

# Get the Best Family Photos this Holiday Season!

*Tips by Jess Block*

- #1. Set up in advance.** Specifically for your family member with autism. Encourage the photo session to be set up ahead of time with the individual placed into the frame at the last second, requiring the least amount of stress, transition, and patience from the member of the group who may have the least reserves in these areas. For a posed shot, scout an area in advance, let the child play while you pose and adjust family members, and then put the child in last, allowing for flexibility if he or she wants to be with mom, dad, aunt, grandma, siblings, etc. The child will be more relaxed, which means you will be too.
- #2. Use candid.** For informal but striking candid photographs, let the photo session be about the child. Play his or her favorite games, sing favorite songs, and just do it all in a picturesque park, college lawn, beach or other photogenic setting while being followed by a flexible and encouraging photographer. You will be amazed at the shots you get while actually enjoying some quality family time.
- #4. Be fast!** A 10 minute photo session can accomplish a lot. Want to do more? Take a break for 20 minutes and then do another 5 minute photo session. It will be positive and won't push your child beyond his or her comfort level. They may hardly even notice they are having their photos done.
- #5. Make the photo session interactive!** If photographing digitally, encourage the child to check out the photos that are being taken on the back of the camera. You will get some great feedback, and it can be a fun game of "cause and effect" for your child (and siblings too)!
- #6. Give kids advance notice.** Knowing of their upcoming photo session, and even possibly looking at photos from past events and playing with a camera, all to encourage your child to be mentally prepared for his or her photo session. You can draw or write a plan for the day, and plan a reward for after the photo session for following directions and/or making good choices during the photo session.
- #7. Plan for contingencies.** What will you do if your child is tantrumming? What is a great motivator/regulator for your child? What if your child falls in the mud? Bring snacks, a change of clothes, and a small toy or sensory item, and you will be well-prepared.
- #8. Allow extra time for transitions.** Don't schedule anything too tightly that day for immediately before or after your photo session.
- #9. Use a photographer you trust.** Whether friend or professional, make sure they are patient, reliable, flexible, enthusiastic, and creative to ensure a great photo session.
- #10. Relax!** A holiday photo session is about your family enjoying each other. The more fun you guys have, the more you will love the end results of your photo session.

*A well-respected photographer and photojournalist since 2000, Jess Block Photography has been specializing in event, editorial and commercial photography. A notable skill in creating well-composed images has earned Block a reputation as one of Southern California's premiere contemporary photographers. Her career began by photographing and imaging breaking news for Southern California's newspapers where her cover images would be delivered to 800,000 homes. Once established as a well-credentialed photojournalist, she went on to develop her own private clientele of industry leaders, quickly rising to prominence as a much sought after event and executive portrait photographer. Block lives in Claremont CA with her fiancée and her 5-year-old son on the spectrum. For more information please visit [www.JessBlock.com](http://www.JessBlock.com)*