WHAT TO WEAR GUIDE

Welcome

I know a lot of people have a hard time coming up with good, solid wardrobe choices for family photography. It's stressful sometimes, but it doesn't have to be! Here are some tips, along with hits and misses, looks to avoid, shops to peruse (both online and in-store), and lots of examples for reference. Remember, the days of all white, all black, all khaki or all jeans is a thing of the past. Family picture time is a great time to embrace your individuality, your favorite looks, bold colors, prints and layers.

Easy Tips

1. **Steer clear of fluorescents.**

Fluorescent colors tend to color cast on faces, necks and hair. They're harsh sometimes. I always recommend versions of primary colors. Yellow (mustard), red (maroon, brick), and blue (navy, royal).

2. **Stay away from wearing a lot of green when having photos taken in grassy/wooded areas.**

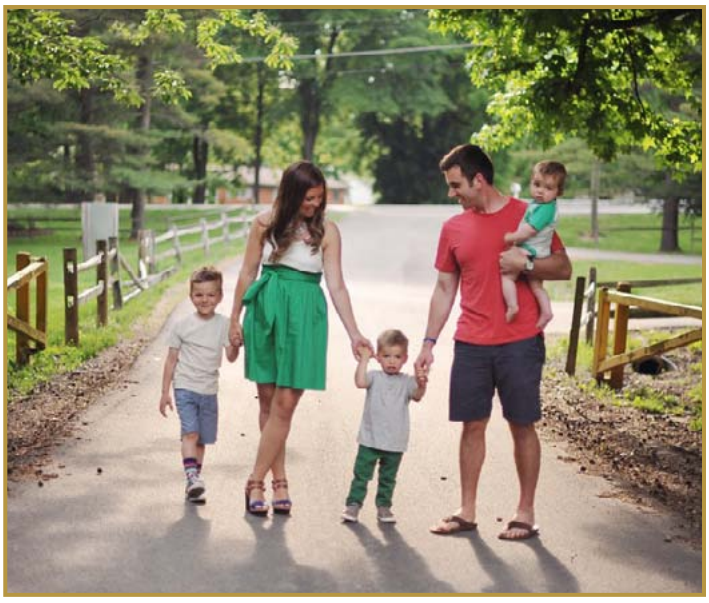
It's just too much green. Green as an accent color is great, though! You want to stand out amongst all the greenery you're surrounded by.

3. To get the flow going with wardrobe for your family, **start with one outfit that you really like.**

From there, build from it for everyone else. This image here was the mustard dress Ashley is wearing that started the whole theme of their wardrobe.

4. **Wear what you feel good in!**

Moms and dads, this tip is for you specifically. If you aren't comfortable in what you've chosen for pictures, it will show. If you can't find a dress you feel good in, but you rock a good pair of skinny jeans, do that. If you can barely walk in heels, there's no harm in doing cute and comfy flat boots or pretty sandals. If you can't do a heel (like me), a wedge is a great alternative, too.



5. **Layer, layer layer!**

Layers add dimension and depth. In the summer? Layer your dress with a cute belt and pendant necklace. In the fall and winter? cardigans, belts, statement necklaces, scarves, hats, blazers, etc.

6. **Purchase clothes to *fit*. And fit well.**

I know we all have a hard time buying clothes for our kiddos that don't leave a lot of room for growth, seeing as they do grow so fast. However, keep in mind that for pictures, too large of a polo shirt, saggy ill-fitting jeans or a jacket that's falling off the shoulders looks sloppy. You'll be purchasing outfits specifically for pictures, most likely, so choose something that fits perfectly, or even just a little bit snug. Make it look almost tailored. Go a size smaller in jackets, cardigans or blazers. A too-big jean jacket will not compliment shape. It hides hips and waist for moms. If you typically wear a size medium jacket, try on the small. Even if it's just a little snug in the shoulders, it should lay nicely around your hips and waist, creating a tailored look.

7. **Matching is out. Coordinating is in.**

And anything goes nowadays! We know your family is together. We're photographing you together! So, wearing the same colored shirt, pants, shoes, etc. looks a bit awkward. Coordinating color is what really brings wardrobe together. I usually choose two to three main colors of wardrobe, and maybe one accent pop of color. Also, mixing stripes with plaids and tweeds is okay! Expression is important. We want to see your personality through your wardrobe.

8. **Minimal wardrobe for newborn sessions.**

The times I recommend clients keep wardrobe super simple is during newborn photos. In these cases, you don't want the clothing to overshadow the precious little person that we're showcasing. I recommend grey, black, and white for these shoots. If we'll be posing a big sister with the baby, light pink is a good color that adds a little something, but again, it's not enough to overpower the baby.

9. **Dress for the weather, and be flexible.**
If you're from any state in the Midwest, you know that it can be 50 and cloudy one day, 75 and sunny 12 hours later. So, be prepared to be flexible with wardrobe, in case you have to switch it up last minute. If you have plans for a cute sundress for your daughter, and the weather ends up being 20 degrees colder than you were anticipating, switch it up a bit by adding layers. Tights, boots, scarf, slouchy hat, cardigan. Dress appropriately for the weather that day, even if it doesn't go with your original plan. If your child is sweating profusely in a sweater during his shoot, he won't be happy. And on the same token, if your child is wearing a tank dress and the weather dips too much in the evening, she'll be a grump, and it'll reflect in the final images. I speak these words from experience. There are a couple of instances I can think of that I should have taken this advice with my own kids!

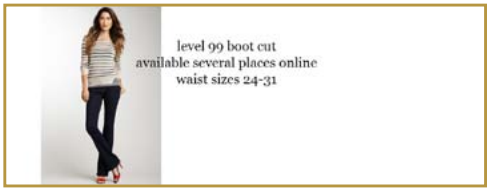
10. **Dress for the situation.**
Just as dressing for weather is important, dressing for the situation is just as important. A fancy black dress and a dress shirt and tie wouldn't be the most appropriate wardrobe for a forest or grassy setting. More formal wear would be more appropriate for an urban or "big city" feel. Also, if you're shooting a lifestyle session in your client's home, make sure they know that wardrobe will take second fiddle to the actual lifestyle images you'll be capturing. I tell my lifestyle clients to wear whatever it is that they'd wear at home. No coordinating or matching necessary. Those sessions are meant to be as normal, true to life and every day as possible.

Tips for Different Body Shapes (for women)

1. **Maxi dresses are flattering on every body type.**

Keep that in mind while shopping! (images courtesy of Nordstrom.com). Maxi dresses are usually a slam dunk for shoots, and they're so versatile. Add a belt or a statement necklace with strappy sandals for the summer, or a belted fitted cardi and a scarf in the fall.

2. **Skinny jeans are flattering on most women, even the curvy ones!**



Pair them with cute heels or wedges, and your legs look a mile long. I'm 5'5 and 155 pounds, and I love my skinnies, even though I'm a little on the heavier side. If you're overweight and don't feel comfortable with the tighter fit, I recommend a fit called "skinny boot cut." You can find them at American Eagle, Gap, and the Level 99 brand is amazing! (images courtesy of hautelook.com)

3. **Take a friend shopping with you.**

They will see you better than you see yourself when trying on clothes. If he/she tells you it looks great, believe them! We're our own worst critics.

4. **Flaunt your best asset.**

I'm self conscious about my stomach and upper arms, but I like my legs. So, I feel most comfortable in a shorter dress with a fitted blazer or cardi over it. Showing off my legs, but hiding the parts that I don't like so much.

Child Wardrobe Tips

1. **Timeless always has a place.**

I love when my clients show up to a shoot with the most simple and timeless of outfits. A smock dress that belonged to Great-Grandma. A plain white lace dress with a simple bow. A plain diaper cover. Naked baby! These outfits (or lack thereof) will always stand the test of time, and will never go out of style.

2. **Dress your kiddos in clothes that fit perfectly, not with room to grow.**

Even if you child may only wear the outfit for a few months, it'll look much better than putting them in something that they still need to grow into. Go a size smaller in jackets, cardigans or blazers. A too-big jean jacket, blazer, sweat shirt, sweater or hoodie will not compliment shape. It looks sloppy on children.

3. **Shoes are a very important part of wardrobe.**

If you have the cutest little trousers and button down for your son to wear for pictures, but slap his favorite pair of Disney tennis shoes on him, it makes the whole look lose cohesiveness. Stay away from character shoes, flip flops, crocs. My recommendation for shoes are boots, leather sandals (just say “no” to Old Navy flip flops), Converse All-Stars, Toms, Sperrys, Joyfolie, Mary Janes, and Willits. And always, barefoot is an adorable option, especially with babies. I’d much rather see bare feet than the bottom of their shoes.

4. **Remember, coordinating your childrens’ outfits is key.** Not matching.

5. Layers are just as important for child wardrobe as it is for yours.

Hats, glasses, vests, bow ties, cardigans, tights or leggings under a skirt. I do recommend making the outer layer (blazer, cardi, jacket) fit snugly. I usually purchase the outer layers one size smaller than normal, because they tend to run on the bigger side.

6. Hair piece tips.

For babies, toddlers and older girls, I always recommend keeping hair accessories simple. When they are too big (think “gerber daisy” big), it distracts from their faces. The only time I think you can get away with a bigger hair accessory is when the child has lots of hair, or long hair. Even if your baby girl doesn’t have a ton of hair, don’t feel the need to hide that adorable head behind a huge whoppin’ head piece that makes her angry because she’s pulling it off every few seconds. Simple and dainty is just as pretty and understated. Some of my favorite hair accessory shops are Sew Whimsey (www.etsy.com/shop/patriciamueller), Petunia and Ivy (www.etsy.com/shop/petuniaandivy), Kindred OAK (www.kindredoak.com), and Strawberry Girl Couture (www.strawberrygirlcouture.bigcartel.com).

7. The most important part of putting together your child’s wardrobe is allowing their personality to come through in what they’re wearing.

If your daughter has a favorite pair of boots, let her wear them (at least in a few pictures). If your son prefers to run around naked to being fully clothed, we’ll let him strip down at the end of the session. If your child loves to wear hats and sunglasses, bring them! Whatever makes your child their own adorable, individual self, let’s focus on those things. Yes, we all want our children to look adorable and fully polished for photos. I’m not recommending you don’t brush your daughter’s hair or forget wiping off the smudged PB&J off your toddler’s face, but allow them to have a little bit of input when planning their wardrobe as well. And never say “no” to bringing their favorite things along. Photographers want to capture those, too.

Favorite Places to Shop

Price points: $-cheap, $$-average, $$$-high, $$$$-expensive

1. Gap.com. They provide a great option for "basics." Just about anything you'd need, you'll find on their website. And Gap frequently offers sales and discounts if you sign up for their email list, plus their sale rack prices are amazing! $$-$$$

2. Freepeople.com. Free People is my happy place. Think easy, breezy, comfy, boho chick. $$$-$$$$

3. Anthropologie.com. It's a little bit more on the expensive side, but the clothes are quality, unique and last forever. $$$$

4. Jcrew.com. Their Crew Cuts kids line is probably one of my top 5 sites for kids clothes. Also, their shoe selection for kids alone makes me giddy. $$$$

5. Mak-rose.com. A great cheap site for girls clothing. Boutique dresses, sweaters, blazers, tights, etc. Not much on that site I don't love, and it's very affordable. So, if you see something you like, it's best to purchase now, because she sells out fast, and once it's gone, it's gone! $-$$

6. HM.com. I consider H&M the holy grail for all things boy and men. And, they just recently started selling clothes online! Eep! Their price point is ridiculously low, and the clothes are my favorite. My boys' closets are stuffed full with H&M swag. Their trouser pants are around $10 and are amazing quality. Amazing. Also, the cutest little cardigans, sweaters, button downs and other great accessories for super low prices. Keep in mind that H&M sizes are a little different, and they run big. If your son is an average size 4, buy him the size 3-4 pants. The 4-5 seems like the obvious choice, but they'll be too long and too big around the waist. $-$$

7. Forever21.com. Cute clothes for women of all sizes (and men!) on the cheap. Take someone with you if you choose to shop in-store. It's a little overwhelming. But honestly, they have some amazing wardrobe choices and the best (cheapest) jewelry that won't break the bank. $-$$

8. Zara.com. I get lost on this site, seriously. So many adorable pieces, shoes, accessories, etc. For men, women and children. $$-$$$$

9. Modcloth.com. A fun, flirty and pretty affordable site for women's timeless dresses, fun tops and the best shoes and accessories! $$-$$$

10. Shopruche.com. Another great site for women's dresses and tops. Gorgeous, gorgeous clothing. $$$

11. Joyfolie.com. Shoes, shoes, glorious shoes! For girls and women. Breathtaking dresses, jackets, caplets. Moms will thank me for this. Husbands, notsomuch. $$$$

12. Fleuranddot.com. The most adorable girls clothing you'll ever find if you're vintage-inspired in your look. Hands down. $$$$

13. Catch-alls. Antique stores. Garage Sales. Flea Market. Target. Ebay. Zulily. Hand-me-downs. Possibly even your photographer's closet! Always keep your eyes peeled! You'll be pleasantly surprised by what you find.

See this dress my niece is wearing? It was $3 at an antique store in Effingham, IL. It's held together in the back by an old safety pin. And it's easily one of my favorites! You just never know what you'll find.

Stylist Heather

Finishing up the guide is Heather! In case you're unfamiliar with the gorgeous and genius styling talent that she is, here's a little blurb about her.

Hey all! My name is Heather. I'm 27 years old and have been married to my husband for eight years. We have two littles. Caedon is almost seven, and Ada just turned five.

I'm so in love with my wacky, yet adorable family! You'll see a picture or two of the four of us throughout this guide. :)

I believe in Jesus. I believe in kindness. I take pride in honesty and trust. I believe in hard work and that people matter.

I love to laugh! I love fashion-most importantly, my MC hammer pants and Hunter boots! I love spending time with my family. I love my amazing friends. I love to dance and I will. Anytime. Anywhere. I love to run. And oooohhh do I love me some Mexican food! I often wear leather leggings, and I crochet. You may never figure me out.

Heather's Favorite Stores

Excluding the shops and stores listed above, here are a few of Heather's favorite places:

For Women:

- Alloy. www.alloyapparel.com $-$$
- American Apparel. www.americanapparel.com $$$
- Nordstrom Rack. shop.nordstrom.com/c/nordstrom-rack $$$
- Dottie Couture Boutique. www.dottiecouture.com $$-$$$
- Urban Outfitters. www.urbanoutfitters.com $$$
- The Oxford Trunk. www.theoxfordtrunk.com $$-$$$

For Men:

- Nordstrom. www.nordstrom.com $$$$
- Urban Outfitters www.urbanoutfitters.com $$$-$$$$

For Kids:

- Zulily. www.zulily.com $-$$$
- Le Coxa Boutique. www.lecoxajboutique.com $$-$$$
- Dutchess and Lion. www.etsy.com/shop/duchessandlion $$-$$$
- The Children's Place. www.childrensplace.com $-$$
- Loola. www.loola.bigcartel.com $$

Styling Do's and Don'ts

1. Choose a color scheme.

I would suggest choosing three main colors to work with. This will give you more flexibility when it comes to dressing the entire family. It will also really make your pictures pop! You want to coordinate, NOT match. By this, I mean choose the color(s) you want to work with and find different pieces that incorporate some or all of the colors you've chosen. I do not want to find out that you sent out a memo saying "Everyone wear jeans and a white shirt" and call it a day. ***White tops generally wash people out in photos***, so I suggest staying away from white altogether unless it's just an accent color. Also, keep in mind that not every person has to have on every color you have chosen. Split the colors up. It makes the photo more playful and less uniform.

2. Find a focal point.

When you begin your shopping, look for a patterned piece that you simply cannot live without! This may be a top that you feel absolutely fabulous in, or a plaid button up for your son that will make your heart melt, or maybe even an adorable little floral print dress for your little princess. Whatever that piece may be, commit to it and work from there. It's natural for me to find the mother's outfit first. As moms, we tend to forget about ourselves in the planning and we become an afterthought. Of course you want your kids to look cute, but you deserve to look and FEEL awesome in your pictures! Trust me. Take that time for YOU. You won't regret it!! In this image below, we started with mom's dress (from www.dottiecouture.com), and we formed all other wardrobe around it.

3. Mix it up.

Do not be afraid to mix prints and textures. Or styles for that matter! For example: You could choose a piece with polka dots and a piece with stripes. You could put a denim top with a corduroy pant. Your prints and textures don't always have to come from your main pieces. You can jazz up a dress with printed or textured tights. Or dress up a t-shirt with colored or patterned suspenders. From here, you can go a step further and start mixing "styles." For example, I might have a client wear a plaid button up, a blazer and a slouchie beanie (mixing dressy and grunge) or a short a-line skirt, blousy top, and military style boots (mixing edgy and chic). By doing so, you will begin to showcase the different styles and personalities of each member of the shoot.

4. Layers, layers, layers!!!

When putting together an outfit, layers are what make the outfit look polished and complete! Add a vest, jacket, cardigan, bowtie, hat, scarf, suspenders, belt, jewelry, etc. This also gives the shoot much more depth! Even if it's just as simple as adding a little fur vest, it adds so much more dimension to your wardrobe. Vests can be found everywhere, but specifically I'm finding them at H&M, Gap and Old Navy right now. Also, if all else fails in chain stores, search Etsy.com. Etsy has everything!

5. Play on your strengths.

Ladies (& gentlemen), let's be honest…most of us have some insecurities about our bodies. But, my best advice to you is to WORK what you've got! Know your body type and what styles will flatter your figure. If you like your legs, show them off! If you think you've lost your waist, try a high waisted pant or a tailored blazer. Any shoe with a higher heel will elongate your body and instantly make you appear thinner. Do your research!

You obviously want to feel comfortable and confident, but try to push yourself outside the box. Perhaps you should try on something you wouldn't normally take off the rack. It may be a complete disaster, but you may also find a new love! We all know that fashion is a form of self-expression, so just be the best, most flattering version of you!

We both really truly hope that this has helped! We had a blast putting it together for you, so thank you so much for taking the time to read and share it.

The written content and images in this guide are provided by Sarah Hill of Sarah-Beth Photography. The contents of this guide have been provided as a reference for other photographers and their clients. This guide is to not be altered without the written consent of Sarah Hill, SB Photography LLC.

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