

what to wear for your portraits...

What should we wear for our family portraits? It's the most common question I am asked. Take what you want from these color boards. It's not necessary to buy a whole new wardrobe, but hopefully these images will inspire you to find the "look" for your portraits!

Every photographer will tell you something different...solids are best...different shades of the same color is best...put the kids in darker colors...keep it simple...minimal jewelry...white/black shirts in jeans is perfect...

I SAY, BREAK ALL THE RULES!

WEAR COLOR, WEAR MANY DIFFERENT COLORS, LAYER YOUR LOOK, TEXTURES ARE A GOOD THING, STATEMENT JEWELRY ADDS PIZAZZ!!

Here is my best advice as you set out on the quest for the perfect portrait wardrobe:

Step 1:

Choose clothing for one person first

You don't have to go out and buy all new outfits for your photo. Most times, you can get a great look by building your clothing around one person's outfit. It's usually best to start with the person in the group who is hardest to pick an outfit for. Most of the time this is the mother or daughter, as boys are normally very easy to style. Look through your closet for a great piece you want them to wear for the photos or consider buying an outfit for that person and going from there.

For example, you've found a fun sweater for your son with tan, light blue, and orange stripes. You know the rest of your family has clothing at home that would match the colors in the sweater. So, you decide he could wear the sweater with a light blue shirt, tan pants, and brown shoes.

Step 2:

Build the rest of the group's outfits based on the first person

Now that you've got one person's clothing done, you can build the rest of the group's outfits. In your case, you also bought your husband a sweater vest in orange to go with your son's sweater. Then, at home, you each had a blue shirt, brown/khaki pants for the guys and a brown skirt for you. Maybe you also had a jacket to go with the tan in the boy's sweater, and you're all set!

General rules to remember when choosing outfits:

Keep in mind where you are going to be shooting

Are you going to be indoors or outdoors? Is the area paved, muddy, rocky, or grassy? What kind of colors would look best in that setting? If you will be outside, it's a good idea to wear clothes you would be comfortable sitting on the ground in. If you are shooting with a green background (trees/bushes), be sure not to wear all green!

Stick to one style

Make sure everyone in the group is wearing one style of clothing such as classy (formal wear, suits, dresses, etc.), casual (jeans, tees, hoodies, converse), or contemporary (a mixture of classy and casual--like a dressy top with jeans and heels). You don't want to look like half of the family is going to a wedding and the others are going to the park to play.

Avoid too many patterns or huge logos.

Patterns should compliment each other, not draw attention away from the main subject of the photo, you! Colors don't have to match, but they do need to go together. Clothing from the same color palette or based on colors in one outfit tend to create a cohesive look without feeling too "matchy." We love fun and vibrant colors; they help the portraits "pop" off the screen or print, but remember, the emphasis of the photos should be on your faces, not your clothing.

Bring accessories and props that pull together the outfit

Using props and accessories is a good way to get different looks out of a single outfit. Think about things that characterize you and your personality: scarves, purses, shoes, and items from your line of work, hobbies, and interests.

Hands and Feet

Occasionally, we will take photos of details like hand-holding and family feet! Remember to clean and trim nails for these shots. For feet, if your toes will show...make sure your toenail polish is fresh.

Clients are always welcome to an over-the-phone consult about what to wear to the shoot. We've even helped finalized outfit choices in person. I just want you to feel good. During your shoot you could be sitting in a pile on the grass having a tickle battle, rolling down a hill, throwing your kiddos in the air or climbing a tree. Wear clothing that lets you do all that (and more) comfortably. As for the kids? Well...uncomfortable kids have a tendency to look...uncomfortable, and are often cranky to boot. Happy kids make for happy pictures.

Bottom Line: Don't choose outfits that make any of you feel constrained, stiff, itchy, scratchy, like you're dressed up for Halloween, or that leave you with a nagging worry that a button might pop if you bend the wrong way. Trust me.

The following items can be found online at Nordstroms, Gap, Old Navy, J. Crew, Gymboree, Janie & Jack, Banana Republic, Piper Lime and Brooks Brothers.