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Christmas Photography Tips

Taking Your Holiday Photography to the Next Level!

Christmas is the most exciting time to take photographs—

- the natural elements,
- the hustle and bustle
- imaginative Christmas lights
- the festive mood

The best time is in the night

- The brilliance provided by the pure white snow
- The brilliant glow of the lights,
- The reflective decorations

How to get the most effective Christmas photos.

1 Photograph Outdoors

The cold chill of winter brings a certain purity to the air. The light possess a different quality.

Get outside in the brisk air and take photos of the snow-covered homes and lawns in your area. Some neighborhoods go overboard with their enthusiasm for the season and have decorated their homes with thousands of lights and Lawn decorations and displays the whiteness of the snow elevates the overall light level like a natural environmental reflector.

Use long shutter speeds – below 1/15 (which will require a tripod) and capture the glory of the season from the massive displays of the surrounding area.

2 Christmas Lights & Ornaments

Christmas lights and ornaments are the standard holiday decorations found in almost all Christmastime photographs and cards;. Use special techniques to find ways to utilize them in new and exciting ways Use close ups or just dominate the image to give dimension and suggest depth. Unplug some of the lights so they don't provide a distraction to your image, this way you will balance the composition and not add a distracting element. Another special effect technique you can use when photographing ornaments and tree lights is the slightly blurred backdrop technique. With Slightly blurred backdrop, you use the blurred or soft focus part of an image as part of the image composition. A simple way to enhance the effect is to place a piece of black paperboard with a shape cut out of it in front of the lens, the soft-focus/blurred light halos will take on the shape of the paperboard cut out . It can add character to your photographs.

3 Express Relationships

The Christmas season is meant for family and friends

Holidays are days that highlight the importance of relationships, the stress and pressure of the passing year may wear on everyone, yet everyone is glad to relax and spend time with family. You will have a chance to take photographs that define emotional moments for years, if not decades to come. The natural joy of this season adds excitement to your subjects, thus they'll be more expressive. Fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, brothers, sisters, husbands and wives will all be open to suggestions on how and where to stand to enable you to capture the bonds between them. Try to get them to smile and laugh; and suggest that couples stand beneath mistletoe for a holiday kiss.

4 Capture the Preparation Stages

Families come together at holidays, but not just for the main event, they come to help decorate... and these are exciting, fun-filled moments, so they're ripe with photographic opportunity! Trimming the tree is a special moment in creating the atmosphere of Christmas, and most families have a cherished collection of ornaments, lights and stockings – all of which need to be hung on the tree. Try to get people's faces as they open the ornament boxes. Young children (who might not have remembered the last Christmas) are especially good subjects. When the tinsel goes on, you're almost done, but there are two more shots to get – the first is when the star (or angel) is placed on the top of the tree; and the last shot is when everything is on the tree and the lights are plugged in for the first time.

5 Focus on the Eyes

The photos of people soar when you focus in on their eyes. It's critical to compose the image with as little headroom and dead space on the sides as possible, so the image is more about the faces and the eyes than anything else. The rest of the décor will filter into the image on its own. This is an effective kind of photo as it shows a subtle unity among the family. If you use a flash with your Christmas photos, use a detachable flash and bounce the light off the ceiling. As the ambient light levels will be extremely high from the Christmas lights (and possibly candles), you don't want the vibrant colors washed out by the flash.

6 Take Group Portraits

Christmas photos can have dual uses – you take them for the memories/record-keeping and you can use them as your family's Christmas card. Either way, you want to make sure that you, the photographer, are in some of the important family photos. You'll want to position everyone by the Christmas tree and have some presents in the composition too. Use a tripod for this group shot, as you'll be using either the camera's timer or remote shutter release so you can get in the photo too. Set your exposure values (shutter, ISO and aperture), compose your frame, set the timer interval (between 3 – 10 seconds), then release the shutter.

7 Recommended Settings

There's usually a lot of additional, light sources "on" during Christmastime and will increase the ambient light level, but not high enough for ISO 100, or 200; you might want to increase to 400 don't forget to readjust your white balance. Shutter speeds between 1/30 and 1/90 aperture settings of f/2 to f/5.6; you'll get shallow to moderate depth of field at these settings, which will add to the ambiance, by keeping the illuminated background just out of focus.

Adjust Your Camera Settings

This step only applies if you're using a professional camera. Keep your ISO and aperture numbers low to make your photos look more dynamic and less grainy. Slow down your shutter speed if you want to capture the twinkling lights in motion,

8 Recommended Equipment

A fast zoom lens is great for Christmastime photography, try for a 28 – 80mm or something similar; this way you'll have a wide angle for group portraits and shooting houses/buildings that are magnificently decorated, and you'll also be able to grab intimate and inviting close-ups. Consider having your tripod available. Even if you don't use the timer function the tripod can be helpful for stabilizing the camera for high angle shots. Use a corded flash or a flash with a tilt/swivel head to avoid having the flash fire head-on at your subjects. A head-on flash will wash out not only the skin tones, but the vibrant color cast from all the Christmas lights as well.

How to Take Christmas Photos

Whether you like taking photos or are more of a behind the scenes editor, you'll need to have a high-resolution photo to work with.

First, you'll need to figure out what type of camera you're planning to use. While your phone camera can take every day Christmas photos, but a professional camera has the advantage especially when it comes to capturing the Christmas spirit through lights and lenses. In order to achieve the festive atmosphere with a professional camera, you'll need to follow these important techniques:

Keep the Aperture Number Low

The aperture number controls the amount of light that your camera captures. The lower the number By Lowering number the less light enters the lens of your camera which is ideal for the low-light environment of Christmas photography. A lower aperture will blur out the background, making your photos look more dynamic.

Lower the ISO

After adjusting your aperture, you'll also need to lower your ISO. Modifying the ISO helps brighten or darken your image. As you'll likely be taking your Christmas photos in a low-light scenario, the lower your ISO the less grainy appearance to your photos

Slow the Shutter Speed

The last setting you'll need to adjust on your camera is the shutter speed. The slower your shutter speed, the longer your camera sensor is exposed to light. Slower shutter speeds help capture a sense of movement and is perfect for capturing the twinkling Christmas lights and achieving that sought-after blurred effect in your photos. If you want to focus on shooting and layer on a blurred effect in post-production, you can always add it in with a photo editing software.

Conclusion

The Christmas holiday is a highly photographed event, it's important to approach the subject with an eye for doing something different and compelling. Use your imagination Utilize the ornaments and the lights to add special effects to enhance the background elements of your shots experiment with the slightly blurred backdrop technique for something subtly different, focus on your subject's eyes position your family in intimate positions that emphasizes their close relationship and the joy this season instills in everyone. The preparation is just as important as the finished product when it comes to Christmas Try to capture all the photos of the tree trimming and the other special activities as they happen.

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Bio

My name is David Wright.

I have many years experience writing procedures on how to test high tech electronic equipment. Re wrote technical manuals so that the average person could understand them.

Set up numerous training programs to train Junior techs.

My documenting skills are excellent paying attention to details satisfying the toughest ISO auditors.

I have enhanced my writing skills by successfully completing a course in Writing for Children's literature.

Completed course from AWAI in Copy writing service ,B2B copy writing, Seo management , Email marketing and web design

This has helped me write how to articles and Information Books that you will find on my website Discount E Books <http://www.discount-ebook-s.com/>

I have had a Camera in my Hand since 1965 Gone pro In 1999

Took the course from ICS in Photography

I am now at a point in life I would like to share my knowledge with the world and the best way I know how is by Print either electronically or Hard copy paper.

David Wright

Electronic service technician

Professional Photographer

Experience writer