

Foolproof Tips for a Stress Free Photo Shoot

Brought to you by Laura Pea Photography



Choosing locations, styles and themes

Picking a winning outfit

Prepping for Success

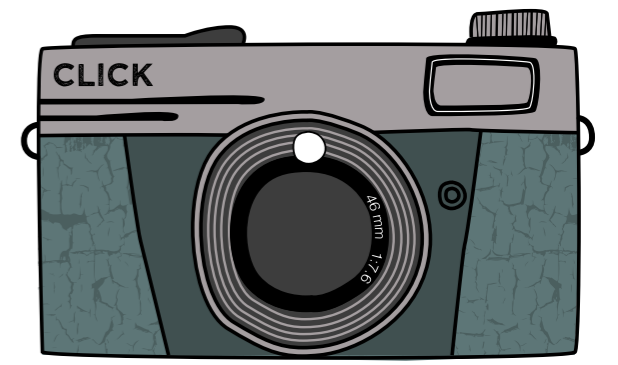
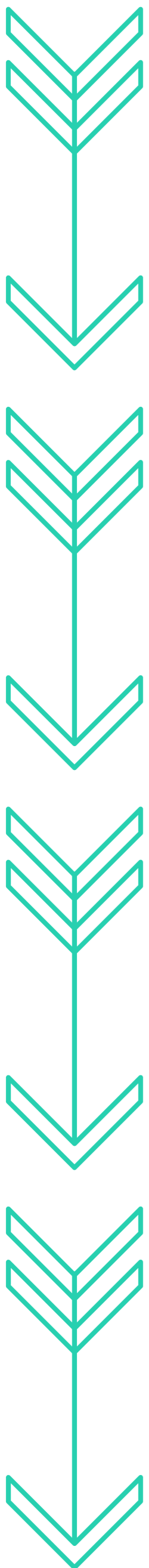


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They're only this small once. The arrival of a newborn is a momentous event in a family and it should be commemorated as such. Children today are photographed more than any generation ever before, but rarely do they see these photos outside of a cell phone or computer. Studies show that children who grow up seeing photos of themselves printed in their home have higher self-esteem and confidence. Here are some tips to ensure your newborn session is relaxing and rewarding, without too many tears from you or your little one.

Choosing the best time

The best time for newborn portraits is the first 6-14 days of your child's life. This is when a baby is still very sleepy and flexible enough to pose, and before issues like baby acne typically crop up. After this time period, photos can still turn out beautifully but can be challenging to achieve, as a baby's body becomes less responsive to posing. Also at that time, baby's eyes are more likely to be open and possibly reveal eye crossing, which is common in newborns. Keep in mind that newborn sessions tend to take several hours, as babies generally need to

be fed, calmed or cleaned up if any messes occur...which they often do!

Choosing baby's outfit

Newborns can be photographed in diaper covers, outfits, cloth wraps or in the buff! Before your shoot, think of where and how you want your photos displayed. Communicate to your photographer the style and colors of your home so they can guide you toward outfits and backgrounds which will complement the style and decor of your home.

What to bring along

It's a good idea to bring enough milk or formula for a full feeding and some snacks for yourself, as these sessions can run long. Make sure you have any outfits, diaper covers, headbands, hats or other accessories you wish to include in the photos. Blankets, books or other items that are special to you make great props and can add a lot of emotion to photos. Packing a change of clothes for yourself can come in handy in case things get messy when the diapers come off.





Safety during sessions

The safety of your baby during a photo session is of utmost importance. Notify your photographer of any medical issues your baby may have. Someone should have a hand on your baby at all times between shots. Stay within arm's reach of your child in case of a startle reflex, which can cause your newborn to move suddenly.

Some popular newborn poses (including those where it appears that a baby is suspended in air) can only be safely executed with multiple shots being edited together in post production. Keep in constant communication with your photographer during your baby's photo shoot so you know exactly what is happening.

Infants + Toddlers

The first few years are a time of so many rapid changes in your child's life. There are some significant milestones during this time that are important to document. At 3-4 months, a baby looks so different from their newborn photos and they begin to smile and interact well. The 6 month mark is also a great time because typically a child will be sitting up at this point. Of course, the 1 year photo shoot is so important to round out your child's first year of life. After that, many people like to adopt a yearly photo routine to showcase the child and the many different stages of growth through the years.

Choosing a location

Indoor or outdoor, that is the question. It's up to your style, really. Photos in studio tend to be a bit more posed and formal. If you like the traditional, or are interested in a variety of props and backgrounds, this may be the route to go. Photos outdoors tend to be a bit more dynamic because of the opportunity for children to run, play and interact with their environment. At my studio, I like to split the difference. I tend to start off clients indoors and do traditional portraits, then move outside when the light is perfect to do fun active photos.



Choosing a style/theme

Every child is different, and you know your little one best. Consult with your photographer to discuss your child's unique personality and abilities, because this all can influence the style of your photo session. Tell your photographer what your home's decor looks like. Whether your home is airy or modern or rustic, your photographer can make lighting choices to complement your style.

Choosing an outfit

Before you choose an outfit, brainstorm where you want to see these photos when they are printed. For example, a canary yellow outfit you picked for a photo might not look best if you choose to hang it in room painted bright red (unless you're a big fan of sandwich condiments). If you're going with a specific theme or costume, try to choose clothing with a classic touch, so that the photos don't look dated when viewing them in the future.

What to bring along

After you've decided on a style or theme, what props you should bring are easy to brainstorm. For photos at the beach, I often bring along a pail and shovel. For Easter photos, I usually include a vintage stuffed bunny. If you're stuck, ask your photographer for ideas. Pinterest is also a treasure trove of inspiration, but try not to overwhelm the photo with too many props at a time. After all, your child should be the main focus of the portraits.

Items that are significant to you and your family are also a great thing to bring along. A blanket made by grandma, or a toy or book that had meaning to you when you were a child can make a portrait really special. Choosing timeless props can make sure that the appeal of your photos will endure throughout your child's life.





Just as photos of your children on their own are important, so are photos of your family together. They show your family's unique relationship and connection. Not only will these photos matter to you and your children, but they will also mean a lot to future generations of your family. Make sure your photographer works with a reputable printer that uses high quality archival inks and papers. A product printed in such a way can last well over 100 years.

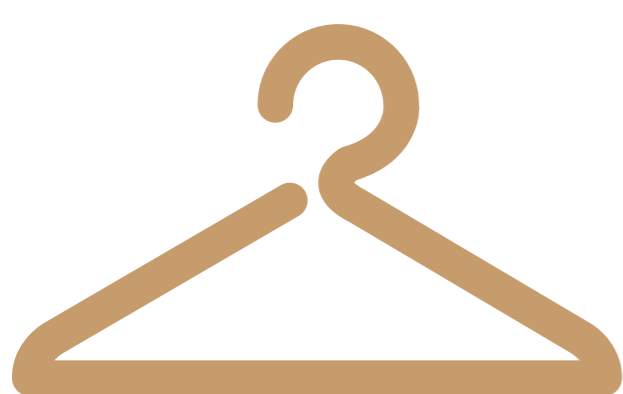
What to wear

As I mentioned earlier in this guide, planning on where you want to display the images before choosing an outfit is very important. Make sure you choose colors and styles that won't clash with the decor of your home. Here are some ways to make sure you and your family looks your best in portraits:

- ★ Pick a few colors, patterns or textures that look good together and add some of these elements sparingly into each outfit. Take note of the family in the photo above. Their colors are red, grey and cream. Not everyone has to wear all those colors, but they look coordinated because the colors tie them together as a unit. Keep in mind that busy patterns can distract.

★ Wear what you are comfortable in. Wearing something constricting that isn't natural to you will result in tense and unnatural posture in your photos. Define your body type and search online for styles that work well for your shape. Make sure you can sit comfortably in the outfit you choose. No matter what you are wearing, your photographer will know how to pose you so you look your best.

★ If you need some outfit inspiration, check out my Pinterest board at: www.pinterest.com/laurapeaphoto/outfit-inspiration-for-clients/



Choosing a location

Do you like traditional formal posed photos? Then you'll want your session to take place in studio. I find, however, that most of my clients prefer taking family photos outdoors. Some large families, or families with small children can find the studio environment a bit uncomfortable, due to the smaller space and presence of large lights and equipment. At an outdoor location, like a park, beach or back yard, there is less pressure and those being photographed tend to feel a bit more relaxed. Make sure you discuss all locations you'd like to visit with your photographer, and research whether professional photography is allowed or if there are any permits or fees required to shoot there. If you're stuck, ask your photographer for ideas.

Getting Family Cooperation

Getting your spouse and children to cooperate for family photos can sometimes be challenging. Dressing kids in comfortable clothing can go a long way to avoid fussing and pouty faces. Maybe even let them help to pick out an outfit to make them feel more at ease and invested in the process. Keep a calm and light demeanor during your session. Being relaxed and having fun is the best way to ensure your photos come out looking natural and beautiful.

I have a few tricks up my sleeve to get kids (or grumpy spouses) to smile. I like to chat with my clients before we start the shoot to make a connection and set everyone at ease who might be nervous about getting their photograph taken. I also have an arsenal of corny jokes that kids love, and adults love to groan at.



Planning a silly shot for the end of your photo session can also be helpful. In the above photo, this family is posing before and after eating a sour candy. Having something fun to look forward to kept the younger kids smiling for all the photos leading up to this. Even though this didn't qualify for their holiday card photo, it became a cherished family memory.

Chapter 4

Pets

Anyone who has loved an animal knows that they aren't just pets, they're family. It's my strong belief that every cherished member of the family should be immortalized with photography. Pets bring us immeasurable amounts of joy during their short but beautiful lives. They stand by us through life and their portraits should hang on the walls beside ours as well.

Choosing a location

Dog portraits can be done in studio or outdoors at a location of your choice. Cats are typically harder to travel with and prefer to stay on their home turf. If your pet is outgoing and adventurous when it comes to new places, the studio is a great option for you. You can also choose an outdoor location where pets are welcome, but make sure that the location allows photography. If your pet is nervous and prefers to stay at home, a session can occur in your back yard. It's important to choose a location where your pet will be comfortable, as anxiety can cause dogs to pant or over-salivate, and cats to become agitated. If you choose a location other than your home, try to bring your pet there several times to get them acclimated to the environment.

Choosing the best time

If your session is going to take place in studio, artificial lighting will make it possible to take photos any time of day. If your session is set to take place outdoors, however, there are other variables to consider. The best times for outdoor photographs are an hour after sunrise, and an hour before sunset. At these times, the light is particularly flattering. Noon is not a great time for photos, because the position of the sun causes harsh shadows on the face, not to mention lots of squinting. Don't worry if the day of your photoshoot promises cloud cover. An overcast day can actually help create soft, even light for portraits. Of course, cameras don't fare well in the rain, so be flexible if your photo shoot needs to be rescheduled due to the weather.



Prepping your pet for photos

For dogs, plan on taking a walk about an hour or two before your session. It can be helpful to practice sit and stay commands a few days prior. If you are getting dogs or cats groomed prior to the session, make sure you do so a few days before, as both a grooming appointment and a photo shoot in one day can be taxing on an animal. Try to trim your pet's nails a few days before a studio session to prevent them getting tangled in furniture or props, which can agitate them. Let your photographer know of any issues your pet might have, such as aggression or anxiety so they can be sensitive to their needs and keep them as calm and safe as possible during your session.

What to bring along

It's a great idea to bring a few of your pet's favorite toys and a good amount of water. You can bring treats, but it might be best to save this as a last resort because it can cause dogs to over salivate and lead to very slobbery photos. You also should bring plenty of patience and a calm attitude to your session. These sessions can take time, and pets can sense when their owners are frustrated or tense.



Chapter 5

About Me



My name is Laura Paesano and I'm the photographer and owner of Laura Pea Photography, based in Suffolk County on Long Island, New York. I graduated magna cum laude from Stony Brook University in 2010 with a BA in Studio Art with concentrations in printmaking and photography, and minors in Art History and Digital Art. I started photographing newborns, children and families in 2014 and expanded my business into pet photography in 2016.

One of my favorite things to do as a child, and now as an adult, is to look back at family photographs. Looking through photos with my family always makes us laugh. It sparks conversations about our family's history and brings us closer together. I think it's so important for families to have beautiful professional photographs taken, and I hope this guide will help you make your next photo session a success. If you're in the Long Island area, schedule a photo session with me by emailing laurapeaphotography@gmail.com or calling 631-256-7476.