

# Cool Tips

## Know Your PDF

A great, yet cryptic, philosopher king once said: "To know PDF is to know the universe." Is this true, you expectantly ask? Is this really true? Well no, sadly it is not. But don't be disheartened, for the truth about PDF is of far more practical value (albeit far less philosophical value). In truth, to know PDF is to know a dynamic and versatile file format that can dramatically simplify and expedite document viewing, integration, and printing. So while it might not bring epiphany, PDF can most certainly bring efficiency.

And now we get to the "knowing" part. First off, the letters P, D, and F compose a file extension—one of those three-letter codes that appear at the end of file names (like know\_pdf\_story.pdf). This extension is like a little file recipe; it describes the file ingredients and tells your operating system how to prepare it for (electronic) consumption. Like most file extensions, PDF is also an acronym: short for Adobe Portable Document Format. Adobe PDF is widely used by publishers, web writers, graphic designers, and everyday laypersons; and is generally accepted as the preeminent format for universal document exchange. But why is PDF so popular? PDF's popularity and power originate from its five key attributes:

**Compatible:** PDF is a cross-platform file format. This means that PDF can be used to recreate documents irrespective of where they were originally created. Also, PDF will preserve the document's original style and formatting (including color, font, and imagery) exactly as they were intended to be seen. With Adobe Acrobat Reader, virtually anyone, on any computer, with any platform, running any application version, can recognize, read, and print identical PDF files. Anyone. You included.

**Active:** PDF files are highly navigable—this means you can sail around documents like a mini-Magellan. PDF files contain highly useful navigation tools like: internal and external links, structured bookmarks, search capabilities, thumbnail page views, multi-directional buttons, magnification options, and more.

**Accurate:** PDF files are both ultra-printable and ultra-viewable. PDF utilizes the PostScript language-imaging model—you know about the PostScript imaging model, right? No? Good. It would scare me if you did. Just remember that PDF ensures true, faithful, and crisp printing—the kind of printing you like. Also, PDF files viewed on-screen retain precise color regardless of software or hardware variation, and also retain precise clarity in magnifications upward of 500%.

***Hint: PRINT OUT Pages in black and white and SAVE***

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## Know Your PDF cont . . .

**Convenient:** PDF files are both smaller in size than original source files (e.g. potentially 20% as large as HTML files) and easier to download and view. PDF documents also offer page-at-a-time downloading; allowing you to read and revise the early pages of a document before the entirety has been received. Further, because of their economical size, you'll download the whole document quicker than you would a source file anyway. Because of these convenient characteristics, PDF files are often referred to as 7-11 files. Not really, though. Someone might laugh at you if you called them 7-11 files.

**Secure:** PDF offers extensive security protections. Users can assign security passwords to PDF documents before sending them to maintain strict control over sensitive information. Further, PDF files can be authenticated and secured with digital signature technology. A PDF feature known as SelfSign enables creators and users to restrict and track access to critical documents through the use of an encoded digital signature. This feature also enables users to say cool things like, "Sorry, Glen. It seems you're not authorized to view this material."

Enough already, you say, I accept that PDF is divinely inspired. Clearly, the multiple benefits of PDF have now been sufficiently revealed. But we've been talking about PDF files in the prime of their lives—where, you might ask, do new PDF files come from? Well, Timmy, it's complicated. When two computer applications love each other very much....oops, different question. Actually, there are five primary methods for creating PDF files.

**1. Adobe Acrobat:** main Adobe software for the creation and modification of PDF files. Allows users to create a PDF file by simply dropping-and-dragging a document into Acrobat, choosing the format directly from Microsoft Office, or converting scanned or web documents directly, among other methods.

**2. Adobe PDF Writer:** software that mimics a printer driver to create PDF documents from nearly any Windows application.

**3. Adobe Acrobat Distiller:** software for workgroup-oriented, automated high-volume conversion of PostScript files to PDF.

**4. Adobe Acrobat Capture:** software designed specifically for the conversion of scanned image files to PDF—optimized for character recognition and clean-up.

**5. Other software:** other Adobe graphical and publishing software such as FrameMaker, PageMaker, and Illustrator can be used to automatically create PDF files. Also, a surplus of third party software like EZ-PDF, ActivePDF Printer, and even QuarkXPress offer PDF creation capability.

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## **Scanning for Different Media**

The process and applications of a scanner are relatively simplistic. It acts and functions much like a copier. It has the same little scanning bar that blinds you if you look into it, and instead of feeding paper (though a rare few do) it transmits the scanned object into your computer and allows you to alter it digitally. In that respect, a scanner can far surpass the average office copier.

### **Color Scanning**

Scanning color pictures can be fun, but it's also very challenging. You may expect to get the same quality and detail as the original, but that's not always the case.

A critical part of any scan is determining the proper resolution, or dpi (dots per inch) setting. Most scanning software allows you to select from a range of settings, usually between 75-6000 dpi. Of course, individual settings depend on the quality of the scanner you're using, and technological possibilities are expanding all the time.

Generally speaking, the greater the dpi (or higher the resolution), means a better quality scan. It also means that you've created a larger file. A typical 400 dpi color scan can be as large as two megabytes, whereas a 100 dpi black and white scan is somewhere between 50-100 kilobytes. There is also a major difference in the smoothness of color shading. The edges of the scanned picture become more jagged and irregular when using a lower resolution setting.

The advantage to scanning in pictures at a lower resolution is that the files are not as large, and can be easily attached to an e-mail or saved to a floppy disk. A 400 dpi file takes a long time to transfer on a slower machine, and is too large to fit on only a single disk. The disadvantage, however, is that the lower resolution creates a lower quality picture. Photo images found on the Web are usually scanned at 72 dpi. While they look great on your screen, these photos will not print on a color printer very clearly.

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## Scanning cont . . .

### Black & White Scanning

In scanning black and white text or photocopies, the concern over resolution is not as great. Whether it's photos or text, contrast is just as important as resolution. Sometimes you'll need to darken the black or grays to add contrast against a white background. Adjusting contrast can cause otherwise unnoticeable scratches or particles to appear. Using Photoshop, you can easily increase or decrease contrast once a scan is completed.

Another thing to be aware of is the quality of the original you are scanning. The scanned picture can never be better than it's original, and you must keep in mind that there are always minor deficiencies, scratches, or other imperfections that will be enhanced by the scan. Keeping the glass on your scanner clean, and double-checking for wrinkles, smears and other debris on the original will usually lead to a high-quality scan.

In scanning different kinds of media, the best thing to do is experiment. Once you have some of the basic principles down, you'll start to see more and more ways to apply them, and even begin to think of new things you might want to try. Play around with scanning objects other than pictures or documents. Most mid-range scanners can capture almost anything that will fit on the glass. Just keep trying different things and don't get discouraged if success is slow to come. Proper scanning techniques can take years to refine.

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## Understanding Viruses

The first tenet of warfare is this: know thy enemy. So what exactly are computer viruses? Computer viruses are devious little computer programs that attach themselves to legitimate program hosts and then engage in rampant self-replication. It's easy to be fooled by their small size. Don't be. They're never small for long. Computer viruses propagate like rabbits -- and by the time you first recognize their presence, your data may be permanently damaged or erased.

On this point, however, an important clarification must be made. Like biological viruses, computer viruses are not inherently destructive. You're probably harboring a fugitive cold virus in your body right now, even if you're not actually sick. With both biological and computer viruses, you can be infected without being affected. Your computer can be a veritable hive of viruses without exhibiting any visible symptoms or actual damage. If not instructed to do otherwise, viruses will quietly, unobtrusively and perpetually replicate. They're only destructive if intentionally engineered to be so.

Malicious computer viruses contain a "payload" -- a programming element separate from the self-replication code that executes its objectives. For example, a payload might display a personalized message on your monitor. It might erase critical data or program files, reformat your hard drive, or infiltrate your messaging software and overload the local network with authorless e-mail. But not all computer viruses are created equal. Some are full of sound and fury, yet signify nothing. Others are silent but deadly. In general, though, computer viruses are of three main types:

**Macro Viruses:** These are the most prevalent type of virus today. Unlike conventional viruses which can attach to virtually any program, macro viruses prey on specific programs. A macro itself is an instruction code that automatically executes other program commands. Many popular and prominent software applications utilize macros extensively. Essentially, macro viruses are macros that embed within a program and self-replicate.

Macro viruses that run on Microsoft applications like Word and Excel are particularly common -- chiefly because certain programming strategies employed by these applications make them particularly susceptible. Macro viruses work like this: when an infected document is initially opened, the macro virus embeds itself in the associated application and then proceeds to attach itself to every subsequent document created. In this way, the macro virus is unwittingly disseminated whenever the user transfers a document.

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## **Understanding Viruses cont . . .**

**Parasitic Viruses:** These are the most infectious type of virus. Parasitic viruses attach themselves to executable programs like .com or .exe files. Once an infected file is launched, the virus is free to replicate itself, embed in primary memory, or release its payload. Further, it can corrupt not just specific programs, but virtually any program being processed in RAM.

**Boot Sector Viruses:** The boot sector is essential software that resides on hard, floppy or optical disk, and is responsible for loading your operating system into memory at the start of a computing session. Boot sector viruses penetrate this vital boot sector and alter its contents. As opposed to macro viruses, boot sector viruses are spread not by sharing documents, but diskettes. Whenever new diskettes are introduced to a previously infected computer, the boot sector virus is transferred to the healthy diskette, which then conveys the virus to other computers, and so on.

These are all considered true computer viruses. Another commonly observed form of computer pestilence (though not literally a virus) is the worm. Worms differ from viruses in that they do not require a host to wreak their havoc. Other viruses are referred to as Trojan Horses. Trojan Horses are viruses that masquerade as legitimate programs, documents or other software, only to reveal their true function later. Trojan Horse viruses are often spread through e-mail or online bulletin boards.

Certainly no one would knowingly expose their computer to a virus. Unknowingly, however, thousands daily place their machines in peril. Ignorance is no excuse, though -- an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The following are some common troubleshooting techniques for keeping your computer virus-free:

- Always rely on a reputable anti-virus software application like Norton or McAfee.
- Always scan new files, diskettes or software before loading them on your machine.
- Always back-up critical software or files to avoid permanent loss due to infection or deletion.
  - Always be wary of strange operating tics or unusual graphics.
- Always ensure vigilance from the other members on your computer or network.
  - Always write-protect your system and program disks.
  - Always enable Macro Virus Protection in all Microsoft applications.
  - Never share diskettes or software without assuring their integrity.
- Never download e-mail or Internet files/programs without scanning them first.
- Never act on an e-mail virus alert without confirmation from an IT professional or trustworthy resource.
  - **Never boot your system with a diskette other than the original.**

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## **The World of Digital Photography**

We are lucky to have the opportunity to take advantage of digital technology in our lifetime. We can save our priceless heirloom photos digitally on a CD-ROM, currently the best available alternative for long-term storage. Of course, CD-ROMs won't last forever, but I would imagine that before your CDs lose their data from age, there will be an even better storage system, one that is truly indestructible to time. Just make sure you have back-up copies on CD of all your photographs, and keep a set of these in a safety deposit box, or in a family member's home. You wouldn't want to lose your photographs due to a single computer failure. Don't consider your hard-drive as acceptable storage for any of your important photographs or documents. Remember: it's not a matter of if your harddrive will fail, it's a matter of when. No computer lasts forever. Many of you are printing your digital photographs using your regular ink-jet printers, or even so-called "photo printers". This is fine for short-term display. Just bear in mind that within 10 years your image will have faded considerably. Especially if you have your photo exposed to light. If, however, you take advantage of one of the on-line professional photo printing services, your photo will have the same lifespan as any color photograph you currently own, about 25 years. Epson does make a printer that uses archival ink, and when used in conjunction with archival paper, your photos printed with this pricey printer will last 200 years! Very impressive, but you do need to have about \$900 to spend on the printer alone.

Digital cameras are great. You can take them on family trips to take photographs of family heirlooms and photos not in your possession. By taking this simple step, you have already doubled the chance for those images to be passed on for generations to come. You can take as many photos as you want since they are virtually free - and since you can see your results instantly, there is no second-guessing as to whether a shot turned out or not. I became an instant digital camera-aholic the moment I took my first shot. In fact, I took over 4000 photographs during the first six months of owning my NIKON 990 digital camera.

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## **Digital Photography Tips**

### **Want the Best Photo of Your Child?**

For a lot of parents, photographing your kids or taking them to a portrait studio can be one of the hardest jobs you'll ever do, but there are a lot of things you can do to make the experience less traumatic for everyone.

### **It's Not About a Photo**

To begin with, don't make taking pictures about taking pictures. Very young children really won't understand why a picture is important. To them, everything is a game. Or if it isn't, they think it should be a game. That's why the most successful photographers of children always make the photo session seem secondary to another fun activity that children love. Playing with toys, reading a colorful picture book, or blowing bubbles should be what's foremost in the child's mind, not getting their picture taken.

### **Yelling "Smile" Doesn't Help**

Never, ever tell a child to smile. Smiles that are worth preserving in a photograph rarely happen on command. The best smiles happen spontaneously - a natural byproduct of a fun activity.

### **Containment Is Key**

Mobility is one of the biggest threats to a photo session with a youngster. Often the fun activity you engage in will do the trick. In fact, if that doesn't do the trick, there's a good chance you haven't found the right activity for that particular child. Of course, playing with a ball might invite movement, so you may need some sort of stationary prop to help keep your subject in one spot.

But there are times when some other restraint is needed. Portrait studios usually have child-friendly sets that are designed to restrict movement. It may consist of nothing more than a table with a children's chair on it. The height of the table will discourage the child from getting up from the chair. As long as mom and dad are close by, it's a safe technique to use. Of course, if you try that approach at home, you'll want to make sure you have someone within easy reach of the child, just in case he or she gets brave and decides to dive off the table! Rule #1 when using this technique: Never let your assistant take their eyes off of the child! If the eyes come off, the hands go on!

### **If You'll Just Sit Still I'll Give You....**

Should you try bribes? Most photographers say bribes should be the last thing you pull out of your bag of tricks. Properly timed, the promise of a special treat like a balloon can give you just enough leverage to get those last 2 or 3 exposures to complete your photo session. Of course, the nature of a successful bribe will vary from one child to the next. What works for a 2-year-old may fail to motivate a 5-year-old. And a 16-year old? Let's not go there!

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## Digital Photography cont . . .

### Just Relax

Last, but not least, relax! Bright, young children are incredibly sensitive to their parents' moods and tend to get nervous and apprehensive right along with mom and dad. Your mood should be as carefree as possible. One way to do that is to focus on the fun activity that you're using to distract your child. Yes, that trick can work on you, too!

Don't get discouraged! Lots of people head to the pros for the best portraits and there's no shame in that.

## The Pros and Cons of Going Digital

While few knowledgeable photographers say film is obsolete, for many who have taken the leap into digital imaging, there's no going back. The advantages of going digital are enormous, though there are some pitfalls. So, before taking the plunge, first take a look at why many still prefer film:

### Film is available.

You can't always pop into a store and pick up a memory card for your fancy new digital camera, but it's rare that you can't find a roll of film within a block of any shopping area.

Greater detail is possible on film for less money.

To capture the same detail found in a 35mm negative produced in the cheapest film camera, you might need to buy a top-of-the-line digital SLR.

### Film is easy to store.

You can stick your film envelopes in the proverbial shoebox. Negatives and slides are a very efficient storage medium, packing a lot of data in a small space.

### Film cameras are cheaper.

One-use film cameras are nearly as cheap as the film, itself. The amount of information stored on a 35mm negative created with a \$100 point-and-shoot camera is essentially the same as what you get out of a \$3500 model.

### A mechanical camera doesn't require batteries to operate.

If you want to go wilderness backpacking, either plan to take along a solar panel to recharge batteries or get yourself a mechanical camera that uses film.

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## **Digital Photography cont . . .**

### **Film can be scanned into a computer.**

If you want to manipulate images with a computer, scanning film is relatively easy to do.

### **Now let's see why so many are shooting digital.**

#### **Sending a photo of the kids to grandma is fast and easy with a digital camera and e-mail.**

If you shoot with a digital camera, you don't have to scan anything. In fact, many cameras come with software that makes e-mailing a photo a simple point-and-click operation.

#### **Once you invest in a digital camera, memory, etc., capturing an image is essentially free.**

The cost of going digital can look too high until you factor in the money you save on film and processing.

#### **Instant feedback of digital means you get better faster.**

Most digital cameras have LCD screens that allow you to check your photos as you go. Particularly for beginning photographers, being able to quickly learn from your mistakes is a huge advantage.

#### **Making exact duplicates of your original digital photos is possible, thus you can store originals in multiple locations for safekeeping.**

Unless you make it a habit of shooting an extra exposure of everything, with film you have only one set of originals, so it's impossible to store exact duplicates in another location.

#### **Many digital cameras allow you to change ISO (as in "film speed") at any time.**

Rather than having to carry several cameras with fast and slow films loaded, you can change the speed setting on your digital camera as lighting conditions change.

#### **Digital photographers can avoid printing all but the very best images they capture**

It's difficult to avoid printing bad photos when you shoot film. Typically the whole roll is printed, not just the good photos. With digital, you can review all of your photos either on the camera's LCD screen or on a computer. If you print only the very best photos, you can actually save money over film-based photography.

#### **Of course, like everything else in life, digital photography has a downside:**

Electronics can fail without warning.

**Manual film cameras still have one key edge-they're very reliable.** Any electronic device can, without warning, stop working. This is why professionals who have chosen to go digital will always have either another digital camera or a film camera as a backup. Or both.

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## **Digital Photo Tips cont . . .**

### **All but the best digital cameras suffer from shutter lag.**

Digital cameras are not always ready to take a photograph. To prepare to make an exposure, you must partially press the shutter release button to get the camera ready. Even then, the cheaper models may have a significant shutter lag between the time your finger presses the release button and when the exposure is actually made.

### **Storing digital photos can present unique challenges now and in the future.**

When you go digital, gone are the days of tossing your photos and negatives into a shoebox that can be easily rummaged through. Organizing, sorting, and writing your best files to CDs or DVDs is a highly recommended habit to develop. Creating thumbnail catalogs of those discs is a good idea, too. As for that future challenge, keep in mind that the day may come when devices capable of reading CDs and DVDs will be hard to find, so it may be necessary at some point to migrate all of your image files to a new storage medium.

### **Batteries. Batteries. Batteries.**

Early digital cameras were notorious battery hogs. While they have gotten better, as with any electronic device, plan to have fresh batteries on hand. Keep in mind that digital cameras that have unique battery requirements can be a problem when traveling. Last but not least, printing your own photos can be costly. The better inkjet printers that make prints that won't fade quickly can be costly, and inkjet consumables on a per print basis can be higher than prices through online services like Snapfish.com.

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## **Going Digital: 10 Tips for Beginners**

Many things that were true of film photography can be applied to shooting with digital cameras, but there are differences, as well. Here are 10 tips for the digital novice from the knowledgeable members of CompuServe's Photography Forum:

### **1 - Batteries: Keep Spares on Hand**

Too often my Olympus C-4040Z wouldn't work when I needed it because the batteries were exhausted. Many cameras come with rechargeable batteries. It's a good idea to buy at least one additional battery when you make your camera purchase. Then you can keep shooting while your spare battery is charging. -- Carsten Bockermann, Bonn, Germany

### **2 - Storage**

It's not that hard to stop at a store to pick up an extra roll of film, but you may not find a memory card for your digital camera as easily. So, be sure to plan ahead. For example, if you're going on a long trip, you might want to check to see if someone you're visiting will be able to transfer photos from your memory cards to a CD, thus freeing up your cards for more photos. Many photo shops are now offering that service for a small fee. -- Frank Riddell, Edinburgh, Scotland

### **3 - Shoot and Delete**

Most photographers eventually come to the conclusion that film is cheap, but electrons are even cheaper. Don't hold back. Take lots of exposures, and then delete the bad ones. Often you can do that while you are taking photos. If you know your subject moved or someone got in the way as the shutter opened, most digital cameras make it easy to delete that shot to free up space for a better photo. But be careful! You don't want to delete a prize-winning photo. --Steven, Columbus, Ohio

### **4 - Experiment: Try New Things**

Digital photography is very liberating because you have instant feedback and you don't have to print anything you don't like. Before digital cameras came along, you had to wait for the film to be processed before you could see if something you tried was successful. With a digital camera's LCD screen, you can immediately get some idea if you have the right exposure of that spinning merry-go-round or of the fireworks on the 4th of July. -- Mary Ann Robertson, California

### **5 - Make Prints**

Don't make the mistake of becoming so mesmerized by glowing pixels that you fail to get prints made of your favorite photos. Even if you e-mail that photo of "little Johnny" after his first haircut, Grandma is still going to want a print to stick in a frame. Using the Netscape Photo Center makes it easy and fun. Plus, the prints you get are real photographs that last. Most inkjet printers use dye-based inks that can fade quickly over time, especially if displayed in bright light. -- Brian A. Kilgore, Toronto, Ontario

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## **Going Digital cont . . .**

### **6 - Don't Travel with a Brand New Digital Camera**

Always get to know a new camera before you entrust it with treasured vacation photos of the family in far away places. Digital cameras can have many powerful features that take a little getting used to, so plan to spend a good bit of time with your new camera, along with the instruction manual, before you head off on that vacation. -- Tom Cattrall, rural Oregon

### **7 - Use the Camera's Viewfinder and the LCD screen**

New users of digital cameras will often immediately start using the LCD screen for composing all of their photos and forget about the viewfinder. That can be a big mistake. For instance, when outdoors where bright light can degrade what you see on the LCD screen, you may not notice when you cut off someone's head. On the other hand, using the LCD to shoot high over your head or with the camera very close to the ground can make the impossible shot possible. Plus, on many cameras, turning off the LCD will dramatically conserve battery power. -- Neal Wydra, Location Not Available

### **8 - Organize and Backup your Originals**

Most people are happy to leave their originals on their computer without thinking of a backup strategy for those precious files. Since many personal computers today come equipped to make CDs, writing backup copies immediately is easy and a good habit to develop. Then you can use software like Adobe's Photo Album to catalog and organize those CDs, with keywords that make it easy to retrieve photos in logical groups. Making a duplicate set of CDs to store at another location is also an excellent idea. -- Mohit Chadha, Avon, Connecticut

### **9 - Learn to "half-press and hold" your shutter button**

By doing this, you give the camera a chance to focus on your subject and do anything else it must to be ready to make an exposure. Then when you press the shutter the rest of the way, you are much more likely to catch the exact moment you want. That technique can go a long way toward reducing the frustration often attributable to "shutter lag," a slight delay in the shutter release that is common to even some of the better digital cameras on the market today.

-- Woody Windischman, Romeoville, Illinois

### **10 - Don't Stop Learning**

After you get your feet wet and have fun taking those "free" digital photos, it's a good idea to take the time to learn a little about the way a digital sensor differs from film in the way it sees and records light. For instance, an overexposed negative can often be printed just by putting more light through it, while overexposed digital photos will have little or no detail in the highlight areas. On the other hand, underexposed film will have little or no shadow detail, but underexposed digital shots can often produce very good photographs when the various tonal values are adjusted in a computer.

-- Mike Wilmer, Folsom, California

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## **Tips for Flattering Photos**

When you know there might be a camera around, do you "go Hollywood" and wear dark sunglasses? Do you break out into a cold sweat? Does your body shake? Do you duck behind the nearest bush or crawl under a desk?

You're not alone!

In fact, unless you're one of those gorgeous magazine models, odds are you're one of the millions of people who just hates having his or her picture taken! And if it makes you feel better, just remember that even those models need help. Before the photographer ever snaps the shutter, you can bet a hair stylist and makeup artist have worked their magic.

Since we can't always have professionals around to make us look our very best, should we just continue to duck and run? No way! If we just pay a attention to a few tips that professional photographers give their clients, we can avoid the camera's "exaggerations" that can turn a double-chin into a visit to the badlands!

### **Makeup - Less Is More**

Women should usually wear more makeup for photographs than they might typically wear in the day, but not as much as they would put on when going out in formal dress.

Digital retouching has all but removed any need for men to use corrective makeup, but for everyday personal photographs, a little makeup for men is not a bad idea. Just don't make your guy look like Mrs. Doubtfire, and if he has a heavy beard, keep a razor handy!

### **Clothing - Don't Let the Packaging Dominate**

If you tend to look heavy in photos, it's good to remember that darker colors recede and lighter colors attract attention. So, dark is good. For everyone else, muted colors and subtle prints work best.

Long sleeves and classic styling will almost always look best from just about any angle. Avoid round necklines and "cap" sleeves. Whenever possible, go with collars which frame the face.

Unless you're a bride, avoid white. White clothing will almost always draw the eye to places you'd rather not see.

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## **Tips for Flattering cont . . .**

Jewelry can be an important addition to a portrait, but the "less is more" rule is even more important with things that sparkle!

### **Lighting - Soft is Best**

Harsh sunlight can be tough on people. Few people look good in photos when they're squinting. Also, the sun's hard light will show more texture and form unattractive, deep shadows.

Open shade or soft window light will usually produce the best photographs of people. As long as the light casts soft, pleasing shadows that show the shape of the face, you'll get a pleasing result.

### **Camera Angles - Not Too Low, Not Too High**

The general rule is that the best camera angle is the one that keeps the facial plane parallel to the film plane. There are times when you want to deviate from that rule, but only slightly. For example, someone with a double chin might prefer photos taken with the camera a little higher. On the other hand, someone with a long nose or large forehead might prefer to have the camera shoot slightly upward.

### **Props - Optical Illusions and Natural Expressions**

Last, but not least, props can be used to accentuate the positive and hide the negative. A girl with a good figure should show it, but if a woman's waistline isn't what it used to be, it's easy to give the illusion that it's smaller than it really is by using a prop. For instance, holding a hat with nice curves near the waist can suggest there are nice curves underneath.

### **Last but not least...RELAX!**

Faces reveal a lot about what is going on inside. Someone who is stressed will transmit that stress in a photograph. So, before that shutter is snapped, take a deep breath, close your eyes, relax every muscle in your face, and then picture yourself in a favorite vacation spot! It may sound crazy, but people are almost always happier with their photos after performing that quick and easy relaxation technique.

If you remember these tips the next time a camera will be around, you'll find it's a lot easier to smile and be happy!

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# COOL Tips continued . . .

## Photos from Cheap Ink?

Anyone who knows the definition of SPAM has probably seen e-mails offering cheap ink cartridges. Were you tempted by the low prices? If you love your digital camera and enjoy making prints on your inkjet printer, it's hard not to be tempted. After all, the printer companies aren't shy about taking your money for the cartridges that carry their brand.

## So Why Not Go Cheap?

Here are several reasons to at least be cautious before sticking a 3rd-party ink cartridge (made and sold by someone other than the printer maker) in your new inkjet printer.

### Reason 1: The Warranty

First, your printer's warranty may be voided if you use an ink cartridge other than the one recommended by the manufacturer. This is a pretty reasonable qualification when you think about it. After all, the printer maker can't be responsible for what a 3rd-party ink maker puts into their cartridges.

As the warranty warning above suggests, you may be putting your hardware at risk if you use a 3rd-party ink. According to one expert, printer makers' supply ink cartridges that contain more ink. He said, "The risk is the head will clog when you let air get into one of the jets by running the printer when the ink cartridge is empty. That's why printers always warn you to replace the cartridges well before the cartridge is empty. It's cheap insurance." He went on to say that it's possible 3rd-party ink cartridge makers cut corners by putting in less ink. That means you must replace their cartridges at the first sign of a problem or when your print-monitor software warns you that your cartridge is getting low. Of course, replacing the cheaper cartridge more often negates a big part of the savings.

### Reason 2: Performance May Suffer

Inks and papers designed to be used in a particular printer are probably going to give you the best looking prints. So mixing things up may save you a bit of money, but if the images don't look good, it's money wasted.

**Reason 3: Print Life** The prints themselves, may not last as long. It's unlikely a 3rd-party ink maker is going to go to the trouble of testing their inks with different papers, but in all likelihood, your printer maker has done just that. The 3rd-party ink might last as long, but you may not want to take the chance.

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# COOL Tips continued . . .

## **So Should I Try It?**

So is it a good idea to use 3rd-party inks for photos? If it's a new printer and you are worried about print and printer longevity, most of the experts we talked to gave us an emphatic, "No!" If the printer is out of warranty and you're willing to gamble a little, the savings might be worth the risk. But if you do decide to give 3rd-party inks a go, try to find cartridges that carry a well-known brand and a warranty covering your printer. They may cost a little more than the cheapest cartridges out there, but that extra expense could buy you a little insurance that will help you sleep at night.

## **Fun Family Photos**

*"Get dressed! Stand straight! Hold still! Smile! Stop fighting!!!"*

Does that sound like a verbal snapshot of what happened the last time you tried to get a family photo? Do you have a rebellion on your hands every time you drag a camera out? If so, maybe it's time to try some proven strategies for getting that perfect family photo that everyone dreams of!

### **Make a Plan**

The key to making this a fun, stress-free experience is to keep it short, and you do that by following a plan of action. Dream photos don't just happen; so get started by thumbing through magazines and books that have family photos in them. Find the one photo that has the look that you believe is perfect for your particular family. Then use that photo as your guide for other decisions and to communicate what you want to the person who will be taking the photo.

Of course, it's unlikely that you'll match that photo exactly, but if you don't have some sort of sample to use as a guide, you may end up with a photo that's nothing like what you really have in mind. Like they say, if you don't know where you're going, you might end up somewhere else!

### **Dress for Success**

Choose compatible colors and stay away from busy patterns. It's not a bad idea to create a checklist and make certain you can put your hands on every item on your list. The last thing you need is to be searching, while everyone is standing around waiting, for the shoe that little Johnny tossed under the bed or that pink ribbon for Sally's hair that somehow ended up as the tail on Johnny's kite.

Here's a hot tip. Kids can sometimes have strong feelings about what they want to wear in a picture, so try giving them a little say by letting them choose between two outfits. Even better, if they're old enough, you might want to get their input on the whole plan. The more involved they are in the planning, the more invested they'll be in a positive outcome!

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## **Location, Location, Location**

Using your sample photo as a guide, consider all of the possible locations available to you. Pick the one that will have the fewest distractions, a nice background, plenty of posing options-places to sit or stand-and so on.

When choosing that location, keep in mind the ages of your group. Taking pictures on the beach might be great when kids are a little older, but chasing after a seagull is going to be awfully tempting for little kids and the family dog.

Speaking of pets, it's always more fun for kids to have their best buddy in the picture, so you might want to use that "option" as a little bribe to get the cooperation you want.

## **Time of Day**

If you want the photo taken inside, then usually just about any time of day can work. That means you can choose the time when everyone in the family is likely to be at his or her very best. On the other hand, if you plan to go outdoors because you want to take advantage of natural light and the environment, lighting conditions will dictate what time of day is best. That beach photo should be taken very early in the morning or a late afternoon when the sun is low on the horizon. If you're photographing in a park, you'll most likely want an area where both your family and the background will be in open shade-an area where the sky is reflecting light into a shaded area, unobstructed by trees or buildings. The softer light of open shade is the key to getting flattering photos outdoors. You don't want everyone standing in the sun squinting at the camera.

Here's another hot tip. If you don't want everyone looking grumpy, don't let the photo session delay a meal! If that's unavoidable, then by all means plan to have everyone enjoy a protein snack just before the photo session begins. It's better to risk ruining dinner than ruining a picture you'll treasure for a lifetime!

## **If All Else Fails...**

Hire a pro! Yes, uncle Joe might have the latest and greatest camera and be a whiz in his digital darkroom, but he may not be the best person to work with your kids. Often a seasoned pro will have an edge because kids will behave a little differently-usually better-when they're around strangers. If you do decide to work with a pro, use the above suggestions to help communicate your expectations. The pros we've talked to agree that creating a plan of action is the key to making family photos fun!

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## **Parents Beware! Are Kids with Camera Phones Asking for Trouble?**

Over 23 million camera phones will be sold in the United States this year. That's a staggering number, particularly given the quality of the images they produce can be less than exciting.

### **So What?**

If, by chance, your son or daughter is, or will be, the proud owner of one of those little gems, what happens if it finds its way to school?

If that's a question you haven't already answered, it's time to start pondering! Why? Because a camera that doesn't look like a camera can create a whole bunch of trouble along with some fuzzy digital photos.

### **School Bans**

Many schools ban the use of cellular phones in the classroom for a variety of reasons, but kids typically just turn them off and store them in their backpacks. "We haven't decided what our policy is going to be on camera phones," says the principal of a California high school. "We're in the process of updating our policy. Given the increased risk to personal privacy, we'd like to keep all camera phones off our campus, but state law protects a student's right to carry a phone, so it may be impossible to ban them outright."

### **The Real Danger**

In much of the San Francisco area, cell phone restrictions already include a ban on the use of camera phones for picture taking on school grounds, but that's obviously no guarantee they'll not be used. What happens if a fun-loving student sneaks his or her camera phone out of their backpack in the gym's locker room, and then, moments later, an embarrassing image of a student is flying around the Internet?

### **Can You Say Lawsuit?**

When asked of that's a likely scenario, an attorney gave this response, "Anyone can sue for anything. Winning is the reason you have courts with judges and juries." He went on to say that if the infringement took place on school property, the school and school district would be the primary targets of any lawsuit because of their deep pockets, but the parents of the student who took the photo and circulated it on the Web would almost certainly be listed as a party in the lawsuit.

### **Potential for Trouble**

And if that's not enough, Florida's Palm Beach County school board recently banned camera phones after students were caught using them to transmit test information in a high-tech cheating scheme.

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