

Preparation Tips for a Pet Photo Session

There are a number of ways you can help ensure that we can capture some great images of your beloved fur baby. There are things you can do, both before and during your session, that will get you and your dog ready. Below are some general tips I encourage you to take into strong consideration for a successful session.

1. A few days before your session, practice with your dog and hold them in long sit and stay positions. Don't get worried if they don't have it completely down before the session. This won't ruin the session at all, but just makes it a little easier for everyone and will help me get a wider variety of photos for you to choose from.
2. Make sure your dog gets a good amount of exercise SHORTLY BEFORE the session. You know your dog best, so please exercise them enough to relieve any over-excitement but not enough to wear them out.
3. If we're shooting on location, arrive at the session location a little early to let your dog sniff and get familiar with the area.
4. For long haired dogs, it is best if your dog has been groomed about a week before the session. If the fur ends up being cut a little too short this will allow some time for it to grow out a little. Also, a grooming and portrait session on the same day can be a lot of stress for most dogs. If grooming is not possible, at a minimum they should be brushed. Wipe any tear stains from around your dog's eyes as well.
5. If you plan to bring any outfits for your dog, please make sure you try the clothing on before the session and that your dog is comfortable in it. I don't recommend dressing up dogs who are not used to wearing clothing fairly often.
6. If your dog has a favorite toy, blanket or something else that you would like included in your photographs, feel free to bring it/them along. If your dog enjoys chasing balls or frisbees definitely bring them!
7. Slobber rags are a great idea if you have a dog that tends to be a little messy around the mouth when excited.
8. Don't feed your dog a full meal before the shoot, otherwise they will be less alert and possibly in the mood for a nap. At a minimum they will be less likely to be interested in treats – and treats are important to be able to use for food motivated dogs during a session!
9. Please bring treats along for your pup. I recommend that we don't use them until we need some extra motivation, but it's important to have them on hand.
10. Bring plenty of water and a small bowl so your dog does not get overheated while on location during the session.
11. If we are doing an in-studio session:
 - Be sure to trim your dog's nails to avoid any scratches or damage to furniture, props, or flooring
 - Be sure they get a chance to empty their bladder just before the session. You are certainly welcome to use my back yard for a potty break before we start and during the session if needed.

12. If we are doing the session in your home, de-clutter as much as possible! Having the room uncluttered and clean will allow your dog to be the focus of the images, rather than all the stuff in the room.
13. If we are doing the session in your yard, please have it as clean and neat as possible. Remove any distractions that may be in the photos. Sweep, mow and/or rake areas we may be shooting in and please, please, please thoroughly clean up all pet waste. I'm usually lying on the ground when shooting so keep that in mind!
14. Consider being included in some photographs too! Your friends and family will cherish images that include you as well as your fur baby.
 - Wear solid colored clothing. Don't wear bold patterns such as stripes or plaids, or clothing with writing on it.
 - Be sure to bring any brushes, hair clips or any other items you or other family members might need during the session to freshen up.
 - To minimize hair sticking to clothing try to avoid fabrics that attract a lot of hair.
 - Keep our location in mind and dress appropriately. Since these will be photos you'll cherish forever, dress in a manner that is casual but still stylish.
 - Is the whole family going to be in a few photos? Yay! You don't need to exactly match each other - your outfits just need to compliment each other. This helps make the image pop, yet look clean and neat. Make sure the colors and styles don't clash.
 - **Ladies:**
 - o Try to avoid tops that are cut too low or shorts and skirts that are cut too short. Nothing will detract from a beautiful moment caught in a photograph more than some cleavage that could have easily been covered up.
 - o If you are getting a hair cut for your session, do so about two weeks beforehand, just in case it's a little shorter than you'd like.
 - o If you wear nail polish, be sure your nails are freshly done (and don't forget the toes if they'll be showing!)
 - **Men:**
 - o Have a fresh shave or trim
 - o If you are getting a hair cut for your session, do so about a week beforehand, just in case it's a little shorter than you'd like.
 - o For wardrobe, go for jeans or pants, and a dress shirt with a belt, or go casual with just an untucked polo, button-up short sleeve, etc. In general, whatever your wife tells you to wear 😊 However, avoid t-shirts, especially with print on them. Again, you don't have to perfectly match the rest of the family, just wear something that coordinates.
 - **For the kiddos:**
 - o Bring a package of wet wipes in case of last minute emergencies, messy faces, dirty hands, etc.
 - o Bring snacks and things that make your child happy. If we need to take a break for snacks, no problem!
 - o Avoid colorful drinks and candy for 24 hours before the shoot. Don't let them eat or drink anything that will stain their face, teeth or mouths.
 - o For wardrobe, same advice as above, but again, everything needn't match, simply coordinate with the parents' outfits.

Remember:

With your pet, your tone of voice and body language translate very effectively to your dog and their mood. Use compassionate authority during the session. Don't get frustrated or impatient with your dog. We have plenty of time to work with them and patience is key! With soothing talk, positive reinforcement and patient repetition, your dog will eventually figure out what you want them to do.

I want you and your dog to enjoy the experience and have wonderful pieces of art for your home! Please arrive on time and be ready to have some fun!