

10 Primers for New Portrait Photographers.

1. Get out of your head and MOVE! Comparison is your enemy. Be spongy. Be teachable. Prune away the adversarial head talk and practice personal grace.
2. Look for light. Spend your life looking at the direction, color, intensity, and character of light. Then, be the Light the world needs.
3. Buy a camera. Do your own research. Feel your way along til you've found your soul mate. Then, study your camera like an infant would a new pacifier. Hold your camera in your lap while you watch movies, ride the bus, or meditate. Move the dials...push the buttons...click the shutter. Painters don't look at their brush while they're painting. Operate your camera blind. Keep her clean and wear her out.
4. Learn the STOP. STOPs are the soul of mental light math. Quit saying 'a little brighter' and start saying 'a STOP brighter'. (A STOP is a halving or doubling of the amount of light that is recorded in camera. It is managed through the thoughtful use of ISO, Shutter Speed, and Aperture.) Think in stops and your camera will speak to you. Earn a doctorate degree in M.
5. Photograph stuff. Seriously people, take your camera out in the world and test the theories, push the limits, mess up, and repeat. Use ONE LENS till you've mastered its angle of view. Make a game of quick focusing and rapid framing. Time yourself on exposure changes and conceptualize how ISO, SS, and Aperture change the outcome. 10,000 hours to become an expert. You'll get sellably good in around a hundred.
6. Your children Love you, but they don't like photographer you. Photograph your neighbors kids, your pastors dog, your butchers family. They may never speak to you again, but your kids will.
7. Get gooey. Learn to lather on the complements. Be the light in the room. Be the alpha. Folks expect to be directed and posed. Earn trust with kind words. Spend trust in posing and expression manipulations.
8. Book a family session with a pro. Watch, listen, question, feel the anxiety, study the gear, hear the pitch, and pay the fee. Ask yourself, what worked, what didn't, and what kind of a person would possibly want to be a professional photographer? Shake their hand, look 'em in the eye and say THANK YOU! They probably need a break, and a snack.

9. Communicating the details is YOUR responsibility. Have a plan, share the details of the plan, execute the plan, and move on. If the client has a beef it's likely in the gap between what they expected and what you delivered. Set the expectations out clearly in verbal and written words.

10. Reciprocity. What you've learned becomes solidified in your mind when you teach it to the next poor soul who's been bitten by the bug. Share what you know and it will boomerang back to you so fast you'll have to raise your shutter speed.

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