

Photographic Considerations When Planning Activities

Note: This page provides suggestions for planning events and activities that will be more conducive to photographic or video coverage. It also includes suggestions for improving photo composition and considerations about room arrangement, plus tips about lighting that will improve your photos.

Photo Planning & Event Suggestions	
1.	It may be helpful to spend an hour at the local newspaper looking their archives. See what photos have run in the past to get a better idea of what the paper is looking for. Compare where and how large they run their own photos (the ones they take) with those you submit. Pay particular attention to the differences in the photos, such as composition and lighting.
2.	Once you've reviewed past photos, try to plan activities that will give the newspaper something new this summer. They're more likely to run photos of something that is new and different, and they're more likely to pass on photos that are the "same old thing."
3.	Consider activities that involve kids doing something active or physical, getting dirty or wet, building something, interacting with senior citizens in the community, doing science, or performing some sort of community service.
4.	Once you have your summer schedule finalized, sit down with the newspaper editor/reporter/photographer and determine which would present the best opportunities for photographs. Ask them for any suggestions they have in terms of preparing the room. They may have some specific needs of which you are unaware.
5.	If possible, plan activities outside to take advantage of lighting and space. If that is not possible, try to plan activities in large rooms with lots of natural light. Small rooms pose real problems when it comes to photos, even if they are well lit. If a small room is your only option, consider structuring your activity so only several children are in the room at a time. Fewer people in the room make it easier to take photos of events. Newspaper photographers will most likely want close-ups of the children in the activity, but they need some space between children so they can compose the photos they want.
6.	Lighting is a real issue. If you have an event or activity that requires low light levels in the room, let the photographer know that ahead of time so they can plan accordingly. Offer to re-enact (stage) a portion of the show before the actual performance. That way they can get the photo they need with good lighting, and they don't have to spend a great deal of time getting it.
7.	When you tell a photographer to be at the library at a certain time, make sure you are ready at that time. Newspaper reporters/photographers are busy, and making them wait past the scheduled time is not only inconsiderate, it reduces your chances of getting future coverage.
8.	When photographers come to the library for planned events, be sure you have secured permissions from parents beforehand. Don't put children in front of the camera whose parents don't want them photographed. Also, have someone available to help the photographer identify the names and ages of the children photographed.
9.	Make sure you have a stool or step-ladder available for the photographer to use if they request it.
10.	Don't ask newspaper photographers to take photos they don't need (like lineups of all the children present that day). If you want those photos for your own records, take them with a library camera.
11.	If you're going to ask a photographer to take a "check passing" photo or an award presentation, try and be creative. Most papers would prefer not to take photos of people standing in straight lines. If someone has donated money for a piece of equipment or materials, wait until the item(s) are purchased and then schedule the photo. If they donate books, get a photo of them reading the book to some children (you can pose it). Too often we want to take the photo when the donation is made, but the better photo is when the money is used for its intended purpose. In many cases the photo will be used in either case, but it becomes an issue of placement and size. A better photo opportunity will result in better placement and larger size.
12.	If you're setting up the room for a performer or activity, you may want to consult with the newspaper photographer to see how he/she would like the room to be set up. Working with them will increase the likelihood that they'll be able to get better quality photos, which they'll use.
13.	Try to avoid placing the performer in a corner of the room. It makes it much harder for the newspaper photographer to get photos of the performer and children.
14.	Don't invite the newspaper photographer to every Summer Library Program event or activity. Give them a schedule for the summer, but issue a personal invitation to only those that you think will offer the best opportunities for photographs.