

Here are 10 tips specifically for teaching children how to use a camera.

1. It's important to be familiar with a camera before teaching children how to use it. So be sure to read the instruction manual and take some sample pictures.
2. Show children how to use the basic controls on their camera and how to hold it while taking a picture. Be sure they know not to touch the lens or place a finger in front of the flash.
3. Digital cameras are delicate and can be easily damaged if dropped. Those that have an extendable zoom lens are especially fragile. Children should be told to never touch any part of the extended lens and to be careful the camera is switched off and the lens retracted when they are not taking pictures.
4. The viewing screen of most digital cameras can be easily scratched. Children should be cautioned about protecting the screens of such cameras by not placing the camera screen side of the camera on a table or other hard surface.
5. After children are familiar with a camera's basic controls, teach them how to compose a scene, hold the camera firmly and squeeze and not poke the shutter button to make a photograph. It's important for children to know they should move only the shutter button and not the entire camera. Remember that film and some digital cameras have a viewfinder (the little window you look through to compose the scene you plan to photograph), while with some digital cameras the scene is composed by looking at the display screen on the back of the camera.
6. Teach kids that their subject should be well illuminated whenever possible. People with shaded faces will not photograph nearly as well as those with faces illuminated by the sun or artificial lights. Explain that the camera's flash is a great way to brighten a shaded subject--even when the sun is shining.
7. Often children will place a camera much too close to the object they wish to photograph. The result is a fuzzy, unusable image. Disposable film cameras are not suitable for making close-up photos. Some cell phone and point-and-shoot digital cameras can be held six inches or less from an object to provide good close ups.
8. Children should learn the importance of keeping the camera's lens clean! Show them how to carefully remove lint, smudges and fingerprints with lens paper. Avoid using facial tissue that might have chemicals in the paper.
9. Practice is important when learning to make good photographs. Children will learn to make better photographs if they practice making pictures.
10. Teach children to be courteous when they use a camera. They should not photograph people without permission. They should be very careful when taking pictures through open windows, over balconies, near stairways and from boats and bridges.

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