

# Picture yourself as a PTA photographer

Kindergartners round the first turn in the jog-a-thon. Parents advocate in front of their school trustees. PTA parents attend a Founders Day dinner. You capture it all on film.

Have you ever noticed that the first thing you look at when you open a newsletter, magazine or a website is a photograph? With all of the information, news and honors that PTA wants to share, photographs help us bring the story to life. Taking pictures is easy, fun and rewarding, especially when you see them in a school newsletter or on the PTA website.

The best part is PTA wants your pictures! Here are some tips to make sure your pictures are published.

Digital cameras have changed so much. A few years ago taking a picture of an event was, well, just so much more work. Taking PTA pictures meant driving to the store, dropping off the film, and then driving back to pick the pictures up. Added to that, gathering the address, envelope and stamp to send the pictures to PTA. Yikes, more time added to an already busy schedule!

Digital photography gives us freedom from film developing, freedom to edit pictures on the go, freedom to take hundreds of pictures at a time and freedom to share them with a few clicks on the computer. Digital computers also make us better photographers.

When it comes to pictures for publishing, some things remain the same, whatever the technology. You need to strive for:

- Clear images
- Getting close to the important part of the picture
- Catching the action
- Lots of contrast between light and dark areas

The amazing thing about digital cameras is you can dramatically change the image quality by changing just one setting. Nearly all digital cameras offer you three to four resolutions when you press the menu setting.

- Low
- Medium
- High

The low setting will let you take thousands of pictures, but the quality is low. Each additional setting up to “high” increases photo quality, but can dramatically decrease the number of pictures that you are able to take. It is easy to change the resolution or picture quality setting. Most cameras offer a menu selection. Choose the image mode or resolution mode and set it to “high.” You will know if you were successful because the number of pictures you can take will drop significantly.



There are two ways to take more pictures. Lower the resolution (which means the pictures may not print well) or buy a higher capacity card. Many digital photographers (professional and amateurs) choose to buy an inexpensive larger capacity card. That way they get many pictures at higher quality.

Paraphrasing the professionals at [www.digitaltrends.com](http://www.digitaltrends.com), always choose the maximum resolution your camera can handle. Once your shots are at their highest quality, you give yourself more flexibility and options once they're on your computer. Most cameras come with software that lets you easily change the size of the picture. If you need to resize one because it's too big to e-mail, you can do this (after creating a back up of the original, of course) without detracting from image quality by shrinking it down in size. Be very careful in shrinking a picture not to let the computer change the dots per inch or dpi. The printing industries' minimal standard is typically 300 dpi.

For sending pictures to PTA and getting the most versatile pictures for home use, shoot at the highest resolution possible, and buy a larger memory card to increase the number of pictures you take. PTA can more easily use Tiff or jpeg photos. This is usually an option you can go to "save as." By using "save as" the original picture and a new copy is created of it. Send your highest resolution photographs with your contact information, including each date, event description, names and titles of individuals, and photo release forms\* to [communications@capta.org](mailto:communications@capta.org).

\*(<http://www.capta.org/sections/communications/downloads/PHOTOGRAPHYRELEASE.pdf>)

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## Here are a few ideas for getting a great digital picture:

- When taking a photo of someone, try to find the perfect distance between you two. If you're too close, for example, it might be too blurry. But if the person is too far away, you may miss out on key traits such as eye color or freckles. You can, of course, stay in one spot and use your lens to zoom in and out, but don't be afraid to take a step closer to your subject.
- Red-eye is a drag. Some cameras feature anti-red-eye solutions, but the best bet is to take your photos using available natural light, such as afternoon sunshine, to avoid this common problem altogether. If your camera does have a red-eye reduction feature, try it, but be aware it might result in a double-flash. (And warn your subjects!).
- Here's a good tip. Taking photos of active kids and pets can be tough because the shutter doesn't usually respond quickly enough to capture the moving images in time. Press the shutter button halfway down to let your camera know you're about to snap the shot. When the action occurs in front of you, press the button all the way down, and the camera will take the photo more quickly.
- Know your flash's distance. Many people try to take photos of a large room, such as a concert stage or wedding dance floor, only to be disappointed at the dark image. This is because many pictures are taken beyond the maximum flash range, which is about 15 feet for most cameras (or about five steps away).
- Optical versus digital zoom capabilities: Optical zoom allows a user to zoom in on an object by using the lenses. Digital zoom allows zooming in through the use of software. Optical zoom creates much better pictures than digital zoom.