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by Shoshana

7 Simple Ways to Plan Your Perfect Family Portrait

By Shoshana Kohen Cikurel

Why Most People Fail to Get the Perfect Family Portrait

When you boil everything down, I think you'll agree that there are few things more important in life than **family**. Without family to share our love and experiences with, everything else in life becomes superficial and loses its meaning.

Your life is built from an incredible series of small, but highly sentimental moments that fit together like frames in a movie, to create the memories of your time spent with the people most important to you.

But don't you ever wonder where all the time goes? The older we get, the faster time whizzes by. The days, weeks, months, and years flash by like scenes from an express train. Kids grow up too fast, there's always something important that needs doing, and there's never enough time to get everyone together to capture your incredible family relationships.

Before you know it, years have gone by and you're left wishing you had taken the time to

document your family when you had the chance...

It is my passion to help you avoid falling into that trap! And thank you for requesting this short guide to planning your perfect family portrait—I hope you get a lot of value from the ideas I'm about to share with you.



"Shoshana was absolutely a joy to work with. We wanted Christmas Card photos but she captured our family beautifully and we got so much more. I would recommend her to anyone!" Jenifer L.

Time, or the perceived lack of it, is the single biggest reason why so many people fail to have their families photographed when they have the chance.

One problem is that **"today" never feels as special as it will looking back years in the future.** Today feels "ordinary", and it feels like you have plenty of time, right?

Today, you're too busy to worry about getting everyone together in one place to create a proper family portrait—*one you'll treasure in years to come.*

There's always tomorrow, next week, next month, after the holidays, perhaps when the kids are out of school, or when they finish

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their summer activities, during fall break, or maybe next year...

New Year comes and goes like clockwork every 12 months, and the years roll by until one day you realize with shock that you missed out on something more precious than anything else you can imagine...

The memories of your family legacy.

If only you could view them proudly displayed on the wall, or as part of a treasured album, instead of having them locked up inside your head.

TODAY, right NOW, you have the opportunity to change the future by creating a set of family portraits for you, your children, and their children to enjoy for many years to come.

Here's how to make sure it's as perfect as possible...

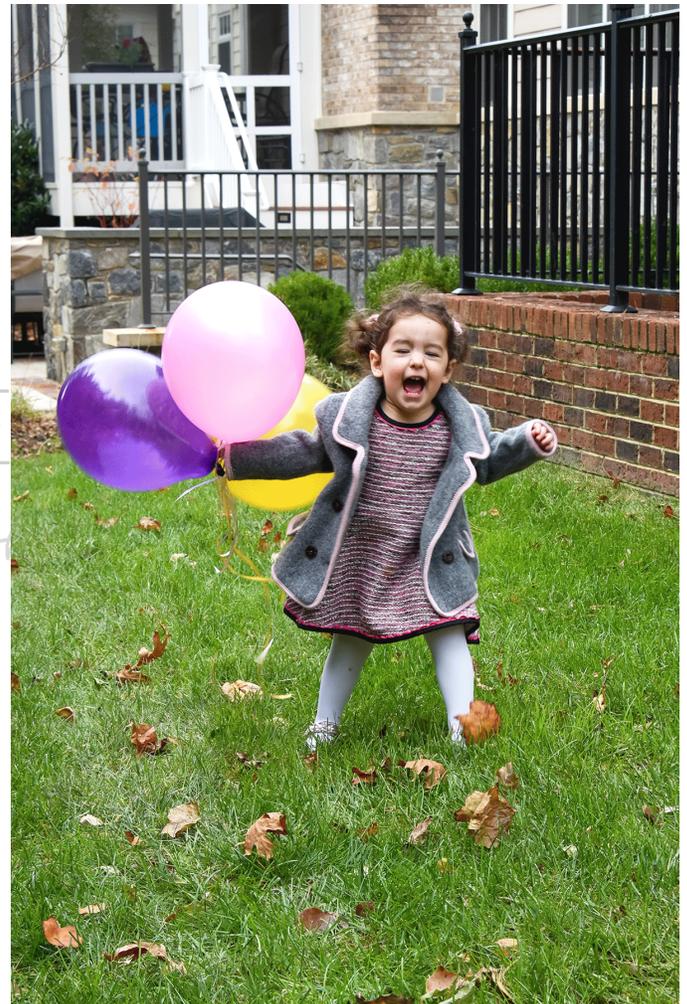
Your Photographer Should Care as Much as You Do...



"Shoshana was awesome, and my family really enjoyed working with her. She is patient, kind, and does excellent work. Highly recommend her!"
Art G.

One of the most important decisions to make about your family portrait is choosing the right photographer—*someone who truly understands every aspect of family, and places the same importance as you do on your all-important relationships.*

Your photographer must be someone you like and trust.



"This is the second time we worked with Shoshana and she did an excellent job on both occasions. She took our photos in the comfort of our home and captured the best moments. Her work is of great quality and she is very professional. She was creative with her suggestions. I would strongly recommend her!"
Elif I.

After all, you're trusting them with the huge **responsibility of capturing the essence and story of your family, as well as the love that flows invisibly between all of you.**

But how do you find the right photographer for you?



If you're like most people, it's easy to get overwhelmed sifting through Google or the websites for hundreds of photographers in your area.

Professional photographers are everywhere and, after a while, they all blend together into one giant blur.

Most people flick through a few websites, finally settling on a photographer after looking at a few of their photos. They pick up the phone and call the studio to find out more information, but this is where things can **really** start to go wrong if you don't know the right things to look for.

Here are the top 7 factors that can make or break your family portraits.

#1: Is Cost Really the Most Important Factor?

Not surprisingly, the first question most people ask a prospective portrait photographer is actually the very **last** question they should ask.

It's true—the first question I hear from almost everyone I speak to is, *"How much do you charge?"*

Now I'm not saying that the price is unimportant, far from it.

However, even if you're on a budget (and who isn't?), there are more important things to consider than just the cost, especially to begin with.

Who Would You Choose?

- Bob, who charges \$75 for a portrait session...
 - John, whose fee is \$250 per session...
- Bob sounds like a real bargain, right? I mean, why pay \$250 when you might get the same service for only \$75?

Let's take a deeper look, because appearances can be deceptive...

The first time you see Bob after your initial phone call is when he shows up late on the day. He got lost trying to find the location, and couldn't remember your names—let alone your phone number. He's already stressed out from the other two families he photographed before yours, and intimidates your kids with his brusqueness. He calls the session over before any of you feel like you've had a chance to relax, and you end up waiting months to receive the finished photographs. In the end, all you get is a CD full of images you don't know what to do with.

Not a great outcome, right?

John, on the other hand, takes the time to meet with you personally before ever booking the photography session, and plans out every detail of your photography with you. For example, you talk about the location and clothing choices, and he wants to know all about everyone who will be in the photographs. He's polite and professional, photographs only your family on that day and is ready to present the finished images to you within a few weeks while the memories are still fresh in your minds.

By the way, these are **real** examples (just not their real names of course).

Ask yourself, which of these photographers you would honestly prefer to work with.

If you would rather work with "John", read on to discover 6 other factors that can dramatically improve your family portrait experience.

Finding the right photographer is not about looking for the cheapest or "*shopping around*".

It's about finding someone with whom you can relax and be yourselves, someone you can trust to deliver what they promise, and someone you believe will put their heart and soul into creating the most amazing portraits of your family.



"Shoshana is an amazing photographer and we made her our family photographer. We worked with Sosi several times and every time we felt we couldn't have made a better decision. Not only did our pictures turn out beautifully – but she was incredibly easy to work with from beginning to end. She has an artistic eye and the images are full of color and life." Yelizaveta S.

#2: What happens if things don't go according to plan?

Life isn't perfect and, while we do everything possible to make sure everything is perfect, there's always the remote chance that something can go off-script on the day you choose for your family portraits.

But what happens in the unlikely event that something does go wrong? Maybe the kids or family dog decide to be uncooperative for some reason, or perhaps the weather isn't optimal for one reason or another.

When choosing your portrait photographer, this is one of the most important questions

you can ask because the answer will reveal a lot.

Obviously, no photographer can know in advance with 100% certainty that the photographs will all turn out perfectly.

Therefore, you must protect yourself in the unlikely event that things don't go the way you expected—even *if nothing major happens but you're just not in love with the final results*.

This is where a guarantee can alleviate any chance of anxiety.

Your photographer should proudly stand behind their work with a guarantee that makes sure you get the photography you deserve.

This is your FAMILY—something more valuable to you than anything else. You deserve to have the comfort and peace of mind of an ironclad guarantee in the event that you aren't 100% thrilled with your photographs.

Even the way the photographer answers this question and their tone of voice are crucial.

If they don't come right out and confidently tell you about their guarantee, if they mumble, hesitate, or offer something vague, then hang up the phone immediately and find someone else who will truly put their heart and soul into everything they do for you.

Never hire a photographer who doesn't offer a 100% money-back guarantee, and make sure that the guarantee is IN WRITING when you hire them.



#3: Find a photographer who doesn't book 100% of their time

There are portrait photographers who work at it full-time, but also many part-time photographers who work other jobs during the week.

Both types of photographer can do a fantastic job of your family portrait, as long as they have the right skills and love their customers.

But, there are some photographers who try to take on as many jobs as they can fit into their schedule. Typically, they charge lower fees, but make up for it in the number of sessions they do and by offering low-cost

products, such as CDs instead of wall art or portrait albums.

Sadly, this can lead to rushed sessions and late delivery of the finished product because they overstretch themselves with other assignments.

Perhaps you already know someone in your family, or a friend, who has offered to photograph your family for you because they want to get started in the business or because they *"do it on the side"*.

While tempting, you must still weigh them up against the quality of the experience and service you'll get from an experienced professional photographer.

The definition of a true professional photographer is someone who manages their business and time well in order to devote 100% of their attention to every client—someone for whom photography is both a passion and a full-time business. They constantly strive to improve their skills, keep their work fresh, and are more likely to ensure timely delivery of the finished product to their clients.

On the other hand, an overworked budget photographer has too much on their plate at one time, which may not allow them to work on YOUR photographs in a timely fashion. With so much stress, they may also find it hard to calmly and smoothly deal with all the things that can go wrong on the day.

Regardless of whether the photographer is full-time or part-time, the answer you're looking for is that the photographer will book a maximum of one assignment per day—preferably limiting their bookings to a manageable number per year. The quality of

their work will be so much higher because of the time they can devote to it.



#4: Talk to the photographer who will be taking your portraits

Occasionally, when you call a photography studio, you might speak to a receptionist or assistant, instead of the actual photographer who will create your portraits.

However, it's important that you do speak to the photographer, even if it means leaving a message and having them call you back when they're not busy. For example, you can reach me directly at [YOUR NUMBER].

This way, you can make sure that the photographer you talk to is actually the one you will be hiring—not a part-time student or someone who only works for them on weekends to earn some extra cash.

Also, never book your family portrait photographer over the phone or (worse) by email!

Instead, make sure you meet the photographer in person before you make the final decision to hire them.

#5: When will you see the finished photographs?

Editing and retouching the many images from a portrait session, and getting them ready for you to view at the final presentation takes a significant amount of time and effort.

But, you don't want to be kept waiting for months before you get to see them, right?

Therefore, it's important to see your photographs in a timely (but not hurried) fashion in order to decide which ones you want presented as wall art or as part of an album, so beware of anyone who can't promise to have them ready for you in 4 weeks or less.

If they can't, it may be a sign that they're snowed under with other clients and when you do see the photographs, only the minimal amount of retouching work will have been done and no one will look their absolute best.



#6: How are the final photographs shown to us?

There are several ways in which you can see the finished photographs, but the two most common ones are:

- At home, on your computer in an online gallery...
- At the photographer's studio as part of a professional presentation...

Generally speaking, the less expensive photographers will give you an online gallery from which to make your selections, while the more exclusive photographers will present the finished photographs by projecting them at full size as part of a professional presentation.

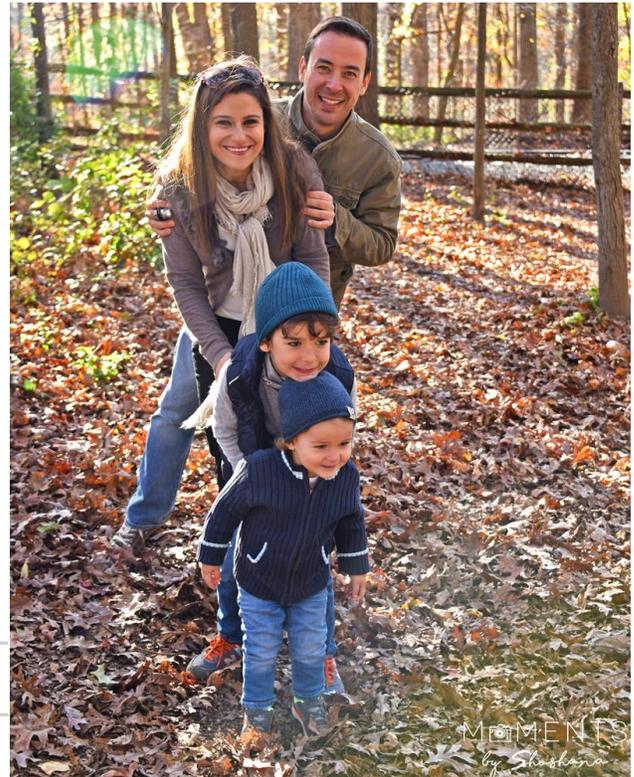
Personally, we prefer the in-person presentation approach because it gives you the chance to see every detail of the images, make comparisons, and we're right there with you to answer all your questions.

That said, there's no absolute right or wrong way, so you should match the photographer's response to your own expectations, needs, and budget.

Generally, CDs and thumbdrives (especially if offered alone) will occupy the cheaper end of the scale. Albums, prints, and wall portraits are typically offered at the higher end.

The one answer you do NOT want to hear to this question is, "you get a CD of all the photographs and the rest is up to you..." because the photographer is most likely telling you they care only about doing the job and moving on to the next family as quickly as possible.

#7: What do other clients say about their experience?



For the discerning portrait client looking for a creative and emotional set of family portraits, nothing beats the look and feel of beautifully-designed wall portraits and professionally-crafted prints. Having digital files as an add-on to that can be a great idea, but you'd be amazed at how many people file those discs away in a drawer and never look at them again...

"The family photos that Shoshana took were everything we had hoped for and far beyond. She did an amazing job finding the perfect locations, lighting and poses. To my surprise, the kids not only cooperated, but they really enjoyed posing for the photos thanks to Shoshana keeping them engaged the whole time. The photos are now being displayed all over our house as well as our offices. Can't wait for our next photo session with her." Verda F.

A photographer can spend all day showing you their portfolio of photographs, trying to convince you they're the best one for the job, but what do their actual clients have to say about the experience of working with them?

The key point here is that you're not paying someone to produce pieces of paper, or make snapshots of your family. This is **real** photography, done by someone who is an

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artist and who cares about you and your family.

For example, what are they like to work with? How did they treat the members of the family? Were they on time? Did they respect the emotional significance of the portraits? Did they take too long before showing the images? Were the finished portraits something to cry tears of joy over?

Talking to some of their past clients yourself will give you an honest picture of how well the photographer delivered on their promise.

What Next?

As you can see by now, the first question most people might think of—"how much?"—is NOT the one you should be asking first!

Take the time to find out how much your prospective photographer really cares about you and your family.

If they ask you questions about your family and the complex dynamics and relationships, and they really listen to your answers, it shows they're interested and care about you as a person, not just as another potential client.

How enthusiastic do they sound on the phone or in person? Do they present themselves professionally when you meet them?

All of these things are important, and only then will you know if they're worth the fees they're asking.

I hope you've enjoyed reading this and you now feel better equipped to find the right

photographer for your amazing and unique family.

Here's what I strongly recommend you do TODAY!

Call me at (202)-517-3267 to ask if I have sessions available in the near future.

Please don't wait on this! If you liked what you've read here, call me. The call is free and we can chat about your family and how you'd like to capture your amazing memories.

Then, if you would like to, we can set up a time to get together in person so you'll be in a better position to decide who the right photographer is for your family portrait.

Sincerely,

Shoshana Kohen Cikurel

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