

Family Tips

Well before the day of your scheduled photo session be sure to ask, "What colors are best for a family portrait?" After all, when shooting a large group of people, proper color coordination is critical. You don't want to show up to a family photo shoot wearing a rainbow of mismatched outfits. Rather, it is important to select colors that will complement the entire group. Ideally, you want your family members' clothing to be in the same tonal ranges, so that no single individual stands out. By color coordinating everyone's outfits, each family member is portrayed as being equally important.

What Colors Are Best for a Family Portrait?

The key to capturing an attractive family portrait is to create a harmonious tone. Clothing that blends well will help direct the viewer's attention to the subjects' faces. The problem is that there is no set color scheme that yields a perfect picture. In answering the question, "What colors are best for a family portrait?" a number of factors must be considered, including:

Background: Will the portrait be shot indoors or outdoors? If it is an indoor session, what color backdrop will be used? For example, light colors are appropriate against a white or pastel background. However, light colored outfits would not photograph well against a black backdrop.

Skin tone: If you are very light or dark complected, then you'll want to stay away from colors that are in direct opposition of your skin tone. For example, a family with very dark complexions should not wear light color clothing to a photo shoot. Doing so will wash out the outfits and make their faces look darker than they really are. It's best to avoid creating a stark contrast between your clothes and the color of your skin.

Focus: Typically, a photographer will recommend that all members of a family wear outfits featuring the same color scheme. However, if the goal of your photo shoot is to feature one member of the family in a more predominant role, then have that person wear a color that stands out for the rest of the clan. For example, if your family portrait features mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, and a new baby, then you might consider having the infant wear a bright colored outfit while the rest of the group wears muted tones.

Color Dos and Don'ts

Do's

- Brown
- Blue
- Rust
- Burgundy
- Mocha
- Hunter green
- Gold

Don'ts

- Purple
- All neon or fluorescent colors
- Bright red
- Bright green
- Gray

In addition, individuals with fair skin should avoid wearing flesh-tones, such as:

- Beige
- Tan
- Peach
- Pink
- Bright white
- Yellow
- Rose
- Apricot

Also

- Do cover your elbows and knees at least for adults. Most people's knees and elbows don't photograph well and will become distracting in a portrait.
- Do go barefoot. Shoes are always a problem in group photos. Few people own similar shoes as the rest of the family and then of course there's the problem of scuff marks, ornaments and trim that can become distracting.
- Do choose clothing that is neither too tight nor too loose because this assures that it will hang evenly without excess creases or folds.
- Avoid clothing with patterns (i.e. dots, strips, flowers, shapes, logos, or any bold patterns, etc)