

# *The Portrait Session Style Guide*

## **What Every Client Needs to Know**

We are so excited for your portrait session! Whether we're capturing your sweet family, or celebrating a special moment in your life, like a graduation, birthday, anniversary or new baby, we're so honored to help you create memories you'll cherish for a lifetime. We've created this guide to help you get the most out of your photos, and by the time you've read through this, you'll have all your questions answered and feel more than ready and prepared for your session. Then we'll take care of the rest! Your only job is to be yourself, laugh a lot and let us create photos you'll love forever. We can't wait to get you in front of our cameras!

## **Choosing Time & Date**

We're natural light specialists because we believe that natural light, from the sun and its reflections, create photographs that feel fresh, timeless and truest to you. We begin most portrait sessions two hours before the scheduled sunset during "the golden hour," when the light is the dreamiest. Use a sunset calculator online to determine the scheduled sunset for the date and location you'd like to do your session. Then, just subtract two hours to figure out your start time. Remember, the sun sets much earlier during the colder months of the year and much later during the warmer months, so make sure to factor that in when choosing your portrait session date, especially if you're taking off work or have evening plans afterward. To get the most out of your session, please plan a buffer when getting ready so you can arrive a few minutes early to your session and be ready to start on time. We're only able to shoot when natural light is still in the sky, so we'll want to take advantage of every minute we have together before the sun goes down. If you're wearing two outfits, save your favorite one for the second half, and if you're wearing one, arrive in that.

*QUICK TIP: Our weekends fill up fast and far in advance, as does our fall season. You can get a Fast Pass to the front of the line by scheduling mid-week or off-season.*

## **Selecting the Right Location**

The location of your portrait session is up to you! Like you see throughout my social media platforms and website, most of our clients choose to showcase the natural beauty of our home state. For most of our sessions, outdoor, open-air environments are always our first choice. We love shooting in wide-open natural spaces because the light is divine, especially during golden hour. There are great options all around the state, so even if you've never seen us photograph in a specific spot before, we're always up for exploring a new spot together!

## **Think Outside the Box**

This is the time to think outside the box! We encourage you to brainstorm unique locations that you might have special access to that most people don't. For example, maybe you, or someone in your personal or professional network, can secure permission to a location that would otherwise be off-limits, like a beautiful private estate, country club or resort. Maybe it's a family ranch, upscale hotel or even a boat, airplane hangar or a rooftop view. The sky is literally the limit! Spend a few minutes thinking about it and checking around. You'll be surprised with what you come up with. Plus, if something seems out of reach, just remember: you never know until you ask! Our clients have secured permission to some pretty amazing places in the past. If you get stuck or need inspiration, check out our blog and keep browsing through my social media or Pinterest. We have some great go-to locations around town that we can always hit, too. Just let us know which type of session you'd love and we'll go from there! Easy. Peasy.

## **Destination Portrait Session**

Your portrait session includes travel time anywhere in the Atlanta Metro area. If you'd like to go somewhere outside the city, we're up for the adventure! The travel fee for two-hour drives to places like Chattanooga, Blue Ridge and the Coast is \$450. We love traveling and are actually on the road quite a bit. We've done different types of sessions from north to south, everywhere in between, so if we're already going to be in or near an area you've always dreamed of doing your photos, and we can coordinate our schedules, let's set it up. We'd love to make it work! If you'd like us to meet you in a destination outside of Georgia for your portrait session where we don't already have plans to visit, just let us know and we can get you a custom quote.

## **Styling your Session**

Want your photos to look more editorial? Bring a little extra something with you! Fresh flowers bring an extra "wow" factor to just about everything, especially when they're attached to something else, like a bicycle basket, tree swing, tent, picnic basket, balloons or car bumper. Whether you want to incorporate larger items like classic cars or bikes, or smaller ones like blankets or hats, even planning for just one extra styled item could be a fun way to make your session more unique.

# *Style Tips: For Her*

*Because you always want to remember this.*

## **Don't Be Afraid to Dress It Up**

Have you thought about rocking a romantic gown, tulle skirt or flower crown but just never had an occasion for it? This is your chance to do it up! Remember: There is no such thing as “too dressed up” when it comes to your portrait session, so don't be afraid to have some fun! If you don't want to add a new permanent piece to your collection, a lot of our clients love Rent the Runway for their session because it's such an affordable way to feel like a million bucks. Other clients love having a great excuse to bring a new permanent piece (or two!) into their closet!

*Quick Tip: There's no such thing as too dressed up.*

## **Say Yes to the Dress**

Dresses and skirts look most stunning because they really flatter every female body, especially on camera — which is probably why the red carpet is always full of so many dresses and not very many pantsuits! We recommend avoiding pants and shorts for your session, and saying yes to a dress or two instead.

Long, full-length, flowy dresses and skirts look amazing on camera because they bring extra movement to the photos. Especially when juxtaposed with nature, like the desert, forest, plains or beach. Consider softer fabrics like chiffon or tulle which allow for beautiful movement in the images.

When considering the length of your dresses or skirts, it's also a good idea to factor in whether or not there will be little ones in your photos. If you have smaller children, we'll likely have you sitting or crouching on the ground to interact up-close with them. Cute, shorter cocktail-length dresses photograph beautifully, but if you have little ones in your photos, a floor-length dress or skirt, or perhaps a cute midi-skirt, will make moving around with your kids much easier, and look perfect on camera, too.

If you're an expecting mother, we always recommend floor-length gowns or maxi dresses. These dresses create the best silhouettes to flatter your figure and really highlight your bump. A lot of our expecting mothers love to incorporate flower crowns or headpieces as well.

## **One or Two? It's Up to You!**

You can bring one outfit set or two! Most of our clients who choose two outfits will bring one “wow” dress, and then another slightly more casual dress that has a “date night” feel. But if you want to bring two “wow” dresses and forgo the more casual dress altogether, give yourself permission to do it! The camera loves runway-esque apparel and so do we!

Remember, though, you don't have to bring two looks if it's too stressful to coordinate or if you'd rather just stick to one fabulous look. One outfit that you love will be so much better than one outfit you love and another you're not very excited about. And if you stick with one outfit set, you won't have to spend any of your time time changing half way through, so we'll be able to sneak in a few more photos! So, one or two? It's really up to you!

## **Choosing Colors**

When choosing colors for your outfits, we recommend selecting softer, lighter tones and more muted shades. By avoiding ultra-bright, bold colors, it will help bring all the attention to your faces and let the eye focus on the way you feel about each other. The camera loves shades of soft pink and muted blues, mixed with sophisticated light neutrals like heather gray, creams, leather brown and white. That softer color palette fits beautifully into almost all natural outdoor environments, and especially compliments the location.

## **Flattering Your Features**

In our experience, every woman, regardless of her shape has an area of her body that she's self-conscious about, so recognizing what area that is in advance is key. Choosing flattering silhouettes and colors that complement your natural features is the best way to ensure you'll love the way you look in your photos.

Three-quarter length sleeves create an awesome slimming effect on all arms, so be on the lookout for an option with a longer length sleeve. You could also bring a cute jacket, blazer or cardigan along, too. Skinny straps or strapless dresses have the opposite effect on arms on camera, so we recommend avoiding those whenever possible if your goal is a set of slimmer-looking arms.

Heels elongate women's legs, making them look fabulous. Closed-toed heels in particular look great on camera because they carry out the line of your leg all the way down to your toe. If your toes are showing in a peep-toe heel, you might want to schedule a pedicure before your session so you don't regret letting your feet show. These little tricks make all the difference!

*Quick Tip: Bring a pair of easy-to-kick-off flats to wear when moving from place to place in between photos. Your feet will thank you later!*

## **Make a Statement**

Pairing an accessory or two with your outfit can really help bring some extra dimension to your images, and be a nice tie-in when you're coordinating with a group. Big statement necklaces bring a lot of pop to the photos, while the smaller, delicate ones are not as noticeable on camera.

Belts, bracelets and earrings bring great visual interest; so choose one or two that don't compete for attention. Fresh florals in a crown can be a really romantic touch for you or your girls as well.

## **Go Pro: Hair & Makeup**

Professional hair and makeup is on the top of most of our clients' checklists because it looks amazing on camera and removes the stress of getting ready on your own. This is the time to treat yourself! Whether it's lash extensions or blown-out hair, professional hair and makeup will give you an extra boost of confidence in front of the camera, and it always photographs like a dream. If you're working with a makeup artist, have her apply your makeup in natural light, if possible, so that it looks fresh and not too heavy. Plus, that's the type of light we'll be shooting in, so it'll give you the best expectation of how it will translate on camera. Most of our clients feel like their professional makeup is "too much" at first, since it's more than you would wear on a normal day, or that they're false lashes look too big, so if you feel that way at the beginning, don't worry! Good makeup artists know how to get it all just right for the camera — and our clients always love the final result. If you need a recommendation for hair and makeup, we work with the best in the business and have a go-to team! They're sweet as pie, talented as heck, unbelievable professionals and wonderful people. You'll LOVE them! Just let us know and we'll send you their information. We know they'll take good care of you!

*Quick Tip: Confidence. It's always the best accessory.*

## **Skip the Spray Tan**

Although it might seem counter-intuitive, we recommend that you do not get a spray tan before your session, even a few days prior, because it tends to photograph orange even when it's applied subtly and by a professional. Your actual skin tone will photograph the most beautifully and naturally.

# *Fashion Tips: For Him*

*Because dapper and debonair never go out of style.*

## **The Best Fit**

Long, fitted pants and closed-toed shoes are the most sophisticated and masculine looks for men. They draw attention away from his legs and feet and place it where you want it: on his handsome face. So, for your session, it's best to leave the shorts, sandals and jeans at home, too, as well as any pants that are loose or baggy. Fitted dress pants or fitted colored pants work best on camera. Solid shades of gray or navy are a strong compliment to most women's outfits, whereas pinstripes or plaid patterns tend to distract the eye. We also recommend staying away from graphics and logos.

## **Layered Looks**

Next time you walk by a store like J. Crew, you'll notice the male mannequins and models are always wearing several layers at once. Layers on men look great on camera, so even when it's hot outside, trust us when we say that it's worth an hour or two of discomfort for photos that will last you both a lifetime. Adding another layer will bring extra dimension and visual interest to your photos. Blazers, vests and coats up the level of any look. If the temperature permits, he could even consider adding a v-neck sweater with a pop of color from a long-sleeved collared shirt and tie underneath. Don't be afraid to get a little creative with layers!

## **Mix It Up**

Many of our guys love to mix a suit coat, blazer or sport coat with a different pant color. It adds some extra visual interest, and breaks up the color tones. We're big fans of this fresh take on a timeless classic.

## **It's All in the Details**

Brown leather dress shoes compliment almost every look, whether he's wearing a full suit or a blazer and colored pants. Ties, bowties, pocket squares, colored socks, belts, tie clips, suspenders, vests and watches are sharp compliments to any outfit for men and boys alike. If you bring two outfits to the session, you can start with a traditional necktie and belt, then switch to suspenders and a bow tie for your second look. If two looks are too stressful, no problem! One will do the trick! You can still mix and match accessories to compliment both of her dresses without doing a full change during the session. So, either way, it's a win.

## How to Prep Your Man

Most men aren't overly excited to take photos for two hours, because they don't have an expectation of what's to come and why it's so important to you. Take fifteen minutes to educate and empower your guy. Tell him why you chose us and our style of photography. Show him your three favorite sessions that we've done, explain why you love them and express to him how much it means to you. Trust us, once he knows it's important, he'll light up the camera for you! The most common thing we hear from guys before photo sessions is this: because of a bad experience in the past, they don't like taking photos or don't think they'll be good at it. By the time we're done, though, they can't believe how fast it went and just how much fun they had!

## *Prepping Your Family*

*Because they won't be little forever.*

## Coordinating the Crew

As you're coordinating your outfit with your family, keep in mind that your outfits will look the most cohesive on camera when the color palette and wardrobe pieces coordinate, but don't actually "match." In fact, we recommend that you avoid thinking about "matching," and instead think about what "fits" together. This will create more visual interest, and allow each personality to shine through.

## How to Mix Colors

The goal for coordinating a family is to visually break up the colors and shades so that you're not all wearing the same color on top and bottom. The more we can mix that up, the better. We encourage you to think about planning each outfit with "dominant colors" and "accent colors" in mind. A dominant color is the color that you see the most in an outfit, while an accent has a smaller piece of visual real estate. When you're planning each family member's outfit, if you can aim for each person to have a different dominant color, and then tie in and vary the accent colors, it's going to look great all together.

For example, if you're wearing a blush dress, soft blue earrings and nude heels (blush being your dominant color), then he could wear a navy coat with a white button-down and gray pants, paired with brown leather shoes and maybe even a blush pocket square (making navy his dominant color). Your daughter could wear a soft blue top with a white tulle skirt (making a soft blue her dominant color) while your son wears light beige pants with navy suspenders and a white button down (making white his dominant color). Now

each person has their own dominant color while still incorporating a few touches of the others that will pull all the looks together. This will break up the color visually and highlight each personality. Most of our moms choose their dress first, and then build the rest of the family's outfits based around that.

Remember, we recommend selecting those softer, lighter tones and avoiding those ultra-bright, bold colors. The camera loves shades of soft pink and muted blues, mixed with sophisticated light neutrals like heather gray, creams, leather brown and white. Feel free to vary the shades of the colors, too. That softer color palette fits beautifully into a natural environment, and can easily be paired in so many different ways.

## **Mixing Up the Pieces**

If you have multiple children, don't feel like you need to put them all in the same type of outfit. For example, one of your daughters could wear a dress and flats, while the other wears a skirt and boots. One of your sons could wear a bowtie, while the other one wears suspenders. Mixing up the wardrobe pieces will bring a great visual interest to the photos.

## **Prepping Your Little Ones**

Before your session, pack a bag with snacks, water and any small objects (like toys or lollipops) that might help us get their attention when it's time for them to look at the camera. If they are old enough to understand you, it's a good idea to prepare them for what's to come before the session starts. Explain how much the photos mean to you so they know to be on their best behavior. A lot of families discuss and pick something fun in advance as a treat after the session if they're good listeners, like an *ice cream cone*, for example. It also helps if they're *bellies are full* and they've had some good rest beforehand. Once you prepare them physically and mentally, then feel free to give them (*and you!*) grace! They're little, and we know that some days don't always go as planned. We've seen it all and will make sure to get you great photos, regardless of their moods. Our goal is to make this as fun and stress-free as it possibly can be for you and your family!

## **Photo Delivery Timeline**

1 Week: Social media sneak peek with one of our favorite photos

2 Weeks: Blog post with some highlights of our time together

3 Weeks: Online gallery with all of your final, retouched, high-resolution images



## Final Note

We know we just gave you a lot to think about. We created this guide to help make your portrait session experience something you'll look back fondly on for years and years to come. At the end of the day, though, the location you choose and the outfits you select won't matter nearly as much as the memories you make together. Your future memories are the most important thing to us, and we want your session to be a time for you to just be yourselves and enjoy it. Have fun together. Laugh a lot. And we'll take care of the rest!

## Portrait Session Checklist

- 1. Set date, time and location with A&J
- 2. Review guide for style tips
- 3. Schedule hair, makeup and nail appointments
- 4. Choose your outfits
- 5. Pack a bag with:
  - Flats or flip-flops for walking between photo spots
  - Second outfit (if you're doing two)
  - Touch-up makeup
  - Water bottle (for warmer sessions)
  - Coat or cover-up (for colder sessions)
  - Snacks for the little ones
  - If you have a toddler or younger, small eye-catching toys (or lollipops) to hold their attention

We can't wait to see you soon!

*- Jaelyn Weiden*