

Preparing Your Child For The Portrait

Preparing your child for their portrait session at Brittney's Photography is the first step in creating a portrait you will treasure forever. Here are a few simple steps you can take at home to help us help you when you bring your child to the studio.

1. Relax...Sounds too simple to work but when a parent is nervous or apprehensive, children (especially under the age of 4) tend to get nervous and apprehensive right along with them. So take a deep breath and remember that unless you've been with us before, that this is going to be totally different than any photographic experiences you've ever had. All kids have a great time here but fair warning...many get mad when you tell them it's time to leave. I guess you could say they had fun.

2. Two Big No-No's To Avoid...#1...never, ever coach or tell your child to smile...either here or at home. Children are born knowing how to smile naturally and then we as parents teach them to do a different way. If we don't tell them to smile, they'll smile naturally as a reaction to what's going on. After all, expression is our responsibility, so don't put any extra pressure on yourself or your child. **#2...**don't tell them they're coming to have their picture taken. Most children leave here never even knowing they had their portrait made...and the ones that do know don't care because they just came to play and that's what they did. If you have to tell them something just tell them you're going to do something fun.

3. What to wear...clothing is an important factor in a portrait. The more appropriate the clothing, the more successful the portrait. Avoid outfits that make a child

angry. And although we can sometimes do two outfits on a child, they get bored and frustrated and can not do 4-5 outfits. Here are a few little tips that can help you select an outfit that will both photograph well and have a happy child in it:

Keep it simple. The more complex the outfit the more likely it is that part of it will be out of place during the session. Children are not miniature adults...they tend to move a lot more.

Make your child the star of the show. In other words, select an outfit that doesn't compete with your child for attention when you look at the image. Strong primary colors are great on traffic lights because they grab your attention but they're not good on children because you have trouble looking at the child. The same is true of high contrast outfits (e.g. light top with dark pants or vice versa) such as black and white together. As a rule of thumb, put light colors together and put dark colors together...mid-tones can go alone or with either light or dark.

Patterns are fine if they are very subdued...a strong pattern competes with your child for attention. So avoid bold stripes, plaids and big emblems or designs. Clothing is replaceable...children are one of a kind.

Shoes are optional...don't spend a great deal of time searching for the perfect shoes. In most cases we prefer bare feet and so do the children. Simply put, I'd much rather see cute little toes than the bottom of a shoe.

Hats...are great but to avoid crushing their hair or making

them mad, bring it and we'll add it toward the end.

Totally confused yet? Don't be...these are not carved in stone rules...they're just suggestions. If you're not sure, just bring 3 or 4 things and we'll help you pick the ones that will photograph best.

4. What to expect...When most people arrive at the studio, they need a moment to get settled in. That's why we plan on taking the first 10-15 min. to let you get comfortable and let your child get comfortable with us. This is play time but it's important because it lets your child get comfortable with us and it lets us see what kind of things your little one reacts to. During this time, the best thing to do is sit back, relax and enjoy the show...the silliness is about to begin. Remember, it's okay to arrive a few minutes early but avoid getting her too early because in most cases there's a session scheduled before you and we don't want to use up your child's patience just waiting.

5. What should you do while we're photographing...We consider you part of the team and you're welcome to join us on the set. Children usually feel a little more comfortable with you there and sometimes we even need your help. The only thing we ask is that you try your best not to talk out loud while we're working with your child...the sound of your voice is the most familiar sound in the world to them and they will invariably look at you right when we need them to be looking somewhere else. Sometimes we can use this to our advantage but as a rule...mums the word.

6. Bribes...We're not above a little bribery as a last resort but we caution parents not to start with a bribe. In other words don't promise a special treat or trip if they're "good" while they're here. A properly placed bribe is a thing of

beauty and can be highly effective if done at the right time...for this reason we have a few bribes that work well. As a general rule...let us bring up the bribes and you can save yours as a last resort...it's rarely needed but nice to know it's there just in case.

Finally, if there is anything we can do to make your portrait experience better, please let us know.