

## Hot Shots — Get Great Photos of Fluffy

**Expert photographers share their tips on how to get the best images of your cat.**

*By Elizabeth Anderson*

When it comes to capturing a priceless pounce or that funny face, you don't have a huge window of opportunity. Your cat may be most cooperative when it is sleeping, but, really, how many photos of your cat napping do you really want?

Cat photographers from around the country share some of their professional tips and tricks that can help any amateur get higher-quality results.

### 1. Don't get too flashy.

"Some pictures simply can't be gotten without a flash," says Austin resident Kip Holm, hobbyist turned pro. "If you use a flash that hits them in the eyes, they will soon avoid you as soon as you pick up the camera. I always used a flash bounced off the ceiling when I used one on Duncan, and he never minded it."

Remove the flash and shoot using natural light to avoid red eye, or "ghoul eye" as Terry deRoy Gruber calls it. New York resident Gruber has an extensive photography background with his work appearing in national publications such as "In Style," "Vanity Fair" and "Vogue." His books include "Working Cats, Fat Cats and Cat High."

"If a camera has a redeye reduction feature, this will almost always cause you to miss the picture because of the resulting delay," Holm says. "I like manual film cameras. With black animals you want to be able to over expose a little to get detail in their fur. A problem with digital is the delay between when you press the shutter and when the picture is taken. It is always during this delay when the cat turns its head and looks the other way or stops doing what it was doing."

### 2. Be prepared.

"To get good cat pictures I recommend having a camera (or two or three) within arms reach and ready to go at all times," Holm says. "Cats don't usually wait around for you to find the camera, load the film and set the exposure."

### 3. It takes two.

"Get someone to assist you by helping to pose your cat where and how you want it and directing its attention to the camera," says Helmi Flick, of Bedford, Texas. She should know: she has been working with her husband, Ken, for eight years to get award-winning shots of cats, and her photos have appeared on several national magazine covers.

### 4. Location, location, location.

"Get down to the cat's level, don't shoot down at the cat from your level," says Preston Smith, a cat show photographer since January 2005. The Kansas City resident got his start after being referred by fellow photog Flick.

"Use a digital camera with a long enough zoom to not crowd your cat's space," Flick adds.

"They are best photographed when they are in their own surroundings where they are comfortable," says Bill Dow, who has been photographing cats for over 37 years, most of that time as resident staff photographer for the Shambala Preserve founded by Tippi Hedren in Acton, Calif.. "My best success occurs when I photograph them being themselves."

### 5. Objects of attention.

"Make sure you're playing with your cat versus requiring them to be a model," Gruber says. "I use string, and rods with feathers to create different ways of moving the cat into position. He'll stay there longer if it was a game to get there versus just putting him there."

"You can try making unusual sounds to get them to stop and look at you," Dow says. "Squeaky toys sometimes work."

### 6. Treats as tricks.

Gruber says he uses a little incentive for the cats: "Many photos were taken with a piece of Pounce stuck on an object and the cat trying to get it."

### 7. Quality takes quantity.

"Re-shoot the same situation until you're happy with what you got ... and understand how you got it," Flick says.

“Immediately review your shots and figure out how you can improve them. Learn from your mistakes. “

Holm concludes with this final piece of advice: “Take lots and lots of pictures.”

Elizabeth Anderson is a freelance writer based in Orange County, Calif. Her last article for CAT FANCY was on “cattoos.”