

# Friendship

**By Shelly Perry**

Enlisting the help of friends is a wonderful way to build up your stock photo portfolio. Since you already have a relationship with them, you will be more relaxed when photographing, and they will be more relaxed when being photographed.

There is just a lot less pressure when photographing your friends than a total stranger. Without the “pressure,” you can play and experiment and get creative. This allows you to get more comfortable with your gear and experiment with things you may not otherwise try. And spending more time practicing your craft is always a good thing!

This month we are going to turn this subject of friends into our theme. While it may be your friends you use for the shots, it may not be as well. You can use friends, family, models, strangers, whomever, but the focus here is on interactions, relationships, and showing a real connection.

Think about all the ways that friends connect and interact with each other. Sometimes it’s a big group adventure, sometimes it’s more intimate one-on-one time.

Friends eat, drink, play, laugh, cry, fight, go out, stay in, travel, and explore. Friends can be some of THE most important people in our lives... and that’s definitely what the focus is this month with friends as our theme. Adding some images that represent the idea of friendship can definitely be a big boon to a stock photo portfolio.

Here are a couple of my own “Friends” shots on the right.



Now it's your turn. While "friends" is the theme, the direction you take with this is totally up to you.

Capture a big group dinner, get a group of friends around a weekend campfire, or show an intimate whisper between

pals. Friendship takes so many forms, so I encourage you to explore it with your camera! From lifestyle blogs to product advertisements to travel companies, friendship themed images hold a strong appeal for photo buyers.

## "Friends" as Stock Images

As a theme, friends, friendship, and relationships of all kinds should be a BIG consideration when thinking about what to shoot for stock. Just crack open any magazine and you will see shots of friends doing what they do together - shopping, gardening, fishing, skiing, skateboarding, walking, traveling, cooking... the list goes on and on.

You'll see them in both commercial advertising as well as in editorial articles. My point is that these are really popular shots due to how emotionally evocative they can be by representing a slice of life that's generally more playful and fun. This is the connected and exciting side of life that most folks aspire to.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Be Creative:** Think of how to show the connections and relationships. Friends are different than really any other relationship, and they can be both deeply intimate or casual

acquaintances and everything in between. Try to think outside the box a little and put your own unique twist on the idea while at the same time being as authentic as possible.

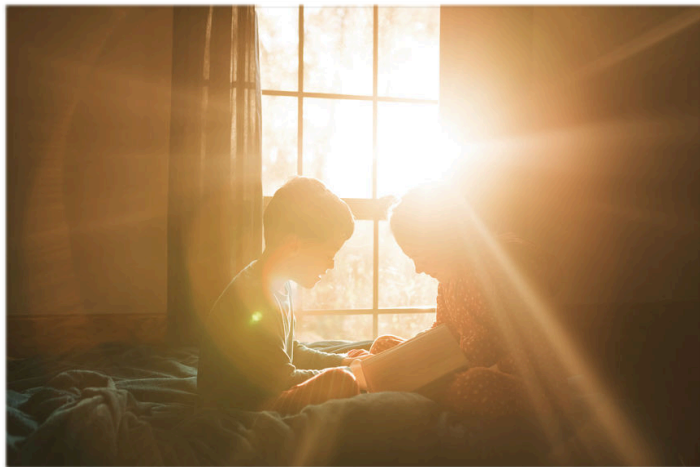
- **Think Expressive:** Friends fill a unique role. Sometimes they can be close as family, and sometimes you may only know them from a shared bowling league. There is a wide variance, but what we are looking for here is the connection, emotions, and experience. Try to capture some great (authentic) expressions.
- **Interaction:** Along with great expressions, the body language and interactions can speak volumes to the viewer, so be sure to pay attention to these elements as well to convey your message.
- **People:** While I suppose a pet or animal could be considered a friend for this theme, the vast majority of friendship images will include people.

This is excellent, especially for those of you a little nervous about photographing people. Just step up for this challenge to try it out. You just may end up with some great new people shots for your portfolio! And if you use your actual friends, it makes it easy for you to get a model release if you end up with some good shots.

Here are a few examples of friend themed images found in stock:



I love this shot of friends after what I assume is a mud run, or some other exuberant mud fun they just had together. There are no faces here as you can see, which sometimes can make a shot more saleable as it creates a more “generic” feel to the shot. Since we can’t see faces, we can more or less ascribe our own thoughts and ideals onto these folks. This image also feels very authentic.



This next photo is such a sweet picture of two children reading a book together. The sunlight streaming through the window like that adds a lot to the mood in this shot, embracing and enhancing the children perfectly. This image is a wonderful reminder that friendship spans all ages and phases of life.



The expression here on the woman's face is everything! This is a great shot because it shows not only the expression but also the connection. Just look at that engagement between the two. The expression feels so genuine and authentic that it’s really a winner.



This group selfie showing a bunch of kids goofing around, playing and having fun together feels very genuine and natural. There are big smiles, funny faces, and it really just has that feeling like you can almost hear them laughing. Friends of all age groups are important.

Also, a side note here... multigenerational friends would be a good consideration for stock photography as well.

Two friends and a dog out on a drive. I love the feeling of this shot- the motion blur on the edges really gives that sense of the wind in your hair, music playing, moving on down the road. This is another strong example of the sorts of things friends do together. And it's sellable... I've actually licensed and used this one for a project, myself.

Sometimes friends may be our family (which I think is the case in this shot), still the expressions here are priceless. They are real and genuine, and make me want to know the joke. The pure joy and connection of these two makes this shot work so well.



Perhaps more common than anything else is friends gathering together for a meal. The lighting and setting here are so nice. Again, the expressions and interactions feel authentic. Remember cooking and prepping the food together could also be a good subject to cover before you hit the table.



A stock worthy “Friends” photo should have these qualities:

- ▶ **Simple Impact:** Some shots can be so simple and yet so powerful in their impact. It’s really about what you choose to include IN the photo and what you leave OUT. Take your time, here. Ask yourself before each shot, “Are the important things in the frame? Are the distractions out? Is my subject clear?”
- ▶ **Good Lighting:** These types of shots can run the spectrum, however most will typically be natural light as you find it in the situation. It’s always a good idea to plan your shoots when the light will be best for your situation. That may be an overcast day when you want nice, soft, diffuse lighting. Or it may be golden hour, when you want your images to have a feeling of warmth and happiness.

The combination of incandescent lighting with blue hour in the dinner scene above really adds to the mood and genuine feeling of the shot. Paying attention to the subtle but important detail of the light in your scene will go a long way for setting the mood of your image, and how buyers will respond to that image.

- ▶ **Be Theme-Worthy:** For this one we are not just looking for pretty shots with great lighting and perfect composition, we are looking for shots that represent friendship and all the various situations and things that friends experience together. Most importantly, it’s the *relationship* and *connection* we are trying to convey here.



## Shooting Tips

**Reach out to your network.** For this theme, you will most likely have to tap into your network to gather some folks together for a fun shoot. You may already have plans with friends that you can photograph. You could also plan a little get-together and prep it all just the way you want on your back patio or at the local park. The possibilities are endless here, it's just a matter of thinking ahead, preparing, and planning... and taking your camera along on your friend adventures or creating a situation where you get the shot.

**Work the shot.** As always, "work the shot." Another way you can think about this is "work the experience." For example, if you're having a dinner party with friends,



through eating and clean-up. It's all about anticipating moments and having your camera settings dialed in so that you are ready to capture the interactions as they unfold.

### **Have fun and keep it real!**

This theme is all about capturing real moments between friends. So really, the best way to do this is to plan some excursions or gatherings with folks you care about and take some pictures along the way. It doesn't get much simpler than that! Of course, pay attention to important details such as wearing logo-free clothing and choosing a clutter-free background. A little planning will go a long way for this Challenge theme.



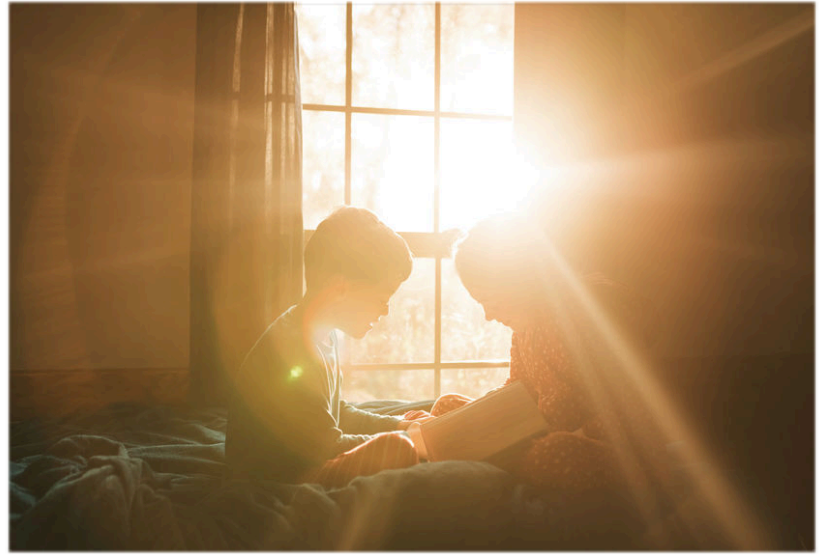
## Keywording Tips for “Friends”

All your shots should include the who (if there is one), the what, where, when, and why as keywords. The actions, mood, or feeling are all important descriptors as well as a few concept or idea words.

For instance, all of the shots above should be able to use “friends” or “friendship” as a concept keyword. As always, don’t include things that aren’t there or are not specifically expressed.

The trick with keywords for any shot is to be clear and detailed about all the things that matter in a shot in a way that buyers who are looking for it can find it without being over reaching and including details that simply don’t matter at all.

Let’s look at the “children in the sun flare” shot to the right. Here is how I would keyword it:



book	copyspace	girl	life	share	sunflare
boy	day	hazy	pajamas	sharing	sunlight
brother	daylight	home	read	siblings	together
children	friends	indoors	reading	sister	warm
childhood	friendship	learn	room	sit	window

Remember, keywording is not an exact science. There are always words that could be added, changed, or taken away, just try to be as clear as possible with the description of the important details you see.

If you want to see more “Friends” sample stock shots to get your creativity flowing, I put together a small gallery here: [www.stocksy.com/user/consumergallery/176305](http://www.stocksy.com/user/consumergallery/176305)

Now get out there and have some fun with your friends!!