

Preparing For Family Portraits (v.1.10)

The following information will help you and your family to prepare for your Family Portrait Session so that you will get the most out of it and that it will also be a successful one. Your attention to the following information will help to make the overall experience of Family Portrait Night more pleasant for everyone participating.

Clothing Selection:

Colour:

The choice of clothing is an important consideration for portraits. Unlike commercial advertising, the objective of portraiture is **to not draw attention to the clothing** but to allow the faces and their expressions be the main focus. The first consideration will be for you to know what colour of background has been chosen for the portraits. The choices will either be grey or white and has already been determined by the PAC or organizer of Family Portrait Night at your child's school. If a grey background has been chosen, most colours can be used successfully within the guidelines, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs. If a white background has been chosen, lighter colours for clothing will be the better choice.

General guidelines for clothing should include choices which will not draw attention to the clothing. On a white background, the darker areas of the portrait will always stand out whether it happens to be the individual's clothing, hair or skin tone. For an individual trying to hide his/her size, wearing a solid black or darker colour may be a good choice as an everyday outfit. **However, when having portraits taken against a white background, wearing black will draw attention to and accentuate what he/she may be trying to minimize.** It would be much better for that individual to be wearing white or very light colours. Contrary to the common misconception, wearing white for a portrait against a white background will not make people appear as if they are floating in mid-air.

Style:

Clothing should be simple and free from bold or busy patterns. Clothing and shoes with reflective elements can cause problems with studio lighting and should be avoided. Clothing with large words, lettering or logos covering the front of the body should also be avoided. However, an exception to this would be if all family members are wearing a shirt or jersey from their favourite team or club.

Clothing should be similar in style and tone for each member of the family so that no single member stands out. Tops should be lighter than bottoms but again, you should avoid black or dark pants that will accentuate the body part that you may be trying to minimize, if the photography will be against a white background.

White shirts with faded blue jeans are an excellent choice for either white or grey backgrounds. Medium to darker greys as well as blacks can work well for a grey background.

There are exceptions to the clothing guidelines that can also work well. Bright primary colours or fluorescent colours can add a dimension of energy to a portrait as long as it is coordinated with the entire group. This concept works well when dressing with costumes of bold colour and design where the main focus is intentionally to be on the outfits.

Length of Dresses/Skirts & Socks:

These items of clothing may become problematic during parts of the session as you will likely be sitting down on the floor (background) for some of your portraits. When sitting on the ground, pant legs, dresses and skirts will be pulled up. **As a result, please avoid very short dresses and skirts for the women and girls.** For the men and boys, please have socks that are at least mid-calf in length to avoid the problem of having several inches of bare ankle showing. For this reason, **short ankle socks are not an appropriate choice.**

Footwear:

Footwear should have clean soles as well as uppers and should not be the same ones which have been worn all day at the playground. In wet weather, you should bring your clean dry footwear to change into once inside the building. Dress boots for women and girls are fine but they should **avoid wearing the 'puffy' type of casual boots that will make their feet look unflatteringly large.** If leather shoes and boots are to be polished, please ensure that all of the polish is buffed off so that the soles, heels and uppers do not transfer any of the dye to the background that which you may be sitting on. This is especially important for the white background so that it does not get marked up.

Bright fluorescent colours are the current trend for runners and skate shoes. Please try to avoid these unless they are to coordinate with the choice of clothing, as they really do stand out and scream for attention. **Runners and skate shoes are especially bad for trapping dirt in the small grooves of the tread, even when dry.** Please stomp these shoes on a hard floor surface to release the debris which may be lodged in the tread before entering the studio.

For the poses in which you will be sitting on the background, the removal of shoes and boots may be required. The colour of the socks is not critical but should match with the theme of your clothing. White socks will be the better choice for a white background. Please ensure that socks are clean and of the appropriate length.

Pets:

Before deciding to bring your dog for your family portrait, please consider whether or not this will add to the already challenging task of settling and getting the cooperation of very young or active children.

Having had pets for most of my life and having been a dog owner for almost 30 years, I fully understand that your family pet is also a member of the family. Whether the pet is a cat, dog or something else, please keep in mind that time is very limited and your scheduled portrait

session can easily run short of it. **Dogs must be clean, dry and obedient.** When bringing your dog for portraits, it should be either on a leash or in a kennel. Please keep in mind that unless your dog is trained to obey fully on command, its behavior may not be quite as you would expect. Your dog is in a strange environment and as a result may be rather stressed and consequently disobedient.

Small dogs present less of a challenge as they can easily be controlled while sitting on a family member's lap. Medium to large dogs can present much more of a challenge. If they need to be wrestled into position, they are not a good candidate for your family portrait session. **If after several minutes of trying to get your dog's cooperation fails, the decision may be made to continue without your pet so that the remaining time may be used to get portraits of the two legged members of your family.**

Short haired dogs are more prone to shedding than long haired dogs but almost all dogs will shed. If a dog is seen to be shedding excessively, the session will be shortened in order to allow time for cleaning the background. (It can sometimes take up to 15 minutes to clean dog hair from a background.) In consideration for other families who may have pet allergies, it is requested that portrait sessions with pets be scheduled later in the evening.

Arrive Early:

If at all possible, please arrive at least 10 to 15 minutes before your scheduled time. If you arrive just at the designated time, we will already be 2 to 3 minutes behind schedule by the time you are settled and the paperwork has been taken care of. Arriving early will also help to accommodate families arriving late due to minor emergencies. If the family before your scheduled time is late and your family is early, we may switch the time slots and put your family in first. This will help to eliminate problems with late families causing a backup in the cue.

ID Card:

If online registration has not been implemented, you may be asked to fill out an ID card. Please include the student's name (first and last), the parent's name (first and last), division number, address, phone number and e-mail address. Please print clearly and legibly.

Waiting for Your Turn:

While waiting your turn for your family's portraits, please take a moment to check over your family's clothing, hair and shoes. Also take this time to settle down active children. Allowing them to run through the hallways to burn off energy is not a good choice as they will be hot and sweaty and may not be able to settle down enough when it is their turn to enter into the studio. This may also create a disturbance which can be distracting for those who are having their portraits taken. The use of electronic games to entertain very young children may also not be the best of choices. This too has caused melt downs when the game is taken away from them when it is time for portraits.

Entering the Studio for Portraits:

Upon entering the studio for your family portraits, you may be asked to give your shoes a final scrub on the mats provided, if the weather has been wet. Since this is a new environment, your children may have the natural tendency to want to explore. Please keep them by your side and **stay off the photographic background until you are asked to move on to it for your session. Ask your kids not to go near any of the equipment including the computer, camera, lighting and props.**

When asked to move on to the photographic background, please walk gently on it. **For safety reasons, never touch the section of the background that hangs vertically and do not stand within a foot of it nor go around behind it. Do not jump around, spin or shuffle your feet when on the background.** Dads should remove any wallets, cell phones, keys or other objects from their pockets as these items may bulge or cause discomfort if asked to sit during the portrait session. Watches with large faces can cause unwanted reflections and should also be removed.

There will be the natural curiosity to take a look at the images as they come up on the computer. Please refrain from doing this until the end of the session when you will be invited to review your images. As parents, you may be able to exercise the care needed to not trip over any of the equipment if sneaking over to take a peek at the images on the computer. However, your kids who may be mimicking your actions may not be as diligent or successful.

This may be a lot to take in if this is your first family portrait session but I trust that some of these suggestions and instructions will help you in the preparation for your family portraits. May your new family portraits be the best ones ever.

Sincerely,

Barry Kwok

Image Photography
Nationally Accredited
Portrait Specialist