

Dreamweaver Artists

Fine Art and Portrait Photography

Portrait Tips: Getting Ready for the Session



Your careful attention to the advice outlined here will contribute greatly to the success of your session and our capturing pleasing images together, to enjoy for years to come.

[Portrait Tips: Getting Ready for the Session]

Clothing

Clothing can make you look stunning, or alternatively, like a nerd.

When it comes to clothing, there is one basic rule – simple is always best. A portrait is almost always about faces. If the clothing is not competing for attention in a portrait, the viewer will be drawn to the face instead of the clothing.

Solid colors without patterns are ALWAYS the best. Stripes make you look bigger and wider. Try to avoid “loud” or “busy print” clothing. We understand that seniors, teens, and children may have some favorite outfits they wish to be photographed in that doesn’t fit the above guideline, and that is certainly acceptable. For some, the outfits worn in a session convey a part of their personality, and that is very desirable. In situations like this, we encourage our clients to also bring some solid color outfits as well as their favorites, so we can be more creative in the session. Some of the images we take in these “boring” clothes are some of the ones our clients fall in love with, ***because they focus on the face.***

Coordinate clothing color with backgrounds. A high-key image is one done against a white or very light background. If you want some images done in this way, pastel or other light colors work best. However, remember that in apparel, ***light color will not slim you as much as dark colors.*** A low-key image is one done against a black or other dark background. Mid-tones or darker colors work best for this. ***A black outfit is always a winner.***

Coordinate with others in the photo. For family groups, it is important to coordinate clothing choices:

- **Use a minimal amount of colors in clothing.** In groups it is best to use colors in the ***same tonal range***, so that no single family member stands out because their clothing is too bright or different compared to the rest of the group. They don’t all have to match exactly, however. For the best coordination among family members in a portrait, use no more than two colors for blouses, shirts, scarves, or hats. The photographer will balance the colors throughout the portrait to achieve harmony. Planned coordinated colors can have the psychological effect of showing closeness as a family, and by providing a sense of unity.
- **Clothing should be of one season.** In addition to colors, coordinate clothing by season with all family members. For example, one person wearing winter clothing and all others wearing spring clothing can make a portrait unbalanced or awkward.

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Long sleeves are best. Unless you're a very thin super model, bare shoulders and upper arms can make you appear pudgy in photographs. Wear tops with sleeves, preferably long ones. If you already have tan lines, plan your outfits so that they are covered. **Tan lines are impossible to retouch.**

Bring several outfits to create many portrait options. Bring multiple outfits (3 to 6 outfits are typical) that range from very dressy to casual in a variety of colors and styles. It is much better to be prepared to have a lot of choices, than to wish you had brought something that is still hanging in your closet at home. A formal outfit, even outdoors, can have an appeal to it that simple casual clothing cannot achieve.

Plan your on-location clothing changes. Most outdoor locations have little or no options for changing. If you are not comfortable changing in your car, you may want to bring a layered outfit that can be changed up by using a jacket without a need for privacy. If you are able to change during the session, wear the outfit that is the most difficult to put on.

We do PG-13 at the most. We are a family studio and will not take R-rated images of anyone. A little bit of "flirt" is fine, and if you're an adult we will have no problem taking these types of images. However, for high school seniors and younger, we pay VERY CLOSE attention to how alluring an image looks and will not create or show an image we feel is inappropriate for the age of the subject. Be sure to consider this when selecting your outfits.

Don't go shopping for all new clothes. Just choose some of your favorite outfits that make you feel great. Also, you may borrow some outfits from family or friends.

What about shoes? Choose shoes that are appropriate for and will complement your clothing selections. In some situations, bare feet look good as well. If showing bare feet, be sure toe nails are clean and manicured. Note that light colored athletic shoes draw the viewer's eye and distract from the face.

To sum it all up...

In the end, choose outfits that fit your personality and make you feel attractive. Create color harmony and ensure that all outfits are coordinated. Avoid patterns or stripes, and short skirts or shorts, as they make tasteful posing more difficult.

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Makeup

Makeup that is simply fresh and natural is always timeless. If you want some images with dramatic makeup that can be done or undone quickly, that is acceptable as well.

Bring makeup (especially face powder) for touchup during the portrait session.

Men must be freshly shaven if that is what you want to see in your portraits. We cannot remove or soften a 5 o'clock shadow. If your session is in the late afternoon or evening, and your beard grows quickly, plan on shaving again before your session.

Mineral makeup does not photograph well. Mineral makeup is very popular these days, and many of them contain titanium dioxide or zinc oxide as sunscreens. Sunscreens work by *reflecting and scattering* the sun's rays. Be aware that this reflective property may adversely affect your portrait by creating undesirable highlights and an appearance of oily or sweaty skin.

Hair and Nails

Do not experiment with a new hairstyle for your portraits. There is nothing we can do to create a portrait you will love if you hate your hair. Get a slight trim and touch up roots if needed. Guys need to get a haircut *a week or two before the session*.

Consider adding "up-dos." If you have longer hair, consider putting it up for some of the photos and down for others. Just be sure you can change quickly, and are bringing all accessories and hair sprays/applications to re-style your hair.

Girls and guys: Pay attention to your nails. Your hands will be visible in your photos. Also don't forget your feet if they will appear in portrait poses. A manicure and/or pedicure will help. Natural or subdued nail colors work best if you paint your nails.

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Jewelry

For timeless portraits, simple, classic jewelry is always best. Jewelry should be simple and complement your outfit, and not draw attention to itself.

What about my glasses? The glare from our studio flashes in your glasses' lenses will limit the possible portrait choices that we can consider. The absolute best solution is to have your portraits taken without your glasses. However, if the glasses are a "part of you" or it isn't otherwise desirable, consider borrowing some empty frames or pop the lenses out. Popping the lenses out of the pair of glasses that you retired when you obtained your current pair may be an easy alternative.

Props

Props can add a nice element of interest and help bring out your personality. Especially great for a variety of senior poses are things the senior has used or owns such as any of the below:

- Sunglasses
- Hats
- Scarves
- Jackets
- Sports gear (uniforms, balls, bats, rackets, etc.)
- Musical instruments and accessories (sheet music, music stands, cases, etc.)
- Bicycles, motorcycles, cars
- Umbrellas
- Pets
- Skateboards
- Hobby items

If you have horses or other large animals, we can certainly go on-location for your portrait.

Fun and Funky

The elements of fun and funky portraits are bold jewelry, wild nail polish, bright or glitzy make-up, and trendy fashion clothing. That is why they are fun! We welcome having a fun and funky portrait in a portrait session, but we strive to mainly create timeless portraits that will look good in any decade.

Don't forget: TRENDS CHANGE. Remember the polyester leisure suits and "bee-hive" hairdos of the 1960's, the bell-bottomed jeans and men's paisley shirts of the 1970's, the teased "big hair" and pop-art makeup of the 1980's, etc., etc.? Many families have those photos, and occasionally look at them and laugh about the faux pas of their "trendy" years. Let's have fun, but remember to create the timeless portraits that many more family generations will love.

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