

MadisonPhotoPlus the Photo Summit **e-Photo Newsletter**

NOVEMBER, 2006

Family Photos. They're a Snap.

As the Holidays approach, so do family get-togethers. When families gather, there's one universal topic of conversation: the family itself. Who's here this year and who's not, how the family has changed since last year, remember a few years ago when so and so did such and such, and so forth ad nauseam. Frequently someone brings out an album or photos of family members at similar events in the past. Wow! What memories those photos hold.

New photos will be taken this year, and here are some tips to make them better than ever ...

Take a picture of the dinner table before anyone is seated. Frame your photo horizontally, and shoot from the center of the long side of a rectangular table. Remove the chair directly in front of you when you shoot, for 2 reasons: 1- the back of an empty chair is kind of boring, and 2- the chair will block more light from the flash than the other objects, and will be the brightest item in the photo (boring again). Bend over a little to try to get the camera's lens at about the height of a seated person (or sit in the chair you just moved). This will yield a photo of the table as a person will most accurately remember it.

Take another horizontal photo with people seated at the table. Try to shoot from a vantage point where people's faces will all be the same distance from the camera which will eliminate some faces being lighter or darker than others. If you have a typical point and shoot camera, your zoom lens isn't a wide enough angle to get the whole table included in one shot before you back into a wall, so take several photos to include everyone in the picture (you never know who might not attend any subsequent family events).

If you are taking pictures of a person or a couple, compose vertical pictures. (Whenever you shoot a vertical picture, be certain that the flash is on the upper side of the camera, not the lower side!) Move in closer to eliminate extraneous backgrounds as much as possible, and make sure your red eye reduction setting is activated. Many people are hesitant of "crowding" their subjects, but consider shooting from a distance of 3-5 feet away.

If you are photographing a child, bend your knees so that you can bring the camera's lens down to the child's eye level. Take your photo from there, not from your eye level. Again, if you are shooting only one or 2 kids, shoot verticals.

Try to take your photos before the adults have their cocktails and the kids have their candy. The sugars in these foods dilate people's pupils, which accentuates red eye.

Remember not to fire your flash directly into a mirror or window - it makes a hot spot in the photo while underexposing your subjects. If you have a chandelier, try to avoid shooting from one side of it to the other. It will give you lots of pointed reflections in front of your subjects - not a pretty thing.

If you are lucky (or plan in advance), you can get some very natural pictures of people as others see them, not necessarily as they see themselves. As an example, few folks see themselves sleeping in front of the TV "watching" the football game.

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I Can't Even Spell SLR. Why Would I Want One?

While surfing the net recently, Jerry came across an interesting article about SLR cameras and why they so popular. It is reprinted here in its entirety.

The screenshot shows the website 'thetechlounge' with a search bar and navigation links for NEWS, ARTICLES, and FORUMS. Below the header, there are several links: Ads by Google, Nikon Digital Camera, Manual SLR Camera, Handbuch Nikon D70, Canon Rebel, and Canon SLR. A sidebar on the left contains 'NEWSLETTER' with a 'Subscribe' button and 'HOT DEALS!' with a 'HARDWARE PRICE INDEX' link. The main content area features the article '10 Reasons to Buy a DSLR Camera' by Kurtis Kronk, published on Nov. 5, 2006. The article text is as follows:

Article | Specifications | Images | User Reviews (0) | Comments (26)

One of the most common questions I get as related to photography is "What camera should I buy?" Before I get into the reasons I recommend buying a DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex) camera, I'd like to state why you should NOT buy a DSLR.

There is a saying among photographers: "The camera doesn't make the photo, the photographer does." The point is that no matter how expensive your gear is, it means nothing without someone who knows how to properly use it. A great artist can create masterpieces with ordinary tools.

I urge you not to buy that Canon EOS 30D or Nikon D80 or [insert other DSLR model here] if you plan to leave it on full automatic mode. DSLRs are expensive light-capturing tools that can help you create some amazing images, but only if you have the time and patience to learn what you are doing and be creative.

As a side note, I will link to some various websites below which I think are useful in the context of this article. Please note that we are not paid for endorsements by any of these websites. I'm simply sharing what I think are some very useful links for people who aren't already "in-the-know."

With my public service announcement out of the way, I present to you 10 Reasons to Buy a DSLR Camera:

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1. **Creative Control:** This is probably the single most obvious advantage of DSLR cameras. These cameras have a multitude of settings that are just begging to be adjusted. Everything from shutter speed and aperture to white balance, in-camera sharpening and contrast, white balance and white balance shift, flash synchronization, and more...
2. **Superior Sensors:** DSLRs typically use a sensor that is approximately the same dimensions as an APS film negative (22.7 x 15.1 mm). In contrast, the 2/3" sensor size of an 8 Megapixel digicam is dramatically smaller, about the size of the tip of your pinky (8.8 x 6.6 mm). The larger sensor translates directly to higher image quality in terms of detail, color depth, and dynamic range.
3. **Less Noise:** Noise is the digital equivalent of film grain. The fact that DSLRs display less noise is at least in part a result of the larger sensor size mentioned above, however it is significant enough to warrant getting its very own bullet point. With your typical digicam, you will get noticeable noise which is detrimental to image quality at pretty much anything above the lowest possible ISO setting. Contrast that with your typical modern DSLR, where you can actually make acceptable prints even at some of the highest ISO settings. I should note that in the literal sense, DSLRs usually make MORE noise when you click the shutter than a point-n-shoot, hehe.
4. **Accessories Galore:** DSLR cameras can almost be considered upgradeable, they have so many accessories... There are lenses, filters, adapters, extension tubes, flashes, strobes, brackets, and the list goes on. For example, you can buy affordable general purpose lenses or high-end lenses with superior quality. Some lenses serve special functions as well, such as those with image stabilization, macro abilities, tilt-shift functionality, and soft focus. You get the idea. With a DSLR, you have a lot of compatible tools at your disposal which opens the door to new creative possibilities.
5. **No Shutter Lag:** Shutter lag is that awful delay between the time that you click the shutter on a digicam and the time that an image is actually taken. With DSLRs, there is virtually no delay between the time that you click the shutter and the image is taken. How many times have you missed a great photo opportunity because the camera didn't focus fast enough and then didn't take the shot fast enough once it was focused?
6. **Instant Startup:** Most DSLRs have nearly instant startup times. That means if your camera is hanging around your neck and in the OFF position, and you see a three-legged man riding a unicycle towards you, you can quickly turn the camera on and snap the shot. And the aforementioned lack of shutter lag will further help in getting the photo. With a digicam it will usually take several seconds to startup, and then you'll have to wait a second or so for it to focus, and then when you click the shutter there will be maybe another second before the image is actually taken - and the three-legged man will be gone.
7. **Higher Build Quality:** Most digicams are plastic, plastic, and more plastic. They feel flimsy and they're not all that hard to break. DSLRs are built to much higher standards, increasingly so as you get into the more expensive models of course. Some of the cheaper DSLRs are still going to have a lot of plastic in them, but overall they're more durable than a similarly priced digicam. When you get into some of the more expensive models in the \$1,000+ range, bodies are ruggedized with largely metal bodies and nice rubberized grips. The ultra-high-end professional bodies are the most rugged and are weather-sealed so you can use them in the harshest environments without a problem. I don't think you'll find many war photographers using a rinky-dink digicam.
8. **Viewfinder:** This can be a plus and a minus, but mainly it's a plus. With a DSLR, you do not compose your shots on the camera's LCD, you do so through the viewfinder, and you're actually looking through the lens (that's what TTL stands for, though not to be confused with TheTechLounge). Looking through the viewfinder allows you to see more detail as you compose your shots with regard to what's in focus, and you won't have to worry about glare on an LCD interfering with composition. The only negative looking through the viewfinder really has is that if you are in a situation where you have to shoot from the hip or over your head, you have to sort of blindly shoot. By contrast, some digicams have swiveling and rotating LCD screens which allow you to compose such a shot without a problem. It's a small sacrifice. I suppose there's also the fact that it might be less comfortable to press your face against the back of the camera, but you get used to it.
9. **Ergonomics:** Back when I used to shoot with a small digicam, I would notice that my hand would cramp after a while of holding the tiny camera. DSLRs are larger and have molded grips which (to a varying degree) make holding the camera for long periods much more comfortable. The cheaper DSLRs are smaller and less comfortable, whereas the more expensive ones are usually larger and more comfortable. This is actually the main reason why I chose to purchase a Canon 20D over a Canon Digital Rebel XT - the 20D feels much better in my hand. And since I'm on the computer pretty much all day every day and I already experience occasional pain in my hands, I wanted a very comfortable camera to hold.
10. **Price:** DSLR cameras are practically affordable nowadays. The big two (Canon and Nikon) currently offer DSLRs for as low as \$500-\$600 (Canon Digital Rebel XT and Nikon D50) and they've been encroaching on point-n-shoot price territory more and more each year. Believe it or not, this is actually already cheaper than some digicams out there. Not to mention the fact that you can often find a great deal on a used DSLR at some major online stores such as BHPHOTOVIDEO.COM and KEH.COM. Another great source for used equipment is the Buy & Sell forums (registration is required, but free) over at FredMiranda.com. Incidentally, [FredMiranda](http://FredMiranda.com) is also a great site to learn from other photographers, and it's also a good resource for camera and lens reviews by the site's users.

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For me, the above list represents 10 good reasons to buy a DSLR over a point-n-shoot digicam. However, I don't want to paint a picture that DSLRs are the perfect solution for everybody. There are some aspects which some would view as a negative of DSLR cameras. You definitely won't be able to put a DSLR in your pocket, it may not be convenient for parties where people are likely to bump into it or spill drinks on it, you'll definitely get more attention with a DSLR around your neck than with a tiny digicam, it's heavier to carry around for long periods, there is a steep learning curve, and it's also an addictive hobby that may get you spending more on lenses and other accessories than you initially planned. These are all compromises I'm willing to make, but only you can decide if a DSLR is truly right for you.

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When to Change Epson Inkjet Cartridges

Written by Bob Johnson, *Earthbound Light*

The ink light on the front of your Epson inkjet photo printer is blinking. The Status Monitor has an annoying warning symbol on it. What's a photographer in his digital darkroom to do?

It would seem that the sensible thing to do is to change the ink cartridge. That's what Epson tells you to do. Not doing so seems like it might risk ruining the print you are in the middle of. To be safe, many users actually change cartridges when they start to get low for fear of having the light start blinking while printing.

But you don't have to.

The truth is, you can keep right on printing until the ink runs dry and the printer completely stops printing. Just change the cartridge then, and continue where you left off, right in the middle of a print. The printer will start up without skipping a beat. Well, without skipping any ink at least. The resulting print will come out just fine, with no evidence that you changed cartridges in the middle of it.

If you do have another color that is very close to being out, it can be worth going ahead and changing it at the same time you replace the one that did run dry, but this is somewhat debatable. Whenever you put in a new, full cartridge, the resulting charging cycle will purge some ink from all colors. If a second color is nearly out, you may end up wasting less ink to change both together rather than incurring a second charging cycle immediately following the first. It can be hard to tell just how many more prints you'll be able to get of course, so don't rush things with a second cartridge that is only slightly low.

I can remember having one color run dry on my old Epson 2200, driving to the store to buy a new one with a half printed picture waiting for me and still having no problems finishing the print when I got home with a new one. You might not want to tempt fate this much though if you don't have to. Ink cartridges are dated, so don't stock up more than you need, but it can be worth having some of each color on hand in case you do run out. Typically, the lighter colors run out first, with light magenta being the first, followed next by light cyan and light black. The remaining order will depend a lot on what you are printing. After a while, you will learn which ones you need more of so you can buy accordingly.

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Csaba Meszaros

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That's about it for November, 2006. Our B.I.P.S. fall programs will be concluding soon. There are still 2 seats available for our workshop on Adobe Photoshop Elements (November 15) and limited seating for Canon Digital SLRs (November 21) and Olympus SLRs (November 28). Please call either store if you would like to reserve a seat.

Holiday card season is in full swing. When you place your order for cards, you can take your envelopes home with you to get the addressing out of the way. No one else can send a card with one of your pictures on it. Share those memories behind the photos you've taken.

Enjoy photography!

Happy Picture Taking!
Jerry & Lynne

Madison PhotoPlus

40 Main St., Madison, NJ 07940
v. 973-966-2900; f. 973-377-1458
www.madisonphoto.com

the Photo Summit

383 Springfield Ave., Summit, NJ 07901
v. 908-273-7427; f. 908-277-0218
www.photosummit.com



Jerry Harmen