

Shanti Arts Publishing

Simple Tips for Producing a Good Publicity Photo

Photoshop can do lots of things to improve photographs, but it's still easier to start with a decent photo that needs only a few minor edits than one that could take hours to improve. You can of course hire a professional to take your photo, but it's not necessary. Lots of people have very good cameras these days, and nearly everyone has a phone that takes incredibly good images. But the device can't do it all, and I've seen enough terrible photos of authors to convince me that a few simple tips are worth mentioning.

First, in most cases, when you ask someone to take your picture, they will have you stand or sit somewhere, they will point the camera at you, and click the picture. What's missing? A bit of consideration of the composition! Yes, composition. It's not difficult.

Have your photographer look at everything they see on the screen BEFORE they take the picture. Are there other people in the background? Are there bright lights in the background? Is there a street with cars going back and forth in the background? Is there bright geometric wallpaper? Is there a fence post bisecting your head? I've seen them all. Most important tip: get rid of the stuff you don't want and keep the picture simple. It's not boring to have a clean, simple background. It's less confusing.

The important part is you! So have the person taking the photo get close and eliminate as much background as possible. We don't need your feet either, so capture your torso and head, or just your head. The photographer might feel oddly too close to you, but that's OK. People aren't used to taking close-ups, but that's what we want. We don't want a picture of the ocean or the forest or the New York skyline. We want you.

Also remember that your photo will be reproduced in a space of no more than 2 x 2 inches. If you aren't big enough to find in that small space, what's the point?

Watch for things in the background that are distracting, such as trees growing out the top of your head, lamps casting light or shadow in the wrong places, etc. If you see any of these things, move to a different location. Watch for lines of all sorts: horizons (photos taken on the beach can be a problem), the dividing line between a lawn and a driveway, the line between a building and the background, poles or fence posts—lines that bisect your body (either vertically or horizontally) are not attractive. Be careful of shrubbery behind your hair; the two can be difficult to distinguish. Seriously...a solid, simple background is best.

And don't forget...you can always do it over. We're not dealing with film these days, so look at the result carefully. If it doesn't seem quite right, take another. Move to another spot. Try a bright spot; try a shady spot. Just remember...the important part is you!