

## Strike a pose

What makes the perfect pet picture? **Jenny Moffett** has some handy hints and tips.

From snazzy new phones and fancy digital cameras, to images on t-shirts, mugs, and mouse mats, photography has never been so much fun! Taking a picture is a great way of preserving a memory. But what about capturing a photo moment with your pet? As the Hollywood saying, “never work with children or animals,” suggests, getting your pet to sit still long enough to have his or her picture taken is only one of the challenges.

### Get comfortable

There is one golden rule with pet photography – don’t do it unless it is fun for both you and the animal. It’s important that a pet is comfortable with the presence of the camera. Some animals don’t like the flash or the shutter click and will run a mile once the camera comes out.

So how best do we get our bouncy Boxers and shy Siamese to pose? It’s a good idea to let them get used to the camera – let them sniff and investigate it – even when you’re not planning on taking a picture. If you’re taking a photo of a wild or farm animal, remember that these animals can be particularly nervous – you will have to move slowly and quietly if you don’t want to spook them. Sometimes you will have to make do with distance and a good zoom lens.

One of the greatest rewards in pet photography is managing to capture his or her personality. Because of this, it’s good to try and capture your pet’s natural activities rather than take a posed shot. Catch your dog mid play or your cat asleep on top of the TV. Alternatively, use treats or toys to get your pet’s attention. You may need patience to wait for the right moment but it’s usually worth it. Don’t forget to reward your pet with lots of praise and tiny food titbits.



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## Take aim

With cats, little dogs and other smaller animals, it is important to get down to their level. You can either lie down on the ground or raise them up, if it is safe and comfortable to do so, onto a table. This means you can get closer to your pet and also take a shot from a more unusual perspective.

Also, make sure that you get close enough so that your subject fills the viewfinder. There's nothing worse than having to search for the animal ("Yes, he's that dot on the horizon!") in a photo. Don't get so close, however, that the animal is blurred and out of focus.

If possible, get outdoors to take your pictures – on a sunny day the lighting outside makes this the best spot to take pictures. Remember though to keep the sun behind you so that the light falls on the animal, not on the camera. You can also experiment with leaving the flash on outside. Even on bright days out, keeping the flash on can help catch a fast moving pet more distinctly. If you must take pictures indoors, keep away from windows, glass and mirrors which can reflect the flash light. Also, use the flash carefully – it can produce red-eye in the finished photo and make your pet look as if he or she's possessed by a demon! If you have red-eye function on your camera, use it. Even better, if you have an off-camera flash, use this.

## Watch the birdie!

When it comes to picturing animals, there are so many special features you can look at – from coloured feathers to textured fur or scales. Exotic birds, fish and reptiles are particularly good subjects for this. However, taking pictures of these species may require a little more ingenuity.

If you want to take a picture of a fish, use the lights of the aquarium rather than a flash to light the picture. Put your camera to the glass and wait for the fish to come past before taking your shot. With reptiles, if it's safe to do so, take him out and take snaps of him against the carpet or floor. This way, it will be much easier to capture the detail of his scales. Remember, with digital photography it's particularly easy to take lots of shots until you get the right one.

With careful planning, a bit of time and a relaxed attitude, it's possible to take some amazing photos of your pet. Over time, these should provide you with a valuable collection and a reminder of each stage of his or her life. So take aim and have fun!