

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.

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.

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.

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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!

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