

## Families on film.

From the very first roll of film, I knew I wanted to transition my client work to all film. I'm pretty sure you know I think film is magical by now, but honestly, it is. It's literally like the gift of time to me because I no longer spend hours upon hours culling, editing, culling, editing, on and on.... I can edit one, maybe two digital images tops, before I am huffing and puffing and dreading every single remaining image. And when you have client galleries of 100+ images, it's basically a nightmare (for me). My favorite part of clients is THE SHOOTING. I am not a business person. I do not like editing. Shooting is where it's at for me.

Fuji 400H



I mentally start preparing for a session a week or so before the scheduled session date. Planning for me consists of sending out a questionnaire to my client, getting basic info about their family and desires/wants for our session, asking for snapshots or iPhone photos of their rooms and then sitting down to sketch out a “game plan” for the session. The “game plan” varies with EVERY family. I typically stick to 2-3 rooms during an indoor family session or 1-2 locations (within the same area) for an outdoor family session. I don't love to move a ton during my sessions and find my clients can relax easier if we stay in one place. BUUUT...I am typically capturing small children and we all know they have their own “game plan” so sometimes I have to throw my ideas out the window and go with the flow.

### **My typical game plan for family sessions:**

- > Posing ideas for family, mom/dad, mom/kids, dad/kids
- > Games/ideas (based on ages of kids)
- > Double exposure ideas
- > Creative extras and other fun ideas to satisfy my creative soul (light leaks, shooting through fabric, interesting angles)

I show up at my client sessions with more cameras than I can carry and my sessions always veer into fun conversations about film and it's beauty. Film can be scary and intimidating with clients

and I feel those exact emotions at every single session. I constantly remind myself to take a breath and relax so the natural moments and connections between a family can unfold. There's no special trick to shooting film with family and newborn sessions. It's just like any camera - just without the digital playback display to chimp your shots and double check your settings. With any session, you have to seek out and find the available light. Film LOVES light, remember. Knowing that it retains highlights like a champ, I always err on the side of overexposure and tend to seek out locations that offer good light within a home or outdoors. My sessions usually last 1-2 hours and I typically shoot 5-7 rolls of 120 film and 2-3 rolls of 35mm film. I keep one medium format and on 35mm camera on me during sessions and I usually have either 75mm or 80mm on the medium format body and the Canon 24mm on the Canon 1V. Autofocus is my best friend during sessions, which is why I usually gravitate towards using the Pentax with the 75mm and the 1V with the 24mm. I like using two different focal lengths so I can get a good variety for my client galleries.

After my sessions, I pack up my exposed rolls, mail them to my film lab for developing and scanning and then they send me back the scanned JPEG images. It takes me about 30 minutes tops to cull, edit and send off my client galleries. I no longer spend hours upon hours culling and editing sessions. Film gives me that light and beautiful look I love so much - with the most perfect skin tones ever. Film allows me more time to take clients. It gives me more quality time with my family. And most importantly, it lets me focus on the part of photography I have always loved the most - capturing and recording moments.

### What's in my camera bag:

- > Contax 645, Carl Zeiss 80mm f/2.0
- > Pentax 645, 75mm f/2.8, Modified Carl Zeiss 80mm f/2.0
- > Canon EOS 1V 35mm Camera
- > Canon EF 24mm f/1.4 II
- > Canon EF 50mm f/1.2
- > Sekonic L-508 Light Meter

### Typical aperture + shutter speed:

- > Family posed/looking shot (outdoors): f4 - f5.6, 1/125
- > Family shots (outdoors): f4, 1/125
- > Groups of 2-3 (outdoors): f2.8, 1/125
- > Individual shots (outdoors): f2 - f2.8, 1/125
- > Indoor shots: f2 - f2.8, 1/60

### Most used spots for in-home sessions:

- > Front porch, front yard
- > Family room
- > Master bedroom
- > Kid's rooms
- > Backyard



**Family session tips:**

Try to keep the family in one place for a while and work your way around the family for variety

Start with a wider angle shot and then move in for a closer/detail shot of the family or just a few members of the family

WITHOUT MOVING YOUR FAMILY, change your camera angles by shooting from above, below, the side, etc...

Focus on ONE particular grouping of the family (ie. mom/son) for a detail shot

Play a game (such as “pass the hug” or “pass the secret”) while the family is grouped together for a mixed variety of images/angles

Laugh REALLY loud and obnoxiously and I guarantee you will get everyone else to laugh too

The more energy you bring to your session, the more energy your family will have

Change your voice from a normal/loud talking voice to a whisper to get kids attention (I promise it works)!

Ask mom/dad to step out of the room while you do the sibling shot and/or individual portraits. Kids tend to listen better when their parents aren't around



Fuji 400H



Fuji 400H

## Families on film | Posing.

I'll tell ya a secret....I pose my clients. Yup. I pose. I tell them EXACTLY what I want them to do. It doesn't always work exactly the way I had envisioned, but that "fall apart" moment - or the moment AFTER the pose is magical enough that it doesn't matter.

I am not a documentary-style photographer. I think my OCD brain just won't let me do that. So instead of WAITING for magical moments to happen (they usually don't), I help to CREATE magical moments with my clients by suggesting them do a certain thing/close their eyes/lean into their hubby, etc... I am shooting FILM - and each frame costs me like a dollar....so I decided pretty quickly to make each shot count and that I either needed to MAKE the moment - or WAIT for it, if I thought it was coming. I also frequently remind my clients that I KNOW THIS IS WEIRD, BUT I PROMISE IT'S BEAUTIFUL. Clients need that reminder....we all do when we are in front of the camera. And you better bet that my main goal during ANY session is to make mama look good! If mama doesn't look AMAZING, she isn't going to like the photo....and my job is to make her love every image.



I always start with a “list” of MUST HAVE shots for my session. It goes a little something like this:

- > Family together (posed looking at camera)
- > Family together (unposed - hugging, laughing, smiling, kissing....)
- > Mom with children
- > Dad with children
- > Mom/Dad together
- > Sibling shot
- > Fun extras + bonus shots

I know it sounds lame to actually write these out, but these are the MUST HAVES for my sessions. These are the photos I would want of my own family IN ADDITION to all the other fun, creative shots. My clients are expecting these and I want to give them these, plus more. I don't work through these shots like a drill sergeant moving on from one pose to the next, but I do keep these in the back of my mind and am always doing a mental checklist to make sure I got what I needed. I am also NOT wanting these shots to be where everyone is looking at the camera. I typically start with the “look at me, this is for Grandma” shot first and then move on from there! Throughout a session, I am watching the natural interactions between the family and am trying to capture as many “natural” moments as I can. I am also ALWAYS on the hunt for ways to add creative ideas into our session (like shooting through trees/branches, double exposing flowers, etc..).



### Session details:

- > These images are all from a 20-minute outdoor mini session.
- > Family of five with kids ages 4, 3 and almost one.
- > This was a SUPER short session so it lacks in variety.
- > Camera, film and settings: Pentax 645 with 75mm FA lens, Fuji 400H. Most images shot at f2.8 and 1/125, except for the full family image, which was f4 and 1/125.





"Dad, hug your girls and look at me and smile."



"Ok, everyone look at me and smile! This is for Grandma!"



"Ok girls! Can you give mom's legs a hug?"



"Now, I want you girls to squeeze mom and dad's legs REALLY tight and mom/dad, I want you to look down at them and smile!"



"Mom/Dad, snuggle in close to each other and give each other some love - and just don't look at me."



"Dad, you sit down on the ground. (Older one) - can you hug dad from behind around his neck? (Middle one) - can you sit in your dad's lap and hug your sister?"



"Mom, snuggle your girls and look down at them and smile."

## Families on film | Full Session.

In-home sessions have my whole heart. This is where my creative spirit feels most at home (no pun intended, lol). I like shooting at home because people just relax and settle into more natural engagements with one another. I also LOVE the fact that people can SIT DOWN. Standing together in some random field (while pretty) is just not natural, lol. I like being able to utilize various rooms and settings within a home and I feel like I can get more variety in a client gallery. Plus, home is SO personal and real and raw. These sessions are my favorite.

The majority of my in-home shots are usually with my subjects sitting or laying down. Again, I always tell my clients NOT to look at me unless I ask them to - and I usually have to remind them of this a zillion times during a session.

### **In-home session flow:**

- > Family together on front porch (posed looking at camera)
- > Family together on front porch (unposed)
- > Family together in master bedroom (sitting on a chair/couch or edge of bed)
- > Family laying together on bed (I shoot this from above using my Canon 24mm lens)
- > Mom with kids in master bedroom (either on bed/couch/chair)
- > Dad with kids in master bedroom
- > Family together in living room
- > Siblings together in living room/on stairs
- > Kids in their rooms
- > Family together outside
- > Mom/Dad together outside
- > Creative extras

### Session details:

- > In-home session with a family of 5.
- > Kids were ages 7, 5 and 2.
- > From the questionnaire the mom completed prior to our session, I knew this family truly loved spending time together and that home was their happy place. The mom homeschools the three little girls and they love to weave, paint and read together. The mom also described the children's personalities very descriptively, so I had a wonderful idea of how each of the girls would react to the session.
- > Camera, film and settings: Contax 645 with 80mm Zeiss lens, Pentax 645 with 75mm FA lens, Canon 1V with 24mm lens. Film: Fuji 400H, Portra 400, Kodak ColorPlus 200 (35mm). Most images shot at f2.0-2.8 and 1/60, except for the outdoor images, which were f4 and 1/125.



Fuji 400H





## Newborns on film.

If I had to pick a photography nemesis, it would be skin tones. I just can't deal with fixing skin tones. Especially brand new baby skin. Editing a digital image of a newborn baby is brutal to me.

I was SOLD from the first time I used film at a newborn session. The skin tones were creamy and dreamy and the colors were perfect in every way.

I exclusively use Fuji 400H at newborn sessions because the skin tones are amazing. My sessions last 1-3 hours and I typically shoot 5-6 rolls of 120 film and 1-2 rolls of 35mm film. I prefer the medium format film because the grain is smaller and finer and the overall quality of the image is better than that of 35mm film. I use a mix of the Contax with 80mm Zeiss lens, Pentax with the 75mm and modified 80mm Zeiss lens and the Canon 1V with the 24mm and

50mm lenses. I like the mod Zeiss for newborns because it focuses SUPER close to my subject, so I can get all those timeless newborn details. For nursery details, I typically shoot those on the Canon 1V (35mm) with my 50mm lens.

Just like with family sessions, I mentally start preparing for newborn sessions a week or so prior to the session date (or usually whenever mom tells me she's had her baby and we set up a definite session time/date). I send my clients the same questionnaire I send to family clients and also have the mom send over a few snapshots of her house and the nursery. This really helps me "pre-plan" somewhat and go into the session with some posing options/location options, etc. I don't really love going into sessions totally blind, but sometimes it happens and you just gotta go with the flow.

Fuji 400H



### **Typical aperture + shutter speed:**

- > Family posed/looking shot:  
f4, 1/60
- > All other indoor shots:  
f2 - f2.8, 1/60

### **Most used spots for newborn sessions:**

- > Nursery
- > Family room
- > Master bedroom

## Newborns on film | Posing.

Yep. You got it right. I pose my clients during newborn sessions too. YOU HAVE TO. People just don't know what to do in front of camera and they can't see WHAT they look like. But you can. You have the magic key to making everyone look amazing. Just like for families, my main goal is to make that new mama look AMAZING.

Posing during newborn sessions really is just a constant reminder for the mom/dad/siblings to look at their sweet baby...and TO SMILE. I frequently have to remind my clients to softly smile (with their mouth closed) and LOOK at their baby when I'm taking their photo. Sessions with first born babies are usually smoother and easier than those with second/third/fourth born babies. Adding siblings into the mix makes everything a little crazier, so I almost treat those as "family" sessions with a heavier focus on the new baby since you are dealing with a larger family AND a newborn. Not all of the babies I photograph sleep, either, and I'm ok with that. Having a sleepy baby makes everything SO much easier, but you get what you get, right?

For babies who are awake, I encourage the parents to still look and gaze at their baby lovingly, even though they may be crying at that moment. The key is making sure the baby's face is turned INTO the parents and is away from the camera for those shots.



Fuji 400H



Fuji 400H



**Two BIG tips to remember for new mamas (or anyone for that matter):**

- > The closest body part to the camera is going to be the largest.
- > Chins should be angled out and down.

**Frequently heard during newborn sessions:**

- > “Smile at your baby.”
- > “Hold your baby to your nose and breathe in that sweet scent.”
- > “Cradle your baby’s sweet head.”
- > “Close your eyes and softly smile.”
- > “Look down at your baby.”
- > “Can you kiss your brother on the head?”
- > “How many toes your sister have?”

Fuji 400H



Fuji 400H



### **My MUST HAVE shots for newborn sessions:**

- > Family together (posed looking at camera)
- > Family together (unposed - snuggling baby)
- > Mom with baby
- > Dad with baby
- > Sibling and baby
- > Baby alone
- > Baby details
- > Nursery details
- > Fun extras + bonus shots

There are SO many variations of these posing above and I usually go back through my older client galleries before a session to refresh my ideas and plan some “poses” I haven’t done in a while.

# Newborns on film | Full Session.

Fuji 400H

## Session details:

- > In-home newborn session with first born.
- > The mom sent photos of the nursery and living room of her house prior to the session, so I had a general idea of where I would shoot the images.
- > Camera, film and settings: Pentax 645 with mod Zeiss lens. Film: Fuji 400H and Tri-X 400. All images shot at f2.0 and 1/60, except for the image of the mama sitting in the chair in the nursery...that image was at f2.0, 1/125.
- > This home was a little on the darker side, so I rated Fuji 400H at ISO 800 and pushed 1 stop in development. I also metered for MIDTONES in the nursery because there was harsh light coming in through the windows and I had such a large discrepancy between the highlight and shadow reading on my light meter.





