**The Portrait Session Style Guide**

**What Every Client Needs to Know**

I am so excited for your portrait session! Whether I am capturing your family, or celebrating a special moment in your life, like an engagement, birthday or anniversary I am so honored to help you create memories you’ll cherish for a lifetime. I created this guide to help you get the most out of your photos, and by the time you’ve read through this guide, you'll have all your questions answered and feel more than ready and prepared for your session. Then I will take care of the rest! Your only job is to be yourself, laugh a lot and let me create photos you’ll love forever. I can’t wait to get you in front of my camera!

**Choosing Time & Date**

I am a natural light specialist because I believe that natural light, from the sun and its reflections, creates photographs that feel fresh, timeless and truest to you. I begin all 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. I am only able to shoot when natural light is still in the sky, so I will 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.

**Selecting the Right Location**

The location of your portrait session is up to you! Most of my clients choose to showcase the natural beauty of our beautiful state. For most of our sessions, outdoor, open-air environments are always our first choice. I 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 me photograph in a specific spot before, I am always up for exploring a new spot together!

**Think Outside the Box**

This is the time to think outside the box! I 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! My clients have secured permission to some pretty amazing places in the past. If you get stuck or need inspiration, I would be happy to help by sending over location suggestions. I have some great go-to locations around town that we can always hit, too. Just let me 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 Denver area. If you’d like to go somewhere outside the city, I am up for the adventure! The travel fee for drives to places like Vail, Aspen or Telluride is $100-$300. I love traveling and I am actually on the road quite a bit. I have done different types of sessions from coast to coast, everywhere in between, so if I am 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. I would love to make it work! If you’d like me to meet you in a destination outside of Colorado or for your portrait session where I 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 my 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! I 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, I will 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, I 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 my 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 my 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 I!

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 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, I 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.

**Flattering Your Features**

In my 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 I 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 my 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 my 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 my clients always love the final result. If you need a recommendation for hair and makeup, I work with many talented hair and makeup artists in town and I would be happy to connect you to someone who will be a good fit for you! They’re sweet as pie, talented as heck, unbelievable professionals and wonderful people. You’ll LOVE them! Just let me know and I will send you their information. I 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, I 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 complement to most women’s outfits, whereas pinstripes or plaid patterns tend to distract the eye. I also recommend staying away from graphics and logos.

**Layered Looks**

Next time you walk by a store, 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 me when I 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 my male clients 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. I am a big fan of this fresh take on a timeless classic.

**It’s All in the Details**

Brown leather dress shoes complement 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 complements 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 complement 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 me and my style of photography. Show him your three favorite sessions that I hav done, explain why you love them and express to him how much it means to you. Trust me, once he knows it’s important, he’ll light up the camera for you! The most common thing I 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!

**Final Note**

I know I just gave you a lot to think about. I 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 me, and I want your session to be a time for you to just be yourselves and enjoy it. Have fun together. Laugh a lot. And I will take care of the rest!

**Portrait Session Checklist**

1. Set date, time and location with Heather Callanan

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)
* Snacks
* Coat or cover-up (for colder sessions)

I can’t wait to see you soon!

- Heather Callanan