

QUICK TIPS

Not the same old snapshot

Do your outdoor shots remind you of dad's snapshots, with everyone stiffly lined up squinting into the sun? They don't have to.

Bright sunlight is wonderful for tanning, but tricky for photographers. Cameras aren't as good as our eyes at dealing with the stark contrast between the bright spots and the dark shadows. While our eyes adjust very quickly as we change our focus outdoors, cameras must capture the whole scene at once and can't record both the blinding lights and the darkest darks. So the question is, "how do you even out the lighting while still making the most of the sunlight?"

First, use your flash. It may seem strange, but one of the best times to use your flash is in bright, direct sunlight. The flash on current cameras will sense the amount of light needed to fill in the shadows (it's called 'fill flash') and give just enough light to make the scene more pleasing when you look at the finished print.

Next, turn your subject's faces away from the sun. Experiment with the sun to their side, partly behind them, and directly behind them to see which style you prefer but by all means stop making them look into the sun!

Finally, if possible move your subjects to what we call 'open shade' which is basically a shaded place in an otherwise openly sun-lit area. This could be on a porch or in the shade of a tree. Light is reflected from the ground and surroundings for the basic scene, and your flash brightens up the faces for a pleasing picture. This works best if the brightest areas are slightly beside or behind the subject.

In both cases, putting the main light behind or beside our subjects helps separate them from the background and also adds some pleasing definition around the edges which gives a nice 'pop' to your picture.

Follow the simple pointers and see if your outdoor pictures aren't easier on your subjects and also more fun to look at!

For more advanced techniques in outdoor photography, please contact me!