



Quick Photo and Video Guide



This guide is intended to help you get the best images and video when the opportunity arises during creative play events and activities. This should be especially useful if the images and video you gather is to be used for presentations or video compilations of these activities.

Basic rules

Don't worry about taking too many pictures.

With digital images, it's easy to select what's required later. Obviously, being selective as you shoot is helpful but, if in doubt, take several shots of the same thing.

Think about the story you're telling

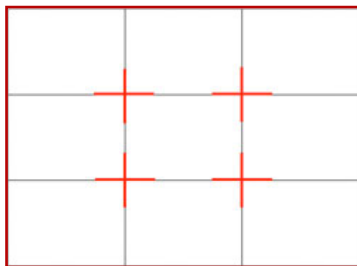
'Every picture tells a story' and, when making a record of an activity, we're trying to put together the bigger story. Each image contributes.

So, when taking a picture, consider how much it will convey. For example, if it's a music workshop, make sure you can see instruments, expressions on faces (enjoyment, concentration), interaction between participants (between children and with the specialists). If instruction is being given, try to capture it so it's clear: specialists demonstrating, children helping each other.

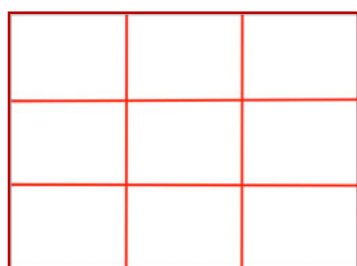
Frame your shots

Try to compose your shots. You can use the 'rule of thirds' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_thirds). If you imagine your frame divide into 3 from top to bottom and left to right, placing the subject on these lines makes the composition more interesting. Don't work if you can't always frame before shooting. It's always possible to crop an image to adjust it later.

Rule of Thirds



Points of interest



Lines for composition

Make it dynamic

Busy shots are more interesting than static ones. Try to capture activity, even if things like gestures might be blurred a bit (this can add to the effect). Static shots are useful too (such as posed groups) but they tend to be very similar.

Go in close

If you see someone engaged in an activity, concentrating or playing an instrument, get a close-up of their expression, their hands on the instrument. What's important here is to show the activity and the children's interest in it.

Get some detail

Sometimes it can be handy to just have pictures of resources as an illustration. In a music workshop, for example, you might get images of the instruments, in their box together, individually on a table. Things like: a tambourine, a triangle, a drum, a whistle, etc. These can be used to illustrate presentations, introduce participant photos showing the activity.

Show context

At the same time, it can be good to see the room or outdoor area where an activity happened. Again, it's useful to look for interesting decoration. In a school room this could be wall charts and posters. If these are particularly relevant to the activity, all the better; an example: a picture of a drum with its name in Gaelic.

Seize the Moment

Activities are often filled with spontaneous moments. If the opportunity arises to capture one, go for it. For example, if someone tries really hard and the group applaud them. The more you think about the way activities play out, the more often you can begin to anticipate opportunities and be ready for them.

Be Prepared If You Can

Whether the pictures you take are for a record of the activity, creating a presentation, slideshow or video, it's useful to spend a little time thinking ahead. It certainly helps if you have an idea of what you are going to shoot and why, who is going to be seeing it and what message the finished result might convey. It could simply be that you'll review it with others and some parts will be used for different purposes later.



Video



Now that smart phones can shoot good quality video, you might want to capture some video of an activity. The tips above apply to the approach as far as how to recognize what to shoot. With video, there's also the need to be aware of the effect of time. Here are some tips:

Observe and Plan

If possible try to figure out how an activity will play out, where it repeats and also check where you need to stand (and be comfortable) when shooting, especially if you think you might have to move to follow it. You don't want to stumble on an obstacle and lose the shot.

Slow and Steady

Try to keep your shots even and to move very slowly and gently if you have to.

Be aware of light

If you have to move so that what you're filming goes from dark to bright or vice versa, be aware of the change. Your camera will compensate automatically but there may be a short loss of quality while that happens.

Be aware of sound

Because you're capturing sound too, remember that there may be extraneous sounds you've tuned out which could be loud on the video. This is very true of wind noise. We don't hear that at all but across a microphone it will be quite loud and drown out other audio.

This isn't important if the sound isn't vital as it can be turned off and replaced with music or voiceover. However, if you're filming a performance, say, where the audio needs to be unbroken, remember you'll need to keep the recording running right through it. The video needn't be perfect as audio can be extracted and put back into anything edited later.

A useful strategy if there several people taking photos and video is to assign someone to get the audio. This could then be done using an audio app or setting the video recording to run continuously. This leaves others free to gather video when the action warrants it.

Editing

As there are choices of image and video editing software, anything you gather will probably be edited in some way, either as images and video clips in a presentation, in slide-show format or edited into a video. Then, you can concentrate on getting interesting material for that purpose as and when the opportunities occur.

When to start and stop

To help with any later editing, it's good to leave a little time before the main content. So if you're shooting a performance, start a bit before anything begins and once it's done, keep the camera running for 5 or 10 seconds.

Other devices

This guide has been written on the assumption most people will use smart phones or digital still cameras. If using a digital video camera, there are additional controls at your fingertips. Specifically pan and zoom. The simple tip for these to use very sparingly. If you have to, take it slowly.

Storing

Whatever you've shot, review it and keep a note of what you've downloaded, where it was taken and when. You can store it in a named folder and name individual files (or the whole batch). This can be helpful if you need to pass the resources to others for editing.

Types of shot

To give you an idea of the kinds of picture you can take, here are a few examples. These are common to both still and video. The illustrations here feature people but you can just as easily treat images of objects (musical instruments, equipment) or buildings the same way.



Long Shot

Good for context, groups. Subject(s) small or distant.



Medium Long Shot

Subject is closer but context still visible.



Mid Shot

Waist to head. Subject more prominent.



Medium Close Up

Head and shoulders.



Close Up

Head and face.



Big Close Up

Face full frame or closer.