

# GET SNAPPING

With the advent of digital photography, picking up a camera and taking a picture has become child's play. **Rachel Riley** explains why you should consider letting your preschoolers spend some time behind the lens...

## about the author



Rachel Riley has been a primary teacher for 18 years. She is co-director of Camera Kids, which offers workshops and after school photography clubs for schools across the south. Visit [camerakids.biz](http://camerakids.biz) or email [rachel@camerakids.biz](mailto:rachel@camerakids.biz)

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## Getting started

When it comes to cameras, sturdy and simple is what you're after - options advertised as being 'for kids' often comprise a low-quality camera that is overshadowed by additional 'special effects' and distracting games. So, look for a model that will withstand a few knocks and allow some manipulation of settings, so you can try different techniques. Fuji's XP range, for example, features models that are a good size, brightly coloured and very robust, making them a good choice.

Here are some more practical considerations to keep in mind once you have your cameras ready for the children:

- A little help may be needed for tiny fingers and fine motor skills - keeping still is tricky when you're excited about something!
- Taking a deep breath and holding it while the photo is taken can sometimes help - as long as the children breathe out straight away afterwards!
- Fingers can easily get in the way of lenses, so help children find a comfy way of holding the camera that keeps their hands tucked away.
- Make sure that the children have the wrist strap firmly fastened - cameras are rugged but they're not completely unbreakable!

You don't have to be any sort of photography whiz to get some great results, and neither do you need any photo editing software. A grasp of a few of the basic

Google 'EYFS photography' and the results are rather depressing - an endless stream of highly cautious guidance relating to the minefield that is the use of cameras with children. Only one or two beacons of hope shine out: an online chat from [earlyarts.co.uk](http://earlyarts.co.uk) about inspiring ways to use cameras in the early years, and a charming Sparklebox 'Photographer's Studio' role play kit ([ow.ly/rovdk](http://ow.ly/rovdk)).

Our children are growing up in a

world where image capture is everywhere, but while pictures of children working, playing and sharing their achievements have become a large part of how we record their progress, both at home and nursery, we have been slow to catch on to allowing them to join in. Photography is a fabulous, and instant, creative medium that can help children to express themselves and produce some fantastic and unexpected artwork. It's an excellent way of delivering content for Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design, so why not have a go in your setting?

Allowing your **children** to take photos of the things that are **important** to them and then **talking** about it is a **great** way of **sharing** their everyday **experiences**

## ON DISPLAY

### HELPING CHILDREN TO SHARE THEIR PHOTOGRAPHS IS EASY...

The best thing about digital photography is that it's instant, so let the children look back at what they have done and share it with their peers. The sight of little faces huddled round the screens proudly sharing their work and cooing with admiration at their friends' achievements is priceless.

- Download photos onto a computer and display on a big screen.
- Negotiate a good rate with a local photo shop and have your own mini exhibition - our children are so used to seeing pictures on screen that the printed versions have become a little lost. Your little ones (and their parents) will love it!
- Use an image the children have created to put into a home-made frame - parents have lots of photos of their children but very few photos that their children have taken.
- Let the children choose their favourite image to use. Don't worry if it wouldn't be the one you'd pick to send home, though - their tastes can be quite surprising! If they don't want to share their work, then respect that decision; understanding that it's their decision to share is an important one in a world where images are used freely, however wrong that may be!

functions, which you can preset for the children, is all you need:

■ **Macro:** generally a button with a small tulip-shaped icon. This is ideal for younger children as they like to get close up to everything. Macro lets you take a good, well-focused photo from about 10 cm away, without the need for zooming in.

■ **Portrait:** usually found within the camera's shooting menu, this uses the best camera settings for taking pictures of people - something children love to do.

■ **Landscape:** represented by a mountain range icon, this helps to get everything in your photo in focus, and is therefore great for taking photos of buildings, gardens and play areas.

■ **Night/fireworks:** any setting that will leave the shutter open for a longer time - some models can last up to 15 seconds, but more commonly around three. This is great for light painting, more on which later!

Once you've set the camera up, you're ready to hand over to your fledgling photographers!

## Practical ideas

1 **Colours, textures and pattern:** a great use for the macro setting! Get your children looking for colours around them. After they have gathered all sorts of things of one colour, let them take a photo of it. Have a wander outside and get close up to things of a different colour - encourage them to fill the screen with red from the climbing frame or green from the grass!

2 **Water:** Reflections are fun to capture, as are splashes, if you want to venture outside. If it's very rainy, use the macro setting to capture raindrops on the window - what can the children see in the tiny drops? Combine colour and water by dropping some food colouring into a tank of water, then let the children photograph the patterns it makes. They can share ideas about what it looks like.

3 **My nursery/school:** Children's perceptions of their environment are often very different to our own. Allowing your children to take photos of the things that are important to them and then talking about it is a great way of sharing their everyday experiences. Encourage your children to take photos looking up or looking down for a different viewpoint.

4 **Seasons:** Weather changes are always great to capture - get outside and snap those dewy cobwebs using the macro setting, a garden full of autumn leaves on landscape, a fallen leaf held up to the sun, or frost and snow on the slide. Using the camera helps the children to look more closely at the different effects of our climate, and can produce some wonderful photographs.

5 **Light painting:** Always a winner with children, if you have a very dark room - a cupboard will do - and a few torches, your preschoolers can create some amazing images! Making sure the flash is turned off and the camera set to a Night setting (if there's an option that says 'with tripod', even better) should enable your children to take photos with the shutter open for up to three seconds. Get one or two children to wave torches around (small coloured glow sticks or finger LED torches are perfect for this) in your dark cupboard whilst another takes a photo - the results are a definite wow moment! The photographer doesn't even have to hold the camera still for this one, as there's lots of movement anyway!

## Final thoughts

This is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to using photography with younger children. It doesn't need to be solely the tool of recording observations, but can be the children's own activity instead. The sooner we can teach our children how to be responsible and creative photographers, the better!

