

# Pet Photography & Photo Selection Tips

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## ***First of all, don't let this long document scare you!***

These tips are suggestions not rules. They are intended to help you capture the best pet images possible. If the pet passed away the tips may aid you with the photo reviewing and selecting process. Basically, the more details captured the better. I like seeing the color variation in their haircoat and the color patterns in their eyes. Seeing these details helps me capture their spirit and their expression that reflects them as your unique pet.

Please send images you already love. They may be “perfect”. I review elements like lighting and composition to determine whether additional shots are needed. A great photograph doesn't always lend towards a great painting. The pose or action in a photo may not fit within the dimensions of my painting surface or the lighting may not capture the details I like to see. Photograph the pet's entire body. This allows me to crop the image for best composition.

I use standard sized canvases/art panels – usually 12x12 or 14x11 (additional sizes are available and quoted upon photo reference selection).

## **Composition Ideas and Camera Angles:**

**You know your pet best.** Think about what your pet enjoys, their unique expressions and postures or “quirks” – then try to capture those moments. Take lots of shots!

Your pet may like to snuggle with their favorite toy, carry their ball, lay on the deck, sleep on their backs, cross their front legs, watch the squirrels or do agility like activities. Consider capturing their tongue in some shots.

Photograph your pet from a low vantage point. Lie down, crouch or kneel aiming the camera lens at the pet's eye-level or shoot from a lower angle looking up. Shots taken from a standing position distorts the pet's body/nose or creates a “floating head” effect (especially with cell phones). This approach might capture a great expression but the composition usually does not work well for a painting. It also creates an uninteresting background behind the pet's face e.g., grass, concrete, wooden deck etc.

After capturing full body shots in a location take additional close-up shots of your pet's face/eyes from the same perspective in the same lighting. Depending on lighting and camera restrictions the wide shot may not capture the details in the pet's eyes.

If you have a 35mm camera, try using a wide angle and 50-85mm lens.

For composition ideas review photographs online taken by professional pet photographers. I can send some photos I found showing different camera angles and poses.

## Stay

Of course, the command “stay” serves well. But if you experience difficulty with your pet moving out of frame, check out your camera multiple shot and/or stop action options and settings. Taking candid shots successively in a row can capture expressions easily missed in single shot mode.

To capture their attention, hold a treat next to the lens. I often make a squeaky noise either through my voice or a toy to make them tilt their head and raise their ears slightly. Obviously use the words or phrases that create the expressions you like.

Some dogs – especially smaller ones, hesitate to jump down from stools or items that place them off the floor. By making them sit in these locations you may have more time to get your shot before they run towards you.

## Lighting:

Most people don't have studio lighting or “good” lighting in their homes to capture a good portrait. Mixed lighting sources found indoors often create “strange” coloring effects or “unflattering” greenish tones. If you must take photographs indoors consider using daylight coming through doors or windows or table lamps. Glass sliding windows create great SIDE lighting on the pet. With this scenario, don't shoot into the window creating backlight on the pet. Position yourself so that the light from the window enters into either side of your camera frame. Try not to use mixed lighting sources. Avoid back or top lighting if possible. Lighting at these angles often blows out hair to white or places their faces in dark shadows creating “black holes” for their eyes and nose. Again, if you like an existing shot, please share it.

Typically, I recommend taking photos outside using natural light. For a “warmer” look take advantage of the “sweet light” or what some refer to as the “golden hour” (the last hour before sunset and the first hour after sunrise). Of course, you don't have to stick to that timeframe. But when the sun nears the horizon, it creates warm light that brings out the color of the hair coat, the form of their muscles in short haired pets and the uniqueness in their eye coloration. This time of day also diminishes the chance of causing your pet to squint which makes them uncomfortable. It's easier to capture more details in a pet's hair coat or fur with softer light, so avoid harsh lighting (artificial or bright sunlight). This especially applies with black or white pets. Shots taken at a ¾ view creates nice highlights on one side of their face placing the other in subtle shadows. These ideas do not rule out trying shaded areas or overcast days. Regardless the lighting conditions or source, avoid back lighting.

## Sending Image Files:

Select your top shots (around 10) and email the original sized images to [creativekathi@gmail.com](mailto:creativekathi@gmail.com). Please do not crop, resize or reduce the file sizes. If you must text or message the photos via your cell phone, please send the “original file size” image. Your phone setting may automatically reduce the file sizes prior to sending – creating a poorer image. Email the photos as attachments instead of inserting them into an email message. This approach makes my downloading process more efficient. Don't worry if you don't understand the difference. I can open the files from either approach.

## Summary:

- Have fun with the process. Try different locations and angles.
- Photograph full body of pet. Shoot close up shots of their eyes from the same perspective and lighting before moving to a new location.
- Shoot out doors if possible. Consider the golden hour.
- Crouch, kneel or lie down so that you are at eye-level with your pet. Try taking shots from lower angle vantage points.
- Use squeaking toys or treats to get their attention.
- Try using your camera's multiple shot mode to capture continuous candid photographs.
- Email the original sized image files to [katdakota@gmail.com](mailto:katdakota@gmail.com). I rather see more images than just a couple.
- Together we will select the best image based on your pet's personality, lighting and composition.

## Cost:

Typically, when provided with a quality image, 14x11 or 12x12 paintings costs \$650 (plus shipping packaging/insurance and tax). This cost includes the face of one pet. Multiple faces and larger sized paintings are quoted upon image review because the composition impacts which sized canvas will work best.

Once the photo reviewing process begins a nonrefundable 50% of base cost is due (e.g., \$325). Payment in full is due prior to delivery.

Thank you! I look forward to seeing your photos.

Kat