

PLANNING FOR YOUR PORTRAIT WITH PROPER CLOTHING

Simplicity is the key in most situations! Beautiful and memorable portraits are carefully planned. We know just what it takes to create a very special and personalized work of art and the selection of proper clothing is a critical factor. The **ultimate goal:** choose clothing that does *not* attract attention to itself or draws attention away from your face. It could be the difference between a very successful portrait and just another picture. It is quite possible that if inappropriate clothing is selected, the photographer may ask you to change your selection before the portrait sitting is made. Since your portraits are meant to be enjoyed for generations to come, fad-type clothing should be avoided, unless you are planning to have new portraits made annually.

WHY IS DARKER CLOTHING BETTER?

Your face is the most important part of the portrait and your clothing will ensure this. Why is darker clothing better? Darker clothing helps to blend your body with the background and tends to slenderize. Light colors seem to add weight to your body and attracts attention away from the face. Prints and any kind of pattern - no matter how small - become a distraction. Bold stripes, plaids, checks, and prints are visually confusing and do not photograph well. Bright colors, such as pink and orange, will overwhelm the face and ruin a portrait. Light colors that approximate flesh tones will overpower the face and make the subject look unusually pale. Thus, avoid busy patterns and bright colors.

However, light colors are best with light backgrounds and fair complexions. White, ivory, khaki, or pastels are best with a white background. Darker colors look better with deep backgrounds and dark hair or complexions. Avoid wearing yellow or green as they can adversely affect skin color. For individuals, simple long-sleeved garments in medium to dark tones of brown, gray, burgundy, green, or blue are pleasing choices when photographed against a medium or dark background.

White shirts and/or blouses under a dark jacket are good. A scarf tied loosely around the neck also helps frame the face beautifully when a collarless blouse or sweater is worn. Necktie's should definitely be toned-down in color and with a minimum of pattern.

AVOID SHORT SLEEVE CLOTHING AND SHORT PANTS

Long sleeves are essential for teens and adults, as bare arms call attention to themselves and will overpower the face. For casual portraits it is equally important to wear long pants instead of shorts. Women being photographed in full length should wear long skirts—at least skirts that cover the knees—pants, or dark stockings in order to keep the eye from being directed toward the legs and away from the face.

GROUP PORTRAITS

Same style & tonal range for everyone. Clothing for group portraits must be carefully selected to blend everyone together. First, decide whether the basic tone of the clothing will be warm-toned (browns, tans, etc.) or cool-toned (blues/greens/grays/blacks/white, etc.) Then, make sure to follow all the above instructions. Remember groups are held together and display unity and harmony when all members wear the same color and styles. Also, couples or small groups should choose simple garments with the same tonal ranges. When subjects appear in a mixture of light and dark tones together, there is visual confusion-as the light color comes forward and the dark color recedes. When this happens, one person becomes dominant and appears heavier than in reality.

PROPER NECKLINES FOR A PORTRAIT

The most flattering neckline for anyone is something that comes up close to the neck. A wide-open neckline tends to thicken the neck in a photograph. On the other hand, a neckline that comes up to the base of the neck - a turtleneck or a v-neck top is the most flattering. It tends to slim down the person and frames the face beautifully. Avoid very wide or particularly deep V-neck garments as well as bulky cowl neck sweaters that completely hide the neck.

Finally, lay out all the clothing onto a bed. Shoes, socks, stockings (dark hose is mandatory) - everything should be included. Then, take a careful look at the collection. If the eye goes to any one item in particular, you can be certain that the same thing will happen in a photograph. That item should be changed.

Clothing should fit, not being too tight or too loose. Clothing below the waistline should be darker than above. Otherwise, even light jeans worn below a darker top could easily attract attention to the lower part of the body and away from the face.

CASUAL BEACH PORTRAITS

For a beach portrait session it is sometimes a good idea to dress in light colored clothing, so that the bodies will blend with the light-colored sand. In this situation all white or pastel clothing works fine. All white clothing is great. White shirts and jeans work well, too. White shirts with beige pants is even better. Staying all in light tones can be very effective in this type of environment. Still, remember to dress everyone in the portrait similarly. You have to blend the bodies of everyone together, so that the faces stand out. This is essential particularly in a group portrait.

CHILDREN: UNDER 2YRS

Dressed in white or light pastels, alone or with a group. Avoid bringing spectators. It is very important that the camera has all of the subject's attention. Avoid turning the session into a play time, feel free to bring props, a toy, blanket, chair or anything special (within reason of course).

HAIR STYLE AND MAKEUP

Hair styles should be SIMPLE and MUST be off the face. Make sure your hair is the way you like it. Hair falling down onto the sides of the face (currently very much in style) create distracting shadows. Bangs that come down too low onto the face will keep light from getting into the subject's eyes - the most important part of the face. Normal evening makeup. Eye makeup should be blended - no sharp demarcation lines between colors. AVOID WHITE above or below the eyes. It does not photograph well at all. Too much color above and below the eyes attracts attention to itself. It actually takes attention AWAY from the eyes, rather than attracting the viewer to the eyes. Foundation makeup should be blended at the jaw line, so that there is no demarcation between the face and the neck. Men should have their hair cut about one week before the portrait session. Men should also be clean shaven or facial hair should be carefully groomed.

GLASSES

Eye glasses may or may not be worn. Non-reflective lenses, of course, are a big help. Better yet, sometimes it's possible to obtain a matching set of frames without the lenses. This is particularly helpful, if your lenses sometimes distort the outline of your face.