

Top 10 Tips for Better Photos

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The old saying goes: 'a picture speaks a thousand words'. How true it is. Great newsletters, dynamic websites, and eye-catching postcards and other mailers usually contain one or more strong images, immediately grabbing your attention and drawing you in.

Subtly filling in details for you without words, great photographs can make or break website, newsletters, postcards, and other visuals communication tools your organization uses to attract donors, volunteers, clients, and others.

If you do not have a good quality digital camera at your organization, either budget to purchase one, or ask for a high-quality one as an in-kind donation from one of your supporters. It is an essential tool for any non-profit organization.

Once you have one your camera in hand, carry it with you as much as possible: to events, volunteer gatherings, field work, and more. You never know when you will have the opportunity to capture the essence of your work on film – or at least on a memory card.

On the other hand, bad photos – those that are blurry, not detailed, or dark and unidentifiable – can immediately turn off viewers, causing them to lose interest and confidence in your work.

Here are 10 tips from [Kodak](http://www.kodak.com) to help you take great photographs:

1. *Get down on their level.* Kids and pets don't have to look directly into the camera, but the eye level angle itself will create a personal and inviting feeling.
2. *Use a plain background.* A cluttered background distracts while a plain background emphasizes your subject.
3. *Use a flash outdoors.* Even outdoors, use the fill flash to improve pictures. On sunny days, it lightens dark shadows under eyes and nose; on cloudy days it brightens faces and makes them stand out from the background.
4. *Move in close.* To eliminate background distractions, move a few steps closer or use the zoom until the subject fills the viewfinder. For small objects, use the camera's macro or "flower" mode to get sharp close-ups. So don't be shy: get close!

5. *Take some vertical pictures.* Many subjects look better in a vertical picture, including buildings and portraits. All too often, we are stuck using the camera just in the horizontal mode. Switch it up and your newsletters, postcards, and websites will come alive and feel far more dynamic.

6. *Lock the focus.* Center the subject, push the shutter button halfway down, reframe your picture (while still holding the button halfway down), then press all the way down to shoot the picture.

7. *Move it from the middle.* Imagine a tic-tac-toe grid in your viewfinder. Place the subject at one of the intersections of the lines.

8. *Know your flash's range.* For many cameras this is only about ten feet: about four steps away. Pictures taken beyond the flash's range will be dark. Again: don't be shy: move in and snap away!

9. *Watch the light.* Study the effects of light on your subject's face. Avoid overhead sunlight that casts harsh shadows.

10. *Be a picture director.* Take an extra minute to add some props, rearrange your subjects, or try a different viewpoint.

Contact **do good Consulting** at 217-778-1687 or dogood@dogoodconsulting.org for more information on using photos and other illustrations in your organization's communications and outreach work.