



Portraiture Workshop

Some Hints

There are guidelines for taking good photographs, but you can still create great images if you disregard the guidelines. First though you need to know what they are so when you break them you can win the viewers sympathy by highlighting some other feature of the image that is stronger than the ignored guideline.

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Here are some things you should keep in mind: -

Lens to Use – A telephoto lens is best because it doesn't distort facial features. A telephoto lens is any lens that has a focal length greater than a Normal Lens. So, what is a Normal Lens? If your camera is a cropped sensor type, then the normal lens will have a focal length of about 30mm. If your camera is a full frame type, then 50mm will be normal. Anything bigger than these lenses is telephoto. A zoom lens can be telephoto when you are using a focal length larger than either 30 or 50 depending on your camera type.

Telephoto lenses have the effect of shortening the depth of field. That is the distance between the nearest and farthest points in sharp focus when you focus on the subject's eyes. Most photographers will use about 80 – 100mm as a focal length but try using a large telephoto/ zoom lens of say about 200mm for more impressive results.

Aperture to use - Use the low numbers – 1.8, 2.8, 3.5, 4.5. These are wide apertures that will produce a shallow depth of field, allow lots of light to enter the lens and permit you to use a faster shutter speed. A faster shutter speed could allow you to hand hold the camera if the lens is not too big and heavy.

Shallow Depth of Field - Good for portraiture as it defuses background detail giving the in-focus subject more impact.

Eyes – Should be the point of focus. Pupils should be in the centre of the eyes to break up the white areas into small sections and so make the white parts less dominant. It's ok to have other areas of the subject a little out of focus.

Clothing - Bright or light-coloured clothing can be a distraction. Remember the face and the eyes are the most important part of the photograph so other items in the picture should not compete for attention.

Position the camera a little **below** the subject's eye level and have the subject **tilt** their head slightly downward so they can look **straight** into the lens without the camera looking up the subject's nose. When the camera is looking down the subject will appear diminutive and when the camera is looking up the subject will appear dominant.

Composition - With a simple portrait image the subject's eyes are usually about one third down from the top and in the centre. If the subject is a little off to one side, then make sure the subject is looking into the picture and not out of it. If your image is to be an

environmental portrait be sure to make the subject a major part of the scene. If the subject is too small your photo will become a landscape or some other scene that just happens to have a person in it.

Shoulders – Try them end on to the camera to reduce their size. When square to the camera they become wider than the subjects head and so become more dominant.

Lean the subject slightly towards the camera to emphasize their importance.

Glasses – If the subject is wearing glasses, angle the subjects head so there is no reflection from the lighting source showing.

Facial scars & Baldness – Adjust your lighting direction and/or type so as not to light up these areas.

These are just some of the small points that you can use to refine your portrait photograph. Your choice of location and the type of lighting you use will be a major factor on just how you pose your subject.

Different types of Portrait Photographs

Formal - Head and shoulders only often taken in a studio setting but can be taken outside using available light.

Environmental – This will tell the viewer a bit about the person being photographed. The background could show their workplace, sport, family, or travel.

Candid – A spur of the moment image capturing a typical facial expression