

Tips to Make Sure You Don't Miss That Perfect Shot

Fumbling photo ops? Keep your smartphone handy and practice, practice, practice

by Ed Waldman, [AARP](#), February 14, 2022

Your 15-month-old granddaughter decides to eat the world's messiest chocolate cupcake, and you just know it would be the cutest video in the free world.

Or your 4-month-old grandson starts playing with his dog, and the photos would garner more likes on Facebook than everything you've ever posted combined.

But you missed the shot. Your phone was still in your pocket or your pocketbook. Or you had it in your hand and got so flustered you couldn't unlock it until after the moment had passed. The [photo you did manage to take](#) was out of focus or not centered or your grandkids had their eyes closed.

What can you do so you don't miss any of these potential viral — or *America's Funniest Home Videos* — moments?

Know your phone

Maximilian Franz, a full-time professional photographer and video producer in the Baltimore area, says his top tip is “clean your lens off as soon as you pull your phone out of your pocket. I see that all the time.” Franz, who has been doing corporate and event photography since 2018, after a 19-year career in newspapers, also says you should familiarize yourself with the movements of the phone.

To take a quick photo [on an iPhone](#), you don't need to enter your passcode or use biometrics. You can get to the camera by swiping left from the home screen even when it's locked.

Many Android devices have similar features. Samsung Galaxy phones have a camera icon that you can touch at the bottom right corner of the screen. iPhones also have a camera icon in the same place.

Be ready for the shot

It may sound like a no-brainer, but to get that great candid shot, have your phone out of your pocket.

Franz says that's the number 1 reason younger folks are able to capture those great moments while many older adults don't. Younger people often seem to be attached to their devices, and taking photos is at the front of their minds.

"They always have their phones in their hands," he says. "They're always ready to take pictures."

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JOSEPH WALDMAN

Allie Waldman takes an iPhone photo of her daughter, Emma.

Take continuous photos

Remember, you're not paying for film or developing. It costs the same to take 10 photos — or even 100 photos — as it does to take one. Most phones today come with "burst" mode for this very purpose.

If you have an iPhone 11 or later, open the camera, then press and immediately drag the shutter button to the left for portrait orientation or up for landscape. Take your finger off the shutter button when you're done. If you're not fluid enough in your swipe, you will start the camera's video mode. For iPhone 10 and earlier, simply touch and hold the shutter button to activate burst mode.

On newer Android phones, shooting in burst mode is similar to doing so on newer iPhones: Just drag the shutter toward the bottom of the screen. Older Androids work similarly to older iPhones.

And after you review your photos, you should delete all but the best ones. But look with a discerning eye for glitches like the dreaded blink or an unintentional — or intentional — photo bomb before getting rid of any pictures.

Practice, practice, practice

Get comfortable with your camera. Do it when you're not with the grandkids or the pets so you are as fast as Franz is with his iPhone 13 Pro Max when a big moment presents itself.

Walk around with your phone in your hand. Practice swiping to get to the camera quickly without having to enter your passcode or use biometrics to unlock it. Once you're in the camera app, practice shooting in burst mode. It can be tricky and frustrating the first few times. You'll probably take as many videos as you do burst shots, but that might be an unintended bonus.

As many people age, they can't hold the camera as steady as they used to, Franz says he has noticed. He recommends using something to help brace your smartphone to keep it as steady as possible — even your knee if you're sitting down.

“And there are [lots of accessories](#) that help with that,” Franz says. “There are some that let you hold on to a knob on the back of the case or let you put your finger or hand through a loop while you’re taking a picture.” You can find these cellphone grips, ring holders and stands at discount stores or online starting at less than \$5.

Finally, use your senses while taking photos. Don’t get tunnel vision, only staring at the screen and not seeing the whole, well, picture. Anticipate the unexpected. It just might get you that [perfect shot](#).

Ed Waldman is a contributing editor and writer who covers technology. He previously was an editor at the Baltimore Sun, taught journalism at the University of Maryland and launched a statewide high school sports website.