

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY CHEAT SHEET



APERTURE



Wide Aperture (more light)

Narrow Aperture (less light)

Use wider apertures to have the background blurred and to isolate the subject.

ISO

100 ··· 200 ··· 400 ··· 800 ··· 1600 ··· 3200 ··· 6400

Lower

LIGHT SENSITIVITY

Higher

Try to avoid noise in your portrait shots by using the lowest ISO possible.

SHUTTER SPEED



Blur motion

Tripod Recommended

Handheld Ok

Freeze Motion

Most often you will want to avoid any blur from motion. That means use a shutter speed faster than the focal length of your lens. If you are shooting with a 50mm for example, then 1/50th second would be the slowest shutter speed to use (1/80th sec for 80mm etc).

1 THE EYES

Getting the eyes of your main subject in focus is practically essential in most traditional portraiture.

2 SOFTLY SOFTLY

One of the most common issues with portrait photographs is that there are harsh shadows across the face of the subject.

3 THE ESSENTIALS BACKGROUNDS

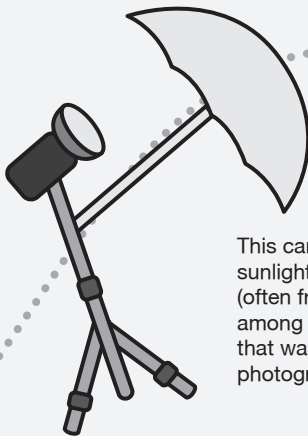
Even in portrait photography, backgrounds are of huge importance. Sometimes you might be forced to use a plain background (head shots for an actor for example), but if you have any leeway, then get creative.



You can get away with having a lot of the rest of the image out of focus, but if the eyes are blurry you are usually going to have a hard time.

TIP:

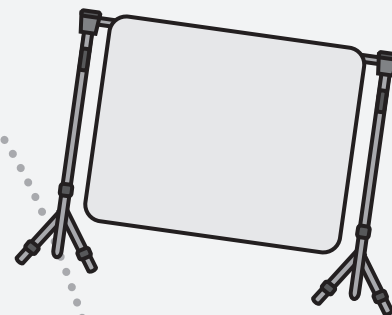
If you can only get one eye in focus due to using a narrow depth of field, make sure it is the eye closest to the camera.



This can be caused by harsh sunlight or harsh artificial light (often from a built-in-flash) among other sources (and if that was the intention of the photographer then that is fine).

TIP:

Think about using diffusers and reflectors to soften the light and shadows.



Indoor, that might mean getting your subject in front of something interesting (curtains, material, textured walls or a contextual background for environmental portraits for example).

TIP:

If you're shooting outdoors try a brick wall or a stunning sunset.