

Portrait Photography Studio Guide

A practical PDF for planning studio portraits, headshots, client prep, lighting looks, posing flow, and final delivery.

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BEST USE	Use this before a portrait or headshot session to confirm the room, client brief, lighting plan, posing flow, wardrobe, and delivery expectations.
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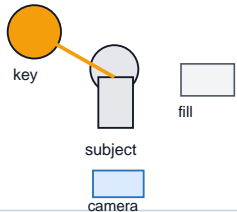
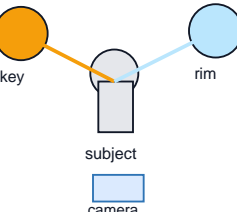
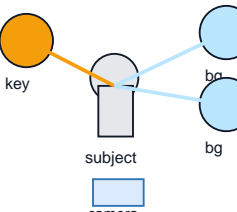
1. Portrait studio selection

[]	Confirm privacy, changing space, mirror, seating, restrooms, climate control, and client waiting area.
[]	Check ceiling height, working distance, backdrop width, floor condition, and room for full-length portraits.
[]	Ask which lights, modifiers, stands, backdrops, stools, apple boxes, sandbags, and triggers are included.
[]	Verify parking, elevator, load-in, overtime, cleanup, music, Wi-Fi, and whether setup time is included.
[]	Confirm makeup or grooming area if the session includes headshots, branding portraits, or talent prep.
[]	Make sure the studio can support the intended crop: tight headshot, half body, full body, team, or movement.

2. Client brief and session plan

Field	Decision to confirm	Session note
Purpose	Headshot, branding, editorial, actor, team, portfolio.	The purpose controls crop, mood, and retouching.
Usage	LinkedIn, website, PR, casting, ads, internal profile.	Usage may require specific ratios or backgrounds.
Look	Friendly, polished, dramatic, natural, creative, corporate.	Build lighting and posing around this tone.
Wardrobe	Colors, fit, backup outfits, lint control, steam needs.	Avoid logos and distracting patterns unless intentional.
Retouching	Skin, hair, wardrobe, background, body shaping limits.	Set expectations before proofing.
Delivery	Number of finals, crops, deadline, proofing owner.	Name who approves selects.

3. Lighting looks to choose from

<p>soft headshot</p>  <p>The diagram shows a subject's head and shoulders. An orange circle labeled 'key' is positioned to the left and slightly above the subject's eye level. A grey rectangle labeled 'fill' is positioned to the right of the subject. A blue rectangle labeled 'camera' is positioned below the subject.</p>	<p>Soft headshot Best for LinkedIn, company profiles, and approachable brand portraits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Large key light close to the face, slightly above eye level.- Use a reflector or low fill to keep shadows gentle.- Keep catchlights clean and background separation subtle.
<p>dramatic portrait</p>  <p>The diagram shows a subject's head and shoulders. An orange circle labeled 'key' is positioned to the left and further away from the subject. A blue circle labeled 'rim' is positioned to the right, behind the subject's head. A blue rectangle labeled 'camera' is positioned below the subject.</p>	<p>Dramatic portrait Best for editorial, creative, musician, actor, or portfolio portraits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Move key farther to the side and reduce fill.- Add negative fill if the room bounces too much light.- Use rim light carefully so it separates without flaring.
<p>white background</p>  <p>The diagram shows a subject's head and shoulders. An orange circle labeled 'key' is positioned to the left. Two blue circles labeled 'bg' are positioned to the right, one above and one below the subject's head. A blue rectangle labeled 'camera' is positioned below the subject.</p>	<p>Clean white background Best for team portraits, badges, simple headshots, and web profiles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Expose the subject first, then raise background lights.- Keep subject away from the backdrop to reduce spill.- Check edges for glow, haze, and lost detail.

4. Posing and expression flow

Stage	Prompt	Watch for
Posture	Stand tall, relax shoulders, shift weight slightly.	Locked knees, raised shoulders, leaning back.
Face angle	Turn nose slightly, lower chin a little, eyes back to lens.	Chin too high, eyes looking strained.
Hands	Use pockets, lap, crossed arms, prop, or relaxed side position.	Stiff fingers, clenched hands, croppped joints.
Expression	Neutral, slight smile, full smile, serious, looking away.	Forced smile, tense jaw, tired eyes.
Variation	Tight headshot, half body, seated, standing, jacket on/off.	Too many near-identical frames.
Review	Check hair, glasses, collar, necklace, lint, and background.	Small issues repeated across the whole session.

5. Session timeline

Block	Time	Action
Setup	30-45 min	Build lighting, test exposure, check tether, prep stool and backdrop.
Arrival	10 min	Welcome client, review goals, wardrobe, grooming, and session rhythm.
Warm-up	10-15 min	Start simple with safe crops and easy expression prompts.
Main looks	30-60 min	Move through approved lighting, wardrobe, crop, and pose variations.
Review	10-20 min	Flag favorites, note retouching, confirm crops and delivery timing.
Wrap	10 min	Back up files, reset studio, pack wardrobe, confirm next steps.

6. Delivery QA checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	Review focus, expression, eyes, hair, skin shine, glasses glare, wardrobe, jewelry, and background.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confirm selected images match the promised crop, mood, usage, retouching level, and file count.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Export agreed ratios for web, profile, press, casting, print, or internal company use.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name files clearly by client, look, crop, version, and delivery size.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Back up originals, selects, retouched files, exports, and proofing notes before archiving.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send final delivery instructions, usage reminders, revision limits, and archive timeline.

Related resources: vtphotoworkplace.com/studios/types/portrait and vtphotoworkplace.com/studio-guides/small-studio-portrait-setup