



Portraits of Cherished Pets and Animal Art

How to Take Great Photos of Your Pet

I created these tips with my portrait clients in mind, however I'm happy to share these tips with everyone so that you can take beautiful photos of your pets! Read on to learn how!

Sometimes my clients have a treasured photo that they really love, and I will always try my very best to work from that photo to create a portrait that's special for you.

However, please realize that the portrait I create will only be as good as the photos I have to work with.

If I am not able to meet your pet in person or via Skype, I have to rely on the photographs that you provide. Your description of your pet's personality and the photos you supply are the only way that I have of getting to know your pet.

To be able to create a portrait that both you and I are delighted and thrilled with, I require well lit, in-focus photos with lots of detail.

When taking photographs of your pet for me to create your pet's portrait, here are a few simple yet effective tips that I've found can give the best results:

General Tips

Remember to have fun and don't be in a rush. Patience is most definitely a virtue when it comes to photographing pets! Cameras can be distracting for some animals, so if you cannot get your pet to behave normally, have someone else present to divert their attention and keep them engaged. For cats that tend to be uncooperative, get them used to the camera over a few days.

I'll discuss the best way to use digital cameras and cell phones & tablets for taking photos at the end of this tip sheet.

Lighting

The best possible light is outside in the daylight. Try to do this even if your pet is an indoor only pet - though of course safety comes first and this may not always be possible. The next best option is to photograph your pet in a room that is brightly lit with plenty of natural light. This is especially important if you are using a cell phone or tablet to take the photos.

Avoid direct sunlight, as it can alter your pet's coat color and increase the contrast between shadow and light, hiding some features and makes your pet squint. Photographing your pet in the shade will produce beautiful photos.

Don't use a flash, as this can cause red eye in addition to distorting your pet's true coat color.

Positioning

MOST IMPORTANT: *Photograph your pet on their level. Don't have them looking up at you unless this is how you wish your pet to be painted!*



Don't make them come to you. Instead, go to where they are most comfortable. Sit on the grass, lie on the floor, whatever it takes. This is especially important if you want a full body portrait of your pet. These photos look best taken from the side rather than above.

Take plenty of close up head, neck and shoulder shots, if this is the type of portrait you want. As well as straight on head shots, also take three-quarter view shot of the head, as a slightly angled pose can make a beautiful portrait photograph. Be sure to take a close up of your pet's eyes and nose, but not too close or they will be blurry!



Straight on

Three Quarter

Capture the most characteristic expression pose of your pet. For all animals the best photos have ears forward, looking at something with interest. A good idea is to have favorite treats or toys at the ready. Hold them up near the camera to catch (and hopefully hold) interest in the right direction. If someone is helping, have them crouch down beside or behind you, not stand above you as the pet will of course look up at them!

Most importantly, don't be afraid to be silly. Try making funny and unusual noises or movements, to get their attention. If using a squeaky toy – don't let them see it while you are using it – they'll run right to you to play with it!!

If your pet won't sit still, have someone hold them in position. If these pictures are solely for the portrait, then hands and arms in the frame do not matter and are easily removed as long as they do not cover important markings.

Using Cameras & Cell Phones

Take as many photos as you can, it's easy to delete the ones that don't turn out. When I photograph pets, I usually take between 150-200 photos and out of those I might get 5 or 6 really fabulous photos that I am able to use.

Digital Cameras

A digital camera will take the best photos even in lower light.

1. Use the sports mode as this will stop any motion resulting in clear, in-focus photos with lots of detail.
2. If your camera has a continuous release mode, burst or rapid-fire mode, I highly recommend you use that setting. It makes a HUGE difference in capturing a beautiful pose before the pet moves.

Cell Phone/Tablet/iPads

If a cell phone (or tablet or iPad) is all you have to take photo's with then follow these tips:

1. You must take the photos outside - or in an extremely well lit room. Cell phones are notorious for producing grainy, blurry photos.
2. iPhones & iPads will take continuous, rapid shots if you leave your finger pressed on the shutter button. For other phones that don't have this feature, just take your finger off and quickly press the button again. Turn the flash off as that will create a second or two of lag time between pressing the shutter button and the camera taking the picture – during which your pet will move!

I hope that you've found these tips useful in enabling you to take fantastic photos of your sweet pets. If you have any questions about this please contact me.

Email me at fiona@petportraitsbyfiona.com or call me 602-770-0529, I'll be glad to help!