

Portrait Photography Starter Kit

Prepare a focused portrait session with clear direction and natural color



AI-generated style illustration. Actual preset results will vary.

Build a portrait session around a clear brief with the True Portrait preset, a model-call guide, a questionnaire, and client email templates.

Includes one XMP preset, an editable guide, and copy-ready templates.

sessionsavvy.com

Build a clear portrait brief

Decide how the photographs will be used before planning the shot list. A profile picture, a personal portrait, and a business website image can need different framing and direction.

Agree on the essentials

- ☐ Purpose and audience for the images.
- ☐ Location, date, length, and accessibility.
- ☐ Outfits, any changes, and the amount of time available.
- ☐ Included photographs, selection process, and delivery date.
- ☐ The client's preferred mood and any poses they want to avoid.
- ☐ Whether vertical, horizontal, or square crops are needed.

If you are running a model call

Choose one portfolio gap to work on, such as relaxed outdoor headshots. State who the session suits, when it takes place, what the participant receives, any cost, and the intended image use. Confirm those details in writing with selected participants.

Use your own reviewed permission or release process for publication. A model-call post or questionnaire is not a substitute for that process.

Model call announcement to customize

I'm looking for [NUMBER] adult participants for a portrait project in [LOCATION] on [DATE]. The session will explore [SPECIFIC STYLE OR PURPOSE] and take approximately [DURATION]. Participants receive [DELIVERABLES] by [DELIVERY DATE]. Cost or compensation: [EXACT TERMS]. Intended image use: [CLEAR DESCRIPTION]. Interested? Share your availability and a little about yourself here: [INQUIRY LINK]. We'll confirm the full details before booking.

Give simple direction and create variety

Start with a comfortable position and give one instruction at a time. Ask before adjusting clothing or touching someone. Let the person tell you what feels natural.

Photograph	Direction to try
Relaxed standing	Ask them to stand comfortably and breathe out before the frame.
Small turn	Invite a slight turn toward the light, then pause and check comfort.
Seated portrait	Use a stable seat and ask for a comfortable, unforced posture.
Hands	Offer a simple option: resting together or lightly holding a jacket.
Expression	Have a brief conversation; photograph both a small smile and a neutral expression.
Gentle movement	Invite a few slow steps if the location and mobility allow.
Close portrait	Move closer for expression while keeping a flattering, natural perspective.
Environmental frame	Step back to show useful context and leave space for a wider crop.

A simple example sequence

For a 30-minute session, allow a few minutes to settle and check the light, around 15 minutes for the main look, and the remaining time for a second framing or outfit if agreed. Adjust for the person and the deliverables.

Before you finish

- ☐ Check that you have the required orientation and crop space.
- ☐ Review sharpness, expression, and distracting background elements.
- ☐ Confirm the next step for selections and delivery.
- ☐ Record what worked while it is fresh.

Portrait inquiry and session questionnaire

Keep the initial inquiry short. Ask detailed style and preparation questions once you know the person is interested in a session.

First inquiry

Your name and preferred email

How you plan to use the photographs

Preferred date range and location

Which portrait service interests you

Before the session

What would make these photographs feel like you

Which words describe the mood you want

Where the final images will appear and which crops you need

Outfits or meaningful items you plan to bring

Practical accommodations or poses you want to avoid

Use the answers to make a short session brief. Keep any publication permission separate and specific to the intended use.

Portrait client messages

Replace every bracketed field. These templates can be adapted for personal portraits, headshots, or a clearly agreed model-call session.

Preparation email

Subject: Preparing for your portrait session

Hi [FIRST NAME],

We're booked for [DATE] at [TIME] at [LOCATION]. I've noted that your photographs are for [PURPOSE] and that you'd like [STYLE OR PRIORITIES].

Please bring [AGREED OUTFITS OR ITEMS]. Clothes that fit comfortably and feel like you are a good place to start. Our session lasts [DURATION], and we'll prioritize [REQUIRED FRAMING OR SHOTS].

Parking and meeting details: [DETAILS]. Your package includes [DELIVERABLES], with [SELECTION PROCESS] and delivery by [DATE]. Let me know if there is anything that would help you feel more comfortable.

[YOUR NAME]

Image selection message

Subject: Choose your portrait photographs

Hi [FIRST NAME],

Your selection gallery is ready: [GALLERY LINK]. Please choose [NUMBER] photographs using [INSTRUCTIONS] by [DATE]. Once I receive your choices, I'll complete [AGREED FINISHING] and deliver by [DELIVERY DATE].

Reply here if you need help choosing.

[YOUR NAME]

Delivery and follow up

Subject: Your portraits are ready

Hi [FIRST NAME],

Here are your finished portraits: [DOWNLOAD LINK]. You'll find [FORMATS AND DELIVERABLES] and [ANY AGREED USAGE DETAILS]. Please download your files by [DATE IF APPLICABLE].

Thank you for working with me. Once you've had a chance to use them, I'd love to hear which photograph feels most like you.

[YOUR NAME]

Install and adjust your preset

True Portrait is a starting point for balanced color, gentle contrast, and a restrained portrait finish. Apply it to an unedited photo or a virtual copy, then adjust the photograph for its own light and subject.

Import the XMP file

- Unzip the kit and locate the .xmp file in the Preset folder.
- Lightroom Classic: open Develop, use the + menu in Presets, then choose Import Presets.
- Lightroom desktop: choose File > Import Profiles & Presets and select the XMP file.
- Lightroom mobile: open a photo, choose Presets, then use the options menu to import the extracted XMP file. Menu placement varies by platform and version.

Look for True Portrait in the Session Savvy preset group. This kit supplies XMP, not DNG or legacy .lrtemplate files. Use a current Adobe app that supports XMP preset import.

Make the look work for this photo

- Match white balance to the actual light before judging the look.
- Set exposure for the person, preserving the depth and brightness of their own skin tone.
- If clothing or the background reflects a color onto skin, address the local cast rather than desaturating the whole photograph.
- Reduce the preset Amount if your starting image already has strong contrast, where the app supports that control.
- Inspect at normal viewing size and at full detail. Apply sharpening and any retouching separately to suit the photograph.

Exposure, white balance, crop, lens corrections, and sharpening are left for you to set. Adjust one representative image before applying the look to a group shot under the same light.

Compatibility note: the preset file structure has been checked; importing and visual results still need verification in Adobe Lightroom. Keep your originals.

Official installation references

[Lightroom Classic preset help](#)

[Lightroom desktop preset help](#)

[Lightroom mobile preset help](#)

Put your next session in motion

Use the templates you have just customized to prepare your next portrait session. Session Savvy can keep the inquiry, booking details, and client communication together.

Prepare a focused portrait inquiry

- Choose the portrait service you want to promote and clarify its deliverables.
- Customize a Session Savvy inquiry form with the four initial questions from this guide.
- Save your preparation and delivery messages for reuse, replacing the bracketed fields for each client.
- Test the inquiry form and share it alongside portfolio photographs that represent the service you are offering.

[Start a free Session Savvy account](#)

[Explore the relevant Session Savvy feature](#)

Already have an account? Sign in and use the same checklist. The links open the existing website; they do not automatically import this kit or create a session.

After the shoot

- ☐ Back up your files before editing.
- ☐ Cull for expression, focus, and useful variety.
- ☐ Adjust a representative image, then review every synchronized edit.
- ☐ Check skin tones and whites at normal viewing size.
- ☐ Deliver the agreed image count by your promised date.
- ☐ Send the delivery message and record the next follow-up.

Make this kit your own

The editable Word guide contains the same checklists and templates as this PDF. Separate text files make it easy to copy messages into your own system. Replace every bracketed field before sending.

You may use the supplied preset on personal and client photographs and adapt the written templates for your own photography business. The kit is provided free by Session Savvy. Photos shown here are AI-generated style illustrations, not client work or measured preset results.

[More tools for photographers](#)