

How To Shoot Your Dog!

(with a camera, of course)

A picture is worth a thousand words. Trite expression, maybe, but absolutely true when it comes to that crucial first impression of our dogs. Here are a few simple tips on improving your pictures.

Get Down on Their Level

Dogs, like babies, never look good staring up into a camera. Instead, kneel down, or better yet, get the dog up on something stable, like a bench or a platform of some sort. The top of a staircase works well, then you can just move down a few steps and get a level shot, often with the dog giving you that nice, curious, tilted-head look.

Turn Off the Flash

Dogs hate the flash and tend to bolt the other way. Can you blame them? They look scared and it makes their eyes look awful. Everyone loves a retriever's sweet, warm eyes, but you can't get that with a flash. So take your photos outside, in natural light. It will be less intimidating for the dog, and they will be much more accommodating.

Go for a Tight Shot

We don't need to see background. Digital cameras turn on at a wide-angle setting, which is not flattering for a portrait. So use the zoom, get back about six to eight feet, no more, and keep the composition tight. Unless the animal has a really attractive physique, a close head shot is usually more appealing, especially for a calendar glamour shot!

Focus

Sounds easy, and is, yet so many photos are needlessly out of focus. Digital cameras focus by aiming, holding the shutter halfway down for an instant, and then shooting. Don't just push it down hard. Experiment both ways and you'll see the difference.

Be Patient

Don't force things, set the stage and let things happen. If need be, tire the dog out by exercising. Have the camera ready, and the lens zoomed for close up. Talk to the dog. Keep it calm, but curious. Wait for good the shot, with the smile, or the ears perked, or the head cocked. Gently bring up the camera. Keep talking as you focus (shutter halfway down) and then, at the right moment, squeeze.

Take Lots of Shots

With digital cameras your photos don't cost anything, so take a bunch of pictures and simply get rid of all but the good ones. If you take enough shots, and follow these basic hints, you are bound to get some good photos.