

4 Tips for Getting Your Best High School Senior Photos

As a senior entering into your last year of school, you have a lot to be proud of – your grades, your accomplishments, your relationships, and, this year, your senior photo.

Of course you want the “Wow! factor” when you hold the photo in your hand, but to get that takes some preparation and investigation well before you actually arrive at the shoot.

To make things easier, we’ve put together four tips to help you get those picture-perfect shot – ones that are timeless and celebrate your spirit and personality.

* Know before you go. Reviewing a photographer’s online portfolio will allow you to see if their images reflect the style you’re looking for, and mesh with your personality, be it black and white, natural, candid with minimal posing, formal, or classic. Whatever your style, find a photographer whose existing work reflects your vision, instead of hoping the photographer will intuitively understand. You’ll save yourself (and your photographer) time and energy by doing your homework ahead of time.

* Establish a connection. Most photographers perform better when they are at ease with their subject (in this case, you), which ultimately translates to better photos. In this way, it’s important to meet your photographer beforehand to see if you feel comfortable with him or her. “Feeling comfortable during your photo session is the number-one most important thing if you want to have great, relaxed photographs,” says Michelle Moore of Michelle Moore Photography in Seattle, Wash., who is a member of the Professional Photographers of America (PPA), a non-profit association.

* Ensure that your photographer is a pro. The last thing you

want to worry about is whether the person you're hiring is actually a professional. To ease your mind, consider hiring a [PPA photographer \(www.FindaPhotographer.com\)](http://www.FindaPhotographer.com) is a website from the non-profit that allows you to search, sort by specialty, locate, browse through portfolios, and even contact qualified photographers in your area). Photographers who are a part of this association have the artistic and technical knowledge and experience to capture and preserve your unique personality while making you feel comfortable.

* Let your parents have a say. While your folks may have different tastes, remember that they are in control of the purse strings, that is, they are (usually) the ones paying. This should be a combined effort, one that involves both parents and teens. "You'll want to find a compromise in terms of style and budget; but ultimately, it should be a decision that both you and your parents make," says Moore.

For more information, please visit PPA.com/SeniorTips.com.

Kick Off Your College Financial Aid Game This Fall

Fall is here, and high school seniors (and their parents) are in the thick of the college application process. But these days, the cost of tuition can seem daunting: 85 percent of parents believe the cost of college is more of a financial burden than in past years, according to a College Ave Student Loans survey of 1,072 parents conducted by Barnes & Noble College Insights. However, many families may not realize and take advantage of the range of financial aid opportunities and options available.

“Don’t let the ‘sticker price’ of a college sway you from applying,” says Joe DePaulo, Co-Founder and CEO of College Ave Student Loans. “The college ‘sticker price’ typically refers to the published annual cost of attendance for any given school, which includes tuition, fees, and an average estimate of other related costs like room and board. The actual price families will pay depends on how much financial aid they receive which will be unique for each family,” he says.

Start by filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Some families skip this form because they think it is too much work for too little payoff. **Don’t Fear the FAFSA** By forgoing filling out this important government form, you could be leaving financial aid on the table. Some financial aid programs work on a first-come first-served basis, so getting it done as close to the October 1 start date maximizes the aid you might receive. There are other reasons to make sure the FAFSA is part of your fall financial aid game, according to College Ave Student Loans, a company offering simple and personalized private student loans:

- **More financial aid:** Some schools won’t even consider you for merit aid unless you complete this important form.

- **More options:** Students planning to apply for Federal Stafford Loans or Federal PLUS Loans must fill out the FAFSA first.

Keep Applying to Scholarships Beyond the FAFSA, students and parents can round out their financial aid plan with scholarships. Many scholarships are available with rolling applications year-round and every little bit helps. College Ave Student Loans offers a monthly chance for students to win a \$1,000 scholarship on their website.

Build a Balanced College List College Ave recommends that you apply to a variety of schools. This will give you more opportunities to find a school that fits your budget

financially, and one that may offer better financial aid. If scholarships, grants and federal loans in the student's name don't cover the full cost of tuition, College Ave Student Loans offers a simple, stress-free student loan process to help cover college costs. Students and parents can apply online and get a response in 3 minutes, with no application or origination fees. For more information about college financial aid planning, hints for filling out the FAFSA, and other loan opportunities, visit collegeavestudentloans.com.

Have a Preteen or Teen? Protect Them Against Serious Diseases

Leaving their phone at a friend's house, suddenly needing a ride somewhere? You knew there would be days like this. But did you know that you'd also need to take your preteens and teens to get shots?

As they get older, kids are at increased risk for some infections. Plus, the protection provided by some of the childhood vaccines begins to wear off, so kids need a booster dose. You may have heard about pertussis (whooping cough) outbreaks recently. Vaccine-preventable diseases are still real. The [vaccines for preteens](#) and teens can help protect your kids, as well as their friends, community and other family members.

There are four recommended vaccines that preteens should get when they are 11 or 12 years old. If you have an older kid like a teen, they'll need a booster dose of one of the shots. It's also not too late to get any shots they may have missed.

You can use any healthcare visit, including sports physicals or some sick visits, to get the shots your kids need. The vaccines for preteens and teens are:

- * HPV vaccine for both boys and girls, which protects against the types of HPV that most commonly cause cancer. HPV can cause cancers of the cervix, vulva and vagina in women and cancers of the penis in men. In both women and men, HPV also causes mouth/throat cancer, anal cancer and genital warts.

- * Tdap vaccine, which is a booster against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. Pertussis, or whooping cough, can keep kids out of school and activities for weeks. It can also be spread to babies, which can be very dangerous and sometimes deadly.

- * Meningococcal vaccine, which protects against meningococcal disease. Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria and is a leading cause of bacterial meningitis – a serious infection around the brain and spinal cord.

- * Influenza (flu) vaccine, because even healthy kids can get the flu, and it can be serious. All kids, including your preteens and teens, should get the flu vaccine every year.

Talk with a doctor, nurse or clinic about the vaccines for preteens and teens. Even though they may not realize it, your kids still need you for more than a ride somewhere. They need you to continue protecting their health by getting them these important and life-saving vaccines.

Want to learn more about the vaccines for preteens and teens? Check out www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Even During School Year, Fun Reading Important for Kids

Most young kids love reading, but when the busy school year starts, it can be challenging to find the time to encourage them to read for fun.

It's important to remember, however, that the more kids read on their own time, the higher they tend to score on tests.

In fact, about 76 percent of students who report reading for fun on their own time once a week or more perform at the high end of basic level testing, while 14 percent of students who never or hardly ever read for fun perform below the basic level, according to the American Library Association.

So how can we get kids reading during their free time when they're already so busy in and out of school?

"Kids should be exposed to a variety of books and genres so that they can figure out what they enjoy," says Stephanie Fryling, Vice President of Merchandising, Children's Books, at Barnes & Noble. "If kids love the books and topics they're reading about, like a graphic novel, they're much more likely to reach for a book as often as a video game."

It can be a challenge, however, to know what reading to get for your kids, let alone put down money for them.

That's part of the reason bookseller Barnes & Noble started a national Kids' Book Hangout. This free, seasonal event offers kids, parents, and caregivers a chance to gather together to learn about a range of books for grades 1-6, as well as play fun games and activities related to the stories and characters.

"We wanted to create a fun, friendly environment for kids to learn about new books and genres so they can find what interests them," Fryling says.

The first Kids' Book Hangout, held this summer, was a big success, drawing over 10,000 kids to Barnes & Noble bookstores around the country. Fryling expects the next Hangout to be even bigger.

The second Hangout will take place Saturday, October 20, at 2 PM, and features a range of books and graphic novels about friendship, adventure, and mystery. Barnes & Noble partner with Penguin Young Readers and Random House Children's Books on the following titles:

- * "The Cardboard Kingdom," by Chad Sell
- * "5 Worlds: The Sand Warrior," by Mark Siegel and Alexis Siegel
- * "The Last Kids on Earth and the Cosmic Beyond," by Max Brallier
- * "Squirm," by Carl Hiaasen
- * "Monstrous Devices," by Damien Love

During the Hangout, booksellers will introduce the books to the kids along with games, activities, and free giveaways. Barnes & Noble will also sell the books for 20 percent off in stores and online on the day of the event.

To sign up at their local Barnes & Noble, parents can go to bn.com/bnhangout and register for free.

For this Hangout, Barnes & Noble also partner with DOGObooks, where kids can discuss, rate, and review the selected titles. Kids can visit the Kids' Book Hangout page at DOGObooks.com before or after the Hangout.

Balancing Housework And Your Baby

Babies need constant attention – they require constant feedings and diaper changes, and they require them at all hours. Tending to a baby is a full-time job, so it's no big surprise when dishes start piling up and you're running out of clean baby bibs.

Still, a clutter-free home can make your life feel just a little less hectic. Here are some tips for new parents hoping to keep their homes clean and organized while caring for their baby:

- Declutter. Less clutter in your home will help you keep your sanity. Get your partner or a friend to help you sort through, store or get rid of things you no longer need. Having fewer objects in the house means fewer items to be dusted, wiped, polished, picked up and rearranged.
- Invest in a sling. With your baby in a sling or other carrier, your hands will be free to fold laundry, dust and vacuum. As the baby gets older and you are able to do more activities outside of the house, the sling will also help you carry your baby through stores and other areas.
- Let products make your life easier. Some products help simplify routine household tasks. For example, Pak-It (www.pakit.com) water-soluble liquid packets deliver concentrated glass cleaner, disinfectant, and multi-purpose cleaning products, such as those for floors, kitchens, bathrooms and laundry. Pak-It products come prepackaged in biodegradable packets -; users simply put the packet in water. A busy mom, for example, can toss Pak-It Laundry Detergent directly into the laundry machine while still holding her baby.

– Take advantage of naps. It's certainly okay to sneak in a few chores while your baby sleeps. But if you're exhausted, listen to your body and use the time to catch a few winks yourself.

– Don't stress out too much. Twenty years from now, what will you regret more – letting laundry pile up or neglecting to spend enough time with your baby? Your health and the baby's needs come first. Besides, if you think your home's messy with a new baby, just imagine how it's going to look with a teenager!