

Diagram illustrating the relationship between aperture size and light intake. The apertures are shown in two rows, with the first row containing three red apertures and the second row containing four grey apertures. The apertures are labeled with their respective f-numbers: f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6, f/8, f/11, f/16, and f/22. Below the apertures, a grey bar indicates that the first three (f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6) represent a Wide Aperture (more light), while the last four (f/8, f/11, f/16, f/22) represent a Narrow Aperture (less light).

ISO

A horizontal scale for light sensitivity. The scale is represented by a bar with a color gradient from dark green on the left to light grey on the right. The bar is divided into segments by vertical lines. The numbers 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600, 3200, and 6400 are placed above the bar. Below the bar, the word "Lower" is on the left, "LIGHT SENSITIVITY" is in the center, and "Higher" is on the right.

Light Sensitivity
100
200
400
800
1600
3200
6400

Try to avoid noise in your portrait shots by using the lowest ISO possible.

30"	15"	10"	2"	1"	1/25"	1/30"	1/50"	1/100"	1/125"	1/250"	1/320"	1/500"	1/1000"
Blur motion			Tripod Recommended			Handheld Ok				Freeze Motion			

Most often you will want to avoid any blur from motion. That means use a shutter speed faster than the focal length of your lens. If you are shooting with a 50mm for example, then 1/50th second would be the slowest shutter speed to use (1/80th sec for 80mm etc).

1 THE EYES

Getting the eyes of your main subject in focus is practically essential in most traditional portraiture.



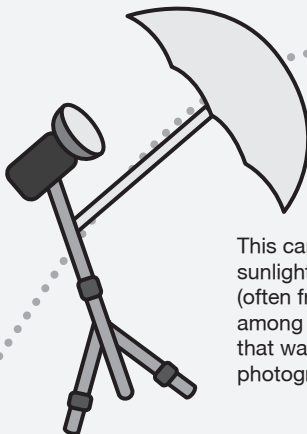
You can get away with having a lot of the rest of the image out of focus, but if the eyes are blurry you are usually going to have a hard time.

TIP:

If you can only get one eye in focus due to using a narrow depth of field, make sure it is the eye closest to the camera.

2 SOFTLY SOFTLY

One of the most common issues with portrait photographs is that there are harsh shadows across the face of the subject.



TIP:

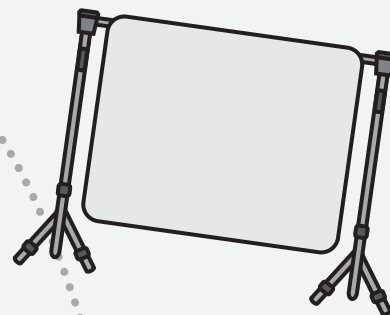
Think about using diffusers and reflectors to soften the light and shadows.

THE ESSENTIALS

3 BACKGROUNDS

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Even in portrait photography, backgrounds are of huge importance. Sometimes you might be forced to use a plain background (head shots for an actor for example), but if you have any leeway, then get creative.



Indoor, that might mean getting your subject in front of something interesting (curtains, material, textured walls or a contextual background for environmental portraits for example).

TIP:

If you're shooting outdoors try a brick wall or a stunning sunset.