



# Say Cheese: Making the Most of Holiday Photo Opportunities

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If your childhood memories are anything like mine, you probably remember waking up Christmas morning and begging your parents to let you get up and open presents. Mom would freshen up to look nice for pictures while Dad set up the monstrous video camera with a spotlight and documented the ritual for all eternity.

But documenting special moments in your family's life doesn't need to be a major production. With a few pointers, not only will you get some great images, but you also will have more time to enjoy the event as well.

**Tip #1** Set yourself up first in the right environment. Figure out where the best light is, make sure your exposure is good, find the best angle, and have a few props to entertain your young subject.

On the subject of finding the best light, there is nothing more flattering than ambient indirect sunlight. Seek out areas of your home that are well lit by natural light—large glass paned doors and windows are good options. Position yourself so that the light is behind you but your body is not blocking it too much. You can also use light from a side angle for a little more drama. I like to place a toy where I plan to place my subject to see how the light is falling on it and make sure my shot is not too



*In this photo the background is distracting and the pose looks forced.*

bright or too dark (exposure) and then make appropriate adjustments (turning on more lights or moving a little further from the main light source).

**Tip #2** Create a scenario. As a professional photographer, one of the most common issues I find with taking photographs of children is that we try to make them pose. This approach often ends in an unhappy toddler and a frustrated adult. Instead, I recommend creating a scenario. When you are ready to go, place your loved ones in an activity or a scene: open a present, sing a carol, or light the menorah. Photos that tell a story make much more interesting images to look at and often they result in very natural happy moments.

**Tip #3** Get close to your subject. As photographers, the



*This is a good example of a nice close-up shot. Don't be afraid to crop out unnecessary background for a more flattering photo.*

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