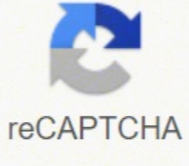




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# D3100 portrait photography poses cards bundle

In this article, I'm going to give you 10 tips and camera settings for portraits. These are just starting points to help you get going. So use them, but test and experiment and refine them each time you do a photo shoot or move to a new location. NOTE: Keep in mind, these apply to the situation where you are in control of the lighting and it is constant (not changing) and the camera and subject are both stationary (not moving). I will cover the opposite situation (where everything is changing and moving) in a future article. Here is a summary of what you'll learn. Camera settings and tips for portraits. Camera Settings and equipment to use for portraits: Lens - to flatter your subject use a short telephoto lens. Tripod - use one when you and the subject aren't moving. Remote trigger or cable release- use one! Shoot in Manual mode. ISO - low like 100-400 if possible, higher if a faster shutter speed is needed. Focus mode - autofocus, set it to a single point and use back button focus. Drive mode - single shot. Aperture - between f/2 and f/4 for a single subject (get the background out of focus) or f/5.6-f/8 for groups. Shutter speed - at least 1/200th handheld, or 1/15th on a tripod (faster if you're photographing kids). White balance - choose the appropriate preset for the lighting conditions or do a custom balance. Let's look at each one in more detail. #1 - Which lens to use I covered this topic in some depth in this article, How to Choose the Right Lens, so I won't go into a lot of detail here. Head over there and read that for more info. 17mm lens - the subject's head is an odd shape, distorted. 70mm lens - notice how less of the background scene is visible now and her face is a shaped normally. The short answer here is that if you want to flatter your subject, use a short telephoto lens. Something like an 85-100mm is a good choice. If you're using a full frame camera try a 135-150mm lens. What a telephoto lens will do is help you compress the perspective, throw the background more out of focus if that's desired, and not distort the subject's face. Using a wide-angle lens isn't necessarily bad, but it will distort your subject and make their face look oddly proportioned and misshapen. Not usually something you want. If you are doing more of an environmental portrait, a full-length pose, or shooting a group photo, then use of a slight wide-angle to a normal lens may be a good choice. 27mm lens (on a full frame camera), ISO 400, f/5.0, f/30th. The slight wide-angle lens allowed me to get in more of his environment. 105mm lens, ISO 800, f/4, 1/200th, use of the longer telephoto lens here shows less of the background and makes it more about his face. #2 - Use a tripod When I tell my students this in the classroom I often get met with a lot of resistance to using a tripod. Many photographers feel it limits their creativity, and is cumbersome and just plain annoying. If that rings true for you as well - I will tell you two reasons why I recommend this, and you can decide. First, using a tripod forces you to slow down. This is a good thing! Take time to check all your settings, analyze the light, and do a test shot. Trust me on this - you will get better results when you slow down and think, before pressing the button. Secondly, you can get out from behind the camera and be eye-to-eye with the subject. If you want to get the best expressions and build a rapport with the person you're photographing - it's pretty darn hard to do that when they can't look you in the eye. Use a tripod for better eye contact and rapport with your model or subject. Try this - get a willing model to pose for you and take a few photos with the camera up to your face. Then put it on a tripod and as you're shooting, chat with them. Engage them in conversation, and take a few more shots. See which images are better, where are the best expressions? But more importantly, ask your model which was the better experience for them? How was it different? NOTE: Remember to turn off your Image Stabilization (or Vibration Reduction) when you use a tripod. It can actually introduce more camera shake when the camera is solidly mounted on a tripod. #3 - Use a remote trigger Adding in a remote trigger or release will help you get sharper images by avoiding any camera shake when you push the button. This one just goes along with #2 above. Once you're set up on a tripod you can also use a slower shutter speed (assuming you are photographing a grown-up person). AND you can get even further out of hiding behind the camera. This is super important when photographing kids. Kids will respond better to seeing your face, than looking into a lens. #4 - Shoot in Manual Mode What camera mode to shoot in is your next big decision to make. I can tell you what modes I use for different situations. It's pretty simple really - just follow these guidelines: If your camera is on a tripod, shoot in Manual Mode. When you're shooting handheld, shoot in Aperture Priority. I would say I follow that about 95% of the time. So using a tripod also includes things like shooting HDR bracketed shots, night photography, and any long exposures. For most casual shooting walking around like street photography and travel - I shoot in Aperture Priority. The only exception I can think of is when I want to do panning. Then I switch to Shutter Priority. Okay now that you're in Manual Mode, I'll tell you why I recommend this. As I already mentioned above, using a tripod forces you to slow down. Well so does shooting in Manual Mode, in a way, so they work well together. But the other thing shooting in Manual does is it allows you to choose all your settings and they will not change - even if the lighting or other factors change around you. That also means you will have really consistent exposures from one frame to the next. This set of images is right out of the camera - NO processing has been done here. Notice the exposure and color tone consistency. This is Miriam. I was taking her portrait in Viñales, Cuba in front of her house. I didn't want to take too much of her time but she suggested this porch as another shooting location so we did a series of shots there. This is how she saw them on the camera. The following year I returned, visited her home and took her some prints! If you are working with a portrait subject (whether it be a model, paid client, or a friend) it makes you look way better. As you show them the images on your LCD screen the exposures aren't all over the place. You will look way more professional, even if you don't feel like it. But the other side benefit of this is that the subject will have more confidence in you and your abilities. They will trust you more. That could also mean they are more willing to work with you on different poses or ideas, and open up and give you some great expressions. This may seem like a little thing, but having your subject's trust is huge! This is one of my favorite images from the set. I applied processing to this one, and then synced (copy and paste works too) them all in Lightroom within a couple minutes. #5 - ISO For portraits, you want the highest image quality possible. So for the ISO set it as low as you can to avoid excess noise in your photos. Go for somewhere between ISO 100 and 400. But having said that, you also need to maintain a usable shutter speed. If your image is blurry due to either subject or camera movement it's irrelevant how noise-free it is. I suggest you start at ISO 400 and adjust as necessary. Meaning, if you're shooting in the shade, low light, or indoors using window light you'll likely need to increase that. Don't be afraid to use ISO 800 or even 1600 if you need to. But remember you can also open up your aperture if the light is low. This was shot indoors in low light at ISO 1600, f/4 at 1/200th. I was using the 24-105mm f/4 lens so could not open any wider so the higher ISO was used to get a faster shutter speed. It's a dance you need to do to find the right balance of the three exposure triangle settings (ISO, aperture and shutter speed). Adjust one, and you'll have to compensate by adjusting one of the other factors. Above all, do some test shots and review them on your LCD before you start shooting away. Make sure you have a fast enough shutter speed to eliminate camera shake when handholding the camera, and subject movement when you're using a tripod. See point #9 below for more on shutter speed. #6 - Focus Mode Use single point focus here (not zone or multiple points), do not let the camera choose what to focus on for you. It often gets that wrong. Always focus on the subject's eye. If one eye is closer to the camera than the other, focus on the near one. ISO 200, f/2.8, 1/400th. I focused directly on her eye that was closest to the camera. The other one is slightly soft at this aperture. The other way around with the back eye sharp and the front eye soft just doesn't look right. Don't do it. Also in terms of focus settings, choose Single Shot (AF-S) not continuous (Servo or AF-C). You want the autofocus to lock onto the subject, you do not want tracking focus (that is for moving subjects). Read more on focus here: 6 Tips for Finding Focus and Getting Sharp Images. Lastly, learn how to set up your camera to do Back Button Focus. Essentially it's a custom setting where you remove the function of autofocus from the shutter release button and assign it to one on the back of the camera. The benefit of doing this is that you do not have to focus every time if you and your subject are not moving. You can lock focus onto them, then leave it there. If you move a little or get closer to them just refocus and lock it again. Focus lock on the subject and shoot away using back button focus. Shooting settings: 17mm lens, ISO 100, f/9.0 at 1/5th of a second (using a tripod). This is how I shoot at night as well. Because the camera is easily fooled in the dark and it can't easily find focus, it will just hunt indefinitely and you'll miss the shot. You can read more about this subject over on dPS in this article, Back Button Focus: What is it and why should you try it? #7 - Drive Mode This is a short one - set the Drive Mode to Single. You don't need to use burst mode and shoot 4-8 frames per second. This isn't a machine gun and you aren't shooting sports. Don't spray and pray. Instead, intentionally press the shutter when you see a good expression and have good light on the subject. Taking lots of images will not get you the best shots in portraiture. It's been my experience being on the receiving end of photos shot that way, and I can tell you it doesn't work. Burst mode often captures closed eyes and weird facial expressions. I received 30 photos (shot in burst mode) of a group portrait I was in, and not a single frame had every person's eyes opened, and a good expression from everybody. Avoid the temptation of burst mode and shoot one frame at a time. Having fewer photos to edit later is a good thing, and trust me - you'll have way more good expressions and keepsers this way. No - shoot one frame at a time. Engage with, and talk to your model. Press the button when you see something good. Be choosy, wait for the right moments. #8 - Aperture I could give you a rule here, such as "Always shoot portraits at f/5.6", but I'm not going to. What I will do is give you starting points, then you need to think it through and make a decision for your situation. For portraits of one person set your aperture between f/2 and f/4. If you don't have a lens that opens that wide, invest in a good old 50mm f/1.8. It's inexpensive and super versatile. Using a wide aperture like this will help you make the background blurry and less distracting. Do be careful of shooting too wide opened like f/1.8 or f/1.4 if you have those settings. The depth of field is so narrow you have to be really precise with your focus and you could end up with their eyes sharp and their nose and ears out of focus. If you like that look and can nail your focus - go for it. If not go for a slightly smaller aperture choice of f/2.8 or f/4. Shot at ISO 400, f/1.8, at 1/250th in one of my classrooms as a demonstration. Now look closer - see just how shallow the depth of field is at this aperture? It's just her eye that's sharp and not even the entire eye! You have to get the focus perfect! ISO 400, f/1.8, 1/400th - lens 85mm. Nice blurry background at this aperture, great right? Yeah, not if you completely miss focusing on the subject's eyes! ISO 400, f/2.8 at 1/125th - 85mm lens. This is a cropped in close from the image above. With her facing the camera more squarely, at f/2.8 I was able to get both eyes in sharp focus. For couple's portraits or groups use a smaller aperture to make sure you get everyone in sharp focus, f/5.6 or f/8 will usually do the trick. Also, watch how you pose and position people in the group so they aren't spaced too far apart (distance to the camera). By keeping everyone close to the same plane you can easily shoot at f/5.6 and get them all sharp. ISO 400, f/5.6 at 1.250th. ISO 400, f/4.5 at 1/125th. I put them closer together here so could get away with a slightly larger aperture. #9 - Shutter Speed In point #5 above, I mentioned that you need to make sure you have a fast enough shutter speed to keep the image sharp. Think about minimum shutter speed you can use handheld (one over the focal length), but also how slow you can go using a tripod. The tripod will keep the camera steady at any shutter speed, even one second or longer. But what are the chances of the subject not moving during that time? So choose a shutter speed according to your subject. Shot handheld at ISO 500, f/4.5 at 1/125th. If you are working with an adult or teen, and they aren't moving a lot or making large hand gestures - you can probably go as low as 1/15th or even 1/8th of a second. I've done it when shooting in the low light from a window - just ask them to be relatively still. But if you are working with kids or multiple people in a group - make it the shutter speed faster. Start at 1/125th or higher and adjust as needed. If you're getting blurry images of the person - increase to a faster shutter speed. If you don't want to adjust the aperture - you'll need to increase ISO (hence the reference in #5 above). #10 - White Balance For White Balance, I recommend choosing one of your camera's WB presets like Daylight or Shady. Choose the one that most closely matches the lighting conditions. For indoor window light do a test shot and see which looks best, gives you the most natural or flattering skin tones. Shady White Balance preset used here. Shady WB also used here to add a golden glow to the image. I tend to err on the side or going too warm, as opposed to too cool. People look better with more warmth (yellow) in their skin usually than blue (cooler). Why I suggest a preset instead of just using Auto White Balance (AWB) is for the same reasons to shoot in Manual Mode. Consistency from one frame to the next. Also, neutral isn't always the best option for portraits - warm is a better choice. AWB makes neutral. You can also do a custom white balance using a gray card if your lighting conditions do not change. But you have to redo do it if you move or the light shifts. Custom white balance was done and applied here. AWB tends to pick up color casts in people's clothes, trees, or whatever else is around you and in the image. It tries to neutralize those colors the best it can - but sometimes it gets it wrong and at best it's just inconsistent. DOWNLOAD THIS GUIDE: Click here to download this camera settings for portraits guide as a PDF so you can print it or save to your mobile device and have it handy when you need it. By clicking the link, you will be sent a download of the free guide as a PDF, be enrolled in my 9-part portrait photography mini-series and be subscribed to our weekly photography emails. Bonus tip - Shoot RAW format By shooting in RAW format you will have more latitude for adjusting the exposure and White Balance if necessary. But by following tips #4 and 10 above, your images should be pretty consistent all the way through your entire photo shoot. That will make it easier for you to adjust one image in post-processing, and sync up the settings across all your images. If the exposures are all over the place, you'll have more work to do in processing. Make less work for yourself by slowing down and getting it right in-camera, to begin with. Then you'll be able to get away from the computer faster and have more time for photography. For a full list of recommended photography equipment for portrait photography - see this page. Conclusion If you apply these tips to your portrait photography, you will see improvement in your images. Not just in the technical qualities, but the overall success of the portraits as well. Do you apply these 10+ tips in your photography already? Do you have others that you follow? Please share in the comments below as well as any portrait images you'd like to share. If you want more in-depth help and lessons on portrait photography, check out our online class - Portrait Fundamentals here. Cheers,

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