

Digital Photography 101

Follow these tips to take top digital photos of your feline friend.

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Follow simple guidelines to maximize the beauty of your photographs. Capture your cat's beauty and personality with your digital camera. Learn how to take the best possible pictures by following these 10 tips. Shop wisely. When choosing a digital camera, "don't get seduced by the game of escalating megapixels," says Helmi Flick, a professional photographer from Bedford, Texas, who regularly photographs championship show cats. "Often an increase in resolution in point-and-shoot cameras today comes at the expense of degraded image quality." Turn off the camera's flash, if possible. The harsh light from the flash can create shadows or overexpose your subject, Flick says. Try to position your subject (in this case, your cat) in natural sunlight, but avoid harsh direct sunlight. Once you have the camera in your hands and are ready to take a shot, hold it firmly. You can avoid fuzzy or blurry shots by eliminating "camera shake." Also pay attention to where you place your fingers so you don't obscure the shot. Before taking your first photo, prefocus on your cat. "That means pressing the shutter button halfway down to engage the auto focus and holding it there until you are ready to take the shot," Flick explains. Prefocusing can help eliminate camera shake and result in less blur. Take a few moments to compose the shot. Pay attention to the background, using the camera's zoom to eliminate or downplay distracting elements. Frame your cat within the shot, keeping in mind the rule of thirds. Picture a tic-tac-toe board with two horizontal lines and two vertical lines intersecting. Create visual interest in your photographs by placing your cat in the frame where two of the lines intersect. Change your perspective. "Get on the cat's level," Flick suggests, so that the shot focuses exclusively on the cat. Or try experimenting with shots from below (for example, if your cat likes to perch on top of a bookcase) or above (looking down at your cat playing with her favorite toy). Play with balance. Try placing your cat at the outside edge of the frame to create asymmetrical balance. Or create symmetrical balance by framing the shot with both your cats taking equal prominence. Remember, you can experiment a bit because you're not wasting film. Preview your images. Take a moment to see if you captured the shot you wanted. If you didn't, delete the image and try again. Enjoy this benefit of digital photography! Back up your photos. Don't miss a perfect photo opportunity because your memory card is full. Take time each month to download your digital images to CDs, portable external drives or other digital storage.

Stacy N. Hackett, contributing editor to CatChannel.com, shares her Southern California home with two adorable Cornish Rex cats, Carson and Evita, and a playful orange tabby named Jackson.