



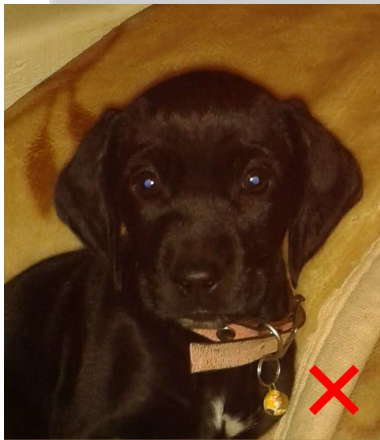
# Taking the Perfect Photo



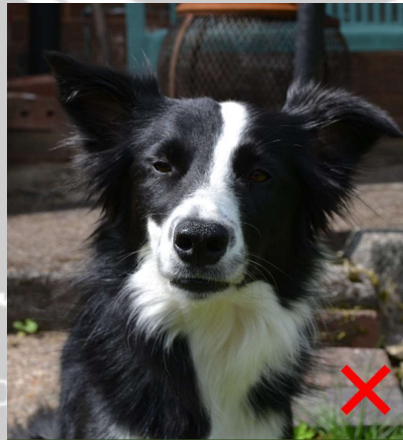
In order to create the best possible portrait of your pet, a good quality reference photo is paramount. But what makes a good photo? In this short guide I will help you take the perfect photo of your pet, no fancy equipment needed!

## Lighting

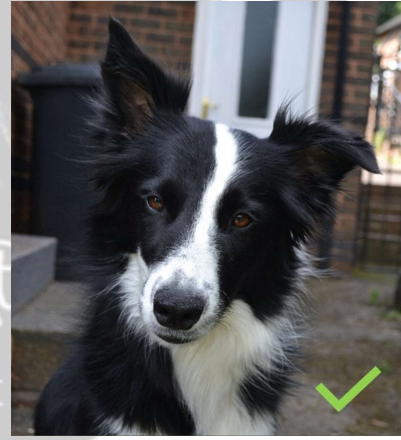
Natural day light is always best. Your camera flash, whether using a phone camera or DSLR, is not your friend in this situation! The best lighting is usually in the morning or later afternoon when the light is softer. I usually recommend near a window or preferably outside. We don't want harsh shadows as this can often blow out the colours and features. This is particularly important when photographing black pets as their fur details get completely lost in dark shadows!



This photo is taken in a dark room with a flash causing reflections in the eyes and poor details.



Although it is a clear photo, the harsh side lighting is causing deep shadows in which a lot of detail is lost as well as a lopsided look.



This is a good photo with even, bright lighting. See notes on positioning and focus which make this an overall ideal reference.

## Positioning

We love our pets and all their “derpy” looks, but they don’t always make great portraits. Often the translation of odd positions in a portrait don’t turn out well. For horses, close-up head-on photos often cause an elongated face.  $\frac{3}{4}$  views or side profile views taken from a slight distance are often the best for horses. Eye level angles usually result in the best shot rather than lower angles. In dogs and cats, photos taken from above often cause their bodies to be cropped badly. I would always suggest moving the camera to their eye level to take photos. Of course, this is not always the rule and there are some very cute exceptions that certainly do work!



This photo is taken too close to the horse as well as from a low angle. I call this the “long nose” effect which doesn’t make for a flattering portrait.



Although it is a clear photo, the low angle results in a disproportionate nose to neck size. i.e. a skinny neck and a large nose.



This is a good  $\frac{3}{4}$  photo with all the horses features in proportion to each other.



This photo is taken from above (with a flash causing eye reflections), making any sort of cropping impossible as well as being an unflattering position.



This type of shot, although taken at eye level, is a bit too close to the dogs’ face.



This is a great photo taken at the dogs eye level, meaning the portrait could be cropped as just a headshot or the full body could be kept.

## Focus

Focus! I saved the most important for last, this is the point that makes or breaks your perfect portrait. As an artist, I have artistic license but at the end of the day I can only translate what I see. Most of the time, I'm unable to meet your fur babies in person and so I don't know them like you do. This means I rely heavily on the details your photos provide. I always say the eyes are the windows to the soul, so for me this is the part of the photo that needs to be the clearest. Flash reflections or tiny pin pricks for eyes mean I sometimes struggle to capture your pet's true personality. With this in mind, your photos should be taken close enough that details like these are visible. Blurry, out of focus photos mean I need to use creative license to put those details in. This can sometimes mean your portrait isn't as detailed as another portrait where I had a very good photo. Often, I get sent photos of animals that are taken from a distance, and although they appear to be in focus, when zooming in, they become pixelated.



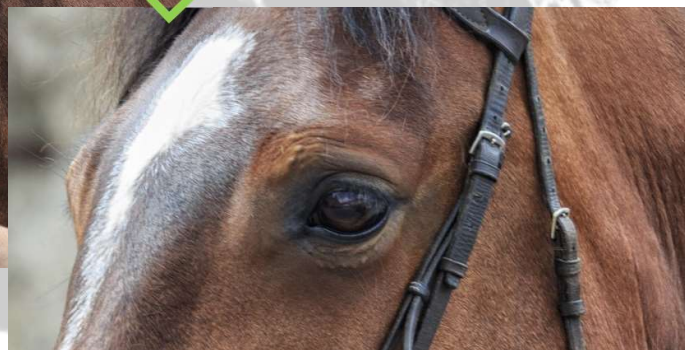
This photo is taken from a distance and although it looks like it could work as a portrait, when zooming in – the main details such as eyes and nose become very blurred and hard to discern.



This photo is slightly out of focus which has resulted in the eyes being blurred. Although not too bad, many of the subtle details and shapes within the eyes are lost making this a more undesirable photo!



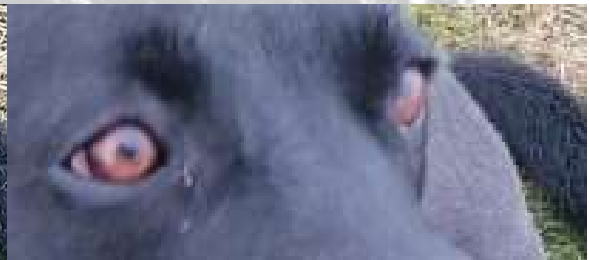
This photo is taken from a very unusual angle; however, with the combination of good lighting and great focus on the eyes – this would make a rather unconventional but cute portrait.



This photo ticks all the boxes in terms of lighting, focus and position. The photo, although taken from a distance is still clear enough that when zooming into the eye – all the details and shapes are still visible!

In conclusion, you don't have to be a professional photographer with a fancy camera to take a good photo. If you keep these 3 key points in mind, chances are you'll have a lovely photo by the end of it. This guide is of course based on my own opinions of what would make a good portrait – and as with everything, there are exceptions to the rule. As an artist I always aim to make my portraits as accurate as possible and in cases where the pet has passed away, achieving the perfect photo is not possible. This is why sending me a multitude of photos to collectively put a portrait together is sometimes the best route.

On a side note, screen shots are to be avoided! This is my one and only hard and fast rule. This is because a poor photo is then made progressively worse through compression. Your once mildly blurry photo is rendered almost useless.



The original 16MB size photo was reduced to 1.5MB when screen shotting.

The differences are subtle but make a huge difference when working on such a detailed level.

(See the loss of detail in the tail for example)

If in doubt, please feel free to send me any photos you may have and together we can work out what would work best for you and your beloved pet!

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