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PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS
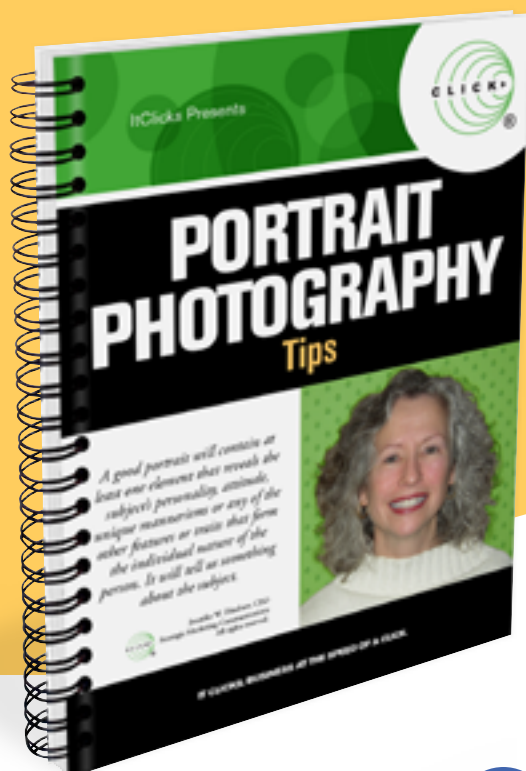
A good portrait will contain at least one element that reveals the subject's personality, attitude, unique mannerisms or any of the other features or traits that form the individual nature of the person. It will tell us something about the subject.

The following are some tips to consider when taking portrait photography.

1. LIGHTING

Use soft, diffused lighting — such as cloudy-day lighting or indirect window light, such as a large north-facing window — to reveal your subject's features in a flattering way. Try to avoid harsh shadows.

2. BACKGROUND

Keep the background simple to avoid distracting elements, but make it relevant to the portrayal of your subject. Pick an appropriate background that will not wash the subject's features, yet will achieve a distinction or contrast between the subject and the background. Having the background out of focus is another technique that can soften and enhance the focal point of the subject.

3. IN CLOSE OR FULL FIGURE

Move in close for an above-the-waist or head-and-shoulders composition; for a less traditional approach, move back to show the entire figure.

4. PERSPECTIVE

For a traditional effect, position your camera at or slightly below your subject's eye level. For a more dramatic effect, try an unusual angle or perspective.

> **TIP**
>
> Subjects do not have to smile to make a good portrait. A serious or thoughtful expression can often be more revealing of character, and a better portrait.

5. HANDS AND HEAD POSITION

Pay particular attention to the position of hands and the angle of the head. In a portrait, hands and head can easily look awkward.

Angling the shoulders slightly gives your shot balance and helps stop your subject seeming out of proportion and lessens the width of the shoulders slightly. It also helps lead the viewer into the focal point of the face and may help with awkward head positions.

Pay particular attention to their hands and encourage your model to keep them relaxed and their fingers separated. If your subject can't seem to relax their hands – consider composing shots that don't include the hands, or consider giving them something to hold onto.

6. CLOTHING

Have subject wear neutral-colored clothing. Solids rather than prints and stripes work best. Contrast is important, especially in black and white photography.

It's a good idea for the subject to bring a few different outfits so that you can have a little variety to work with. Collared shirts are flattering for many subjects, especially men, in the way the collar frames the face.

7. MAKEUP

Make sure subject's face and head aren't too shiny. Advise women to apply makeup that works for the subject, i.e., don't put on a lot, instead use more color and a bit more definition.