

Achieve perfect pics with tips from a pro

Photographs are the way many people document life's special occasions, milestones and even the daily moments that are worth saving and sharing. Nowadays, it's easy to take photos for granted since digital technology has made taking photos simpler than ever before.

The U.S. Library of Congress says that the oldest known photograph in the world was taken by French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niepce in 1825. The photo depicts a man leading a horse. Niepce's heliographs, or sun prints, were the prototype for the

modern photograph.

Although people have been taking photographs for nearly 200 years, some people still struggle to perfect their style and execution. Professional photographer Laura Kyle Bruen, of Laura Bruen Photography, works across New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania and shares her expert tips for creating visual photo perfection.

Photo taker: My camera has automated settings, but I'm interested in having more control over my photos. What are some things I need to know?

Laura: Step one would be learning the three elements of creating a correct exposure. This involves finding the balance between: ISO, shutter speed and aperture setting. ISO is the measure of a digital camera's sensor's sensitivity to light.

Aperture is the size of the opening in the lens, which allows light to enter. It also controls your depth of field (how in-focus

or out of focus the background is behind your subject). Shutter Speed is the amount of time the shutter open and closes.

The most important thing to remember is once you change one of these settings it will directly affect the others. I highly recommend Bryan Peterson's book, "Understanding Exposure," to learn about the balance of these settings and how it affects your images overall. Once you learn the rules of creating a correct exposure balancing these three settings, you can learn how to break them when deemed creatively desirable.

PT: My photos seem great at first glance, but then I see something in the background that ruins the overall look. How do I remedy this?

L: While the subject, not the background, should be your main focus, it makes sense to evaluate your surroundings when composing a shot, as an ugly background may distract from the subject. Training your eye begins with looking through the viewfinder and making some conscious decisions. A good method of doing this is to mentally divide your frame into nine equal parts. Evaluate your frame: Does that large box of tissues need to be in the background? Are there

any large obstructions, garbage cans? Is the light behind you? See any objects with clashing colors to your subject or other undesirables? If so, recompose your shot. Make it a habit to perform this exercise and when your eye is trained, you will compose images before you even put your eye up to the viewfinder.

PT: How do I get my subjects to pay attention ... especially children?

L: In addition to knowing your camera and the basics of photography, depending on your subject matter you will either play director or documentary still photographer. If you're working with an adult in a portrait, engage him or her in conversation to relax the atmosphere. Getting your subjects relaxed results in great images. With children, life is silly — I'll do anything to get the shot — dance, hop around making silly faces, even mount things on my cameras to get a rise out of small children. Do not force your subjects to do things they are not comfortable doing or do not want to do. Keep it light, fun and comfortable.

PT: How do I know when to use the flash?

L: The correct answer to this question depends on the

current lighting situation. In every environment you have to analyze whether or not flash is necessary to achieve your desired outcome. As you progress/advance you'll learn techniques where you can add supplemental light to existing light. Some of today's best consumer digital cameras have very high ISO ratings that allow the photographer to shoot with relatively low light. On-camera flashes can be harsh. If you need to use your pop-up flash, I highly recommend purchasing a pop-up diffuser. It is a solid investment as it softens the light and subjects won't have that deer-in-headlights look.

PT: Everyone has had a horror story with a photo that makes them look awful. I want my subjects to look their best. Are there any tips for achieving this?

L: We can all use posing tips! Direct your subject to bend his or her elbows and lift arms slightly away from the body to avoid flat arms against the body — which is not flattering. Shoot from above if your subject has a full face to eliminate any double chins. Make sure everyone is standing up straight! Have subjects cross one leg in front of the other to slim the thighs. Rotate the upper body of the subject slightly at the

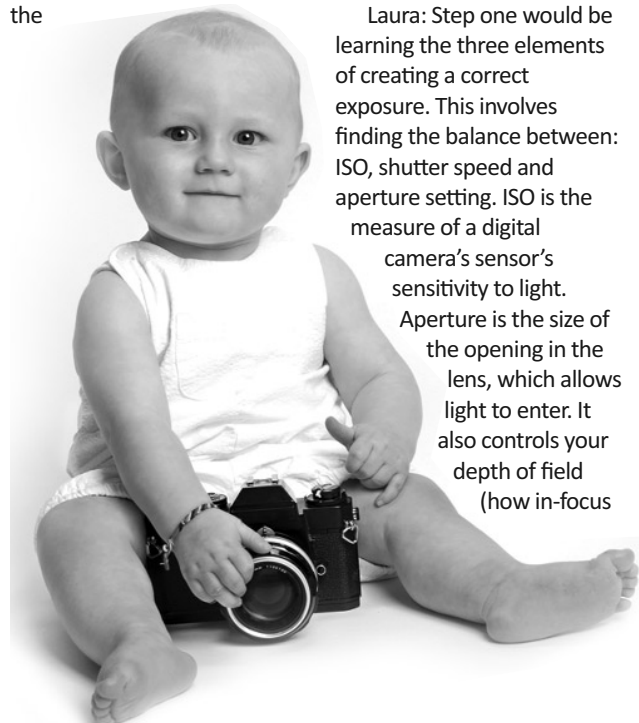
waist (slight twist) to slim the waistline. Tell subjects to relax their faces and to smile with their eyes — it works! I also tell my clients to get a good night's rest the night before a shoot. They arrive well rested and fresh faced, and it's amazing what a good night's sleep can do!

PT: Are there times when portraits or other shots are better left to an expert?

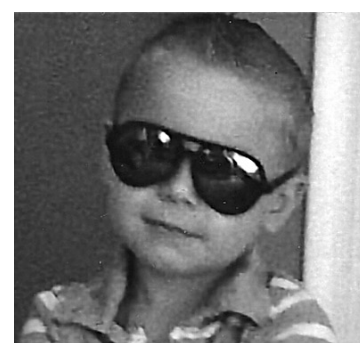
L: A professional photographer would be best documenting major milestones in life, such as a newly born baby, first birthday, communion, or wedding or for commercial purposes where a professional shot will sell you, your product, or your service.

Learning photo basics is the first step in taking beautiful photos. Then photographers can experiment to achieve the photos they desire.

Laura is a member of Professional Photographers of America (PPA) and Wedding & Portrait Photographers International (WPPI), as well as the National Association for Professional Women (NAPW). She regularly blogs about her creative life interests on her official blog, shoot-scoop.com.



Beautiful Baby Contest



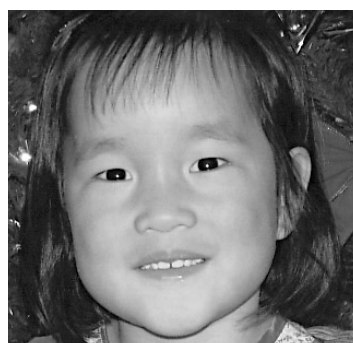
Makson Banuelos
Grandparents Rick & Lori Anderson



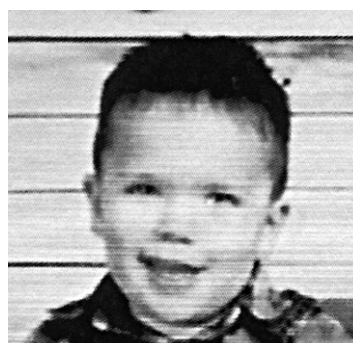
Raegen Brandt
Dwight & Raja Brandt



Rowan Brandt
Dwight & Raja Brandt



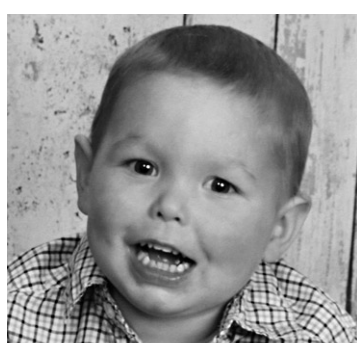
Emma Lucille Busby
Jon & Kelli Busby



Jacob Chadwick
Julie & Casey Chadwick



Landen Castle
Tina Castle



Mason Chesley
Megan Bye & Eric Chesley



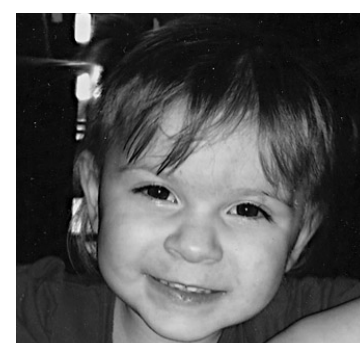
Brooke Devine
Travis & Whitney Devine



Jett Devine
Travis & Whitney Devine



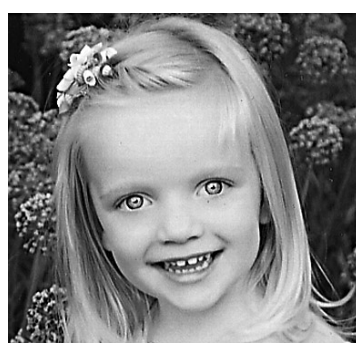
Claire Dreesen
Jeff & Megan Dreesen



Chloe Rae Marie Draskovic
Drew Draskovic & Cassie Tielke



Bentley Eilers
Jeff & Megan Eilers



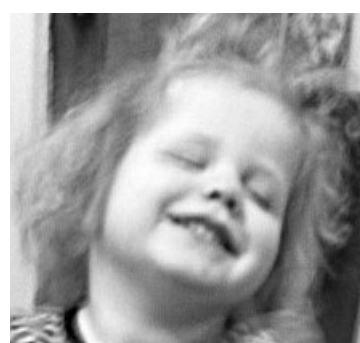
Brooklyn Fischer
Corey & Ann Fischer



Jax Gause
Tom & Sheri Gause



Madison Jo Gukeisen
Justin & Misty Gukeisen



Hadley
Grandparents Linda & Daryl Stephenson



Mary Healy
Chris & Anne Healy



Willow Mackey
Evan & Alex Mackey



Elly Naber
Grandparents Lisa & Pete Mueller



Liberty Nohr
Chris & Katie Nohr



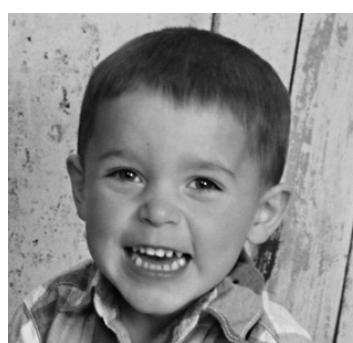
McKinley Podzimek
Grandparents Nancy & AJ Soukup



Reed Sedlacek
Nathan & Blair Sedlacek



Kennley Sedlacek
Nathan & Blair Sedlacek



Braxton Chesley
Megan Bye & Eric Chesley

