

Picture-Perfect Dog Photos

Tips from professionals on what it takes to successfully photograph your dog.

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Is your dog a wiggler? A pacer? A jumping bean? If so, taking dog portraits might feel next to impossible.

It doesn't need to be, say award-winning dog photographers Dale Churchill and Kerrin Winter. Authors of "How to Photograph Dogs: A Comprehensive Guide" (John Wiley & Sons, 1998), Winter and Churchill offer hints for encouraging your rambunctious dog to behave during a photo session.

1. Practice and prepare. A few days before the shoot, keep your dog on long Sit-Downs while you do housework. Practice taking pictures without film to help your dog get used to the flash. On the day of the session, make sure your dog is well exercised and well fed.
2. Energy is not your enemy! The trick to getting a good portrait of a wild child is knowing what to do with all that raw energy, Winter says. You want your dog's personality to shine through in a portrait. Aim for settings, poses and lighting that highlight your dog's quirky energy rather than trying to contain it.
3. Use a handler and trust them. Arrange for someone your dog knows and likes to reposition your dog as you shoot. Make sure your handler knows what you want out of the session, and resist the temptation to direct when the plan is not going accordingly. Take a deep breath and relax. Stay focused on your own job: Don't miss windows of opportunity for a good shot.
4. Demonstrate good two-legged behavior! Your tone of voice and body language translate more effectively than English to your dog. Use compassionate authority. Never discipline your dog during a session. With soothing talk, positive reinforcement, and patient repetition, you can help your dog eventually figure out what you want him to do. And don't forget how easily laughter relieves tension!
5. Use noises, toys, and food sparingly. The photo session should be as quiet as possible. Noises and toys work to grab attention. Food, such as chewy treats, can help calm some dogs. If your dog likes munching, his gaze may follow the treats; as long as the handler keeps your dog from physically following the food, this is one way to get him gazing in a desired direction.

Got a great shot of your dog? Share it with other visitors in the DogChannel Photo Gallery.