

It's starting to feel a lot like Christmas, alright. Beautiful snow, dramatic skies, smiling faces and the great wonder of children's enthusiasm. What great reasons to take pictures.

One of the most popular subjects is holiday decorations. Here are a few tips:

When shooting the Christmas tree, menorahs, etc., determine whether you want to capture the item producing the light, or another subject illuminated by those lights. The meter in your cameras can handle the latter, but not the former. If your camera is automatic only, it can't shoot the tree, menorah, etc. correctly. You must turn the automation off and meter the item with the lights or candles off, and then use that exposure with the light sources active.

When shooting outdoor illuminated displays at night, remember to turn your flash off. The exposure is too long to hand hold, so be sure to use a tripod with a remote release or self timer. The colder the weather, the shakier we all are; you can't compensate for that. Use a tripod, no matter how small it is.

When taking pictures indoors without flash, remember that your exposure system will be fooled when you shoot towards a window or a lamp. Take your exposure reading up close to negate the effects of the backlighting from these sources. Automatic cameras will not work well in this situation. If you force your camera to use the flash, you'll get better results.

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REMEMBER TO CHECK YOUR CAMERA AND FLASH BATTERIES. THEY ALWAYS WORK UNTIL THEY GO DEAD! FRESH BATTERIES AREN'T NECESSARILY GOOD BATTERIES – it depends a lot on how they've been stored before you get them. They could be stone dead in the package. REMEMBER TO HAVE MORE FILM, TAPE, AND/OR MEMORY THAN YOU THINK YOU'LL NEED! Every year we hear from people that they ran out. You know our stores aren't high pressure, and we often get accused of bad business practice when we strongly remind you.

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If you have any doubts about whether your camera(s) is working, please bring it in for a FREE checkup. No purchase necessary, no strings attached - We want you to preserve this holiday season with pictures.

Beyond this point is our annual holiday product and service review to help you save time with your shopping. A greeting will then follow. If you prefer no to see this review, please skip the following section.

Under \$50 gifts:

Our number 1 suggestion is a framed enlargement. It's an extremely personal gift that **no one else can give** and is always appreciated. After that, we suggest film, digital memory, photo albums, table top tripods, monopod, extra life power pack for most digital cameras, a comfortable camera strap, lead lined bags (for taking film through airport and seaport security), photo storage boxes, reproductions of old family photos, and video tapes.

Under \$100 gifts:

A framed poster print of your favorite picture, special effect filters, a new camera case, a small point and shoot (film) camera, a Xyron laminator, a new Olympus W-10 recorder (shop early), a beginner's telescope, inkjet paper and ink, good print/paper trimmer, polarizing filter (most sizes), and a photo quality inkjet printer.

Under \$150 gifts:

Binoculars, point and shoot zoom camera with longer zoom range, electronic flash with bounce capabilities (for SLR cameras), digital restoration of a favorite old photo (order this service early), full size tripod with remote release, a better camera system case, photographer's vest, photo scanner, circular polarizing filter, transfer of old movies to VHS or DVD (Christmas delivery not guaranteed), zoom lens, high capacity digital memory cards.

Under \$200 gifts: 35mm slide and negative scanner, photo backpack, powerful automatic bounce flash, point and shoot zoom camera with extended telephoto range, medium resolution digital cameras, 28-200mm AF zoom lens (older style), shirt pocket size zoom camera, general purpose binoculars and indestructible camera cases.

Under \$300 gifts:

Most high end compact zoom cameras, high quality 2 megapixel digital cameras, versatile photo inkjet and dye sublimation printers, 28-200mm zoom lens for AF SLR cameras, automatic AF SLR cameras with modest zoom lens, high quality 90mm telescopes, large assortment of digital point and shoot cameras, 70-300mm AF zoom lens, 100-400mm AF zoom lens, CD-Rom writers and macro lenses.

Under \$400 gifts: Computerized telescopes; top quality 3 megapixel digital cameras, a combination binocular with digital camera built in, Hi-8mm camcorder, 35mm SLR AF outfits with zoom lens, photo inkjet wide carriage (11"x44") printers, eyeglass quality binoculars, advanced 35mm SLR camera bodies, zoom lenses for nature and sports, wide angle zoom lens, bounce flash for many digital cameras, 24-200mm and 28-300mm zooms.

More expensive gifts: (other than higher quality items than previously mentioned) Digital SLR cameras (we stock up to 11 megapixel) , 4-6 megapixel point and shoot digital cameras, sharper, brighter computerized telescopes, superior binoculars, professional quality photo inkjet printers, semi-pro & professional 35mm cameras and lenses, Carousel slide projectors, professional quality film scanners, home studio lighting outfits, digital camcorders, and more....

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Speaking for all our staff, we wish you and your family a healthy and happy holiday season. We have lost some members of our extended "business family" during 2002, and miss them. Customers sometimes come and go, but we recognize each of you for the person you are, not the money you represent. The loss of a customer affects us because of who the person was, not what was spent. At this holiday season we take stock in all the blessings we still have, and consider you one of those blessings. Please enjoy your family and friends as the gifts they really are. Peace on Earth.

Lynne, Jerry, Mick, Rob, Steve D., Dana, Steve Q., Geoff, Joe, Eric K., Eric C., Bob, Terrence, Erin, Leslie, Bret, Shaun, Mike and Wakil

Holiday greetings