

HOW TO TAKE GOOD PHOTOS OF YOUR DOG

It can be a real challenge to take good pictures of your pets. They don't know what you want and most of the time they just think it is play-time. They are jumping around when you want them to sit still and pose for that perfect pet portrait. So how do you get that once in a lifetime shot?

- **BE PATIENT:** Don't think you're going to go out in the yard with your dog and come back inside a few minutes later with a frameable photo. You'll need to allow enough time for your dog to settle down and work off some energy and pay attention to you. It could take 15 minutes; it could take a couple of hours.
- Turn off the flash. Use natural light, but not direct sunlight. A shady spot on a sunny day or shoot on an overcast day outside. If you are shooting indoors, keep the flash turned off. Use a room well lighted by a large window, or for a warm tone, use lighting from a lamp. If it is just too dark and you absolutely have to use your flash, use a detachable flash and point it at the ceiling or bounce it from a wall to avoid the harsh shadows and red-eye caused by direct flash.
- Camera settings: If you have control of your camera settings, choose a shutter speed that is as fast as possible for the lighting conditions. 1/500 to 1/1000 second is a good range. This accomplishes two things: 1. It freezes a moving dog, and 2. It puts the background out of focus so that your eye is drawn to the subject.
- Focus on the eyes. Make sure the eye nearest the camera is tack-sharp.
- Pay attention to what is behind and around the dog. Watch for tree branches, buildings or other distractions sticking out of the top of the dog's head. Eliminate distracting backgrounds. If you are posing your dog against a wall, keep him at least ten feet from the wall to provide separation. Make sure there are no people, toys, debris, or anything else, in the frame. Zoom in tight. Fill the frame with the dog. How about a shot of just your dog's eyes and nose? Or a close-up of the face?
- Get on the same level as your dog. Everybody takes pictures of their pets standing and shooting down on them. Try shooting from your dog's perspective. Get down on your knees or even your belly to photograph your pet. Or, elevate him on a table or chair to bring him up to your level. You will be amazed at the difference this makes in getting a "keeper" photo of your dog.
- Take lots of shots and discard at least half of them. Then go through the other half and only use the ones that jump out at you.

The photograph is the first impression people have of your pet. It is what makes people stop and say, "I want to know more about that dog". People who aren't "caught" by the photo will not stop and read that your dog is well-mannered, housebroken, can fetch you a beer or drive to the store.

FINAL ADVICE: Be patient, have fun. Make your dog's portrait session a play date.

