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Top 10 Tips for Great Birthday Party Photos

Featuring KRISTINA KROOT, NIKON AMBASSADOR TAMARA LACKEY, KAREN WAGNER & KATHY WOLFE



© Tamara Lackey

Take lots of shots as your birthday girl blows out the candles on her cake (or cupcakes). You'll capture a variety of facial expressions.

Birthday parties, especially those for children are so much fun to witness and experience. From the happiness in your child's face as everyone sings happy birthday and she blows out the candles on a birthday cake, to the joy in her eyes as she opens her gifts to the fun of party games like pin the tail on the donkey or a piñata, there are many opportunities to make memorable photographs.

We've gathered together 10 of our top tips for taking great photographs of a birthday party.



© Kathy Wolfe

Take a nice portrait of the smiling birthday girl.

- 1.** When you light the candles for the birthday girl to blow out and then turn off the lights, set the camera to night portrait scene mode (if the camera offers it) so the camera will expose correctly for the low-light situation and capture the natural glow of the candlelight.
- 2.** Boost your ISO. For indoor parties at home or at a sporting complex or restaurant, an increase in ISO will let you use a faster shutter speed, enough to capture the action and help ensure sharp photos. Depending upon your camera, you may be able to significantly boost the ISO.

3. During the party you don't want to have to bother with settings unless you know your camera well. Set the camera on program and let it do the thinking for you. You'll get great photos and enjoy watching the birthday fun unfold. Same for focus. If you have an autofocus lens, use it. If you don't have an autofocus lens, you may want to borrow one for the day.

4. When shooting indoors, be aware of your white balance. Residential homes usually have incandescent lighting, however fluorescent bulbs are being used more and more because of their efficiency. Gymnasium lighting is sometimes filled with multiple types of light sources and could be more difficult to accurately white balance compared to lighting in a restaurant. Experiment with the best white balance setting; it may be auto, incandescent or fluorescent.

5. Similarly, if the party is outdoors, depending upon whether its sunny out, overcast, or under a tent, check the setting of your white balance. If its partially cloudy and the sun is going in and out of the cloud cover, you may find auto white balance will work best in this changing lighting condition.

6. Shoot candid images as well as more formal portraits or group photos. Let kids be kids and take lots of photos of them having fun. Candid expressions are the most natural.



© Kathy Wolfe

Candid images are timeless reminders of happy events. The girls in this picture don't have to be looking at the camera for the viewer to know that they're having a great time.

7. Photograph your child's friends too. Take lots of pictures of the birthday girl with her friends.

8. Take portraits of your child with the party location in the background. This will make a great memory when they're grown, especially if the location is special to your family.

9. Photograph the decorations. Take a picture or two of the decorations as a remembrance of a themed party or one featuring special characters.

10. Remember to have someone take a photo of your birthday boy and yourself beaming with pride too!



© Tamara Lackey

The family photographer often doesn't end up in any photos. Remember to hand the camera to someone else so you can have a photographic memory of you and your child celebrating his birthday.

The Cake Smash



© Kristina Kroot

The latest trend in celebrating a baby's 1st birthday is the cake smash. To do it you set up a spot on the floor with a small birthday cake, a baby and let the smashing begin.

A recent trend with little ones is to photograph a cake smash for their first birthday. This is a fun way to celebrate their first year of life and let them make a mess too! If

you want to photograph your own child's cake smash, find a surface that you won't mind having to clean chunks of cake and icing off of. Make sure the space is free of clutter. If you want, you can add party decorations or even give your child a party hat with a big number 1 on it. Then place the small cake or cupcake in front of the birthday baby and get ready to capture the smiles and laughter as she mashes the cake up and has a ball.



© Kristina Kroot

Take close ups as well as wider shots showing the entire cake being smashed.



© Kristina Kroot

While some babies tend to make a real mess of the cake smash, this little lady is focusing on mommy (out of the frame) while she eats a big chunk of cake.

To see more of Kristina's photos visit her website: www.kristinamariefoto.com.

To see more of Kathy's photos visit her website: www.kathywolfephotography.com.

Tamara is a Nikon Ambassador. Check out her [Ambassador page](#) and see more of Tamara's photos visit her website: www.tamaralackey.com.

To see more of Karen's photos, visit her [Flickr page](#).

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