



5 MINUTE PHOTOGRAPHER

THE BUSY MOM'S GUIDE TO
TAKING BETTER PHOTOS OF YOUR FAMILY
WITH ANY CAMERA (IN 5 MINUTES OR LESS)

TOMMY HEIDEN

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The Busy Mom's Guide to Taking Better Photos
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by Tommy Heiden

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As a family photographer, I always want to make sure I can give my clients photos that they'll be able to look back on for years and smile and cry and do all the wonderful things parents do when they see beautiful photos of their children, and of course that means I look at a lot of my photos to see what makes a great photo and what makes an average photo. There is a magical element to a great photograph, and it's something every photographer worth their salt looks for in their photographs.

It's a secret so obvious, that it's right in front of your nose, and something that I often find myself commenting on when I see other people's photographs. It's the number one secret that family photographers use to make their photographs really shine, and we'll discuss it in depth by the end of this book. But before we talk about that, let's talk about what goes into making a great, eye-catching photograph.

Simply put, photography is a wonderfully *magical* art form which can be easily expressed as a completely *unmagical* mathematical formula. The "*Formula for Photography Success*" (or FPS as I've just decided to call it) can be boiled down to three basic elements: L, C, and E, and can be expressed with the following formula:

$$(L + C) * E = AS$$

And don't worry, this isn't a science textbook. It's all very simple, just bear with me. If you look at the equation above (and since some of you are wondering if this isn't a science textbook, what's with the equation, smart guy? To you, I'll answer thusly: Because I'm a nerd and I thought expressing photography as an equation would both amuse me and make me giggle a little. Which, in fact, it did, *and* I did.), you'll notice that while

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L & C are an integral part of the equation, the element E is profoundly important. In fact, if you have ZERO E, the equation will equate to zero itself

ie: [L + C] * 0 = 0

So what is this mysterious element E? Never fear, faithful traveller, we'll get to that in a moment (this book is, ultimately, about that mysterious element E, after all), but first, let's briefly touch upon the two other elements, L & C so that we can get some context of the equation.

What is L?

In the above formula, L stands for *light*. Without light, there is no photograph. In fact, the word photography comes from the words photo (light) and graphos (painting). In other words, photography is painting with light. We won't go in depth into quantity, quality, colour, and direction of light, just be aware that light is a strong contributing factor to any photograph.

Why do you think that people hold flashlights under their chin when telling spooky stories around a campfire? Because the upwards direction of light changes the way the storyteller looks and helps to create the mood. Likewise, shrouding someone's face in shadows makes them more mysterious and/or anonymous.

LIGHTING TIP:

Typically, the best light for family photography is softer, more diffused light, so if you're indoors, shoot near a window when the sun isn't directly coming straight through the window. And if you're outdoors, try shooting near sunset as the warm, soft, directional light helps create dimension to the face and is very flattering to many different faces.

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For example, here's a shot of my son by the window.



This is using just the available light from the window (notice the nice rim light around his hair), with a reflector to kick some light back onto his face. Since I'm guessing anyone reading this probably doesn't have easy access to a reflector, white or off-white walls or light coloured carpeting work great as a natural reflector.

Light could be a whole topic that could fill a book unto itself (and then some), but since this isn't a book about light, we'll move on to the next element in the formula: C.

What is C?

C stands for *Composition*. A photograph is a visual medium for storytelling, and composition is how you tell the story. If you're telling the story of a woman going to the bank to deposit her paycheque, it may or may not matter that she has diabetes. It may or may not matter if she has a dog named Scruffy. It may or may not matter that she's wearing a pink skirt. The elements you include either contribute to or distract from the story you want to tell.

What does this mean? It means simply that if you want to take better photos of your family, consider everything in the photograph. Is your messy floor behind your kids part of the story? Or do you need to change your composition so the messy floor isn't seen? What about that sign post? The tree? The person in the background? The garbage can? Look at your photos and see what elements distract from the story and remove them. Include anything that helps contribute to the story.

COMPOSITION TIP:

If you have a photo of your kid getting sprayed by water at a spray park, you may want to include something that shows where the water is coming from instead of having the water appear out of nowhere. Depending on the type of camera (and lens, and sensor) you're using, the background may be *more* in focus or *less* in focus, and since photography is a 2 dimensional representation of 3 dimensional space, the background could be given equal weight to the foreground. So that cute picture of your toddler becomes less cute when you notice the guy in the background of the photograph scratching himself that you didn't notice when you were looking at your kid, and your fancy three dimensional vision focused on your child, and your

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brain filtered out the guy in the background automatically.

Look at this shot of my son playing with his sister when she was just home from the hospital.



What's the story in this photograph? The tender moment between my two children is the story, and everything else is irrelevant. My daughter is laying on an ottoman. In front of the ottoman is a whole bunch of toys. Just outside of the frame on camera right is a fireplace with a bunch of collectibles on the mantle. Would including the toys or the fireplace help tell the story? Or would they distract from it? It depends on the story

you want to tell. Is it about your kids sharing a moment? Or is it about your kids sharing a moment in a messy house? Feel free to crop or frame your photos as necessary to remove any distracting elements and tell a better story.

Putting the Formula Together

Now that we've discussed how light and composition help tell the story, let's move on to the element E, without which the entire formula (and this book, quite frankly) falls apart. E doesn't care what camera you use. E doesn't care if you're using a point-and-shoot, an iPhone, a mirrorless, a DSLR, or for that matter a medium or large format camera. E doesn't care whether you're shooting film or digital. E is the magic that gives a photograph LIFE! So what is E?

E stands for EMOTION!

I've learned by photographing countless individuals, couples, and families, is that it's all about emotion. I'll take a decent photo filled with emotion over a technically perfect photo that lacks emotion any day of the week. I want my photos to say something to the viewer, I want something that will reach out to them and tug at their heartstrings, or make them laugh or cry, or feel pride, or joy, or SOMETHING.

A great photograph should make you WANT to look at it, and in my mind that starts with infusing the photo with emotion.

Let's take a look at my magic formula again:

(L + C) * E = AS

Written out, the formula says this: *(light + composition) * emotion = angels singing*

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As I mentioned above, you'll notice that E is a multiplier, not an addition. What this says is that the more E you put into your photographs, the more the angels will be singing. Put enough emotional oomph into your photographs, and the heavens will part, beams of light will rain down upon you, trumpets will sound, and angels will be heard upon high. You can have the best light in the world, and you can beautifully compose the image, but if you multiply it by ZERO emotion, precisely ZERO angels will be singing. Do you see what I'm saying? Are you getting my gist? Are you picking up what I'm throwing down?

Excellent.

Now let's take a look at the following photo:



It's by no means a perfect photo. In fact, I could easily point out the flaws in this photo, but it's still one of my favourites from this particular shoot because there's a very quiet quality to this photo. My son is very active and energetic, and I love how this shot displays a quieter side of him.

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And let's face it, no one will ever tell you that your ISO really got to them, and they'll never tell you that your F-stop really tugged at their heartstrings. Beyond a certain level of technical proficiency, the photograph is all about the emotion and the story you're telling. It's the emotion in the previous photograph that captivates. The framing, cropping and lighting contribute to the story, but it's the emotion that is and should be the focus.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, here's another one of my favourites of my son. You can just see so much in his eyes, and the way he cocks his jaw to his right side (camera left). It's not even the classic happy, smiling face, it's something a little more mischievous, which makes it somehow more appealing to me.



But it's not just about happy, smiling faces or mischievous looks. In the next photo (*next page*) you can't even see my son's face, but there's a little drama in this that strikes me. What's he thinking? Where's he going? There's an entire story in this photo waiting to be told.

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And then, of course, there's this next image (*next page*). Tired mama, sleeping baby. Do you see the connection between my wife and child? Do you see the emotion? Neither subject has their eyes open, and neither one is looking at the camera, and yet this picture tells a story that every mother will instantly know, understand, and *feel*.

In fact, this is one of my favourites of my wife and our first child. This is one of those photos I can look back on to remember how tiny our little guy was when he first came into the world and how much he's changed. This is gold. I look at this and I see how much heart and spirit my wife gives of herself to our children, and reminds me what a dedicated and loving mother she is.



As the kids today say, “Oh, all the feels.” Emotions, people. It’s all about emotions. Look for them, capture them, and even if your photo is a little under-exposed, or over-exposed, cropped a little funny, or not quite tack sharp, all that stuff goes out the window when your photo can elicit emotions from the viewer. A picture of a kid is just a picture of a kid. But once you infuse that photo with some emotion, once you tell a story with your photo that packs an emotional punch, then you’ll have angels singing and people’s hearts going all pitter-pat every time.

What To Do Next

Whether you use a DSLR, a point-and-shoot, or your phone, you can use the *Formula for Photographic Success* right now to improve your photographs of your own children. While the more you know about light and composition the better, focus on looking for emotional moments, not just “cheese” photography (y’know, the type where you pull out your camera and your kid sees it and goes “Cheeeeeeeese!”).

Try to capture different emotions. Think of the Disney/Pixar movie *Inside Out* and try to capture moments in your child or childrens lives which showcase Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust. Tell an emotional story, and most of all, shoot as often as possible. Photography is a learned skill! You must go out and practice!

Bye for now! Good luck, and good shooting!

About the Author

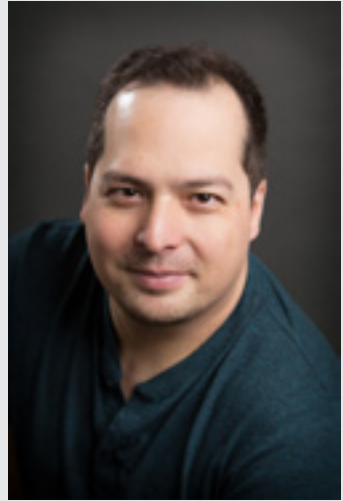
Tommy Heiden is a family photographer based out of Maple Ridge, BC, Canada, and is the founder and lead photographer of Heiden Photography, a family photography service that serves the Port Moody/Coquitlam/Port Coquitlam/Maple Ridge area just outside Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Tommy's photography has been featured in *Freshly Worn Magazine* and he is the author of *"Picture This: The Busy Mom's Guide to Choosing the Right Qualified Family Photographer for the Best Possible*

Price" and *"5 Minute Photographer: The Busy Mom's Guide to Taking Better Photos of your Family with Any Camera (in 5 Minutes or Less)."*

Tommy is the originator of Heiden Photography's **unique, innovative, and FREE "Screen Test" photo session** which can help you *look great in every photo for life*, and its **100% Risk-Free Breakthrough**. These industry-leading ideas help Heiden Photography ensure that its clients have *convenient, stress-free, risk-free family photography to enhance their homes and leave a lasting legacy for their children and their children's children.*

If you would like more information on Heiden Photography's offerings, or to book your free "Screen Test" photo session, please visit their website at www.heidenphotography.com.





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TAKING BETTER PHOTOS OF YOUR FAMILY WITH ANY CAMERA (IN 5 MINUTES OR LESS)

Inside this free report, you'll learn the Formula for Photographic Success, and how it applies to taking better photos of your family. You'll learn the three elements of a great photograph, and most importantly, you'll learn the number one secret that family photographers use to get beautiful photographs every time. You'll get actionable advice on how to apply this secret in your own photography regardless of what camera you choose to use.

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