

Tips for Head Shots & Portrait Sessions

What to Wear & How to Prepare

riverwood photography

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THE BIG TIP

If you don't read anything else, in this guide, read this tip:

Be sure to wear clothes that you like and that you are comfortable wearing. If you aren't comfortable it will show in your face and your body language, and that will definitely come through loud and clear in your pictures.

How to Prepare for your Session

- Get a good night's sleep the night before. This isn't always the easiest thing to do, but it's really important to try. The more rested you are, the better you'll look.
- Drink plenty of water in the days leading up to your session. Hydrated skin looks much healthier than dry skin.
- Apply facial moisturizer (men and women). Moisturizer helps to make your skin look fresh and smooth. Use a plain moisturizer without any color or shine. Be sure to do this before you apply any makeup or face powder.
- If you normally wear makeup then apply it before you leave for the session. You don't need to use extra makeup; rather just apply it as you normally would.
- Avoid makeup with too much gloss or shine. In particular, don't wear high gloss lipstick or very shiny lipgloss.
- Avoid face creams, bronzers or blushes that contain any sort of shine or sparkle. These don't look natural and often reflect too much light in photos.
- If you have oily or shiny skin then consider a light application of face powder before you leave for the session (or shortly after you arrive).

What to Bring to your Portrait Session

1. A comb or brush and a light hair-spray. Heavy sprays and gels make your hair look unnatural and stiff, so something with a light hold is a better idea.
2. A plain lip-balm. Dry lips show up very badly in photos. A non-shiny, non-waxy, no-color lip-balm is essential!
3. If you normally wear makeup, bring it with you. Avoid anything with too much gloss or shine. In particular, don't wear high gloss lipsticks or very shiny lip-gloss. Also avoid any face creams, bronzers or blushes that contain any sort of shine or sparkle. These often look too unnatural and reflect too much light in photos.
4. The floor in the studio is tile over concrete and can be cold at times, so for studio sessions please bring a clean & comfortable pair of shoes.
5. Feel free to bring a couple of clothing options (eg. a couple of suit jackets and some different color ties). We can work together to pick a final outfit that looks great.

What to Wear for Headshots & Business Portraits

For headshots, there are three very broad options:

1. Casual and Informal

A simple shirt (or sweater) and jeans is always a good bet here.

IMPORTANT: Do not wear shirts with logos, brand names or any obviously printed words on them. These draw the eye away from your face which should be the focal point.

2. Elegant and Slightly Formal

A well tailored jacket and a well tailored shirt is a very good choice for men. For women, a fashionable, figure-flattering top, dressy sweater, nice trousers, or casual cocktail style of dress is a good choice. Shirts should have solid colors or faint stripes, but should not have bold patterns, fancy designs, or large logos.

When you're choosing what to wear, ask yourself whether you want your photos to look corporate or not?

- Women: If you don't want a business-like look, don't wear button-up shirts.
- Men: If you don't want to look corporate then skip the tie.

If your headshots are for acting, online dating sites, etc., you don't want to look as if you're going to a job interview.

3. Edgy and/or Unusual

Particularly for actors, musicians and entertainers who have a unique look or play a broad range of styles. For this 'look', bring the clothes that define your particular style.

In short, bring the right outfit, accessories, or makeup that really shows off your individuality.

What to Wear for Family and Beauty Portraits

When deciding what to wear for a portrait session, the range is much wider. It depends entirely on what type of portraits you're getting. However, the following rules apply to almost any photography session...

1. For Family and Group portraits everyone should be wearing complementary clothing. For studio sessions in particular matching colors are essential! When one person looks different against a solid backdrop they really stand out and become a major distraction in the resulting image.
2. Colors which look great on almost everybody: White, black, and greys are always a good choice. For color, choose earth-tones (reds and browns) and jewel-tones (turquoise and most blues). Certain pastels are also good: light blues, lavenders and pinks.
3. Clothing choices to avoid: Large, bold prints, logos or patterns. Again, these draw the eye away from your face, which is not a good thing. You don't want your outfit to dominate your photos. Don't wear clothing that is too loose or too clingy. Very loose clothing and very tight clothing both have the effect of unflatteringly altering the shape of your body. Shiny fabrics should generally be avoided; anything with a lot of shine will reflect light and tends to overemphasize the figure.
4. Do not over-accessorize. Keep it simple. Too many extra visuals will detract from your face, which should be the only focal point in your pictures. If you have one particular piece of jewelry you'd like to wear, don't wear any other pieces with it. A big, bold necklace can sometimes look really wonderful, but not if it's also worn with big, bold earrings. Small, basic earrings, one or two simple rings, and no necklace are usually the best choice for women. Just a watch and one ring (if you wear any) is usually the best choice for men.

Although there are a lot of things to factor in here, they're all quite simple. If you keep these tips in mind, you're certain to look and feel your best for your professional photography session!



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