



Session Prep A to Z

CLOTHING TIPS AND GENERAL ADVICE

Avoid white

Try to avoid wearing white clothes in your photos. White always wins the eye, and it also tends to overexpose, so the eye will be stolen by a white shirt or dress instead of the person wearing it.

Bloating

Avoid high-salt and high-fat foods for two to three days in advance of your shoot. I've also found that staying well hydrated helps thin out your face. Being bloated will sap your confidence and comfort in front of the camera.

Comfort

Comfort is key! Photo sessions aren't designed to be torturous—I want you to have fun. If you don't feel comfortable in them, there's no need to wear overly formal dresses or suits, or skin-tight outfits (similarly, avoid overly baggy clothing—the camera won't add 10 lbs, but ill-fitting clothes will!)

Dry skin

Dry skin can really detract from a great photo shoot. Start moisturizing nightly a week in advance of your shoot. When you get out of the shower, dry off until lightly damp, and slather 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. Tip: For dry skin on your face, especially around your nose, use a sugar scrub. Mix a cup of sugar with about a quarter cup of olive oil, or just until it looks like wet sand. Scrub your face with it anywhere you have flaky skin, wash it off, then wash with soap to remove the oil. The sugar paste shouldn't be oily, just wet enough to moisten the sugar. Also, be sure on your face to use a facial moisturizer, not a thick body moisturizer, or you could break out.

Everyone does NOT have to match!

The biggest misconception I get for portraits is that everyone in the picture should be matching. This isn't true! Your entire family doesn't walk around the kitchen wearing white shirts and khaki pants, so why should you do that in your pictures? Try choosing a color family (for instance, all warm colors such as red, brown, and gold) and then add some variety within that color family. It's okay to mix patterns and fabrics as long as the colors tie everything together. For more advice and examples of what to wear for your family portraits, scroll down!

Facial Hair

Men, please shave with a new razor, shaving cream, and a moisturizing after-shave lotion to avoid bumps and redness. Trim up your beard, sideburns, moustache or goatee, especially looking for wiry stray hairs. Ladies, even if you have some light facial hair (particularly around your lip or chin), indulge in a waxing in advance of your shoot – even barely-there light facial hair will be noticeable in your photos. For everyone: please clean up your eyebrows!

Glasses

If people wouldn't recognize you without glasses, then wear glasses in your shoot! However, lens glare can detract from your eyes in photos. You can have your lenses removed from your frames for your shoot (don't worry, it's what Hollywood does to avoid glare in movies), ask your eye doctor to loan you a pair of similar frames, or you can also visit an inexpensive company online like Zenni Optical and buy a suitable pair of duplicate frames on the cheap.

Hair

If you're getting a hair cut for your shoot, do so about two weeks beforehand, just in case it goes wrong – you just never know! For men, a fresh cut a couple of days before the shoot is fine. Ladies, be ready to put your hair up and make it look nice in case of a windy day. Bring bobby pins, hair clips, headbands or any other favorite accessories. And don't forget to remove hair elastics from your wrist before the session!

Ironing

Iron your clothes and hang them the night before your shoot. If you're wearing something that wrinkles easily, don't wear it in the car on the way to the shoot – just change at the location.

Jeans

Jeans are my favorite go-to piece of clothing because they're comfortable and casual. They work well for every type of portrait—families, seniors, headshots, etc. When in doubt, bring a great-fitting pair of jeans.

Keep Clothes Simple

Avoid logos, busy patterns, and anything that will detract attention away from your face.

Lips

You will probably wipe or lick your lips during your shoot, so bring fresh lip gloss or lipstick for touch-ups. Use lip balm for a few days in advance of your shoot to make your smoochers look their best.

Make-up

Ladies, you might consider hiring a professional makeup artist for your photos—it can really make all the difference! If you choose to apply your makeup yourself, make sure your foundation exactly matches your skin tone, and highlight your most important features (eyes and cheekbones) by adding a little extra just for your shoot.

Nails

Add a fresh coat of polish before your shoot! Pick a neutral color that won't distract in your shoot or clash with your outfits. Your photo shoot is a great excuse for a manicure.

Opposites

People with lighter skin tones should avoid light colors, like white. Similarly, people with darker skin tones should avoid dark colors such as navy, dark purple, dark brown, or black. Portraits look best when there's significant contrast between skin and clothing.

Props

Bringing personal items can help make your session more meaningful. Some ideas to get you started:

Newborns: hats, headbands, woven baskets, sentimental items like the quilt that Grandma made for the baby, or a baby blanket from your own childhood

Kids: Jump rope, chalk, bubbles, balloons, giant lollipops, costumes, sunglasses, Radio Flyer wagons

Engagement: Something that shows off your relationship or interests! Bikes, headphones, books, coffee mugs, etc. Bring a blanket if we're shooting in a field. "Save the Date" or "Thank You" signs for future card designs are also cute!

Seniors: musical instruments, sports gear, letter jacket, college t-shirt

Maternity: ultrasound printout, alphabet blocks that spell your baby's name, stuffed animals, flowers

Quit smoking ;)

Not to be your mom, but please avoid smoking and drinking a few days before your session as it will help you look your best. In general, be nice to your body. Sleep is always helpful too!

Red eyes

Visine is your friend.

Shoes

Women can't go wrong in heels or wedges. For men, dress shoes are best (or boots down in Texas!) Avoid wearing running shoes. And of course, bare feet are always welcome.

Tan Lines & Sunburns

If your shoot is booked for Saturday, don't go to the beach on Friday. If you plan to tan before your shoot, do so at least a week beforehand and don't get burned. Be mindful of clothing tan lines, sunglass tan lines, hat tan lines, etc. If you accidentally burn before your shoot, slather on tons of aloe vera—speaking from experience, it will help prevent peeling in a few days! 😊

Undergarments

Bring a set of bras and strap-adjusting accessories to work with any outfit you want to shoot in. Make sure to keep your straps well-hidden. Also think about underwear lines—you never know when they might show up in your pictures!

Variety

If you're planning on wearing multiple outfits, change up your looks! Try one formal outfit (for example, a prom dress for senior girls), one casual outfit (jeans and a tee), and something in-between—perhaps a cute sundress for girls, or jeans and dress shoes for guys.

Whitening

If you want to brighten your smile, start your treatments about two weeks before your session.

eXtra Clothes

Okay, the letter "X" was a stretch 😊 But please bring a TON of clothes with you if you're unsure about what to wear. Just pack your trunk full, and I'll help you choose at your session.

Your job is to have fun!

If this list stresses you out too much, then IGNORE it. All you have to do is show up to your session. I promise I'll make you look your best 😊

Zits

Start using African Black Bar Soap for a week in advance of your shoot to help reduce and limit pimples and blemishes. Equally important, don't cake on a lot of make-up to try to hide blemishes – it's almost always easier to Photoshop away pimples than to clean up overdone make-up.