

Intro Pet Photography



Instructor: Roger Buchanan

Website: www.thenerdworks.com





Outline: This presentation covers the “Three P’s” needed for photographing pets:

- Photography – know your cameras settings and how to use them;
- Planning – make your plans and prepare accordingly ;
- Pets – know your animal/s.




Camera Controls: You will need to be comfortable using these controls to photograph your pets.

- Aperture Priority for Depth of Field Control
- Self-timer used to get pets attention
- Drive Mode for fast moving pets
- Exposure Compensation  for Dark or Light pets
- Flash Compensation  to add “just a little bit” of light
- White Balance for accurate colour in JPEG’s

Photography:

- Always **have your camera prepared** to use, and located within easy reach at all times!
- Activity: Reviewing your pictures:** being able to zoom in on your pictures allows you to check focus, etc...
Press the playback  button.
Point and Shoot cameras zoom in for detail, zoom out for thumbnails,
dSLR use   buttons
- Get down to the Pets eye level for many of the shots from the front and sides. Get in really **Close**.
- Use the entire range of focal lengths if you are using a Zoom lens.
 - **Activity** – Fill the frame from, close, medium & far using Zoom. Look for the change in perspective!
- Capture various Close-up, Medium and Full Portrait shots, and remember the major components of the Eyes, Ears, Paws and Bodylines of the Pet. Practice tight Crops!
- Take shots of the pet interacting with Toys, People, and Other Pets, even you!
- Take some shots just as the pet is waking up from a nap.
- Fast moving pets need **Shutter Priority** of about 1/500th second. (use “Sports Mode” with Compacts)
 - **Activity** – High speed capture of “Interactive-Instructor”!
- Put your pet in a Cultural or Historical context for their breed. Take a photo that tells a story of the pet.
- Mix up the framing of the pet in your composition. Level the camera or Tilt the camera for some shots.
- Capture them when they are not paying attention to you or the camera (i.e. Candid Canine)
- Set your White Balance to the accurate setting of the lighting where you are taking photos.
 - **Activity** – Setting your White Balance accurately
- Shoot **RAW files** for best exposure and colour.
- Never edit JPEG files**, use “Save As... .tiff” or “Save As....psd” if you will Edit a Photo. JPEG is for storage, display or transport ONLY!
- Shoot in colour**, and then make your B & W on the computer with software.
- Arrange a “mock stage” so you can practice before the actual shoot. Let the pet explore it.
- Exposure Compensation**  +/- is used with White or Black animals and in Light/Dark scenes.
 - **Activity** – Use the Exposure Compensation to make one dark and one light photograph.
- Use a **higher ISO** than you normally would (i.e. ISO 800 or more)
- Indoors try shots near a **window for natural light**, outdoors avoid direct sunlight, try for shade.
- Use a polarizer** if there is sufficient light, as it will help reduce glare. (Especially good for Black fur!)
- For Fish in an Aquarium using a Polarizer really helps and also using a Rubber Lens Hood.
- Focus on the Eyes** of the Animal, regardless of species.

Cont’d on Next Page... → → → → → → → → → →

- **Depth of Field/Focus** is controlled by the Aperture setting
 - **Activity** - F/3.5 gives Shallow Depth of Field, whereas f/16 gives Large Depth of Field.
- Use Fill Flash sparingly by setting your **Flash Compensation**. 
 - **Activity** - Photo taken with reduced Flash output. Try these together “+2  ” and “- 2  ”
- Set your self-timer to “Custom” and have it take a number of photos after the specified time delay. This allows you to interact with the animal to a greater degree.
- **Pre-focus by placing a mark on the ground**, when your pet hits the mark take the photo. Alternatively put your camera in “**Servo Mode**” Auto Focus to track the pet moving.
- Assess your images using the **Histogram** feature when reviewing your shots.
 - **Activity** - assess the images you have taken by referring to the Histogram
- A Tripod and a Remote Camera Trigger are great tools to have. Or maybe just the tripod and self-timer.
- Sometimes you need to accept that it just isn't going to work out this time...

Planning: Advance preparation will make your photography session go much more smoothly. Ensure you make arrangements and set schedules for the following:

- Pet Interview Questions
 - **Activity** - (see “Pet Interview” Handout)
- Before the shoot **introduce the Pet to your gear**, the light of the Flash, the Click of the Shutter. It should be something that is familiar to them before you start taking their pictures for real.
- Image Management: Ranking, Renaming, MetaData addition, Tagging, etc...
- Research various locations (colours and backgrounds) suitable to the breed;
- Maybe a “perch” to sit on will help the pet stay still being photographed.
- Time of Day (affects colour of lighting, i.e. Early morning, Late Evening) Window lighting works well.
- Props, Treats and Toys (include water and food if out for a long period)
- Camera Gear needed and prepared for both Formal and Candid shots. Clean your gear!
- Helper/Assistant
- **Play with them**, especially with active pets, to get them tuckered out before taking your pictures of them.
- Other Subjects, family, friends.

Pets: You need to know the daily energy levels, routines and behaviors that your pet/s exhibit. The way to accomplish this is to fill out the “Pet Interview” sheet included below. This info becomes context for the pet shoot, as well as organizational in nature.

Pet Interview

Pretend that you are your pet, and have someone ask you the following.

What is your Name? _____ (Important for voice cues) Age? _____ Yrs.

What Breed are you? _____ (Important for historical context)

Do you have a favourite Toy? _____ Treat? _____

Can you do any Tricks? _____

What Commands do you respond to? _____

At what times are you most Active? _____ am/pm Resting? _____ am/pm

Do you have a “special place” where you go to Rest/Relax/Hide? _____

Do you have any “Unique” behaviour that you are known for? _____

Are you “Notorious” for any type of Bad behaviour? _____

Are you patient or easily startled? _____ (important for time/noise constraints)

Do you have any special animal friends? _____

What about people friends? _____

After you have eaten, are you more relaxed, or do you get playful? _____

What is a favourite Activity of yours? _____

What is your signal that you are getting cranky and want to be left alone? _____

Please feel free to download, copy and distribute these notes as needed.