



SCLS Online PR toolkit Tips for Taking Good Photographs

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Note: This page provides suggestions for taking good photographs that you can submit to a local newspaper. The reality is that you may not always be able to plan events around the schedule of the newspaper. There also will be times when newspapers have to change their coverage plans because of breaking news (car accidents, fires, etc). In these cases, there are things you can do to increase the likelihood that you can take photos the newspaper will be happy to use.

Photo Tips

1.	If you're using a film camera, it's best to use one with an external flash. Most built-in flashes are not powerful enough to light larger spaces. If you get more than eight feet away it's likely your photos will be dark. If all you have is a small auto-focus camera with a built in flash, concentrate on taking close-up photos. Remember that using a zoom lens increases the light requirements of the camera. The tighter you zoom, the more light you need. Therefore, it's often best to leave the camera set on a wider setting and just move closer to your subject(s).
2.	Film selection is critical. Today's higher speed color films are very good, so always select a 200 or 400 ASA/ISO film. The higher the number the more light sensitive it is, so if you have to shoot in a darker room select a 400 speed film. Remember, you still should use a flash.
3.	If you're using a digital camera (or getting ready to purchase one), it should be a model with at least 2 megapixels of resolution, but 3 or more is best. This will ensure there is enough detail to print quality photos. If you have the option, you should also use an external flash with a digital camera, but many do not offer this feature. Therefore, remember what was said about using the zoom lens found on most digital cameras today. The closer you zoom, the more light you need. Therefore, in lower light situations get as close as possible. Digital cameras will shoot in very low light without a flash, but that doesn't mean the photos will be usable. Depending upon the light, the shutter just stays open longer and longer, and with anything slower than 1/30 th of a second you will get motion blur because you just can't hold the camera still. Practice taking digital photos in the rooms where you will hold events so you know what you can and can't do with your digital camera. This way you'll be more likely to get usable photos.
4.	Shoot both horizontal and vertical photos. Papers need both to do their page layout, and having both formats will give them more flexibility. Shoot your vertical photos so the camera flash is always on the top.
5.	Concentrate your efforts on one or two people, using close-ups instead of overall shots. You get fewer people in the photos, but again its an issue of where and how big the photo gets used. Try to capture photos with action and expression. Accomplishing this goes back to activity planning. If you've planned an event with this need in mind, it will be easier to capture the photo.
6.	Don't try to run the activity or event and also take photos. Get someone to take photos (perhaps a volunteer) who can become familiar with the camera. If you're always using a first-time photographer, your photo quality will suffer. This might be a good job for a high school student who is in the photo club or works on the school newspaper or yearbook.
7.	When photographing an event with a digital camera, take a lot of photos. People—especially children—tend to notice when their photos are being taken so they're always looking at the camera. You're more likely to get good photos when the subjects get used to your presence and start ignoring you. With a film camera, take photos for a few minutes with no film in the camera, then put film in. You're photos will be more natural and of better composition.
8.	Never, ever, have your subjects in front of a window (night time is OK if the shades are drawn). You won't be happy with the results, so it's just better to avoid this situation. This is an important issue when you set up your room for an activity or performer. If you want the newspaper photographer to get good photos, don't make him/her shoot toward a bright window.