone wear? What if our pictures turn out terrible because no one will cooperate?*

A family photo session can be a nerve-wracking experience for any parent, but the results are well worth the effort. To help you feel a little less stressed about getting everyone dressed and smiling, here's a handy guide on how to prepare for and make the most of your family session.

Schedule at the right time of day

When it comes to photographing young children, scheduling is everything. For instance, you probably don't want to schedule a photo shoot right in the middle of naptime and end up with a cranky toddler. In the same way, if your session runs over into dinnertime, your little one may throw a tantrum. Even if you want "golden hour" images, consider your kids and what time of day they're most alert, awake, and content. It's better to have your photos taken in the middle of the day than to struggle with frustrated, grumpy children just to get that gorgeous evening light.

Talk to your kids beforehand

A photo session is not something you want to drag your kids to without warning them. Take time to sit your kids down and explain what they can expect at the family session and how they should behave. Emphasize the fun aspects of a photo shoot: They can pretend to be models and even ham it up a little for the camera. Just remind them the importance of listening to you and the photographer and following instructions.

Get inspired

Think about what kind of images you want, and talk to your photographer about your options during your pre-session consultation. Would you prefer a studio session or one outside at a favorite park or spot in your town? Maybe you want an in-home session where the photographer can capture your family in their natural environment. Whatever you choose, be sure to speak with your photographer beforehand about what you're hoping to achieve, as well as any special requirements you or your family may need.

Choose what to wear

While kids definitely look adorable in their dressiest outfits, you're better off choosing something they're comfortable in. That goes for your whole family, including you. Everyone will feel more like themselves in their favorite outfits. Just be sure everyone coordinates well and avoid bright colors or patterns that can be distracting. See another blog [here](#) that goes into more detail on clothing for your session.

The Day of Your Session

Pack your bag

If you have kids, you're definitely familiar with how much stuff you need to bring along with you when you go places, and a family photo session is no different. Here are some items we recommend you pack for your photo shoot:

- An old blanket to sit on—perfect for cozy outside images
- Backup outfits—You never know when someone will get a little messy!
- Lint roller—This is a must if you're including pets in the session—and pets are most welcomed!
- Favorite toys—A great way to keep little ones happy
- Snacks and water—Nothing boosts a kid's mood quite like a favorite snack! Just go for something that isn't too messy
- Tissues—As a mom, you probably always have these on hand, but you'll need them to wipe messy noses

Keep an eye out for illness

If you or one of your children comes down with the flu the day of your session, talk to your photographer about rescheduling. These things happen, and we're more than happy to work with you to find a better time to capture your family photos.

Remove any unnecessary items

Before your photographer starts snapping pictures, be sure to take any keys, phones, or wallets out of pockets and remove any hair ties or Fitbits from your wrists. All these items can be tucked away into your bag so you know exactly where they are and don't have to stress about searching for your keys later.

Make a day of it

While your actual session may only take a couple hours, it's a good idea to make the day a relaxing one. That means no additional activities for the kids (unless you want to take everyone out for a treat after the session) and no work for you. If possible, spend a relaxing day at home before and after your session.

Give yourself plenty of time

Instead of rushing out the door 15 minutes later than expected, get everyone ready early and allow yourself plenty of time to get to your session location. You may even want to take a look at traffic reports and give yourself even more time if necessary. If you're in a rush, you'll feel stressed and anxious, and that's no way to start a family photo shoot! Be sure to give yourself plenty of breathing room so you can arrive comfortably early to your session.

Stay calm

I know, it's easier said than done. But if you're stressed out, your kids will sense it—and so do pets, and suddenly everyone is having a not-fun time. Besides, genuine smiles look so much better than forced ones, and you want your family photos to capture your authentic joy and personalities!