

Claxton Photography

Things To Think About For Your Portraits

Before I get started you need to realize that these are just suggestions. The pictures are yours as well as whoever is paying for them. If you want to do things that go against any of these suggestions, feel free. It won't hurt my feelings any. These suggestions are to help you get the best portraits possible from your session.

- 1) **Clothing.** All sessions include unlimited changes of clothes. Just remember that the more times you change your clothes the less time there will be for actually taking pictures. Now think about what type of clothes you should wear. General guidelines are:
 - a) The most important thing is to wear what you feel and look the best in, are most comfortable with, and what truly reflects who you are. For example, if you are studying for clown school it would probably be appropriate to wear a white, polka-dot clown outfit with yellow hair, red hat, red nose and big red shoes for a few shots (very few shots!) It's part of who you are, even though it breaks probably every rule below.
 - b) Bring a variety of clothes. Don't bring all jeans and t-shirts or tank tops and shorts unless that's really all you want. You will probably want several different looks. For girls this might be shorts, capris, skinny jeans, skirt and dress. All with appropriate tops, shoes and accessories. For guys, it might be shorts, jeans, Dockers and slacks. Again, with the appropriate style of shirt and shoes. Bring clothes/uniforms that represent your activities and interests in school.
 - c) If you want to, bring scarves, gloves and hats to change up the look of your outfits.
 - d) Wearing classic styles will ensure that your pictures won't look dated in a few years when the current styles go out of fashion... again!
 - e) Try to ensure your clothes aren't wrinkled or dirty. If your eye can see wrinkles or soiled cuffs and necks, the camera will see them better. A lot of this is due to the fact that you will not be moving in your picture. When you're moving around, wrinkles and dirt might not be as noticeable, but when you are still, in your picture, they will show.
 - f) Solid colors photograph better than patterns. Portraits, generally, are all about you, not your clothes. Loud, bright patterns will distract from you and draw attention to your clothes.
 - g) Try not to wear clothes with small stripes. Sometimes they will not photograph well and develop interesting Moiré patterns (not a good thing!) Large stripes would probably be OK but, again would draw attention away from you in your portraits.
 - h) Lighter clothing will, in general, make you look larger than darker clothing.
 - i) Wearing dark tops with light pants can make your bottom half look bigger than your top half, which isn't a good idea for either males or females.
 - j) A "V" neckline tends to be minimizing while a rounded neckline will tend to make your face appear rounder.
 - k) Normally shirts with large writing on them aren't as good as plain shirts.

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- l) Try to match dark skirts, shorts or pants with dark tops and match light skirts, shorts and pants with light tops.
- m) When selecting colors remember to pick colors you look best in. That's probably what you wear already and shouldn't be a problem but just something to think about.
- n) Shirts with sleeves will work better than shirts without sleeves. Also, short sleeves don't work as well as long sleeves. Large, light areas will distract the viewer's attention away from your face. Shoulders and arms are, in general, larger and lighter than faces.
- o) Wearing clothes that are too tight can make you look much bigger than you are. Be sure your clothes fit well.
- p) Don't wait until the morning of the shoot to select your clothes. Make sure you have complete outfits picked out. Don't just throw together some random clothes and worry about sorting it all out later. Make sure the clothes aren't wrinkled or dirty, unless they are supposed to be.
- q) If you will be wearing dresses or skirts, you might want to wear something underneath to help stop the possibility of embarrassment. Things like spandex or cheer pants maybe. Try to wear the appropriate bra for the outfit you have on. Bra straps are very distracting and rarely, if ever, look OK. If you will need to be changing in a car you might want to wear a tank or something underneath your outfits, if appropriate. If you have or know someone with a van that would help with outfit changes.
- r) Be sure to bring appropriate undergarments for each outfit you will wear during the shoot. It might not require more than one set for all of the outfits but think about it while picking out clothes. Nude or flesh colored undergarments will have the least chance of showing through your clothes in the pictures.
- s) Get help if you need it. If you are fashion challenged, maybe ask friends and/or parents what you should wear. Guys, get your girlfriend or a girl friend to help you. Girls, maybe get some of your friends (probably not your boyfriend) to help you pick out what to wear.
- t) Some poses will show your shoes so don't forget to bring shoes & socks for each outfit that you plan to wear. Barefoot and sandals are no problem for your casual outfits. Although white socks are in, they don't photograph well, so bring darker ones.
- u) Traditional styles will stand the test of time and keep your portrait looking fresh for years to come. So try and use styles and looks that will be in style "next year," as well as this now. Otherwise your portrait will look dated and out of style in a year or two.
- v) As a parent, I'll mention a thing about compromise. You might want all of your pictures taken with torn jeans, ripped shirts and old, grungy sneakers. While you may be OK with that, your parents would probably like to have some pictures of you in dress clothes. It wouldn't hurt too bad to do some pictures like that too. I promise. And consider... 20 years from now you may be looking at the 'grungy' pictures from your shoot wondering

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what you were thinking. You might just like having some 'cleaned up' pictures as well. It also helps add variety to your shoot.

2) Makeup:

- a) Please do not wear ANY sparkly makeup. This includes anything with glitter such as eye shadows, blush and lotion.) This makeup, and other sparkly products, can leave small white dots all over your face, arms and wherever else it is and will not look good at all! Things that don't seem to make much difference when you are moving, talking, laughing or whatever suddenly make a lot of difference when you aren't moving, the sparkles aren't flashing on and off and are just there, forever. Depending on the lighting the spots can look much larger than they actually are.
- b) Don't use makeup that has an SPF factor (the ingredient which will help protect you from sunburn). SPF makeup contains reflective substances that will also cause glare or at least lighten your skin a little, making it not match the rest of you. Other than that, non-oily foundation, powder, etc... is OK.
- c) Be careful when applying makeup so you don't leave obvious edges that will be hard to retouch out of the picture.
- d) Non-oily foundation, whether or not you normally wear makeup, can help hide zits and splotches on your skin.
- e) Oily makeup and/or lotion can leave a shine on your face that won't look good in your pictures.
- f) For guys and girls alike. Even if you don't normally wear makeup, a translucent powder is a good idea. It will help cut down on the amount of shine on your face while taking pictures. Shine will blow out very easily to white in a picture and doesn't leave detail in the skin to try to recover from. Try to match the color to your skin and be sure to bring along extra.
- g) To help with oily shine a little bit more, at the shoot location, you should be able to find face blotters at beauty supply stores or makeup counters.
- h) Don't wear super glossy lipsticks or lip gloss because they will make big white spots from the shine where the light hits it.
- i) Use fresh mascara so you won't have clumps. Your eyelashes will show very clearly in close-ups, so clump-free mascara is important.
- j) Use neutral eye shadow colors such as grays and browns. Try to avoid pastel shades and very highly frosted eye shadows.
- k) I'm a guy so I don't know if nail polish counts as makeup, but I'm putting it here.
 - i) Remove and redo chipped nail polish. It will probably show in several of your shots.
 - ii) While black/blue nail polish may be trendy now, you might think about not wearing it. You might like it now, but in 10 to 20 years what will you think?

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iii) Very bright, neon colors may draw too much attention to your nails and may clash with the colors of some of your outfits.

iv) Maybe think about wearing fairly neutral colors.

3) What to do and not do the week or two leading up to your session:

- a) Try to keep out of the sun. Sunburn on guys or girls who wear ball caps, peeling skin on noses from recent burns, raccoon eyes from those who were burned while wearing sunglasses and strap lines on the shoulders of girls who wish to be photographed in a strapless formal dress or top are all major problems. Sunburn, uneven tanning and tan lines are extremely hard or impossible to retouch. If this happens to you, your session will probably need to be rescheduled.
- b) If you do want to tan, try to vary your sleeve lengths and swim suit styles to try to help avoid tan lines.
- c) Kind of in the same line, don't spray tan before your session. Spray tans look very orangey and may be uneven because of differences in skin types on the same body.
- d) Don't get your hair cut or colored too close to the session date. You want to have a chance to get it redone if you don't like it. Also, you might want a chance to let it grow out a little before the shoot.
- e) Chapped or cracked lips are going to show in your portraits. Moisturize your lips before your session and make sure they are in good shape.
- f) If you are going to whiten your teeth before a shoot start treatments a couple of weeks before the shoot.
- g) Start moisturizing nightly a week in advance of your shoot. When you get out of the shower, dry off until lightly damp, and put on moisturizer. Focus on your arms, shoulders, neck, face, hands, anywhere you'll be exposed to the camera. This includes your legs if you're shooting in shorts or a skirt.

4) What to bring to the shoot:

- a) School letter jacket.
- b) Any athletic/sports equipment, uniform, caps and hats.
- c) Band instruments and uniforms.
- d) Any props or paraphernalia used by other types of clubs or activities, such as: chess boards, calculators, slide rules (yea, right!), theater or choir articles, etc...
- e) Jewelry.
 - i) Remember that too much jewelry can be distracting.
 - ii) If you will be wearing several different pieces with different outfits it's a good idea to have the pieces with the outfits they will be worn with. This can be done by putting each set of jewelry in baggies and putting those on the hangers your outfit is on.
 - iii) Flat, shiny jewelry can be harder to photograph due to the reflections.

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- iv) Pendant necklaces can be hard to keep in the proper place when you move around as you pose. The pendant may not be centered in many of the shots.
- f) If you wear glasses, check with your optician to see if it is possible to borrow a pair of empty frames like yours. Glass glare from the lenses is difficult to remove after the fact.
- g) Hair brush, hair spray and makeup.
- h) Pets, if you have someone with you that can control the pet during your session. This is important so you won't be distracted.
- i) Your vehicle (car, pickup, motorcycle, etc...)
- j) A friend or parent who can help with outfit changes and checking your hair and makeup.
- k) If you find particular poses or ideas you would like to use, bring the picture or just the idea with you. We will work to make it happen for you.

5) Bringing Someone With You:

- a) I would really like it if you had someone with you to help you during the shoot, if it isn't someone who will be too distracting to you. A friend or parent can help you feel more at ease and comfortable during the shoot. They can also help you with outfit changes, jewelry, hair and all of the other things that need to be watched and kept straight. I'll do what I can, around the shooting, but someone else would make it easier for you and help keep the shoot flowing smoothly.
- b) This person may also help by holding reflectors, diffusers, lights, etc. during the shoot if necessary.
- c) Don't bring a big group of people. It can degenerate into a lot of people making fun of you during your shoot and you won't be comfortable and the pictures will show it. One or two people would be a good number.

Wow! This is such a long list! I don't want to make you think that if you don't follow all of these suggestions your images won't turn out. They will. But, following some/most/all of these suggestions will help to produce more images that you will treasure for a long time.

Now that you have finished looking at this list, I want you to understand that you should have fun with this! These are some things to think about but, in the end, these are all just suggestions.

Tony