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Getting Great Pictures of the Kids this Halloween

By Jeff Westover

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There she was in all her glory. Long white lab coat, frizzy hair, safety goggles — and a face smeared with the black ash of an experiment gone terrifically wrong. She was, at least on this Halloween night, Dr. Abby Normal. But for most of her life I had known her as Abigail, my daughter, and I had just taken some of the most legendary photos of her life.

These weren't your garden-variety portraits. Not exactly Wal Mart studio stuff either. They were pictures taken of my kids in their natural element — being kids. That is the real photo opportunity of a holiday like Halloween.

For treasured images this Halloween, here are some quick tips to remember to get once-in-a-lifetime photos:

1. Stop Posing — Halloween is not a formal affair. So don't bother with the wedding style shots. Engage the kids in the play associated with their costumes — and THEN shoot the pictures. Candid reveals the smiles much more than a "Hold still, honey!" moment.
2. Shoot Early, Shoot Often — Film is the cheapest part of photography. And in this digital age, there just isn't a reason not to shoot several images. There are many good reasons for being trigger happy with the camera. First, if kids are use to you constantly firing away they won't bother with the plastic smiles. But most importantly, shooting more simply increases your chances for great pictures. With Halloween pictures some of the best images are taken while the costuming is in process — don't wait for the finished product in getting out the camera.
3. Get in Their Face — Halloween was made for pretend. Kids love to make faces, don costumes and assume a new personality. It is the ultimate form of exhibition. You just can't let the opportunity pass. They WANT to be noticed. Most point-and-shoot variety cameras have wide-angle lenses. While this helps them to get sharp results and to work well in lower light, they tend to move the subject matter

further away. Most have a minimum shooting distance of around three feet. Don't be afraid to push that limit at Halloween. Get in close, have them make faces, ask them to talk to the camera. They will. It is, after all, Halloween.

4. Let Them Call the Shots — It's their party. Ask them what kind of pictures they want. When my son was Harry Potter a few years back he wanted to jump off the roof on his Nimbus 2000. We had to reason with him a bit. But a little leap from a lawn chair to the grass did the trick and we got the shots of Harry in flight. Chances are your kids have an idea of the persona they are adopting. Let them call the shots to document the experience.

5. Use the set — Most of us decorate for the season. There could be haystacks, a bubbling pot, a roaring fireplace. Use these props, even if they don't fit the theme of the costume. Down the road the memories you cherish will include all the fun that went into creating the holiday environment in your home.

Good candid pictures of children require active participation and putting them at ease. Halloween is the easiest of seasons in which to do this.

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Jeff Westover is a freelance writer and father of seven from Salt Lake City, Utah. He is the managing editor of My Merry Christmas.com, where folks have been making merry online for more than a decade. He writes about holidays, families, parenting, home schooling and photography for a variety of publications both online and offline. Please visit

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one.

Enjoyable Halloween Party Games

By Beverly Kane

Kids love many things about Halloween parties. The candy and dressing up are right at the top of the list. Party games rank pretty high on the list too for all kids love to play Halloween games especially since the winners usually get a prize.

If you are in charge of planning the Halloween party, the first thing you need to consider is the age of your guests. If you are in charge of very young children then you should pick simple Halloween games that don't require much of an attention span. Pin the tail on the donkey and hot potato come to mind and are fun for kids of all ages, so you can adapt this for Halloween by playing pin the tail on the skeleton. Another fun game for kids to fill balloons with air and have them try and pop the balloons by sitting on them. It isn't as easy as it sounds and usually results in lots of laughs.

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Kids that are a little older love to play treasure hunt or scavenger hunt. For this, you simply hide items in your house and give them a list of clues that lead to the objects. Whoever finds them all first wins a prize. This will help to keep the kids busy while you tend to the party or watch over little ones. Hide Halloween related objects in semi-scary locations such as under a big stuffed spider to make it more exciting for the brave older kids.

For the adults you might consider Halloween games of charades or card games. This is a fun way for them to socialize and relieve stress at your party.

Halloween games will help keep your party moving and keep your guests engaged. The adults will appreciate having something entertaining to do and the little ones will get a thrill out of winning a prize.

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