

Getting Ready for Your Portrait Session

There are many factors to consider when you're getting ready for your portrait session. Here I've listed a few details you might wish to review. If you follow these simple tips, you're much more likely to present yourself in a positive light in the photographs we capture. Remember, this information is intended to serve as helpful guidelines and should not be considered requirements for your session.

Considerations

Before you arrive for your portrait session, I recommend that you assemble at least four (4) different outfits. Since my portrait packages are booked by the hour, I'm happy to accommodate as many wardrobe changes as possible during our time together. For my style of photography, there's no such thing as too many choices. When you arrive for your session, I'll help you choose the wardrobe options that might suit you best and promote your likeness in the most complementary fashion. Please note that if we are photographing you in public location or park, wardrobe changes may not be allowed. Please check with me prior to your appointment if we are planning your session for a public location.

If you don't have access to a large, stylish, or new wardrobe, you may wish to consider purchasing a few new items prior to your portrait session. It's helpful if you can ensure that your wardrobe will enhance rather than detract from your portrait. If your budget doesn't allow you to purchase new apparel, you may want to consider another option. Many of my subjects purchase new clothing from their favorite boutique or department store and then return the items after our session. If you consider this option, please take note that some stores don't allow returns. Check on the store's return policy before you buy!

Avoid selecting wardrobe items that feature strong patterns, bright colors, busy prints, or logos. Apparel featuring those characteristics can draw attention away from your face, the most important area of your photos. For more information on color selection, please see my short section titled *Choosing Complementary Colors* at the end of this document.

To make sure your wardrobe is presented in the best possible light, you should first make sure it's pressed and clean. An insignificant wrinkle can sometimes ruin an otherwise great photo. You should also ensure your undergarments aren't visible through your outer layers of clothing. Bra straps are notorious for causing problems in photos. And if you're wearing white or semi-transparent items, try to remove tags from your garments. Under certain lighting conditions, these tags can sometimes be visible in your photographs.

Although this consideration may not always be possible, consider avoiding wardrobe items that are made out of 100% cotton, linen, tweed, stripes, bulky knits, busy prints, shiny silk, satin, and shantung. The nature of these fabrics and accessories can pose unique difficulties in portrait

photography. You should also avoid wearing multiple layers of clothing. Multiple layers can often add perceived weight in photographs and make you appear bulky.

And finally, unless you're very thin, avoid sleeveless shirts, sweaters, or blouses. Even for slender subjects, it's often difficult to focus attention on your face if your bare arm is competing for attention in the photograph.

Don't forget to bring all of your accessories like shoes, socks, belts, necklaces, and earrings. You should also avoid wearing distracting jewelry including watches, large rings and earrings, and prominent necklaces. Jewelry should be kept at a minimum as these items can distract from your face in the finished photo. You should also avoid large buttons or shiny objects on your clothing or body. Shiny objects can also include glitter and rhinestones.

In addition to your standard accessories, you may wish to bring along a prop like a piece of jewelry or clothing, a tool of your profession, a book, a hat, a scarf, or even children's toys. Try to choose items that help identify you, but won't detract from your appearance.

Both men and women should pay particular attention to facial hair. Women should take a close look at their eyebrows and upper lips before the session. Even if your facial hair is masked by makeup, it can still appear in photos. For men, although it might prove difficult, I recommend you carefully shave a few hours before the photo session. This is a good practice because evidence of facial hair can often appear right away. Trimming your beard, goatee, moustache, and/or sideburns is also strongly recommended.

In the same vein, I also recommend that you visit your barber or stylist at least one week prior to the session. And if you're not comfortable styling your own hair or applying your makeup, please consider seeing a professional on the day of your session. That step alone can make a world of difference.

Finally, try and use hand moisturizer immediately before our engagement session. It's quite possible that I'll feature your hands in some photos. A manicure a few days before is also highly recommended, even for gentlemen. Pedicures are optional, but they often offer me additional photographic opportunities, especially for barefoot shots or if you intend to wear open toed shoes.

If you're participating in a couple, family, or group photo session, I recommend that you both wear similar attire. You should think about complementary colors and styles. These wardrobe choices will keep distractions to a minimum. For example, one option might be to have all of you wearing a combination of white and denim. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that any garment worn on your upper torso doesn't conflict with anything worn by someone else in the photo. Solid black, white, pastel, khaki, and denim combinations are generally the most successful for these types of photographs. If you have other color-scheme ideas, please feel free to call me before your session to talk about your wardrobe.

Try to get a good night's sleep before your photo session and avoid alcohol. You'd be amazed how easily bags under your eyes can detract from your photos!

Choosing Complementary Colors

It's helpful if you choose wardrobe (and makeup) colors that complement your skin-tone, hair color, and eyes. These color schemes and their complementary colors are traditionally segmented into four groups, named for the seasons Winter, Summer, Autumn, and Spring. For more information about selecting the best colors for your wardrobe and your makeup, I recommend the book *Color Me Beautiful* by Carole Jackson. Although this book was originally published in the early 1980s, its content remains timeless.

Winter

People with Winter complexions have dark or very light hair. Their skin is often pale white, olive, or dark. Many Asians, African-American, Hispanic, and natural white-blondes fit within this coloring category. Intense colors like black, navy blue, red, and hot pink are ideal for individuals with these characteristics. For apparel or makeup using lighter colors, bright white and pastels in blues, pinks, and yellows are also often found to be very complementary. It's always best to avoid brown earthy tones along with subdued colors like beige, orange, and gold.

Summer

People with Summer complexions have very pale skin with pink undertones. Many individuals with natural blonde hair and sometimes brunettes with pale skin and eyes are often segmented to this category. Since there's not much contrast between the skin, eyes, and hair of someone with a Summer complexion, clothing choices are particularly important. For best results, try to choose neutral colors and pastels. Some excellent color choices include powder blue, dusty pink, mauve, lavender, plum, and pale yellow. Vivid colors, earth tones, black, and orange should be avoided.

Autumn

People with Autumn complexions have golden skin undertones that can be described as pale peach, golden beige, or golden brown. Many individuals with red and brown hair and golden or dark eyes fall into this category. However, individuals with golden brown or black hair can also fall into this category. Colors that are most complementary include rich warm colors seen in autumn leaves along with colors like camel, beige, olive, orange, gold, dark brown, and warm gray. Colors like black, white, pastels, and blue tones should be avoided.

Spring

People with Spring complexions have subtle golden skin tones that are usually creamy white or peach. Individuals with this coloring usually include natural golden blondes, auburn, or strawberry blonde redheads. Members of this group also often have light green or blue eyes as well as freckles and rosy cheeks. Colors that are most complementary include pale, soft colors like peach, camel, golden yellow, golden brown, aqua, ivory, bright greens, reds, blues, and coral. Colors like black, white, and dark or dull colors should be avoided.