

Say Cheese

What parent doesn't crave pictures of their child? Especially pictures taken during that first year when they change so quickly! In my daughter Melise's first 12 months of life, I never took her to a professional photographer. I just didn't have the budget. So I had to learn how to take my own frame-worthy photos.

A week before Melise turned 1 year old, I dressed her up and took her out. My goal was to have a picture for the newspaper and a few to frame. We went to her great-grandma's house where the yard is perfectly manicured. A relative that loves gardening makes a great asset in times like these!

My first attempt at capturing the perfect 1-year-old photo was to set Melise down on the porch steps. Great-grandma was sitting at the top of the steps watching. Of course, Melise spotted Great-grandma and would do nothing but watch her back. I called her name, sang a ditty, jumped up and down, but nothing I did would make Melise look at me. I pulled a little teddy bear out of my bag and Melise finally shifted her interest. I hit the button on my camera furiously, just hoping to catch a smile!

Feeling a little dismayed with my photo attempts thus far, I moved Melise next to some lovely marigolds. She immediately reacted to them, but not in the way I had hoped. She reached out and grabbed a flower. She giggled and babbled as she tore it to pieces! I tried to convince her to sit still and smile, but my attempts were ignored. She grabbed up the next flower and started to eat it! I took pictures in between struggles to get flower petals out of her mouth!

I moved her again, this time to the edge of a garden with an old tractor behind it (farm equipment always makes good backgrounds). Almost as soon as I sat her down she started crawling away! I pulled her back over and over, but she'd just turn her bum up in the air with a smile and crawl off every time. I was still clicking that camera button with fervor!

I decided it was time for a change of venue, so we waved goodbye to Great-grandma and went to the park. I found a bench under a tree with a sea of green lawn behind it. I placed Melise on

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the bench and asked her to smile. She just looked down at the wood she was sitting on and began to examine it. Once again, I couldn't get her to look my way.

I offered her the teddy bear again. She turned to it and with a swift slap knocked it off the bench. Melise turned her back on me in order to look for the bear. For a moment I was frustrated, but events turned to my favor when a woman went walking by. Melise turned to look over her shoulder at the woman, posing like a little model—click, click, click! I couldn't have got a better shot if I had asked for it!

At home, I uploaded the pictures to my computer. I had taken 233 pictures in two hours! There were shots of her staring at Great-grandma. There were shots of her torturing marigolds and drooling bright orange petals. There were shots of her backside as she crawled away from me. And there were shots of her peeking off the bench to look for her teddy. But amidst all those shots, I found six golden smiles with perfect poses. That made it well worth the effort!