



Audrey and Watson

PhoDOGgraphy

Ten Tips for Taking Great Pet Portraits

By Photographer Kim Levin



One of the questions I am asked most often is how do you take such animated portraits of dogs and cats. I have always felt strongly that being a good photographer comes from instinct and experience. I do not believe that you can teach someone to “have a good eye” but you can learn techniques that are very helpful in taking good portraits of your pets, especially if you have a digital camera.

Below are ten tips that I have created to help you take great pet portraits. As the saying goes, “practice makes perfect”.

Photo (left): Zoey

1. Develop A Rapport With Your Pet

Before you take any photographs, spend some time getting your dog to relax and pay attention to you. Create a more relaxed atmosphere by talking to them and letting them know that you love them.

2. Cookies, Cookies, Cookies

Use food and treats to your advantage. Treats help pets stay in one place so you can take several shots at a time. Call their name to get their attention away from the treat or take the photo while they are waiting for their treat.

3. Make Some Noise

My best shots come when I use a high pitched “shrill” sound or a harmonica. Some dogs tilt their head to these sounds.

4. Get Down On The Same Level

Roll around and lay down on the floor so that you are eye-level with your dog. This unique positioning shows you the world from your pet’s perspective.

5. Photograph Outdoors

Photographing outdoors is ideal because it allows dogs to be playful and happy, creating more personality-driven photographs. Utilise natural backgrounds such as the beach or a field of flowers. Let your dog romp around in the water or on land and start shooting.

6. Indoors With Natural Lighting

Dogs move around a lot, so it helps to be able to move around with them. I like to photograph pets in their environment where they are most at home and comfortable. Using natural lighting is ideal because I find lighting sometimes scares pets, and they don’t stay in one place too long.

7. Use A Wide-Angle Lens

Create some perspective by experimenting with lenses that make the pet look a little different than the traditional photograph.

8. Strike A Pose

If you have a small dog, place them on chair or a bench so they can’t run away.

9. Let Large Dogs Roam

Photograph larger dogs outdoors on location. The beach, woods, and park settings make great backgrounds for bigger dogs. This is a great opportunity to take some action shots of your best pal.

10. Always Have A Camera Handy

Taking a great pet portraits takes time, so have patience and keep your camera close by. Some of my best pet portraits have been truly spontaneous. When your pet smiles or rolls around on the ground in a funny manner, pull out the camera and begin photographing. Take as many shots as possible because it usually takes many to get a really great one.



Ragan



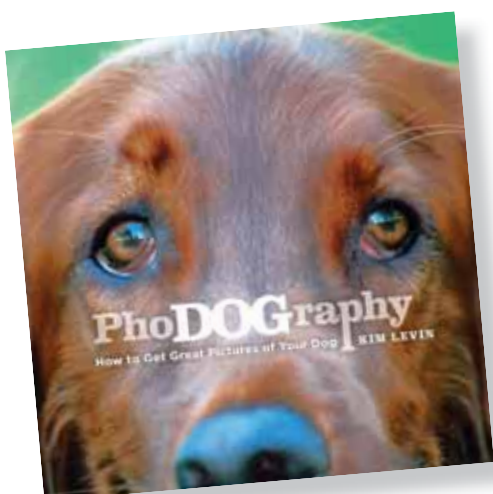
Zipper



Paper Bag



Pepper



Kim Levin started her photography career as a pet portrait artist. In 1996, Kim created Bark & Smile Pet Portraits, a full service photography business committed to capturing the essence and unique personality of each animal photographed. Over the past 10 years she has photographed thousands of dogs and cats.

Kim has published 15 books including the best-selling *Cattitude* and *Why We Love Dogs*.

www.barkandsmile.com