

Posture

I have a background in teaching dance, so I've got a thing for posture. A rigid soldier look is not attractive, so I try for a comfortable posture that makes my client look good! There are definitely some simple things that can be done to help a lady look lovelier, and a gentleman look more dapper.

- Stand with one foot slightly in front of the other with your weight on the back foot at a 45-degree angle to the camera. This helps to create a flattering pose, and looks much better than a straight on shot with weight centered.
- Relax your shoulders. That doesn't mean you should slouch. The easiest way to relax your shoulders is to scrunch them up to your ears, and then relax.
- When teaching dance, I have found there is a simple way to get great alignment. I tell my students to "Think long neck". This means that you try to lengthen your neck. Keep your face and chin parallel to your body so that your chin is not jutting out. So for great posture, think "long neck" and then relax!

Props

Adding props to photos is one of my favorite ways to help show personality! If you enjoy reading, add books or have the shoot in a library. If there is a favorite pet, bring the pet along.* Perhaps fashion props like hats or shoes would be your style. If someone plays an instrument, bring it along on the shoot. Team shirts or gear for the athlete. Engagement photos might include "Save The Date" signs, and things that represent what you have in common. For a maternity shoot, you might want to bring along an ultrasound printout or alphabet blocks to spell baby. Newborn photos might include a special stuffed animal, blanket or basket. Children's portraits could include toys, sunglasses, or dress-up clothes. You can also bring anything that might have special meaning to you or your family. Perhaps a family quilt, a special chair or stool, or jewelry that belonged to grandma. Using a few props can add personality and make the photos more meaningful. I also have a few props that I can bring along. This is part of what we will discuss before your photo shoot!

*Note about animals. I have found that if there is a pet involved, it is best to bring an extra person along on the shoot that the animal knows to help get the pet to look toward the camera.

Infants

Newborn infants are so very special. The best newborn photos are taken within the first few days after they are born. You can alert me to your due date, and then check back when you want to schedule the shoot. Try to book your appointment around your baby's feeding and nap times, if you have figured that out! Usually the best time is right when the baby would be laying down for a nap after a feeding.

I won't be bothered when the baby cries or if we need to take a break because baby needs some time alone with mom. I also know that mom needs to feel calm and comfortable. Babies know when mom is stressed. I allow lots of extra time for diaper changes, and mood swings. Newborn sessions can last longer than regular sessions. If you want photos without clothes, the room temperature will need to be warmer than usual. Babies tend to cry when they are cold. Newborn photos seem to work best when the baby is sleeping comfortably and easily posed. Infants have the most adorable expressions!

Glasses

I dedicate an entire section to glasses because it is one of the most challenging parts of getting great photos! If you wear glasses, I am sure you are familiar with those light reflecting spots that show up on your lenses in photographs. Trying to eliminate glare is one of the main reasons I use a diffuser on my external flash. There are a few things you can do to help prevent those spots. When we are shooting outside, the sun is above us. It is usually not a good idea to angle your face upwards because that is a sure way to catch the light and cause glare spots. In most situations, it is best for someone who wears glasses to angle their face slightly downward. This works indoors as well. So, if you hear me say, "Chin down" I am trying to change the angle of reflection and eliminate the glare on your glasses.

Note about transition lenses: If we are shooting outside and your glasses have transition lenses that turn darker in the sun, please let me know ahead of time. We need to do a little extra planning if you want your lenses to show up clear in the photos. We can set up and plan the shots while you have your lenses tucked safely in a dark pocket. Then take them out for the shot. It may take more time to complete your photo session because we need to wait for them to clear up between each shot.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Tips for our clients:

**How to create
great portraits**

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What To Wear

First, it is important that everyone is comfortable! If you are in pain because of the 5-inch stiletto shoes you are wearing, you are not going to have a lovely relaxed smile. Children especially need to feel comfortable, or they will not be as cooperative as we might like. That superman cape that they seem to always want to wear may be the perfect choice. Years from now, you will remember how special that time in their life was.

Basically, simple is best. Large bold colored patterns and neon colors tend to take focus away from the people in the photo and draw your eye toward the print or super bright color. Choose shirts that don't have words on them. (Unless you are going for the super hero theme, or we are shooting company profile photos.) Solid single colored shirts with bottoms that are similar in tone usually look best. Be careful of printed fabrics. You don't want one person to stand out or have a competition between prints.

Some families like to dress alike, or dress the part with a theme. I've had a lot of fun taking photos with themes like farming or western cowboys. One of my favorite large family portraits has each individual family dressed in the same color. That really helps in figuring out which children belong to whom when great grandma is showing the photo to her friends.

If you would like everyone in a family portrait to dress in a similar color, they don't need to match perfectly. For instance, different shades of blue look fine together. When choosing a color, you also need to consider where the photo will be taken. Many people like the idea of everyone wearing white shirts and jeans. That can look really nice. But if the photo is to be taken a large room with white walls, that could be a big problem. If it is outside in front of a red barn, those white shirts may look great! You can also choose colors that compliment each other instead of being exactly the same.

It might help to lay the clothes out somewhere to be sure nothing clashes. You may notice that one outfit seems very different from the others. Consider style as well as color. You don't want your daughter wearing her prom gown and her brother wearing camo pants, or one person wearing dark colors and everyone else wearing lighter colors.

Please let me know if you are planning to bring more than one outfit. It is important to let me know what you are thinking so we can plan our time together. I like to at least have a Plan A. That makes Plan B easier to figure out.

Lips and Nails: If you are someone who enjoys makeup, you may want to have your lipstick or gloss handy for touch ups. A fresh coat of nail polish in a neutral color that won't distract or clash with your outfit will help you look polished.



Posing

When there are groups of clients, sometimes it is necessary to create different levels of people to fit them all in. There are three basic levels: Standing, kneeling, and sitting. There is also the basic rule of tall people in the back and shorter people in the front. But there are always exceptions! In large families, I prefer to have individual family members near each other. Sometimes this gets interesting and takes some time to get just right. I come from a very large family (right now I have 28 nieces and nephews) I also have a lot of experience taking group shots of our youth group with many teenagers. Taking group shots can be challenging, but a lot of fun if everyone has a cooperative attitude! I enjoy taking the traditional "everyone smile and look nice" poses, and then sometimes "lets have some fun" poses! Ironically, the "fun" photos are usually the favorites because they show personality.

- Ladies: Standing up straight at a 45-degree angle to the camera with your weight on your back leg as mentioned in the posture section is a great pose. Shifting your torso slightly toward the camera and lowering your front shoulder just a little bit will help create a flattering angle. Bending your arm slightly back and away from your waist will help create a feminine line. A graceful seated pose for a lady involves keeping knees together, and perhaps crossing legs at the ankle back leg over the front one. There is also a spinal twist pose that I use for sitting on the ground, if she is wearing jeans or slacks. One knee is bent upwards with the other leg on the ground and tucked in under the upward knee. For a model style smile, which helps a little bit with the double chin issue, try pressing your tongue against the roof of your mouth.
- Gentlemen often seem to struggle with what to do with their hands. I try to capture what is normal for each client. If he is a hands in the pocket kind of guy, only one hand in and his thumb should always be showing outside of the pocket. A good kneeling posture is like the traditional football player team pose. Down on one knee with the other leg bent at a 90-degree angle. The elbow of the arm on the same side as the knee that is up should rest on the knee.
- Children can be lots of fun to pose. In one recent wedding, there was a little man who most obviously was not enjoying the photo shoot until his father held him upside down! Giggles ensued, and he stopped trying to run away. When small children are involved in a family group shot, it is so important for all the adults to keep smiling as we work on getting the children to smile. It is so heartbreaking for me to finally get a shot with the baby smiling, but one of the adults was not paying attention! I have found that it is a super great idea to have an adult who knows the children stand behind me to get the children's attention. This is by far the best strategy I have found for getting great photos of children. Small children do not respond to a stranger's voice, or my face that is behind the camera. For a family portrait session with young children, it is a good idea to invite another adult to help with the smiles! Not expecting perfection is a great attitude. I remember a photographer trying to take my daughters thumb out of her mouth, which just made her cry. That photo with her thumb in her mouth is now one of my favorites. I also have noticed that children are much happier when they are not hungry. Snacks that are not messy can be a great idea!
- I really like to show personalities in portraits. I think it is nice to give the impression that you really care about the others who are in the photo. So, I may suggest that you touch someone else's shoulder, hold hands, or lean against one another. You might hear me say "look like you like each other"! The best photos are usually not the "perfect pose" but the "real pose".

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