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Business Portrait Clothing Suggestions

By Mark Turner, photographer

Choose an outfit that you would wear when meeting one of your best clients.

Choose conservative clothing that flatters your face. Mid-range and darker, solid colors such as blue, brown, gray, red, green are best for both men and women. Avoid busy patterns, large amounts of white, and very bright colors. You want to draw attention to your face and use your clothing as a frame.

Simple, classic styles will not look dated as styles change. Suits tailored from structured fabrics such as wool and linen work well. Single breasted suits or jackets tend to lay better when you are sitting for a portrait. Watch out for fabrics that wrinkle badly.

If you prefer casual clothes, scarves, capes, hats or props, by all means bring them along. You are also welcome to bring several clothing choices to your session and let me help you choose which outfit will photograph best.

Men:

A good fit is important for your suit and shirt. The camera will show if your clothing is either too tight or drapes poorly on your body. If you have an afternoon appointment, you may want to consider bringing a fresh shirt to wear. If you choose not to wear a suit or jacket, remember that white or light pastel shirts worn by themselves tend to look washed out and draw attention away from your face. A better choice for business casual is a jacket with an open shirt or a sweater.

Women:

Metal jewelry works well. Necklaces should be short and go with the neckline of the blouse. Earrings need to separate from hair. Pins can be attractive but need to be fairly large to show up in print. Women with long hair should choose a jacket that is a different

tone from their hair, otherwise the hair and jacket tend to run together when the photo is printed.

Do I need to do any special grooming?

You want to look your best, so pay a little extra attention to your grooming before your portrait session. If you need a fresh haircut, have it done about a week ahead. Facial shine is extremely detrimental to a great portrait. If your skin is oily, shiny, or perspires heavily, you should dust it lightly with cosmetic powder. This goes for men, too.

Men:

If you have an afternoon appointment and a heavy beard, you may want to shave mid-day to avoid the “five o’clock shadow” look. If you wear a beard or mustache, they should be neatly trimmed.

Women:

Wear your normal makeup and lipstick. Even if you prefer a natural look, a good foundation can smooth out skin tones, and a little lipstick and mascara can bring out your features. You may want to apply your makeup slightly heavier than normal and add some color to your cheeks and lips to enhance your appearance and help minimize any imperfections.

What about glasses?

If you normally wear glasses, they should be part of your portrait. We control the reflections to the best of our ability by adjusting your pose, but sometimes it’s impossible to completely eliminate glasses glare. If you have thick lenses or have had severe reflection problems in the past, you may want to ask your optometrist to loan you a frame with no lenses for your portrait.