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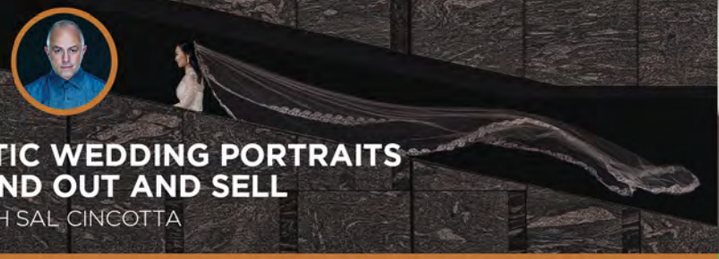
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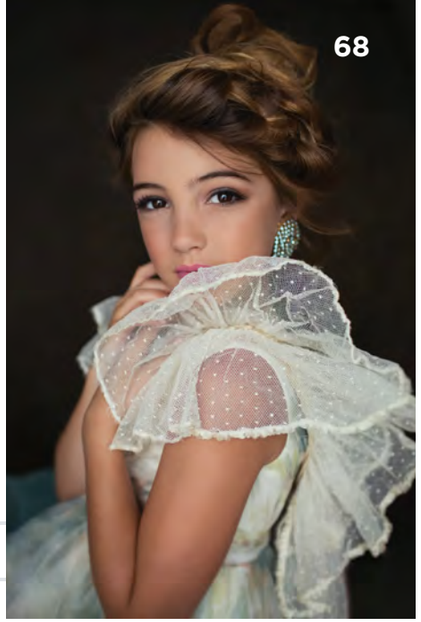
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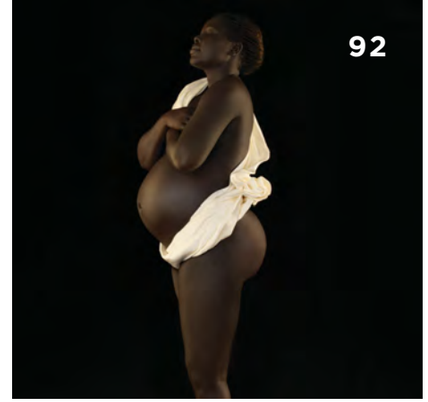
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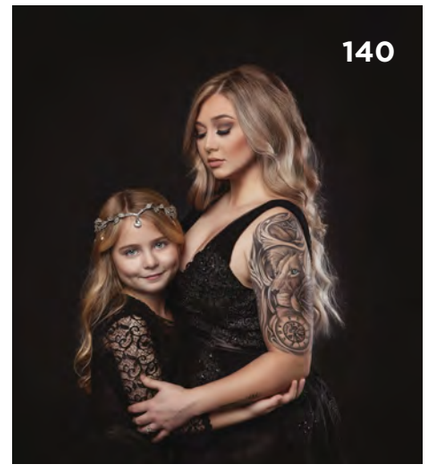














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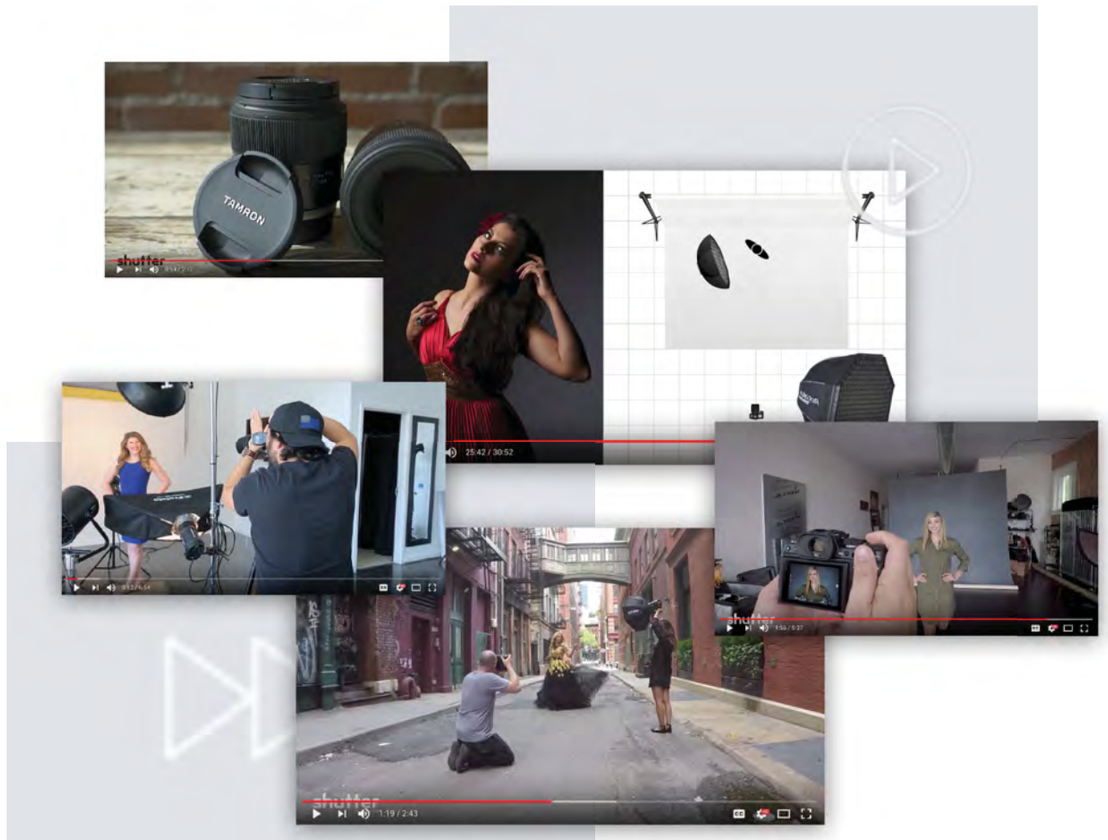
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Shutter Magazine's focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. *Shutter* uses the latest technologies to deliver information in a way that is relevant to our audience.

Our experienced contributors help us create a sense of community and have established the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

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Michael Anthony
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Sal Cincotta
Vanessa Joy



THE **COVER**

TITLE: the synchronized swim team
PHOTOGRAPHER: anne geddes
WEBSITE: annegeddes.com
CAMERA: hasselblad h3d
LENS: 120mm mf macro
EXPOSURE: f.11 @ 1/125 iso 100
LIGHTING: 4 large softboxes, 2 on the background to keep it even, plus 2 left and right of the camera



LAUNCH **POINT**

A message from the publisher

Children have a unique and exciting quirkiness to them that makes photographing them extremely **rewarding**. This month, our writers focus on some unique ways to photograph children that will help you expand your **creativity** and **grow your business.**

- Sal Cincotta

ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image is from my series "Under the Sea." The babies were photographed separately and grouped together in post. "Under the Sea" was one of the more complex series of images I've created over the years, particularly in terms of props and styling. But this image to me is a lovely example of the fact that regardless of the extensive research and planning involved beforehand, the babies always provide the magic in their own charming way.



IS PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY DEAD?

with **Sal Cincotta**

Right now, it's very easy to watch the news, the doom and gloom, and believe the walls are caving in around us. Trust me when I tell you, during this isolation, I went through a roller coaster of emotions. Fear, depression, anxiety. We are all experiencing something that is truly impacting our lives and everyone around us.

As a community, we have always been able to rally around disaster. Normally, when disaster strikes, it's in a part of the world or country where those that can help do. Think earthquake in California or flooding in New Orleans or tornado in Tennessee. However, this is different. This is impacting every single one of us. How do you offer support when you need support yourself? How do you worry about your fellow photographer when you need someone worrying about you? This is what's happening right now and it's happening to all of us.

So, where does that leave us as an industry? I have been reading some really shitty articles and watching some videos just predicting the end of times for our industry. First of all, it's pretty shameful. Feels very very clickbaity, which to me is always disingenuous.

Here is the reality: as I write this almost 30 million Americans are unemployed. Will they get their jobs back? Time will tell, but I'm sure we can agree that 30 million people will not go back to work immediately. Some businesses will never recover. There will be long-term unemployment. That news alone is concerning to any business owner. If your customers are unemployed, how will they afford your products or services? Fair question.

So, that leads us right back to the headline. Is professional photography dead?

Here are several reasons I don't think it is.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A HIGHER LEVEL

It doesn't matter what your craft is. There are always hacks and do-it-yourselfers out there. Plumbers, electricians, cooks, and yes, amateur or aspiring photographers. This should shock no one. Don't you cook your own dinners at home? So, should people stop becoming chefs? Have you not done your own home-improvement task? Should carpenters, painters, etc. just quit?

I know how ridiculous the above sounds and I think that's what we need sometimes. In a word, perspective. Without perspective, it's very easy for us to lose sight of reality. And the reality is, people will continue to need and search for professional photographers who master and continue to hone their craft.

Are you that person? Are you a master of your craft? Or are you just a hack? By the way, it's okay to be a hack. Photography is an amazing hobby. But now more than ever, you must find a way to stand out from the crowded field if you are going to survive. Now is the time to invest in upping your skills— lighting, posing, editing, etc.



EVENTS ARE STILL HAPPENING

People are still getting married. Families still want to document their lives and the special moments in them. Corporate events, headshots, family shoots, weddings, engagements, boudoir, etc. Use common sense. You think all of a sudden people no longer care about these moments or documenting them? Of course they do.

While yes, there is going to be a hiccup in our economy, it will recover. We saw this back in 2007 and we recovered from that. Strong business owners know there is still a market out there for their goods and services.

SERVICE WILL ALWAYS WIN

We live in a service economy. That isn't going to change overnight. Yes, there will always be the "friend-with-a-camera" scenario, but is that really what you think the majority of clients want?

Is that what you want? You need a plumber for your new installation of a dishwasher and you call your friend who has a monkey wrench to install it? Really? How do you see that working out? Probably as disastrous as the never-ending horror stories of brides who hate their wedding pictures because that friend really had no idea what they were doing. This doesn't change because all of a sudden we were in isolation for a month or two.

People spending money on weddings or any other type of event want great service and they will continue to pay for it. If you lose sight of that you will end up in a very dark place with your business. So, what should you do? Up your service game! Isn't that the obvious answer?



NOT EVERYONE LOST THEIR JOBS

We have to shake off the doom and gloom mentality. People are still working. People are still making money and lots of it. So, instead of convincing yourself no one has money, change your mindset and realize the reality of it all. People do, and will continue to, have money for the things that are important to them. This is human behavior 101. Sure, during the middle of the pandemic, toilet paper was the most important thing to people for some still unknown reason.

However, as we are coming out of this and businesses and people are coming back online, they have pent up demand for discretionary items. Make sure you are in their face with your services. Squeaky wheel gets the grease they say, well you better make sure you are the squeaky wheel and you better be LOUD and in their face with marketing. If not, no one will know you even exist, which was probably a problem for you before the pandemic hit.



THE SIMILARITIES TO THE 2008 CRISIS ARE EERIE

They say history repeats itself. Well, here we are. Yes, I get it, one was a man-made disaster, the other was a natural phenomenon. Regardless, the point remains. There are similarities here that cannot be ignored. The economy will recover. People will begin spending again. Businesses, smart businesses, will thrive again. We built our first business, Salvatore Cincotta Photography, during the middle of the 2008 financial crisis. Within 2–3 years, that business crossed $1 million in sales. Photographers around the world could not wrap their heads around how we were able to do it.

We did it by offering a superior service to our clients. Giving them a top-notch experience. And creating a very powerful and lusted after brand. In a nutshell, we did it, not by cowering in fear, not by waiting and hoping for customers to come. We did it by grabbing the market by the balls and controlling our own destiny. The same will hold true this time around. Again, history has a funny way of repeating itself.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As you can see, I am very optimistic about the future of my business. Is it going to be hard work? Of course it is. Nothing worth having is ever easy. We all know the saying "if it were easy, everyone would do it." Well, that statement has never been more true.

Photographers will close up shop. They will lower their prices to their detriment in the pursuit of a quick buck. They will operate from a position of fear vs. a position of confidence. This will all lead you down a rabbit hole of financial distress. Weird. The exact same thing that happened in 2008.

Instead, we will use this history and knowledge to lean into this market. What do I mean by "lean in"? Our plan is to out market our competitors. I want to ensure customers know we exist. I want to target people who are spending money. Who still need a photographer for their 2020 wedding. I want to target high-school seniors who had a pretty shitty senior year and offer them the best photography experience possible. I want to target families. I want to target businesses who need updated headshots and team shots to use in their marketing that they are going to implement because they, too, see the opportunity ahead of them.

I will do all this, all without lowering my prices. I will invest in my marketing. I will invest in my craft and equipment. I promise you, this will pass and my goal is to ensure we are here and ready for customers vs. a stranded ship without engines sitting in the middle of the ocean waiting for something else to go wrong.

We have to move forward. Sitting still is the kiss of death for any business, especially photographers.

Let's do this! ■



Sal Cincotta is an international award-winning photographer, educator, author, Canon Explorer Of Light and the publisher of *Shutter Magazine*. Sal's success is directly tied to the education he received in business school. He graduated from Binghamton University, a Top 20 business school, and has worked for Fortune 50 companies like Procter & Gamble and Microsoft. After spending 10 years in corporate America, Sal left to pursue a career in photography and has never looked back.

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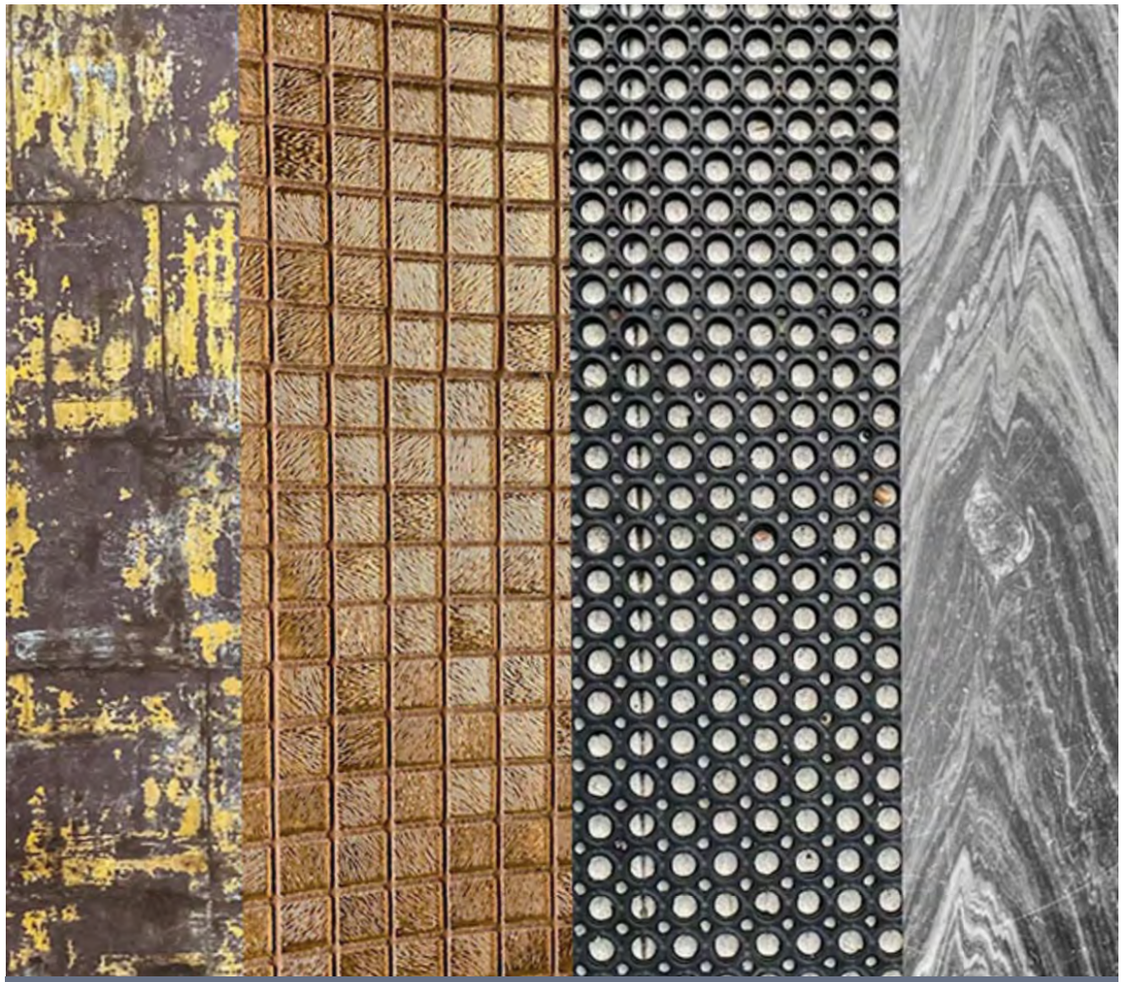
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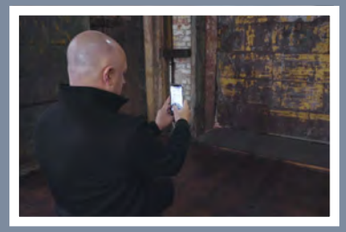
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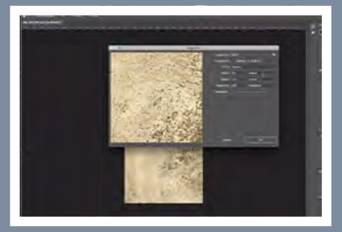


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DEALING WITH MASSIVE DISRUPTION IN YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS

with **Michael Anthony**

I'm writing this at the beginning of May 2020, which was the start of what was to be an incredible year for our business. Bookings were up 25%, revenue was up 15%, and new leads were pouring through the door to create a very low-stress 2020. I had just hired two new employees and was beginning to finally expand my business into different vertical markets.

Out of nowhere, our country was hit with the largest pandemic in over 100 years. The state of California ordered nonessential businesses to shut down, all while encouraging us to maintain our staff. As we went through late March and early April, weddings on our calendar began to eviscerate. Concerned couples started postponing their weddings or canceling altogether. We were prepared for a record year, and a record year is what we are going to get. However, this is likely going to be a record low as opposed to the record high.

So with that being said, how does a business immediately shift gears? We have had to deal with ups and downs before, but never a down that was so severe that it literally prohibited the main service that we provide to our clients.

WELCOME TO BUSINESS DISRUPTION

Our industry has experienced disruption before, but 10 years from now we will bear the badge of honor of the great pandemic of 2020. That badge will dwarf those who survived the film-to-digital transition as well as the 2008 recession.

But that badge is only earned by those of us who make it out of this mess. Today I am going to talk about the things we are doing to set our business up for success long-term.

As I write this, I don't want to make the entire article about how to deal with this pandemic. The reason for that is because this specific disruption will come to an end at some point. Instead, I would like to make an article that can help anybody dealing with business disruption to come out stronger on the other side.

So let's get into my top three tips for dealing with disruption in your business.



Image © Michael Anthony Photography



Image © Michael Anthony Photography

STEP 1. ASSESS THE DAMAGE USING THE SWOT TECHNIQUE

When I was a police officer, the term SWAT meant something entirely different. However, as a police officer there was one thing that I learned that definitely translates into business. Before making any major decisions you have to assess all possible outcomes, and there is nothing better for doing that than conducting a SWOT analysis.

The SWOT analysis stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It's good practice to conduct the SWOT analysis on your business every six months, but it is crucial to do so every 30 days when evaluating a major business disruption. A business disruption could be something that happens quickly like this pandemic, or something that happens over time like the transition from film to digital. Either way, if you are noticing influxes of negative action in your business, it's best to get on top of them immediately.

The only difference between a disruption SWOT analysis and a normal one is that during the business disruption your SWOT analysis should be dealing with the disruption directly. Let me explain how that works.

For this pandemic, here are our strengths:

- Strong support from clientele
- Strong vendor support
- Associate photographers to take on future booked dates

Here are our main weaknesses:

- Event revenue to portrait revenue ratios are not favorable (event bans are likely to last longer)
- Needing to rely on venues to give dates to clients
- High costs compared to competitors because of our business size

Here are our main opportunities:

- TIME. This is a huge opportunity
- Ability to work on SEO
- Ability to work on vertical markets
- Ability to gain favorable perception from my clients by working with them in this situation
- Ability to work on portfolio once initial lockdowns are lifted

Here are our main threats:

- Uncertainty can cause our clients to cancel outright
- Postponed weddings taking dates from future clients = lost revenue altogether

MAPhoto was a strong business no doubt, but this pandemic exposed major weaknesses in our business, specifically our reliance on events. Now, nobody would have ever thought in a million years that there would be a worldwide pandemic that would particularly target large groups of people, but at the same time, it's always better to not have all of your eggs in one basket.

Now after analyzing with SWOT analysis, I can see that my biggest opportunity is the time that is freed up while the world is on pause. You will often see that your weaknesses can be solved by your opportunities and every strong business owner will value time almost as much as money.

So, we have used this time to build a stronger business that is less reliant on a single revenue stream. Assessing the damage through SWOT analysis is absolutely essential when working through uncertain times. That brings me to step two.

STEP 2. ADAPT TO CHANGE

Every business disruption in history brought about change in one form or fashion. Look at the transition from physical video stores to online streaming. Not only did it bring change to the way that viewers consume content, but that very change brought about new methods to produce it. Low-cost streaming services like Netflix have purchased foreign movies and TV shows, dubbed them into multiple languages, and successfully introduced them to new markets. This technique was never needed in the past, so it was never thought about. Netflix in general is a great example of a company that adapts to change. They changed the way that the rental industry worked by delivering DVDs to your mailbox, and then when the Internet became faster, they introduced online streaming. When Hollywood made it very difficult for them at every step to obtain new content, they started producing their own content, and when competitors stepped into the market to finally follow their lead, they were so far ahead of them that none of their competitors could compete with their library.

Now in this pandemic, Netflix is considered an "essential" business.

Netflix accomplished all of this by being amazing at one trait: adaptation.

I had an employee when I first started my business that would get so frustrated at how quickly I would change policies and processes. He would always tell me that he could never develop consistency because I was always changing the way that we were doing things. I responded to him that the only thing that was going to be constant in our business was that it would always be changing. And while the rate of those changes has dropped off significantly, the reason why we were able to achieve success so quickly was because I was always willing to adapt to new ways of doing things.

There is a term in business that drives any new venture that we partake in, and that term is to fail fast. By doing that you can limit the amount of time that you spend on doing something that is not profitable and test and tweak it until it is.

How is this relevant in business disruption? Business disruption by nature is change, so by being able to adapt to the new normal, you will quickly be able to overcome the challenges you are dealing with. The challenges may not come in the form of a pandemic, but it could come in the form of an illness, divorce, new child, lack of time, or something else that only affects you as opposed to the entire world. However, the need to adapt to that change will be exactly the same no matter what that change is.

Now that all changes are created equal, there are two types of change in your business. There is reactive change and proactive change.

Reactive change comes in response to disruption. Things like updating your contracts or changing your cancellation policies are all reactive changes. Reactive changes can help prevent problems in the future to help make it a stronger business. Proactive changes are making changes to your processes prior to them causing problems. Proactive changes are adaptive, and allow you to get out in front of your market when chasing a new venture.

The entrepreneurs that are always struggling to keep up are good at reactive change, but the entrepreneurs that are always winning are extremely good at proactive change. In step one I talked about the SWOT analysis, and this SWOT analysis shows opportunities that can help me find proactive changes in my business, such as diversifying our revenue streams.

This is why you see so many stories of businesses that are built during recessions. They are usually a result of entrepreneurs being forced to think outside the box to make positive changes in their business to succeed. And I want you to understand that I'm talking to you today about entrepreneurship rather than just photography. As a photography business, you are no doubt struggling right now, but using the opportunities you discovered in step one can truly help you to come out of this in a positive way. And that brings me to my last tip for dealing with business disruption.

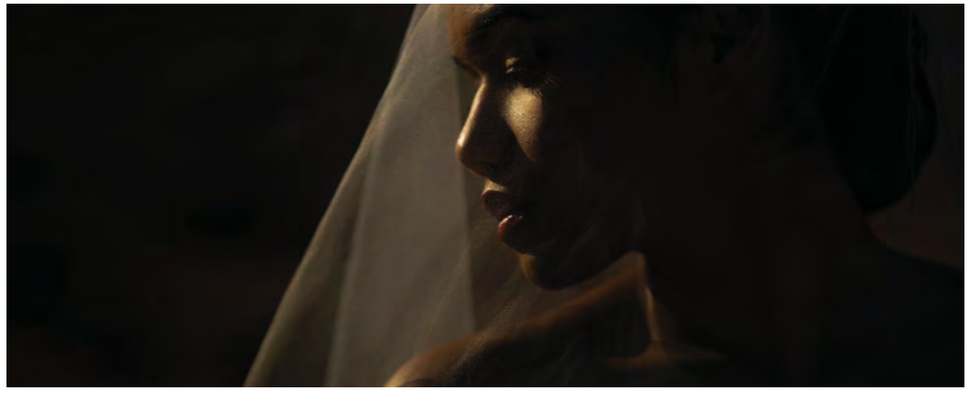


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STEP 3. HUSTLE, HUSTLE HARD

To anybody reading this who has seen success at one point in their photography business for a sustained amount of time, I want you to remember how hard you worked to get there.

As this pandemic has caused chaos on the economy, the world has seemed to stop on a dime. So if you think about the rat race that we all lived in, adapting to this new normal of stay-at-home orders and banned events has been a culture shock to many busy entrepreneurs.

The need to protect the public has come at a massive cost to the economy, forcing business owners to stop doing the one thing that they all want to do the most: grow.

The most important thing to understand about all this is that one day, if it hasn't already happened by the time you are reading this, the economy is going to open, and that is when the real race starts.

All the hard work that you have done with the extra time is going to only move you closer to pole position in the lineup once all of the restrictions are lifted. But despite where you start, you know that the fastest car, when driven by the best driver, will still come out on top of the race.

You have an opportunity now that you haven't had for years. All of your competitors that have rested on their laurels are going to expect that their business will continue as normal when the economy opens up.





Images © Michael Anthony Photography



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PLEASE DON'T MAKE THIS MISTAKE

The economy has changed, and it is driven by confidence. If brides are not confident that people are going to show up to their wedding, they will continue to postpone until further out in the future. You are going to have to work hard for every booking. This means that you are going to have to put in the time to visit your vendors, develop your relationships, and build a business in the new economy that is sustainable even through a pandemic. Your goal coming out of this is to work harder than you have ever worked before, putting in all of the hours necessary to accomplish your goals.

And let's talk for a second about goals. Not setting a goal is like getting in a car to drive to a destination that you do not know. Once you have your destination, then you can enter it into navigation and get all of the steps you need to accomplish that goal. Right now during this time, you can set your goals and put your plan together so that once the economy opens, all you have to do is follow the directions to get there.

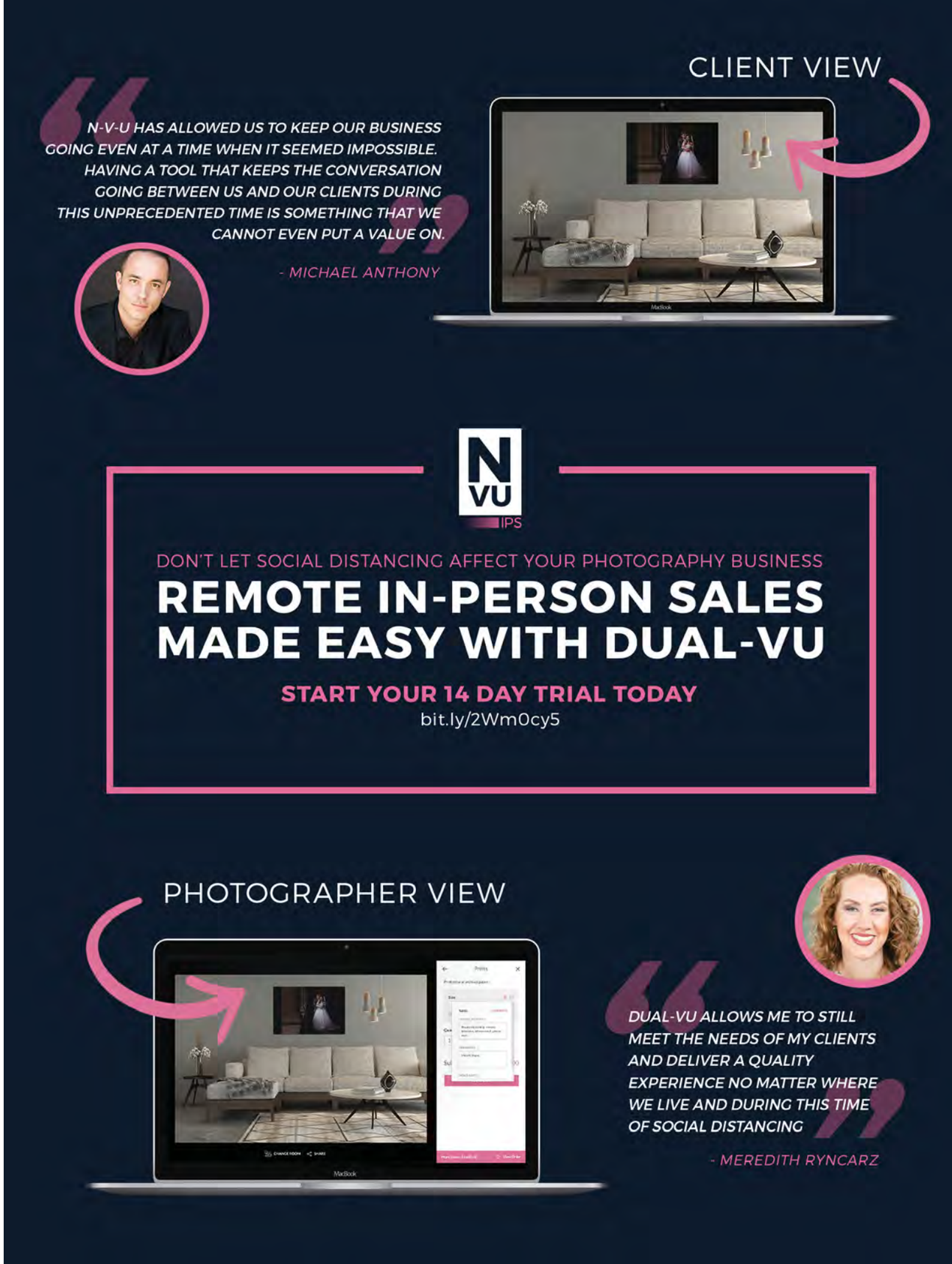
So hustle, hustle hard and you will get to the other side of this thing in better shape than you came into it. I honestly hope that anybody reading this article or watching the accompanying video emails me at some point in the near future telling me that the advice they read in this article helped them to build a business stronger than it ever was before. Let this article guide you to making it out to the other side. We'll catch you in next month's Shutter Magazine. ■





Michael Anthony is the owner of Michael Anthony Studios, a wedding photography studio based in Los Angeles. He has won multiple awards in international image competition for his creative use of light, storytelling and environmental portraiture. The five-member team at Michael Anthony Studios photographs around 60 weddings and over 200 portrait sessions a year.

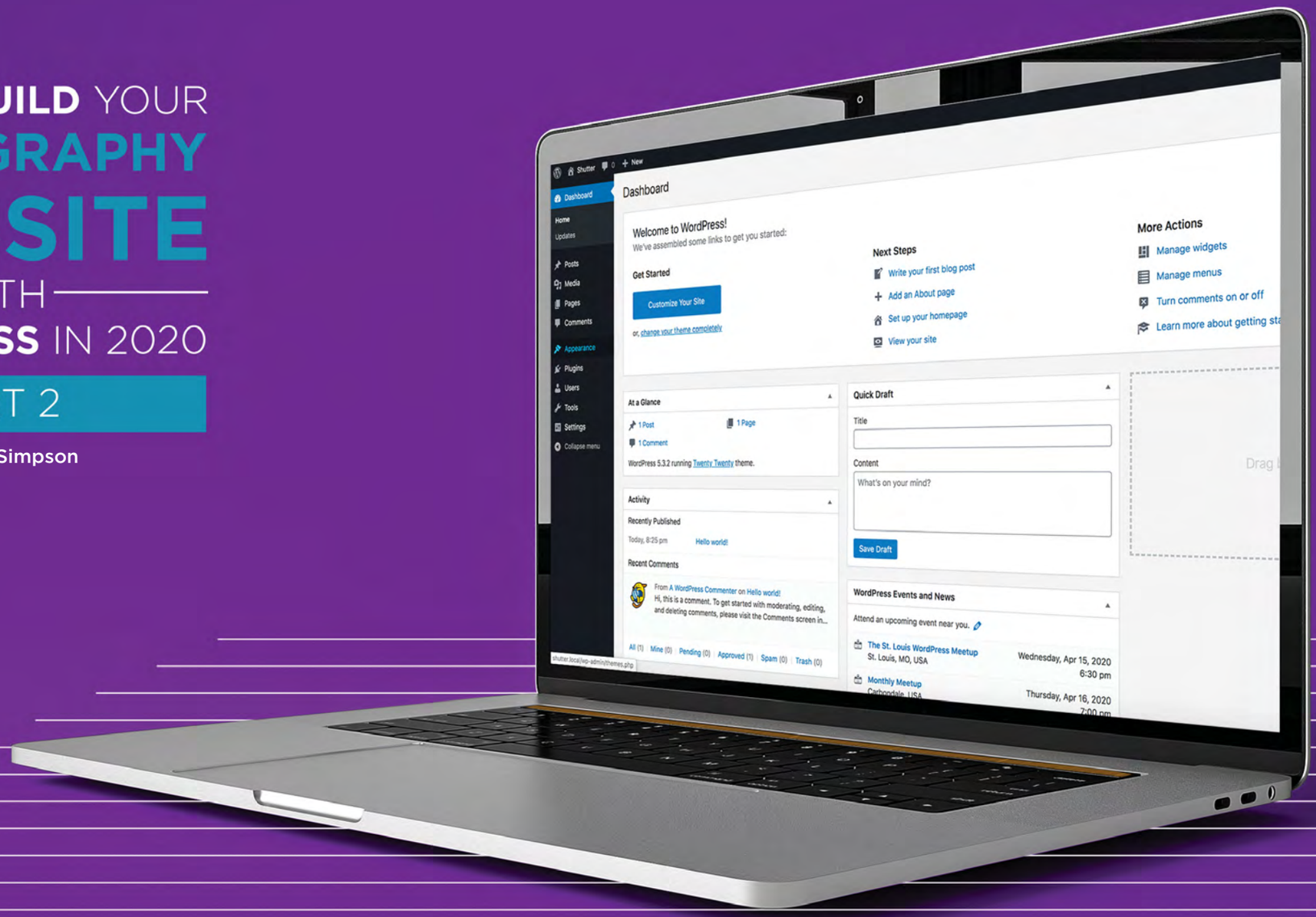
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HOW TO **BUILD** YOUR **PHOTOGRAPHY WEBSITE** WITH **WORDPRESS** IN 2020

PART 2

with **Alicia Simpson**

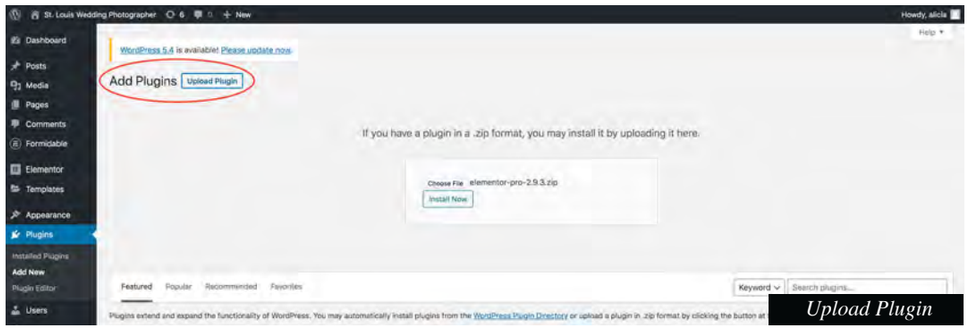


Last month, I covered the very beginning stages of creating a WordPress site: choosing your host and theme, and setting it up. Now it's time to take that foundation and start building our pages.

BUT FIRST, INSTALL SOME PLUGINS

If you're following along, you'll need to install a few new plugins at this point. The first ones are for our page builder: Elementor (free) & Elementor Pro. ($49/year for one site, and totally worth it. Just trust me on this.) Elementor can be installed from the Plugins > Add New screen. If you buy Elementor Pro, you'll need to upload the zip file by going to Plugins > Add New > Upload Plugin.

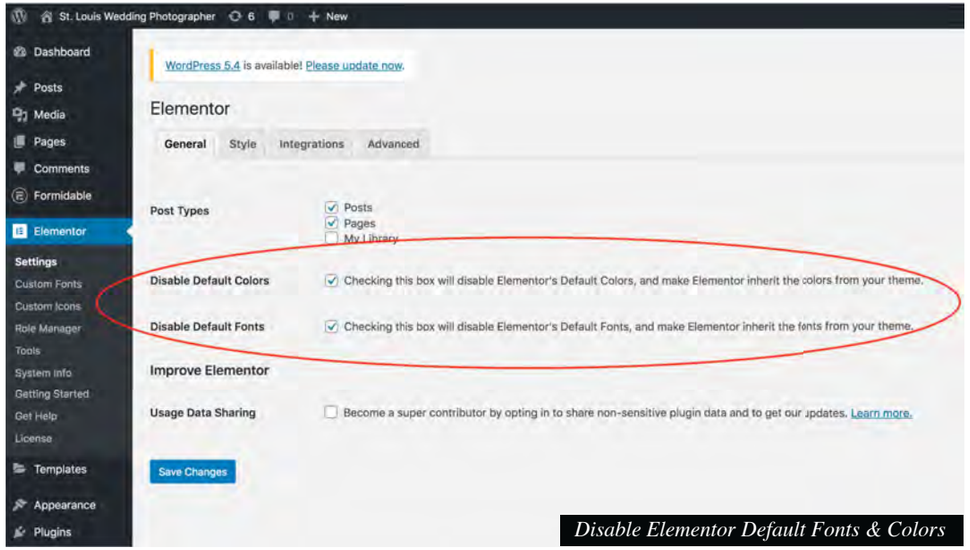
If you are not planning on embedding a contact form from a CRM like 17hats, another plugin you will need is a form plugin. In this article, I'll be using a plugin called Formidable Forms which has a free version and paid version. However, some other good options are WPForms or Gravity Forms.



Upload Plugin

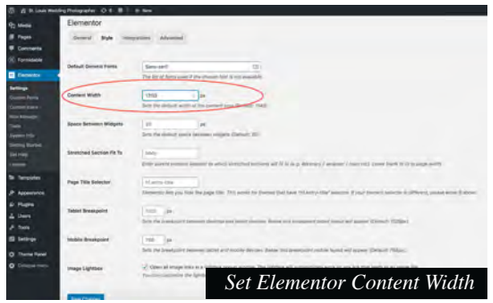
ELEMENTOR SETUP

First things first, go to Elementor > Settings. Check the boxes to disable default fonts and default colors. This will allow the site to use the settings we chose in the customizer while setting up our theme, and ensures we only have to go to one place in order to change site-wide colors. This makes for a much faster workflow down the road.

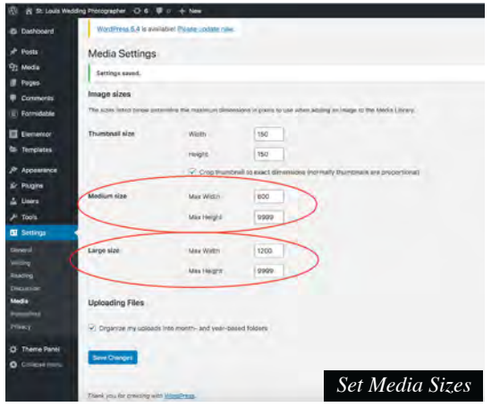


Disable Elementor Default Fonts & Colors

Next, click the Style tab at the top of the page. Everything can be left at the default settings here except for the second option, Content Width. You'll need to make sure the number here matches the number in Appearance > Customize > General Options > General Settings (if you are using the OceanWP theme). In the demo site, I've set it to 1200px. On Sal's site, this is set to 1000px because there are many full-width vertical images that I felt were taking up too much scrolling space at 1200px wide. Use whatever width you feel looks best here, just make sure they both match so your pages are consistent. On any pages you don't use Elementor, the width will be determined by the Customizer setting.

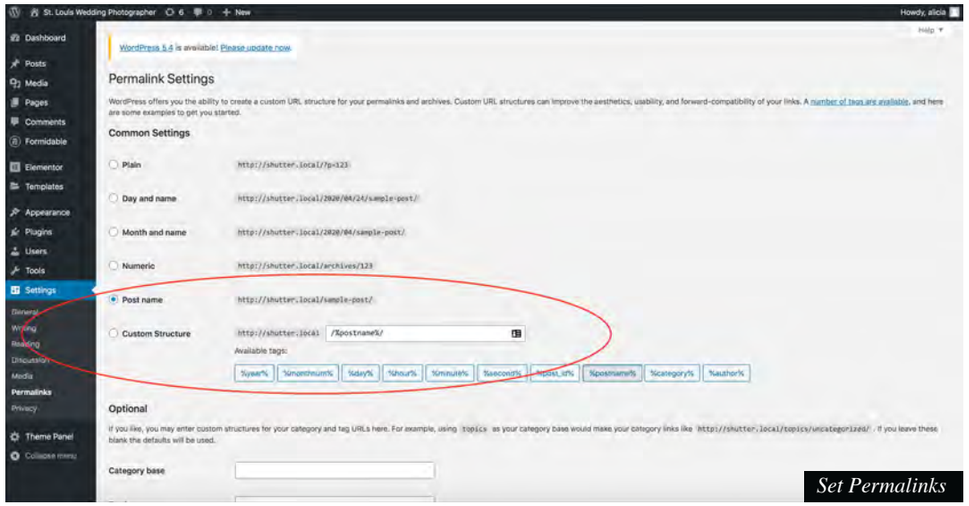


Set Elementor Content Width

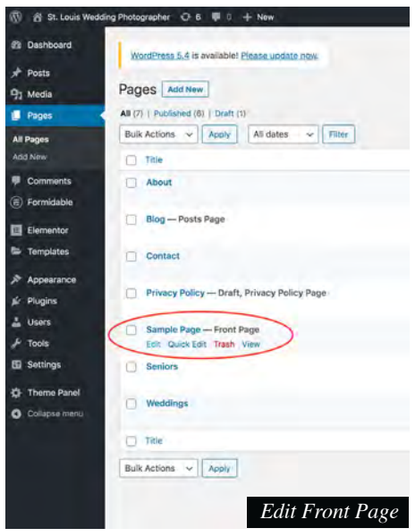


Set Media Sizes

Next, go to Settings > Media and adjust your image sizes. Change the max width of your medium size to half of the content width we just set and the max width of the large size to match the content width. Change the max height of both to 9999. Finally, go to Settings > Permalinks and make sure you have Post name selected. This is the best setting for SEO and making sure this is correct from the start of your site is very important.



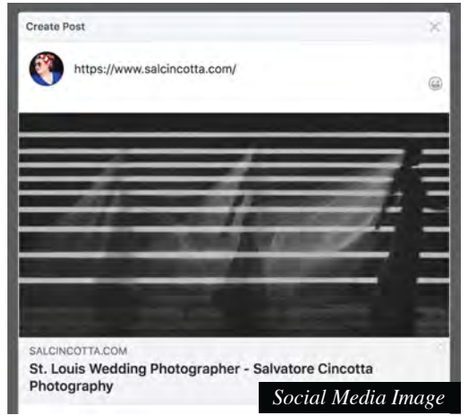
Set Permalinks



Edit Front Page

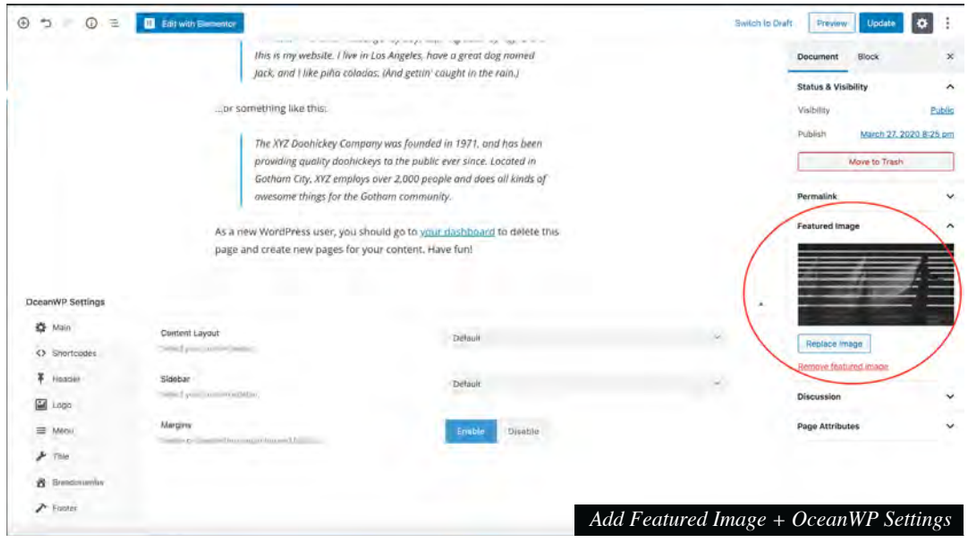
CREATING THE HOME PAGE

Now we're (finally) ready to actually start designing a page. Let's start with the home page. Go to Pages > All Pages and find the page you created that has "Front Page" next to the title. Hover over it and click on Edit.



Social Media Image

For all pages you create, you should set a featured image in the right-hand sidebar. I like to make them 1200px wide by 630 tall, which is the recommended image size for Facebook. This will be the image that shows up if that page is shared on social media.



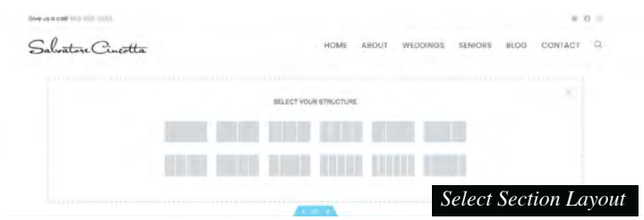
Add Featured Image + OceanWP Settings

Another area to get into the habit of checking is the OceanWP Settings, located below the page content. The page settings we chose in the customizer in last month's article should keep us from having to change anything here, but if the page ever looks unexpected (i.e. the content is not going edge to edge, the page title is showing up when you don't want it to, etc.) this is the place to change that.

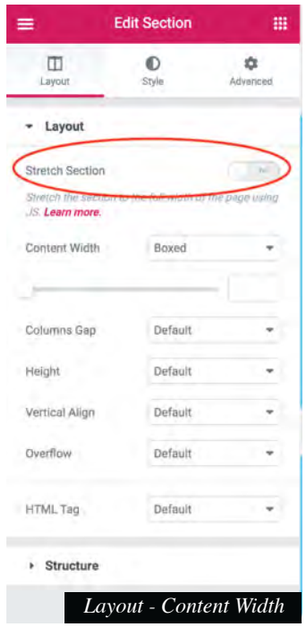

Blank Elementor Page

Next, click on the Edit with Elementor button at the top. The page builder will load, and if there's any sample content on the page, you can delete it to start with a blank slate.

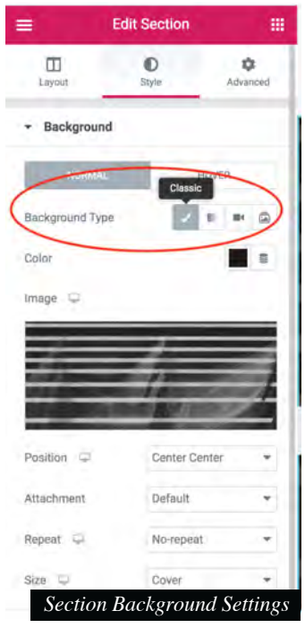
Click the plus button to create a new section and select the layout you want. I'm recreating Sal's home page, so I'll select one column to make the "hero" section. Since we've set up our theme correctly, the blue outline of the section should go edge to edge, and you shouldn't have to change your content width settings or ever use the "stretch section" switch (this adds unnecessary Javascript to your site, which ultimately makes it slower).



Select Section Layout

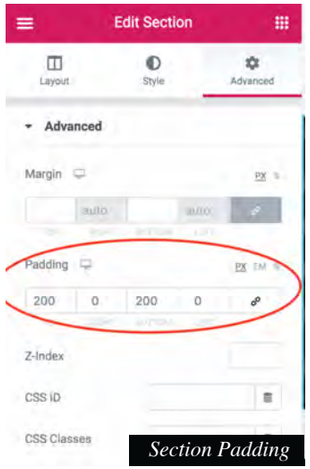


Layout - Content Width



Section Background Settings

In the style tab, I'll click on the paintbrush icon to select a classic background and add a background image. For full-width backgrounds, I size them at 1920px wide by however tall I'd like the section to be (which is usually not more than 700px tall). Make sure to set the position of the image as needed, the repeat setting to "no-repeat" and the size to cover so that it always goes edge to edge. Finally, I'll go to the Advanced tab and add some padding to the top and bottom of the section. I don't want to add any padding to the left or right, so I clicked the lock icon next to the top, bottom, left, and right areas before entering in the numbers. Now the full background image is visible, and the text I want to add inside the section will have some nice white space around it.



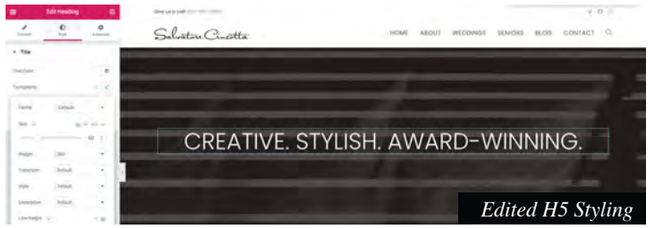
Section Padding

Pro Tip: *Margin adds space* ***outside*** *the background of your section, and padding adds space* ***inside*** *the boundaries of your section.*

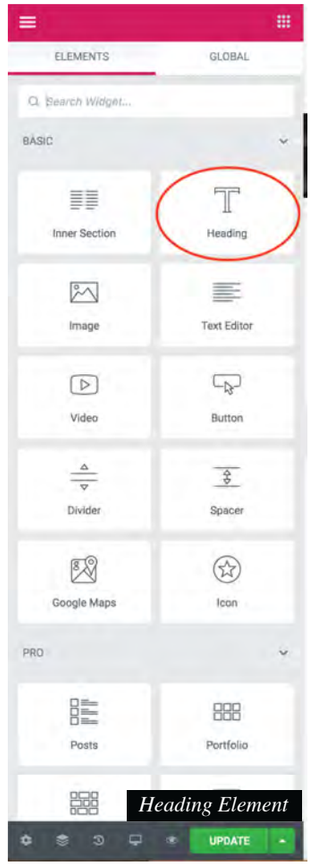
Next, I've added a heading element to the section by clicking on the dial pad icon in the top right corner of the Elementor panel and dragging the heading element inside the section. This is going to have Sal's tagline. I want this text to really stand out so potential clients know exactly what they're going to get. However, the phrase "Creative. Stylish. Award-Winning" doesn't really tell Google a whole lot about what Sal does. So I chose to change this to an H5 tag, which is pretty small by default. That should be fine for the rest of the site, but we want this particular text to be large. So I'll go to the style tab and click the edit button next to typography and change the size of the text. You can also change the size and add some text effects in the style tab, too.



Default H5 Styling



Edited H5 Styling



Heading Element

SEO Tip: *There should only be one H1 on your page, and it should be the most important (in terms of SEO) text on your site. You can have multiple H2–H6 tags on a page, but try to categorize them in order of SEO importance. This makes it easier for Google to index your site. They can always be styled differently!*



H1

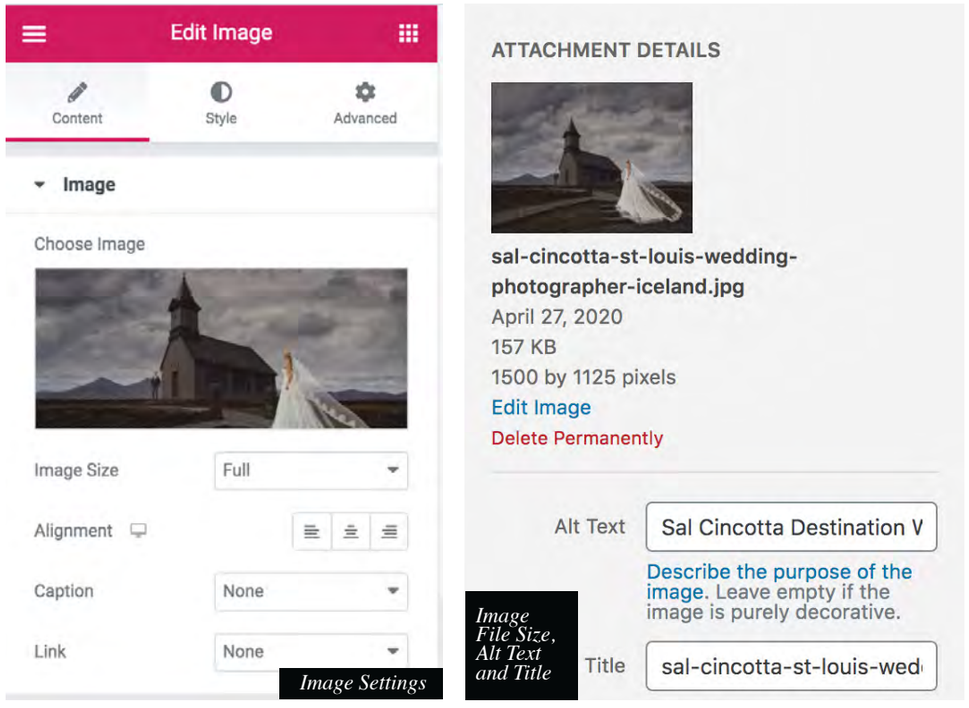


Image Settings

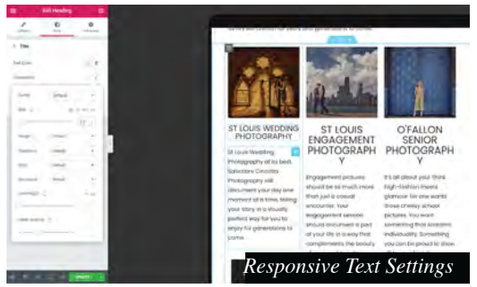
Image File Size, Alt Text and Title

I built the rest of the page using standard sections, images, heading, and text editor elements.

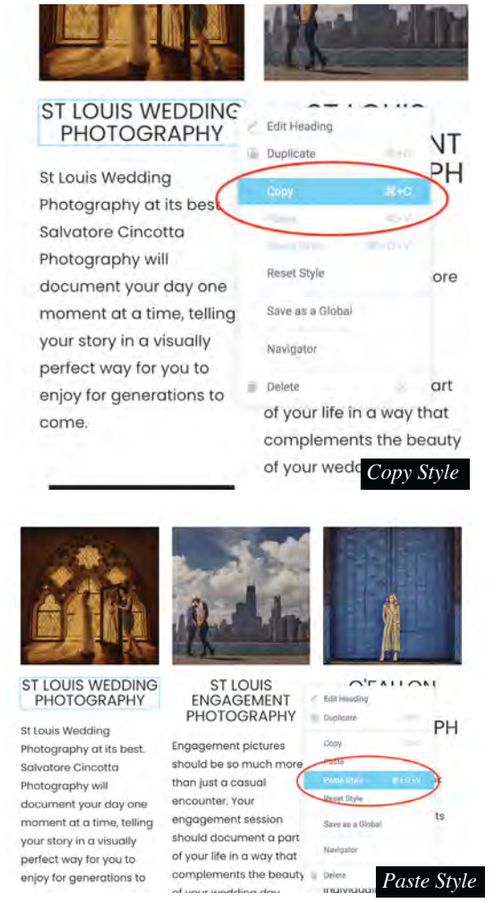
For images, make sure that none of them are sized wider than the content width you set (for me that's 1200px) and that you've sized them for web, meaning none of the images are larger than 250KB. I use the Save for Web option in Photoshop, and then upload the image to tinypng.com to compress it further without losing quality. When you add the image in Elementor, make sure that you always choose "full" for your image size.



Responsive Mode

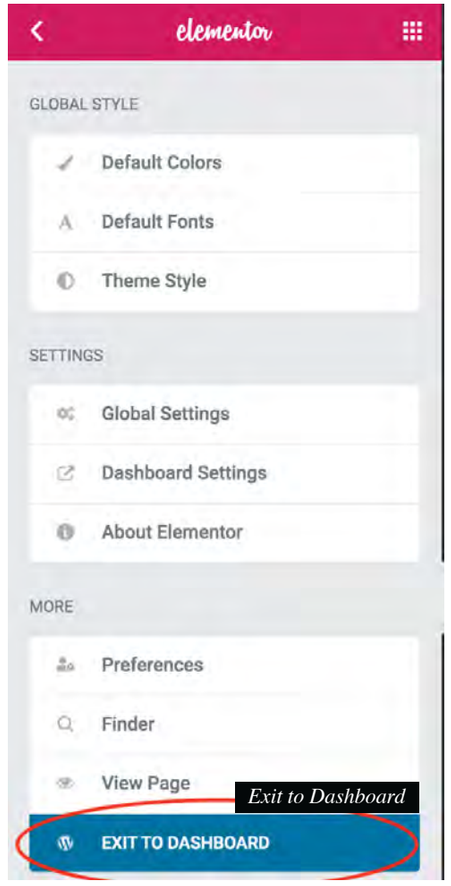


Responsive Text Settings



The last step before finishing up any page is to check how it looks at different screen sizes. To do this, click on the Responsive Mode button at the bottom of the screen and choose a device. Now you can change various settings that have a device icon next to them like text size or alignment, and the changes will apply to that size and smaller. If you have many of the same elements on a page, you can quickly apply consistent styling by right-clicking on the first element, clicking "Copy," then right-clicking on the other elements and clicking "Paste Style."

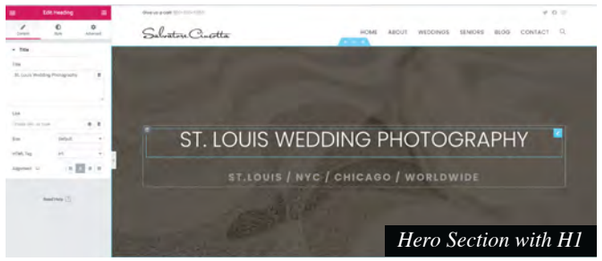
After you like how your page looks on all devices, click the green Update button. To exit Elementor, click the three lines in the top left corner, and click Exit to Dashboard.



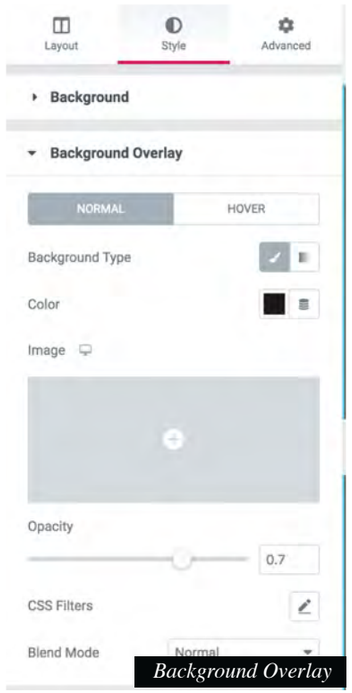
Exit to Dashboard

THE WEDDING GALLERY PAGE

Next, let's work on the wedding gallery page. This is a pretty simple page with a hero section at the top, followed by a little text, the gallery of images, and a contact form. On this page, the H1 tag is where you would expect it to be, at the very top of the page with an H2 below it. I also added a background overlay to this section to make the text more readable.

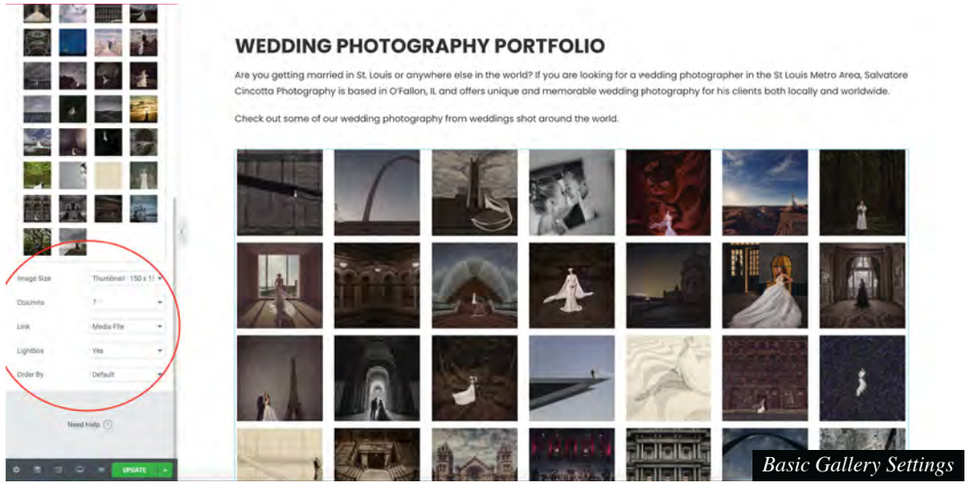


Hero Section with H1

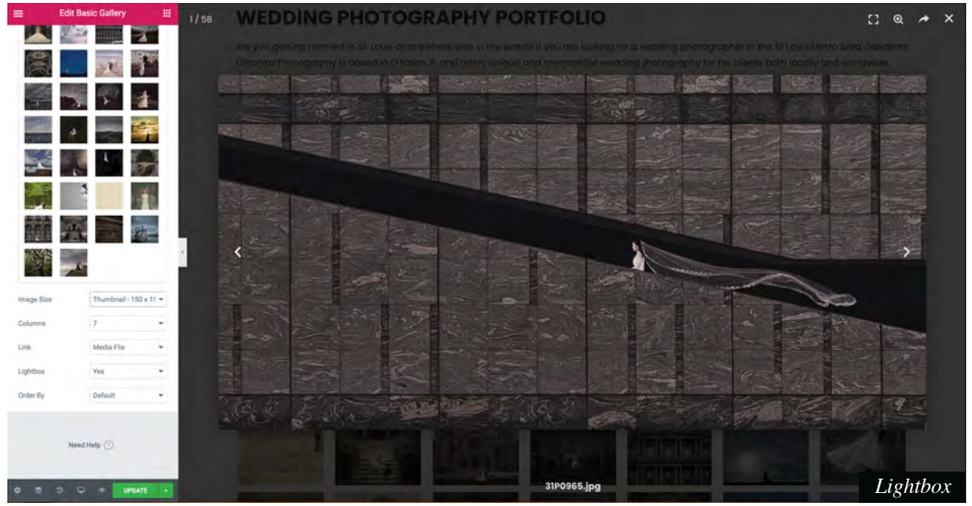


Background Overlay

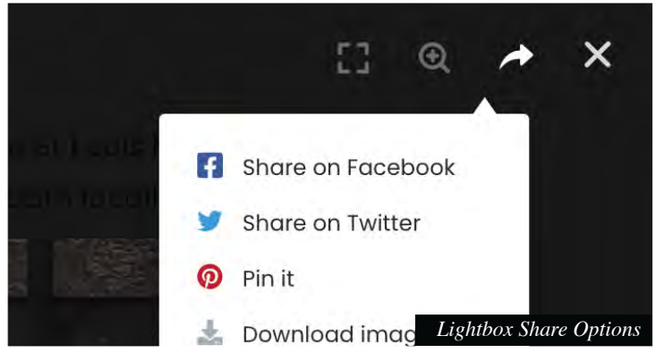
For the gallery, Elementor has quite a few options available. The first is the basic gallery, which is available in the free version of Elementor. I uploaded my images (58!) and set the image size to thumbnail so that they would all be cropped to a square. I set the link to Media File, which means that when someone clicks, it will open up the full-size image. I left the lightbox setting to Yes, so that the full-size image will open up in a slideshow format with some social sharing options. (This also includes an option to download the file, but you can turn these share settings off in Global Settings > Lightbox.)



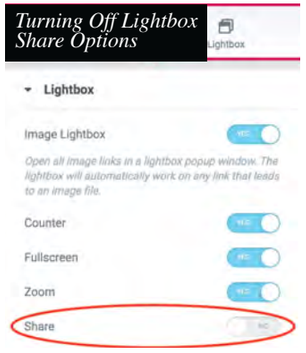
Basic Gallery Settings

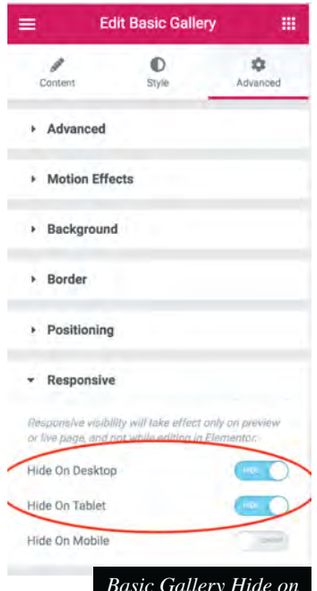


Lightbox



Lightbox Share Options

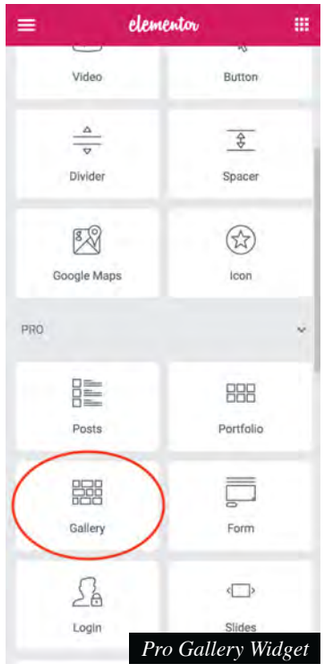




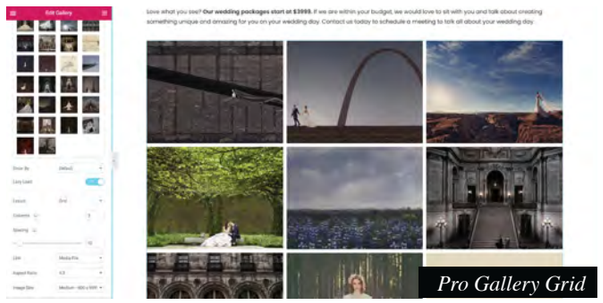
Basic Gallery Hide on Desktop and Tablet

While these gallery settings are probably the fastest in terms of page speed, it's not the prettiest. We can't control how the thumbnails are cropped, which results in some of the subjects getting cut off. And as soon as you set the image size to anything other than a square, it looks like absolute shit. On top of that, it's atrocious to use on mobile since the number of columns can't be changed. To get around that, you'll have to duplicate the gallery, change the settings, and use the responsive options in the Advanced tab to show it only on mobile devices and hide the original gallery on mobile devices.

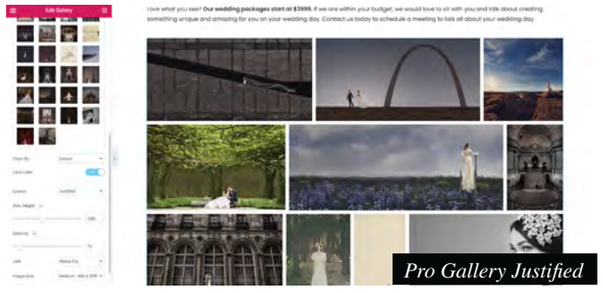
Elementor Pro's Gallery widget can give us a much nicer-looking, Pinterest-style gallery that can be more easily managed on all device sizes. First, you can choose single or multiple gallery. With multiple, you could easily create a way for users to filter and see only destination work, engagements, or even different venues in your area. (Think of the SEO value there!) The lazy load option will help with page speed. Finally, there are three layout options: Grid, Justified, and Masonry. Grid will look very similar to the basic gallery, but provides more aspect ratio and size options. Justified looks similar to an N-Vu gallery, with the images in rows, un-cropped. Masonry looks similar to Pinterest, with your un-cropped images in columns. If there are any awkwardly long columns of images, just rearrange them by clicking on the images and dragging and dropping to change the order.



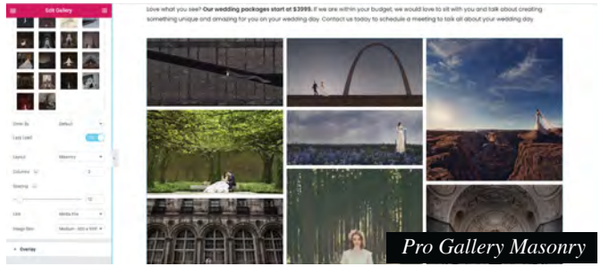
Pro Gallery Widget



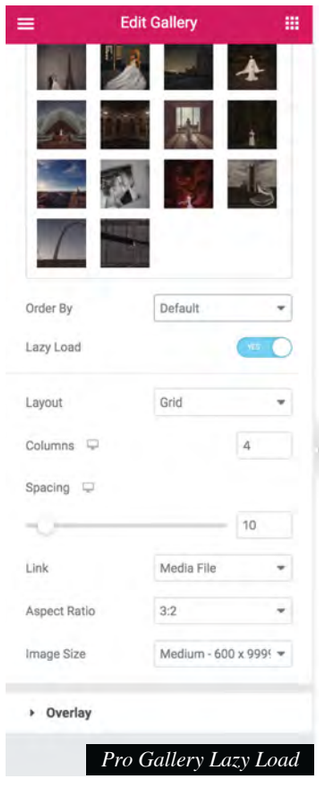
Pro Gallery Grid



Pro Gallery Justified

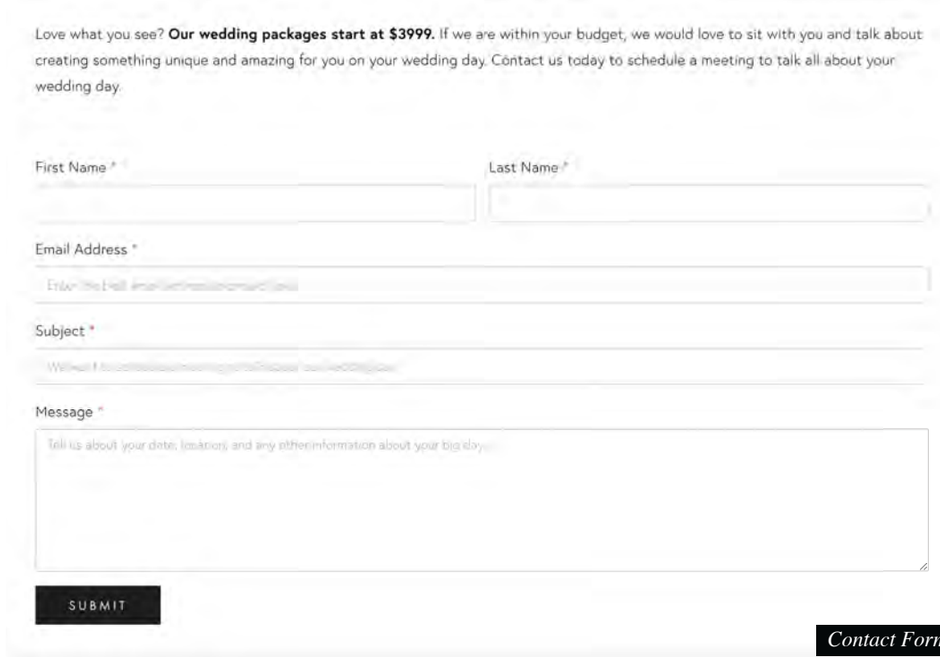


Pro Gallery Masonry



Pro Gallery Lazy Load

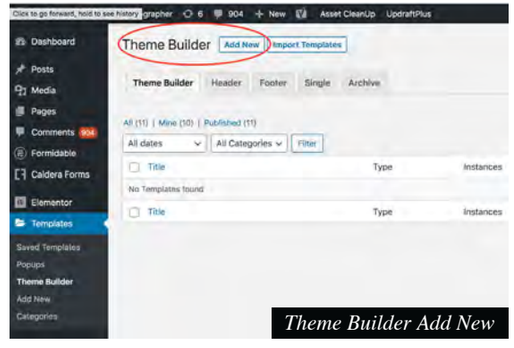
Finally, I added a simple contact form that I created with my form plugin.



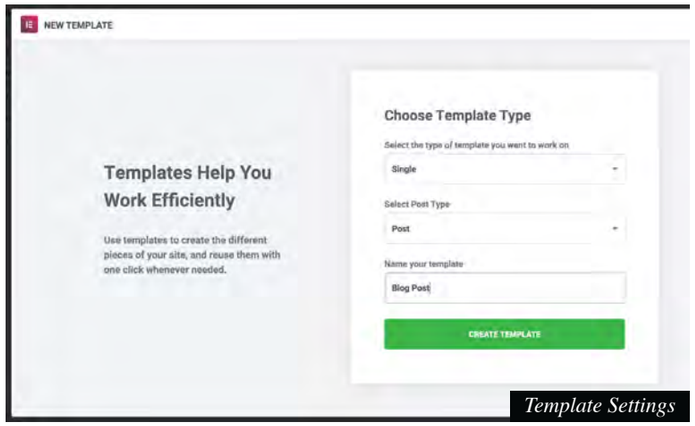
Contact Form

BLOG POST

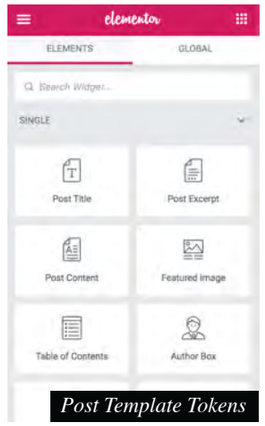
Last but not least, if you have Elementor Pro, you can use it to design a template for all your blog posts. (If you don't have Pro, you can still use the Customizer to set up how your posts look.) On your WordPress dashboard, go to Templates > Theme Builder and click Add New at the top. Select Single, Post, and give your template a name. You'll immediately be taken to the page builder with a library of pre-made templates to choose from. I'm going to make my own from scratch, so I'll exit out.



Theme Builder Add New

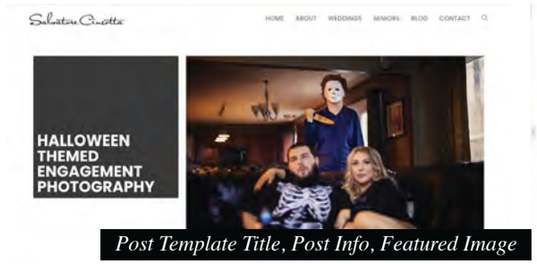


Template Settings



Post Template Tokens

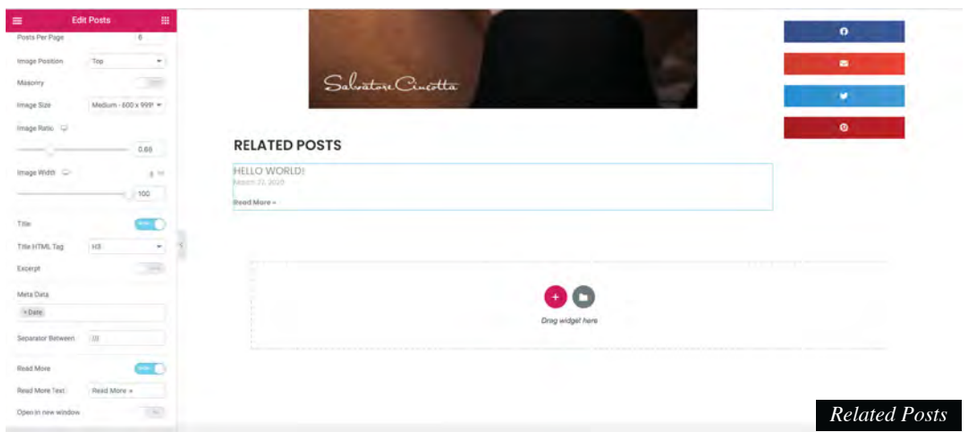
Since this is a template, Elementor gives us some "tokens," which are items that all posts have, like a title, content (everything you write), and featured image. Here I set up a section at the top with the title, featured image, post info (I selected category and post date) with the content of the post below. Next to the post content, I added some social share buttons that scroll along with you. At the bottom, I used the Posts element to show some related posts.



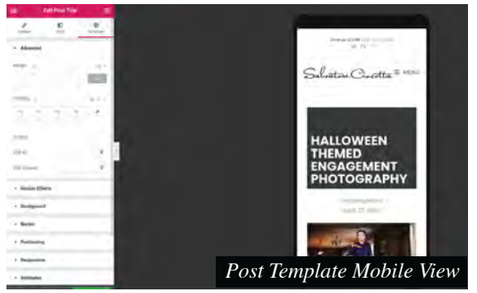
Post Template Title, Post Info, Featured Image



Post Template Content and Floating Social Share Buttons



Related Posts



Post Template Mobile View

Note: *Elementor will use data from your most recent blog post to preview your template. If all you have so far is the "Hello World" sample blog post, I recommend editing that post to add all the things you would have in a typical post: featured image, category, etc., so you can get a more accurate idea of how your template will look.*



Saving Post Template

After making a few adjustments so the design looks good on all devices, click Publish. I want to use this template for all my posts, so I will leave these settings as is and click Save & Close. The template is now live, and all my blog posts will now be displayed with this design.

GO FORTH AND DESIGN!

That covers the basics of page building with Elementor & WordPress. Use these tips to finish building out the rest of your site. Next month, we will add analytics, backups, look at SEO, and tackle site speed. ■



If you've ever emailed support@behindtheshutter.com, you've probably talked to Alicia Simpson. In addition to part time tech support, Alicia is a Senior Graphic Designer at Cincotta & Co, and has worked for Sal for the past four years. She designs marketing materials and websites for Behind the Shutter, Evolve, ShutterFest, Level Up and any other brands Sal can come up with. She is also heavily involved in the graphic, trade show and website designs for Creative Cinc clients.

behindtheshutter.com

HIGH KEY
LOW BUDGET

with **Michael Corsentino**

Image © Michael Corsentino

High key lighting is a highly sought after and easy to create technique when you know how to do it. In this month's feature, I'll show you how to create beautiful high key lighting on a low budget. I'll take a reductionist approach, walking you step by step from the most complex, pro level, gear-intensive method, to a great 50% midway point, and then to our final 1-light method, the subject of this month's tutorial.

METHOD 1.

The first method requires the most gear and, by extension, is the most expensive. The payoff is maximum control. With this method, the light is broken down into 4 separate zones comprised of 8 strobes, each individually controlled. You read that right: 8 strobes. Don't worry, in method 3—which is the focus of this month's tutorial—I'll show you how to create a very similar high key effect with only 1 strobe! I'm including methods 1 and 2 for those who find themselves with more lights or want a deeper dive with greater control. Breaking down high key techniques from the most complex to least complex will give you a better understanding of what we're attempting to recreate with 1 light in method 3.

For all methods, the first lighting zone is the key light, typically modified with a beauty dish. Zone 2 is made up of 2 strobes typically modified with stripe boxes, placed on the left and right side of the subject's face, and set at equal power. These act as kicker lights, providing illumination on the sides of the model's face. Zone 3 is a fill light placed below the subject's face, waist level or above, to open up any shadows created by the key light in the subject's eye sockets or under the chin. This arrangement is known as Clamshell Lighting and we'll use it with all 3 methods in one form or another.

The last and most demanding zone is zone 4, which is used to create a high key background that can be controlled independently from everything else. This zone is typically comprised of 4 strobes, 2 on the left and 2 on the right, behind the subject, fired into V-Flats and bounced back onto the background for an even high key effect. This is the pro method used in studios the world over as it requires zero compromises and gives photographers independent control of each lighting zone.





METHOD 2.

The second method requires half the number of lights, which is 4 strobes, and therefore half the cost. That said, it's still a lot of lights for many people. Here again, as in method 1, zone 1 is the key light, more often than not a beauty dish placed directly above the camera position and in front of the subject. Zone 2 is again made up of 2 strobes typically modified with strip boxes, placed on the left and right side of the subject's face, and set at equal power to act as kicker lights, providing illumination on the sides of the model's face.

Zone 3 is a fill light placed below the subject's face, waist level or above, to open up any shadows created by the key light in the subject's eye sockets or under the chin. The method used for creating the high key background is where this method parts company with the last. Here, instead of using 4 strobes to illuminate the background, 1 strobe modified with a large octabank is placed directly behind the subject and facing the camera position. This strobe is used to create an illumined background. Simple but effective.

The drawback here is that your framing is limited by the size of the octabank. Therefore, this method is effective for headshots, 3/4 length, etc., but not full figure work. When using an illuminated background pay special attention to light spilling onto your subject from behind and creating a milky washed-out effect.


Key Light Only


V-Flat Background Added


V-Flat Panel Added Camera Left


V-Flat Panel Added Camera Right

Images © Michael Corsentino


Fill Reflector Added Below Key Light


Final Before Retouch, Color Grade

Images © Michael Corsentino

METHOD 3.

Alright, we've looked at 8 lights, we've looked at 4 lights, now let me show you how you can get pretty close to the techniques above with just 1 light. What you lose here is the independent control you have with a multi-light setup. Despite that, it's possible to achieve very acceptable results with this greatly pared-down technique.

As with the methods above, zone 1 is our key light. For this technique, we'll dispense with the beauty dish I'd typically use and recommend in favor of a medium-sized octabank. This is done to maximize light output and create a larger circle of light with less falloff than is possible with a beauty dish. The key light is the only powered zone in this method. For zones 2 through 4 we'll swap strobes for reflectors, specially a combination of 2 white V-Flat panels and a 3x4 reflector.

For the purposes of illustration, I've broken each step down for you, building the lighting effect by adding one panel at a time. Once you understand this method you don't need to do that. Feel free to set it up completely and shoot. For zone 2, our light under the model's face, a 3x4 silver reflector is used. The intensity of fill can be controlled by adjusting the distance of the reflector from the key light above it. I choose silver fabric for maximum intensity and heightened specularity.

For the background and side accent lights, we'll build a 3-sided box around the model using white faced V-Flats. With the octabank firing into this box, a beautiful and easy high key effect is created. While the background isn't the blow-away background you could create with a separate zone of 4 strobes, it's pretty close. The shallow distance between the subject and the V-Flat panel used for the background gets us close enough to white for many applications.



Final, Retouched & Color Graded

Image © Michael Corsentino

So, as you can see, you don't need a king's ransom worth of strobes to create perfectly acceptable high key lighting. If you have more strobes, by all means use them. If not, the 1-light method pictured here has got you covered. ■

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Michael Corsentino is an Orlando, Florida-based editorial fashion and portrait photographer. In addition to his busy shooting schedule, Michael is a passionate educator, teaching workshops domestically and internationally. He is an author of two books, writes a monthly lighting column for *Shutter Magazine* and is a regular contributor to *Photoshop User* magazine and JointheBreed.com.

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SELF PORTRAIT COMPOSITES IN QUARANTINE

with **Kristina Sherk**

Image © Kristina Sherk

Kids. Don't get me wrong… we love them, but good Lord they are a lot of work. And whoever thought it was a good idea to lock everyone in their homes in the middle of a pandemic, didn't think about those of us with toddlers... Climbing the walls has become a daily occurrence in our house.

Before Covid-19 hit, I was coasting on a well-oiled, churn and burn headshot photography business. I was doing multiple headshot sessions a day at my studio and barely making it home in time for dinner and then, in what felt like the blink of an eye, all that changed. So I've had to pivot and somehow take my frustrations out in other creative ways.

I'm not a patient, nurturing person by nature, so being at home with a 2.5-year-old and a 5-month-old is literally taking up 120% of my effort, patience, and mental capacity. I couldn't help but feel like the moment I'd put one toy away, another one had exploded all over the floor. How is this happening?! She's only one kid! My head was spinning from her boundless energy and short attention span. So that's where the idea for this image was born.



Before



After

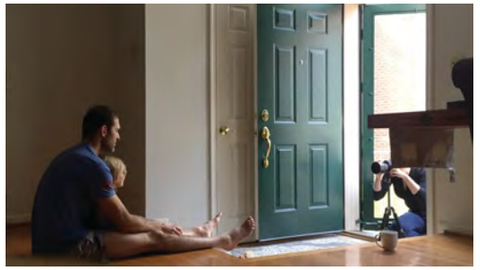
Image © Kristina Sherk

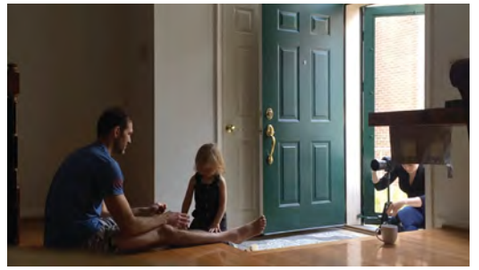
Composites don't have to be hard and daunting, and you don't need to be a Photoshop guru to create them either. If you keep a few important concepts in mind, you'll be shocked at how easy it is. In this article I'll walk you through the step by step process for creating this image.

TIPS FOR CAPTURING THE IMAGE

The first step is to capture the images themselves. I put the camera on the tripod near the front door as you can see in the time-lapse video and set the focus using my husband as my stand-in model. A tripod is extremely important for this kind of composite! If you use a tripod to shoot, all of your frames will be exactly the same and you'll thank yourself later when you get to the editing phase.

You might be asking how I triggered the camera to fire. There are multiple ways of doing this. You can use a long shutter release cable, or if you have a newer camera, there are cell phone apps that can trigger the camera to fire.





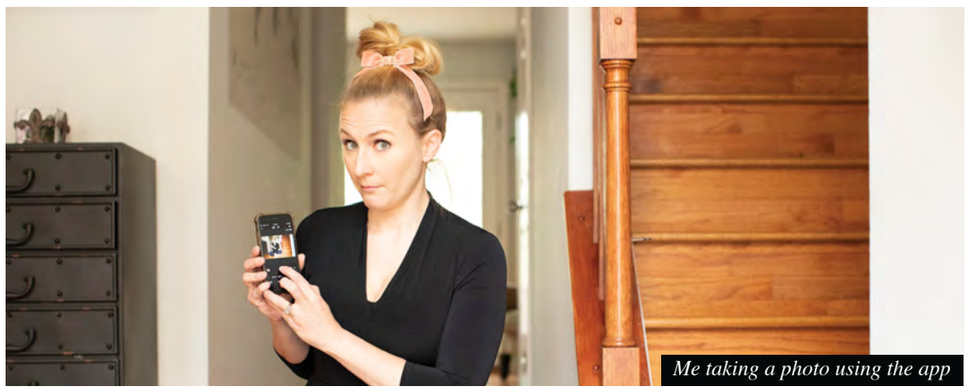




The first image you always want to have is something called a "plate" image. It's a shot of the background without anything else in the frame. Next, you'll want to shoot when you think your kiddo is doing something interesting that lends itself to the overall concept of the photo. I stay very, very still. I'm doing this for an important reason: while I want my daughter to be in lots of varied positions, I don't want to have my body in slightly different positions in each shot. This will make the retouching process much harder once we get to the editing stage.

Shoot more than you think you need. Some images may not work perfectly. You don't want your duplicates of your kiddo to overlap too much, otherwise it will be hard to see them. So space them out and try to give direction (as best you can since we all know kids don't listen) as to where to stand and what to do.

I've hidden my one hand behind my leg in the image. That's the hand that I'm using to trigger each photo using my cell phone app (Canon Camera Connect). This app in particular does so much. I can even switch to live view and see the preview on my cell phone to check focus. This specific app only works for iPhone, but there are Android alternatives on the market. Additionally, Nikon and Sony also have capabilities like this.



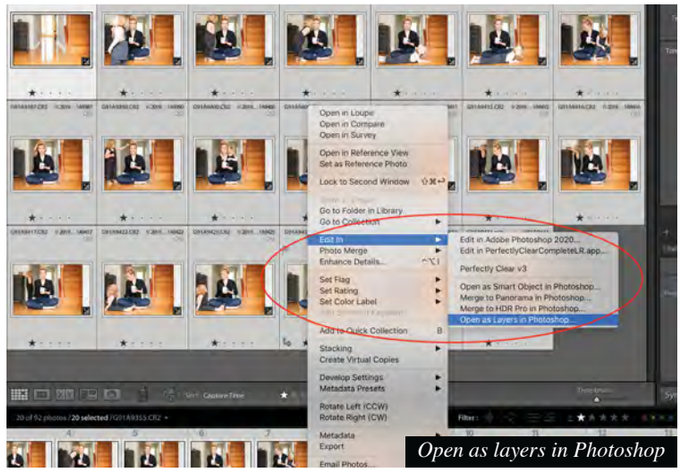
Me taking a photo using the app

Image © Kristina Sherk

TIPS FOR ORGANIZING THE IMAGE

Once all the shots were captured, it was time to import them. I imported them into Lightroom and then picked out the ones I wanted to use, paying close attention to the placement of the little maniac and making sure to use frames where her position and location was varied enough, in hopes of making each action she was doing unique and independent within the image.

Next, I selected all of the shots I wanted, and told Lightroom to open them as layers in one document in Photoshop. The way to do this is to select all the images you want to use, then right-click on any photo selected and choose “Edit In” and then “Open as Layers in Photoshop.”



Open as layers in Photoshop



Named each layer

The last step in this section is to label each layer what they are. Take it from me, having 15 plus layers in one document that look almost identical is basically torturing yourself. I named each layer what my daughter was doing in each frame.

TIPS FOR RETOUCHING THE IMAGE

Once they’re all in the same document as layers and named correctly, it was really easy for me to start at the bottom and build up from there. Each additional layer I added with a version of my little one had a different mask over just the kiddo. And if you stay perfectly still during all the shots, even if she/he interacts with your body, the images will line up.

Here are two of my masks shown in two different ways. Version A for each mask is previewing the mask itself, and version B is the exact same mask but shown in quick mask mode.


Version A


Version B


Version A


Version B





Image © Kristina Sherk

Since the images were all shot on a tripod and are the same exact frame, my masking could be really sloppy (thank goodness)! That's what saved me with the time it took to create this edit. I wasn't being extremely specific in my masking because the background in all of the different images (regardless of where my daughter was) was the same. And let's be honest — who has time to spend hours on an edit? Not this momma! In my complementary video to this article, I show a warp speed edit of the entire retouch which originally took me about an hour. I know you don't have an hour to watch it (or maybe you do if you're mandated to be sitting at home doing nothing but twiddling your thumbs), so I sped it up to about five minutes for your convenience.

At the end of the day, part of me had been yearning for some sort of hardship for a few years now, because that's where my creativity stems from. But it came at an expensive cost. I hope this little case study shows you that you don't have to be a master Photoshopper in order to make a creative portrait. So go enjoy your "forced time off" and make some cool art. I can't *wait* to see everyone at Shutterfest 2020! ■





For the past 15 years, Kristina Sherk has been a high-end photo retoucher based out of Washington, D.C. She specializes in realistic retouching and has done work for many clients such as Time Inc., Hasselblad, Merz Aesthetic and Cotton Incorporated. She loves "translating Photoshop" for people and subsequently, she's a contributing author for educational publications like Shutter Magazine, Photoshop User Magazine and Lightroom Magazine. She is also the author behind five KelbyOne classes and Photoshop Café's Fashion Retouching DVD.

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3 BELIEFS THAT ARE **HOLDING YOU BACK** FROM REACHING YOUR **FULL POTENTIAL**

with **Katie Engelhardt**



Image © Katie Engelhardt Portraits

Not so long ago I was paralyzed by limiting beliefs about my talent, my abilities, and my business as a portrait photographer. I made excuses as to why x photographer was successful, consistently booked, had a greater following, and why I did not. Always finding comfort by filling in the blanks with which obstacles (finances, equipment, knowledge, time restraints, or life circumstances) were holding me back from being the artist, creator, and business owner my heart longed for. I believed that the "something" that would transform me into who I wanted to be was answered in my lack of obtaining this or that and didn't realize all the answers were available through honest self-talk and authentic artistic exploration. Once I ended the "if only" record on replay in my head, my business and my work elevated, propelling my "sort of" business into a bespoke business that began to attract not only my ideal client, but also a growing following, more business collaborations, and allowed me to create work that sets my soul on fire.

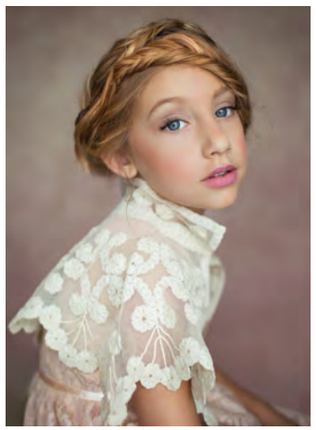
1. YOU BELIEVE YOUR SPATIAL LIMITATIONS ARE PREVENTING YOU FROM PRODUCING BEAUTIFUL WORK

I couldn't count how many times I have either heard or thought, "I need a studio space to be taken seriously" or "I don't have enough space/the right space to take portraits." It is amazing how little space is needed to create magic. My "portrait studio," aka my living room, has been my greatest challenge and my greatest blessing. Prior to every session, I move a 6-foot sofa, a coffee table, an entry table, and an arm chair in a Tetris game to create enough space for movement and shooting. I roll up an area rug and conceal it underneath my canvas backdrops. I pull out my studio wardrobe from Rubbermaid containers stacked tightly in the corner of my garage and rally all of the vintage step stools, benches, chairs, and props that double as my personal home goods when not in use. I have been doing this routine for every portrait session since establishing my business. It is not ideal by any stretch of the imagination, but it is what I have done to nurture and grow a passion into a successful business over the last six years. My exact studio space measurements are 7 ft x 6.5 ft x 8.5 ft. I am a natural light photographer and utilize the light available from the window in the room. When I am not able to get the right shot within the confines of my space, I have been known to crawl through the window and shoot knee-deep in my front yard landscaping to fit all family members in the frame. I have even put up a tailgating tent and photographed a client on my driveway in order to overcome lighting or spatial challenges. I am sure some of this has created interesting conversation amongst my neighbors, but I have not allowed my space to limit the unwavering desire in my heart to create.

I stopped focusing on the judgment I felt for not having a "proper shooting space," comparing my space to other photographers, and apologizing to my clients for my lack as a way of making me feel more comfortable. Only then was I finally free to own, cherish, and be inspired by what was possible. I stopped looking at my space as an obstacle but instead as an opportunity. I began to relentlessly explore what was possible within every inch of this beautiful space, studying form, posing, and the way the light danced across the walls. Today, I know that most importantly, my clients trust me and hire me for the service and experience of creating intimate heirloom quality portraits. Within my small studio space, we laugh, cry, and giggle as I capture the light reflecting in their eyes and the beauty in their hearts.

CHANGE YOUR THINKING:

- Get creative.
- See possibilities where you once saw barriers.
- Master your space, your posing, and your light.
- Take on those less-than-ideal challenges to turn your "sort of" business into your dream business.









Images © Katie Engelhardt Portraits



Image © Katie Engelhardt Portraits

2. YOU BELIEVE YOUR LACK OF HIGH-END EQUIPMENT IS PREVENTING YOU FROM PRODUCING HIGH END RESULTS

Over the last few years, I have been fortunate enough to slowly upgrade my equipment from beginner to professional by selling back and buying used from my local camera shop. My first DSLR camera was a Canon Rebel, which I used for many years, and three years ago I purchased a 5d Mark III. When I invested in my first backdrop, the largest size I could afford was a 60 in x 44 in, clearly not ideal for a portrait photographer capturing images of children and expanding to families. This of course provided loads of problem solving with posing and hours of post-production. Trying to clone and extend backdrops seemed to be nearly impossible at the time. There is no doubt that equipment matters and can produce significant enhancement in outcomes, reduce sacrifices, and increase time availability, but I refuse to believe that it is a barrier to creating beautiful, high impact images.

Each time I upgraded my equipment, I was impressed with the fun bells and whistles, however, the quality of my work never changed significantly. I still approached the sessions the same visually and creatively.

My whole kit and kaboodle consists of one camera, one lens, a collection of backdrops, one backdrop stand, two sandbags, a hair dryer for blowing hair, two sheer white curtains, and the rare use of a piece of foam core purchased from a local drugstore to bounce light.

If you are a photographer who has the means to buy the high-end equipment, by all means go after it and purchase all of the tools available to meet your needs. For those photographers who are unable to upgrade and feel that lack is preventing them from attracting their ideal client or create swoon-worthy images, I am here to firmly advise you that this is a false narrative you are telling yourself. I am incredibly lucky to say an overwhelming majority of my clients are not only repeat clients and have gone on to refer other repeat clients, but those initial clients were the ones with the entry-level camera and me using thumbtacks to hang up my fabric backdrops (purchased with a coupon at the local fabric store). They were attracted to my vision then and have stayed with me since.

The magic is not found within the camera, the lens, or any vintage market treasure find. There will never be a prop, gadget, or a post-production preset that will change your vision or make you more of an impactful artist. These tools are simply enhancements to honing a craft that begins with how you see the world. High-impact images are created through a love of creating, in deep connection and collaboration with your client, and through the mastery of form and light.

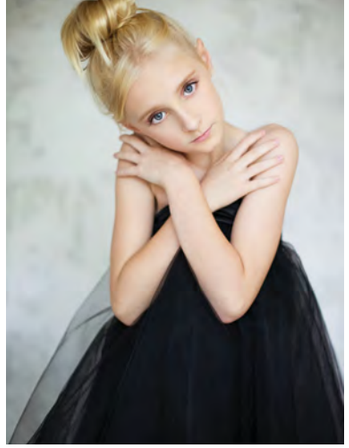
CHANGE YOUR THINKING:

- Play with composition, depth of field, and light.
- Dive deep into building confidence in all technical aspects of your craft.
- Master the equipment and tools you own.

3. YOU BELIEVE YOU NEED TO DUPLICATE ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPHER'S WORK/PROCESS TO ATTRACT YOUR IDEAL CLIENT

I made decisions early in my career based on this false narrative. I spent way too much money purchasing the exact backdrops and props used by very successful photographers to recreate their setup with the assumption that it would make me just like them—successful, profitable, fully booked, and equally admired. I would spend hours researching their sources, camera settings, lighting equipment, looking for behind-the-scenes pull-back shots to better help me nail "their" vision. I thought the secret to success was in duplicating what was bringing others success. At times when I did nail the shot, it still lacked in so many ways because it was never my vision, and in that disconnection came clear inauthenticity.

This narrative was also ingrained in my offerings and services. When I opened my business, I was the "photograph everything but specialize in nothing" type of photographer. I knew I loved taking portraits, but other than that, I had no focus. I started advertising what I saw local photographers doing and took on clients based on those ads. I photographed newborns, outdoor mini-sessions, engagements, and highly themed and bold-colored studio sessions. I started to notice this intense sense of dread and sickness the day before certain sessions. I was uncomfortable and self-conscious and once I became honest with myself and my heart, I knew my work was not serving me, and certainly not properly serving my clients. I had spent so much time focusing on how other photographers were thriving while I was not growing at all. Through providing the services that "everyone else was providing," some as blessings, some as lessons, and through the pain of consistent failure to produce work I was proud of, I became honest and clear about what types of sessions brought me joy and excitement. Today, when I approach a photo shoot, I truly believe that my camera is a tool in creating my life's purpose and I am incredibly intentional about the portraits I create. I have only been able to attract my ideal client through standing boldly behind what is unique to me as an artist. I am not the photographer for every consumer. That is of great significance because I know I am attracting clients who share my core values. My business has allowed me to capture portraits for clients who continuously inspire me with their beauty and forever captivate my soul with their stories. Our clients know when our work is authentic and made with intention and love. Early on I felt that I served my client well by knocking off someone else's vision, providing them a requested service for payment. I believe that through portraiture everyone has a story worth telling, a life worth celebrating, and a legacy worth creating. Today I know that only when I show a mother a portrait of her child that captures the light in their soul, and the love in their life, have I served them well.













Images © Katie Engelhardt Portraits





Images © Katie Engelhardt Portraits

CHANGE YOUR THINKING:

- What about your sessions excites you? What do you dread?
- What specifically do you love about another artist's work (the fashion influences, lighting, their ability to connect with their subjects, posing) and how can you play with that concept?
- The moment you think, "Every other photographer…" STOP.
- Create a vision for your brand. What does your client like, where do they shop, what do they value, etc.
- Be brave enough to pursue a life that is unique to only your soul's calling. ■



Katie Engelhardt is a natural light photographer specializing in female portraiture, based in the Philadelphia area. Katie's success has earned her collaborations with the industry's leading brands and features in international publications. Since graduating from the Savannah College of Art and Design she has been utilizing her camera as a tool in expressing her soul's purpose, crafting beautiful heirloom portraits attracting the modern woman and celebrities alike. She is in constant pursuit of honing her craft, studying posing and form, and exploring the natural light as it dances across the walls of her studio. Katie's goal for every client is to create a portrait that communicates the artful, intimate, and authentic storytelling of a life well lived.
katieengelhardtportraits.com



HOW TO FACE SWAP IN **PHOTOSHOP**

with **Dustin Lucas**

Image © Jessica Lucas

When it comes to portraits of children, we all struggle to balance capturing their energy and personality while getting in-focus images. Not to mention ones with kids with eyes open, looking and smiling at the camera. Of course, the parents are going to love almost every image, and this makes the photographer's job easy, right? Well, you need to get the safe image they expect with their kids somewhat facing the camera, eyes open, and smiling. That moment isn't easy to capture in one shot, so what we are going to create is the perfect portrait by swapping heads in Photoshop. Doing a bit of Photoshop does not mean you aren't a good photographer. We can only control so much and are still required to deliver a somewhat perfect portrait.

It all starts with culling and basic editing in Lightroom for consistency, then we can open the images in Photoshop. Once you find the first face to swap, select with the Lasso tool and copy and paste into the plate or main shot. Adjusting the new layer opacity and using the free transform tool helps align and position your selection in place. Depending on the complexity of the swap, you may need to use the clone stamp tool to fill in the background. Once we have all the swaps in place, we can use adjustment layers to blend the images together. Boom, that's it. And now you have the perfect portrait to deliver to the parents. Let's jump into Lightroom and get started.

SELECT & EDIT RAWS FOR CONSISTENCY

To get started, import your images into Lightroom and adjust the build previews to 1:1. (Fig 1) Once this is completed, Lightroom will run faster while you cull and zoom into your images. The first image I want to choose is the plate shot or main image. This will be the frame I will paste all of the swapped faces into. I recommend the ones with a pleasing composition and where feet aren't cropped out and the background is complete. This image I will 5-star and add a blue label. (Fig 2) Since this portrait has 3 kids in it, I will scan all the images for the best expression of each. Using color labels I can distinguish who I am selected for in each frame. Starting with the child on the left I will red label all images I like. (Fig 3) For the middle child I will be using yellow labels and if any of these overwrite the previous red labels, that will not be an issue. (Fig 4) Green labels can be applied to the child on the right and this will complete selection. (Fig 5)

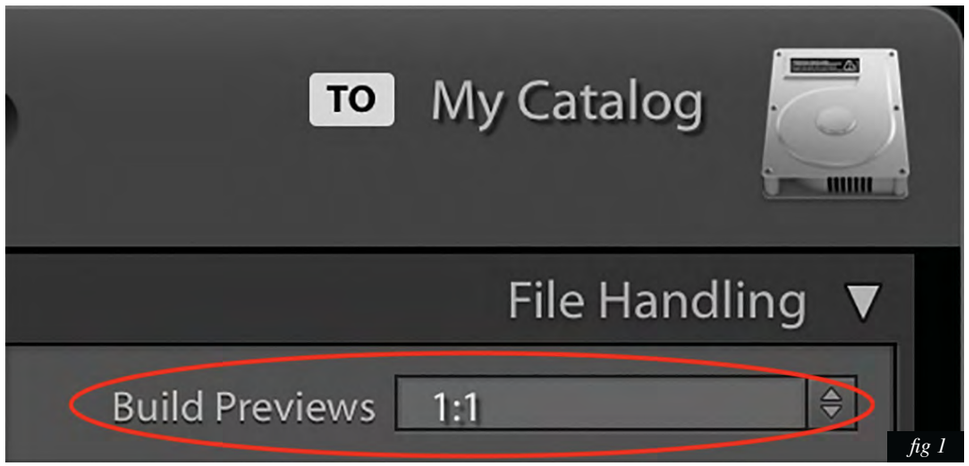


fig 1

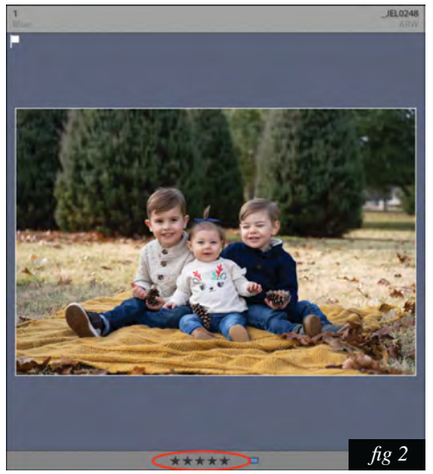

fig 2


fig 3


fig 4


fig 5

Image © Jessica Lucas

Next, we can move on to basic color correction to get our images ready for swapping. I usually choose the main image to edit with. I use a preset to get started and then tweak the colors and brightness to my liking. (Fig 6) Once I am done I can sync these develop settings to all the color labelled images. (Fig 7) Before we open the main image into Photoshop we need to check our preferences for external editing. Open Lightroom preferences and go to the External Editing tab to review these settings. Typically I keep these settings the same as the default, except in this case I want to reduce the bit depth to 8-bit. (Fig 8) To open directly into Photoshop, I can select the image in Develop mode, hold command and strike the E key. Once opened in Photoshop, I can save it by holding command and striking the s key so the new edited .tif file appears in Lightroom. (Fig 9)

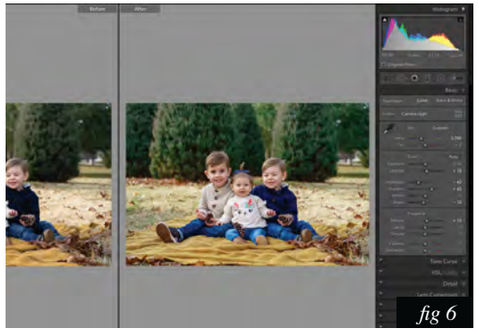

fig 6



fig 7

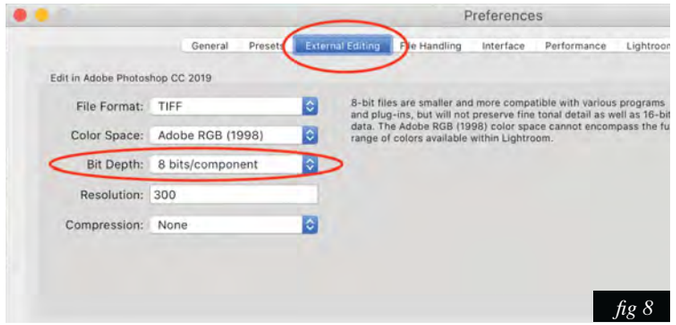


fig 8

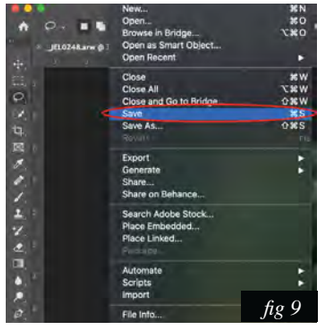


fig 9

Back to refining my selection. Since I have 21 images chosen, I need to narrow down the final ones I'd like to use per color label. For the final selection per child, I will add a flag and then open directly into Photoshop as well. (Fig 10) In order to distinguish between these swap images and the main one, I will not save them in Photoshop. This will keep the file extension as .arw instead of a .tif. This isn't required, but it helps to stay organized while in Photoshop. (Fig 11)


fig 10



fig 11

USE LASSO TOOL FOR SWAPPING FACES

Toggle between images in Photoshop by holding command and striking the ' key. This will be handy as you will want to review each face to swap and compare the results. Once we are ready to use the Lasso tool, strike the L key and draw around the face you'd like to swap. (Fig 12) Be sure to leave a little room around it in case you need to blend with the background as well. (Fig 13) Then you can copy the selection and paste it in the main .tif image. You can use command and the C key to copy and command and the V key to paste. Yes, it's really that simple to bring in a new face. To quickly move the newly pasted face, you can hold command while clicking and dragging. (Fig 14)

From there, you'll need to align, move, and resize the face into position so it's a more realistic composite. This requires a bit more work using layer opacity, the free transform tool, and masking out the unwanted areas.



fig 12


fig 13


fig 14

ADJUSTING OPACITY, TRANSFORMING, AND MASKING

I like to start by zooming in at 100%. To do that, simply hold command and strike the 1 key. Then, by lowering the new layer opacity to around 70%, I can see both faces to start aligning them. (Fig 15a) By holding command and striking the T key, I can use the free transform tool to resize. (Fig 15b) So far things are aligning pretty well, however, if I want to match more closely, I can toggle the warp tool to move the eyes independent of the mouth. (Fig 16 before, 16 after) This becomes more useful on the child to the far right where I need to do a full head swap.

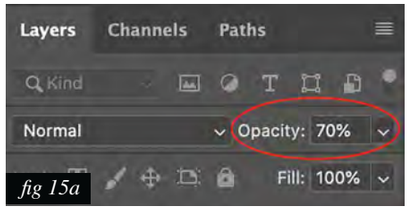


fig 15a


fig 15b


16 before

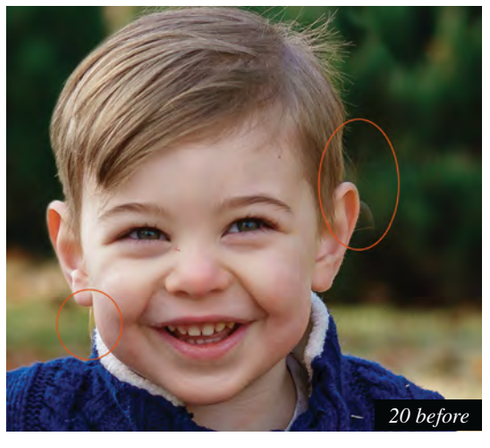

16 after

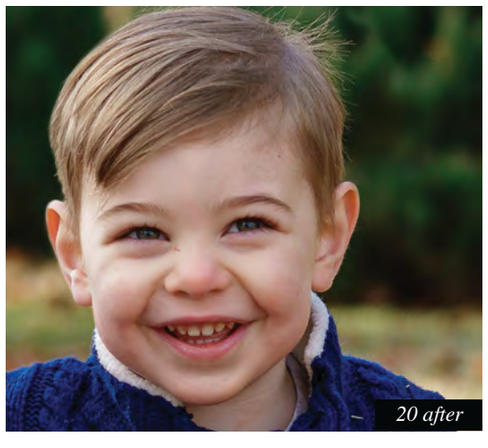

fig 17

Once I copy and paste the preferred selection, I will have a lot of clone stamp work to do. (Fig 17) First, I will need to reduce the opacity to 70%, resize and move the selection with the free transform tool. The best way I align a more difficult image like this is by using the shoulder to start. (Fig 18) Then I will resize the image to scale with the area I am replacing. (Fig 19) This process takes the most time and the closer I align here, the less cloning I will ultimately have to do. Once I am finished, I will need to create a blank layer, grab the clone stamp tool, sample all layers, and start painting in any areas I can't fix with masking. You can also use the healing brush if you need to blend areas, however, stay away from hard edges with this tool. (Fig 20 before, 20 after)


fig 18


fig 19


20 before


20 after

Now we are ready to do some quick adjustment layers to tie everything together.

ADD ADJUSTMENT LAYERS TO BLEND

The first thing I like to do is apply a quick dodge and burn layer to level out the brighter tones and recover shadows on faces. To perform this adjustment, I make a new layer, set the blending to overlay, fill with 50% gray, and use a brush to paint on the layer. (Fig 21) Typically I set the brush opacity to 10% and a very soft edge to paint white for dodge and black for burn. (Fig 22) This is a one-layer technique and it's simple to work from. I also use a highlight recovery curve to tone down brighter spots. Burning those down can make them gray so this helps to not dull the image. (Fig 23 before, 23 after)

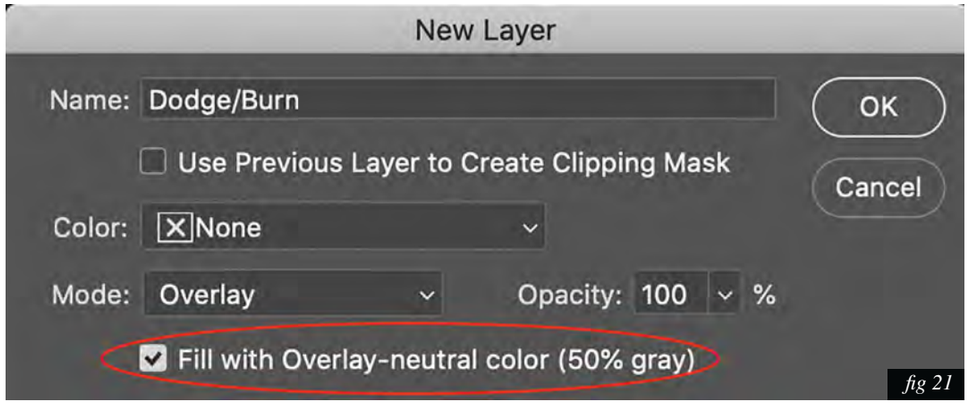


fig 21

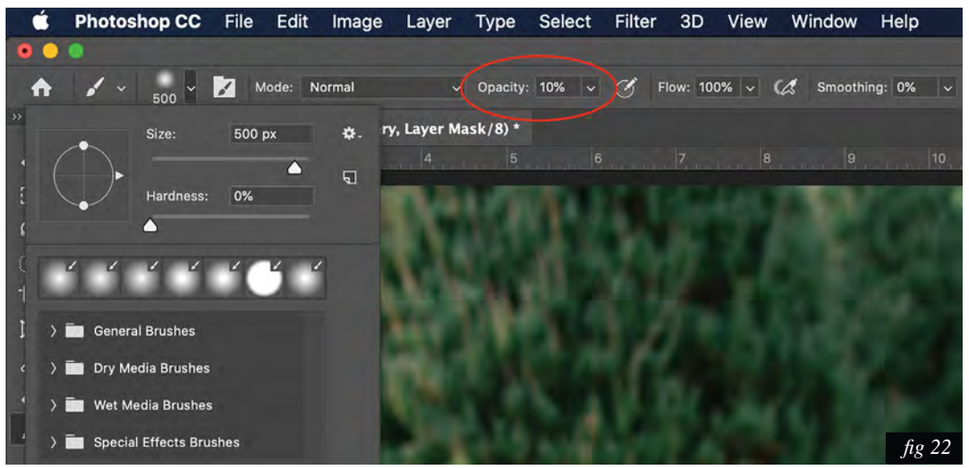


fig 22


23 before


23 after


24 before


24 after


25 before


25 after

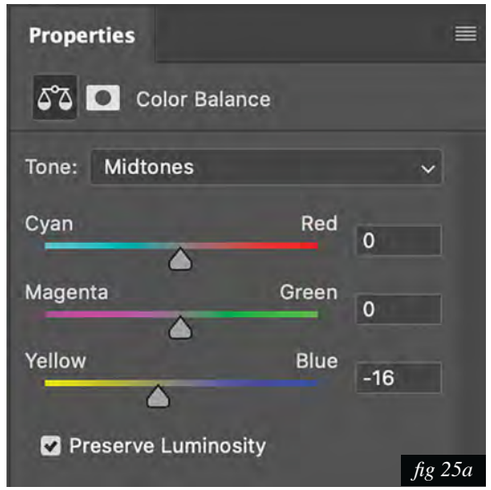


fig 25a

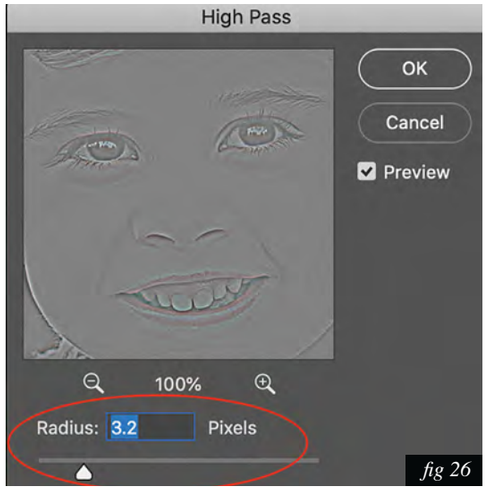


fig 26

The last changes I made were to the saturation of some areas and sharpening. Using the Hue & Saturation tool I can quickly drop the saturation, invert my mask and paint in the areas in the trees that were overly warm. (Fig 24 before, 24 after) This does the trick. Fixing the dead spots in the grass can be done with a Color Balance adjustment layer. (Fig 25a, 25 before, 25 after) I like to sharpen a bit in Lightroom, however I do most of my heavy lifting in Photoshop. Using the High Pass technique, I make a new layer and apply a filter called High Pass. Typically, I set the radius between 3–10 pixels depending on the sharpness already and click ok. (Fig. 26) Then I can double-click the new layer to change the layer style to an opacity of 75% and the blending mode to soft light.

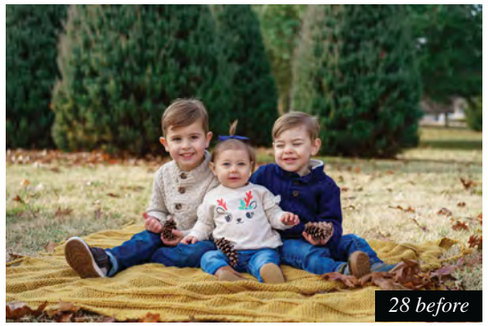
Image © Jessica Lucas

To intensify this effect, I can change the blending mode to overlay or hard light as well as lift the opacity. (Fig 27 before, 27 after) Boom, I am done! (28 before, 28 final)


27 before


27 after

Image © Jessica Lucas


28 before


28 final

Image © Jessica Lucas

THE RESULTS

Getting the perfect portrait of children doesn't always have to be daunting. I hope these steps help you when you need to swap faces. Always start in Lightroom so you can stay organized through the entire process. It also doesn't hurt to quickly select and edit your images. Once you are ready to composite, open each image directly from Lightroom into Photoshop with the Edit In feature. For swapping faces and heads, the Lasso tool really is the best choice to keep things simple. Copy and paste selections directly on your plate or main shot. ■

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Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his Master of Fine Arts degree, a career opportunity opened once he began working with Evolve Edits. Through teaching photography classes and writing about photography, Dustin continues to expand his influence on art and business throughout the industry.

evolveedits.com

THE CHILDREN EDITION

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WHAT I'VE LEARNED IN MY NEARLY **35-YEAR CAREER**

with **Anne Geddes**



Image © Anne Geddes

When I first picked up a camera at the relatively late age of 25, I had no idea what my future held. And that's true, of course, for anybody beginning any career that's inspired by a passion, which is part of the magic. However, I knew I had my own story to tell.

At the start of my journey, I stumbled and made mistakes as we all do… but those mistakes were all part of a steep learning curve. For the first 10 years of my career, I exclusively did private portrait commissions. That experience was invaluable in that it taught me how to deal with children of all ages. It's difficult at the best of times to connect with a child who considers you a stranger, and to draw out the uniqueness in each child within a very limited time puts huge extra pressure on that connection.

Now after many years of experience, I pretty much know that I can achieve results out of any difficult situation. Here's some of what I've learned over my nearly 35-year career.











Image © Anne Geddes

YOU WILL NEVER CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AS AN ARTIST UNLESS YOU HAVE YOUR OWN UNIQUE STORY TO TELL, YOUR OWN VOICE

I say this time and time again when asked for advice from students and photographers who are just starting out. But this also applies to those who've been photographers for many years. My own work since the very beginning has centered on a continued exploration of the mystery and meaning of new life. I consider myself a storyteller and maybe you should too. So, what's your story? Your work should speak for who you are, what you represent.



Image © Anne Geddes



Image © Anne Geddes

THINK OF YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT AS A STORYTELLING TOOL

Yes, get to know it well and then move forward with the story you have to tell. Great images are ones that you can look at for a long, long time. And when you look at a great image, right then I can pretty much guarantee that you're never wondering what camera was used. Great images always come from the heart and make an emotional connection.

Just on equipment though, most of my book, "Pure," was shot on a Sinar 4" x 5" film camera. I've also used Hasselblad and Mamiya cameras for years (both film and digital) and have lately been using both Nikon and Canon SLRs now that their file sizes are large enough and I'm getting beautiful results. I also have a digital Leica that I carry with me all the time.



Image © Anne Geddes

IF YOUR WORK LOOKS THE SAME AS EVERYBODY ELSE'S, YOU'RE NOT PUSHING YOURSELF TO BE BETTER EVERY DAY

Everybody needs to start somewhere, but always keep evolving. Strive to find your own unique style. And it may take time for that style to develop. Here's when it happened for me. In the very early days of my career, I was struggling with developing my own style. I was doing portraiture in people's homes and gardens and it just wasn't working for me.

Then one day, in my local newspaper, I noticed a very simple black and white portrait image of a young girl and I was so drawn to it because of that exact simplicity. I contacted the photographer and asked if she needed an unpaid assistant, which thankfully she did. And the moment I walked into a photographic studio it was like coming home.

I love the control of a studio, creating the setting and developing the lighting… the excitement of creating something that wasn't there before. Like magic. Find your own magic, whatever that may be. I like to completely strike a set after each shoot and begin afresh with the next. For me, it's a way to not fall into the same old lighting habits. I want every shoot to teach me something more about lighting, because that's a process of endless discovery.







Images © Anne Geddes

DON'T FALL INTO THE TRAP OF THINKING EVERYTHING CAN BE FIXED IN POST-PRODUCTION AND RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO MAKE YOUR IMAGES TOTALLY UNREALISTIC

Get it right in camera, because that means you'll be learning new things each time and pushing yourself to be better. And it's not the number of images you're shooting, but the quality of each one.

I've noticed these days that a lot of "newborn" retouching looks totally surreal. As a professional photographer, your challenge is to create unique, yet realistic images for clients that stand the test of time.

Lately I've started using one of my old Softar 1 filters on my lens. I find that this very subtle filter takes the edge off the hardness of ever larger digital files, and it makes for less retouching in post.



Image © Anne Geddes

ONCE A MONTH, SET A DAY TO CREATE AN IMAGE PURELY FOR YOURSELF

This is what I started to do very early on when I was increasingly in demand for portrait commissions. Working constantly with very young children is hard work, and I needed a creative outlet just for myself, which is where I began with a black and white image of baby Joshua suspended in calico (which used to be the traditional way of weighing babies). I remember taking a print home that night, placing it on my dining table and thinking, "I really like that," and my own opinion was the only one that counted. The following month, I shot the twins in the cabbages and so on.

You need to be challenging yourself constantly, and those personal shoots once a month led me on a creative path I never would have gone down had I just kept doing my regular portraiture.

STUDY THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE WORK OF PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE YOU

I guarantee this will make you a better photographer because you'll have a deeper understanding and appreciation of your craft. And great images from the past will always stay with you in one form or another.

Start with the beautiful work of Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879), considered one of the most important portraitists of the 19th century, and go exploring from there.



Image © Anne Geddes



Image © Anne Geddes

WITH EVERY SHOOT, ALWAYS STRIVE TO BE BETTER. TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW AND BEAUTIFUL THAT DIDN'T EXIST BEFORE. BUT TELL YOUR STORY IN YOUR OWN UNIQUE WAY

If you're creating exactly the same work, day after day, year after year, you can't be calling yourself an artist. Challenge yourself every time you pick up your camera.

MOTHER NATURE IS ALWAYS A WONDERFUL REFERENCE POINT

Mother Nature is the greatest artist of all. She never gets her colors wrong and she never ceases to surprise and inspire. And that's our job as artists as well. For instance, nature was my constant guide when I was shooting for my 6th coffee table book, "Beginnings," featuring elements of nature that bring forth new life, alongside beautiful pregnant women and tiny babies. Essentially, I constantly look to nature for inspiration.

Image © Anne Geddes

STUDIO RULES I LIVE BY

I'm often asked about my studio team, which is in fact fairly small. These days, I mainly do commissioned work and for this I have my regular freelance team of Producer, Production Assistant, Stylist, Digital Operator, and one or two Camera Assistants, depending on how big the job is. And I always work with the same studio nurse, who is, by the way, a legal requirement here in New York for all commercial shoots involving children. She is also my trusted person to be on set with the baby when I go back to the camera. Her sole function when she is on set is to never take her eyes off the baby.

Safety is paramount and I can't stress this enough. In the studio, nobody handles the baby apart from myself and the nurse (apart from parents, that is). When there are lots of people in the studio, which is sometimes the case, the temptation for people is to pass the baby around, but this can never happen. You must have eyes in the back of your head and be experienced at reading a room. As the photographer, you are responsible for every aspect of the shoot.

On the subject of safety, it makes me go cold when I see videos online of photographers photographing newborns from above, with no camera strap around their necks. If you're ever photographing from above, triple check your camera and always wear the safety strap.

If you have multiple babies in the studio at the same time, each baby should have their own clean and appropriate change space. Always wash your hands before touching another baby and use hand sanitizer. These days, of course we're all more hyper aware of the need for hand washing, but it's been my rule since day one. And absolutely no hot drinks.

I safety chain all lights, sandbag all stands, and I always double check this myself. Siblings of the baby models are never allowed to come to a commercial shoot. Busy and energetic small children running around in the studio is a recipe for disaster. You must always be in control and super safety-conscious. And you must completely trust the team you are working with. Brief them before every shoot.



Image © Anne Geddes

I'm asked a lot about how my props and sets are made. I've been fortunate to have worked with the same props/styling person (Dawn McGowan) since my very first coffee table book, *Down in the Garden* (1996). Today, I live in New York and Dawn still lives in New Zealand (where I had my studio for 18 years). The wonders of the internet make continuing to work together possible.



Image © Anne Geddes

LASTLY, BUT MOST IMPORTANT

We as photographers face a challenging future, with the domination of smartphones opening the door to the ubiquitous advance of millions of images daily. The word "photographer" has lost some of its magic, which is why it's more important than ever to define yourself by your point of difference. Reach inside yourself, for your uniqueness, your story, your expression, your talent. You owe it to yourself, and you owe it to your profession. ■



Like no photographer before her, Anne's imagery singularly captures the beauty, purity and vulnerability of children, embodying her deeply held belief that each and every child must be "protected, nurtured and loved." A multiple New York Times bestselling author, accompanied by an array of global awards, Anne's photography has been treasured and enjoyed by many generations. Anne is an inductee in the International Photography Hall of Fame, joining a very select group of photographic luminaries.

Anne is recognized as a Global Advocate for children.

annegeddes.com



Image © Nikki Harrison Photography

8 TIPS TO CREATE *Fairytale Styled*

CHILD PORTRAITS THAT SELL

with **Nikki Harrison**

If you're anything like me, you don't want to just take a picture. You want to create an art piece that not only causes a sense of wonder and magic, but will SELL.

A long time ago, in a far-off land and in another life, I was a successful business person running a financial business. During that time, I learned something very important. I learned that when you are in a business that is flooded with others just like you, you need to find a way to separate yourself from the pack. The bottom line was I learned I had to become highly specialized in one niche, as opposed to being mediocre in many. What makes you different? What makes you better?



Image © Nikki Harrison Photography

After the financial crash of 2008, I had plenty of time on my hands and like so many others before me, I fell madly in love with photography. As a matter of fact, I tried my hand at almost every single type of photography and realized quickly that if I wanted to make this a career, I needed to go back to the basics.

So, taking a step back from the passion, I had to think with my business head and not my art heart. Make sense?

Once again, I needed to find a niche that I could excel at, become the "expert" at, and focus on that over everything else.

Because I loved the magic and storytelling of child portraits, I decided to focus on that genre as a specialty. I began to focus on creating a story within my images, and I quickly realized that the more I focused on building that story by supplying the wardrobe, building a set, and focusing on a theme, the more interest I received for my sessions. This was a win-win for me! I was able to create what I wanted to for my creative soul, all the while having parents pay top dollar for it.



Image © Nikki Harrison Photography



Image © Nikki Harrison Photography

4 TIPS FOR PREPARING TO SPECIALIZE IN FAIRYTALE STYLED ART

1. Consistency: Before you can charge top dollar for incredible child art, make sure your skillset is easily replicated consistently. This might mean doing personal work and experimenting with props and wardrobe to assist in the story you want to tell. Make sure you have a clear vision of the story prior to bringing in a child to test with. Children do not have a long attention span for test shoots, so all of your prep work should be done prior to bringing a child into a test. I can photograph a complete child session in 20 minutes. I know that I have a very slim timeline whereby the child will be happy to listen to anything I say. You will need to have your poses prepared, either on a storyboard via a sheet, or on your phone. You need to always prepare everything to the smallest detail before the child(ren) arrive so that all you need to do is go through your poses. I have 10 go-to poses that I usually do for every type of genre that I create. Once you do it consistently enough, you will easily move through them without reference. Please, please make sure you have a website with a consistent body of work that clearly demonstrates your ability to replicate your style over and over again.

2. Lighting: Besides your wardrobe, props, and creativity, you need to nail your lighting. I use both strobes as well as continuous lighting for my child work. If I'm working with two or more children, I will use strobes. I don't want to risk having one child in focus and one out, especially because children move a lot, and when there is more than one, it is much safer to use strobes and a more stopped down F stop to prevent motion blur. Normally, if I'm working with one child, I'll use my continuous lighting in order to get a shallow depth of field, which lends itself to a more Fairytale look. Although there are a million online schools and in-person workshops to learn lighting, if you are on a budget, YouTube has a ton of free ones.





Image © Nikki Harrison Photography

3. Post work: It has become my experience that with the proper lighting, especially with continuous lighting, you can create an ambiance and mood that will require very little retouching. You can use 1–4 lights as well as tiny add-on lighting that will assist you so much in the story telling that the post work, although it may look like a lot of post was done, is not required. I have developed a very artistic approach to some of my themed work, taking advantage of compositing and really focusing on the post side of photography. This, however, is not necessary. The possibilities in Photoshop is what made me fall in love with the possibility of photography. My Photoshop skills were good long before my technical skills, but that's because I've been an artist my whole life. You can achieve Photoshop skills via a multitude of online sources, and again, YouTube has some incredible free tutorials nowadays, unlike when I started out.

4. Sales: these are always emotional purchases. I do all my sales immediately following the session, while parents and kids are still excited and happy. I do not sell my files; my prints and products are my sole income and I will not give that away. As a studio, I can print up to a 16x20 wall portrait and for everything else I use a professional lab. My clients purchase the images while surrounded by large, beautifully framed prints of art I have made. As lovely as a computer screen is for showing off professional photography, my artwork is a million times nicer printed on Fine Art paper and framed in all its glory. This is hugely important to show your clients. They will see it and want it. This is the best way to sell and I highly encourage you to find a way to make this presentation possible. This is what will separate you from the shoot and burners or USB providers! *Tip: Always over-deliver.* If I have a good sale, I will always surprise my clients with an additional gift, whether that is a necklace with a portrait in it or a set of gift cards featuring their child—it doesn't matter how small. People will always rave about you if they feel you over-delivered.





Images © Nikki Harrison Photography

4 TIPS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

1. Parents: Regardless of the genre you decide to offer, children are all different. But there is one commonality that you should always be aware of: parents will try to direct their child. The best way to prepare parents for the session is: while the child is getting dressed into the provided wardrobe, you just share a few rules of the studio. I always do this after the formality of introductions and chatting with the child(ren) and getting them calmed down. I like to tell my parents, "So, it has been my experience with kids that they will be unsure of me because I'm a stranger, and therefore they will probably listen to me better than you during the session. For this reason, I just want you to sit back and put your phone away. I'll direct your kids. I'll pose them easily and I'll take the pictures. You just sit back and marvel at how well behaved they are, deal?" This works every time! It sets a clear boundary for not allowing cell phone pictures, as well as demonstrating that for the time they are in my studio, I am the boss. Parents always leave shocked at how well their child followed direction and how well they behaved. I normally have little treat bags prepared for both boys and girls, and have them in a drawer in my viewing room, so that I can have something to bribe them with during the session as well as something to keep them busy while mom and dad view the images and make their purchase.

2. Wardrobe: I supply the wardrobe for all girls that come to my studio from age 3+. This is an investment, and it's one that is necessary in order for you to control the look of the portraits. If you can't supply wardrobe, then your portraits may suffer from bad clothing choices they may bring in. I always tell them that they are welcome to bring along anything they think is nice, and we can determine what is best once they arrive. Boys are easy; I simply tell parents to bring dark trousers and socks and I have several dress shirts I can provide along with suspenders.

3. Patience: Not all kids are easy. I'm not going to lie and pretend they are. You must have patience and figure out ways to make kids shine. The more you work with kids, the more intuitive you will get. I can now read a child in the first 5 minutes, whether she'll be a star or someone I need to work with. You might have to take a portrait of the child on mom's lap in order to succeed with the image you want to create. I've done it so many times if the child refused to be away from mom. You can have mom sit on the studio floor, have the child sit on mom's lap, and just direct mom's arms away from the child so that you can at least composite the mom out. Where there's a will, there's a way, and when you work with kids and animals, half your job is problem solving!

4. Have fun! If you are having fun, being silly, and photographing the child down at their level, you will get gold! Don't forget to have a few child jokes that guarantee laughs every time! Even if your portfolio doesn't have one child with a smile, make sure you get several smiles anyway. They will SELL every time!





Images © Nikki Harrison Photography





Images © Nikki Harrison Photography

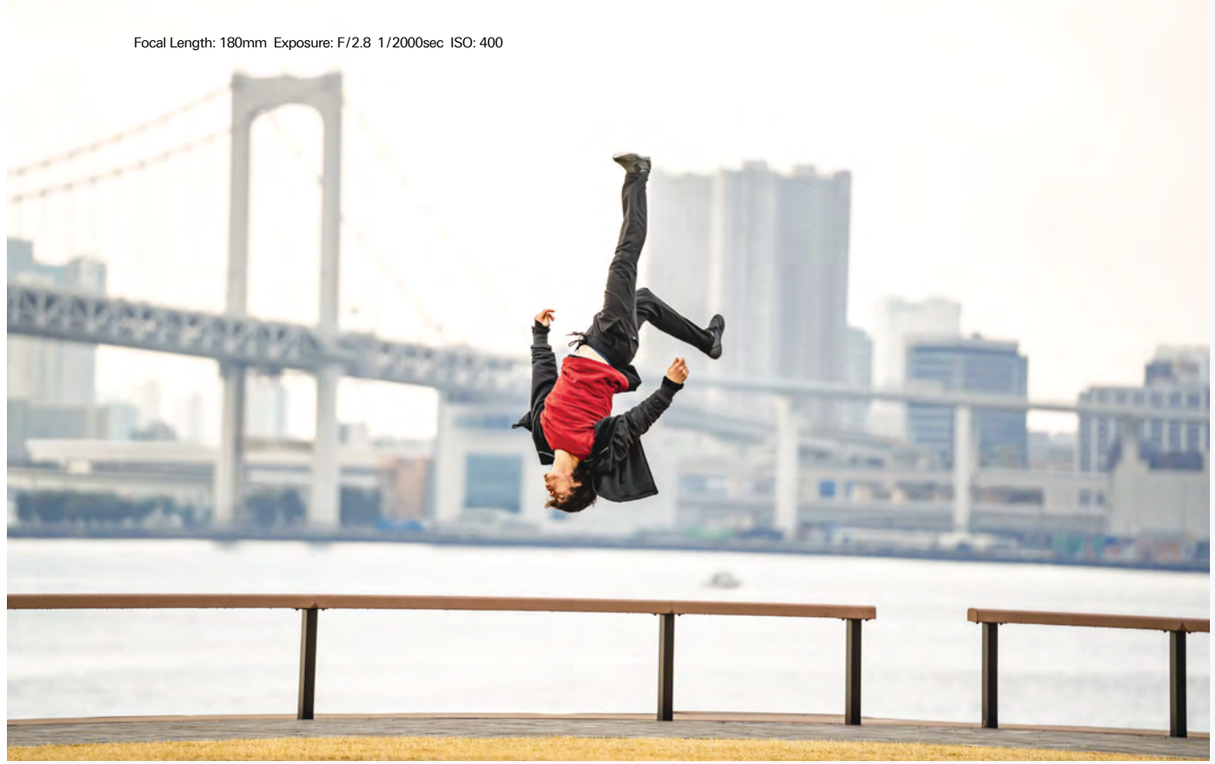
As with all photography genres, there is work, there is required effort, and a learning curve. Just remember that you are doing this first because it's your passion. Don't get sucked into the starving artist chapter. You don't have to be broke to be creatively happy. Work hard on your goals, dedicate yourself to both the creative and the business side. You can do what you want with as much zest and passion as any other career, and still earn a good living. ■



Nikki is a full-time portrait photographer based out of beautiful Kelowna in British Columbia, Canada. Nikki won the bronze medal in the World Photographic Cup in 2017 and focuses her business on Children and Women.

nikkiharrisonphotography.com

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3 TIPS THAT WILL TAKE YOU FROM A BEGINNER TO A MATERNITY MASTER

with Casey Dittmer



Image © Casey Dittmer

Maternity portraits. What once was taboo and frivolous is now becoming more and more mainstream. Growing in popularity and trendiness, maternity has come a long way since I began shooting. It continues to evolve in styles and approaches and is given more recognition as a powerhouse in artistry as well as a stable and sustainable income stream.

Maternity photography intimidates many. Feeling foreign in the approach, whether it is in the posing, sales structure, or client interactions, is enough to prevent people from taking hold of the huge advantages that offering maternity services could provide. And really, for most wedding shooters, family photographers, or even seasoned high school senior photographers, maternity is not that far of a leap. And even if you are just starting out brand new as a portrait photographer, there is no need to be overwhelmed or scared to shoot maternity. I am going to lay out 3 key elements for you to follow that will take you from a beginner maternity photographer to a master in no time.

1. CHANGE HOW YOU THINK ABOUT THE BELLY

The first thing to do on your journey to becoming a maternity master is to change how you think about the belly. During other sessions, we would more than likely *never* feature someone's belly. That would just be weird in a family session… But here, you are literally saying, "Hi, I know we just met, but I'm going to focus on taking pictures of your belly. I will have your face in many of them, but for much of the session, I'm just gonna focus on your gut." (OK, so don't actually say that, but you know what I mean…) Since we are going to be focused on that, we need to make sure we are thinking about it in the right way. During maternity sessions, it is not just a body part, an appendage. It is a *person*. Treat it like a face. (Yep, I keep making it weird.) But this is really important. You have to think of it as a face. Otherwise, you will light it poorly, pose it poorly, and just plain miss the mark on showcasing why we're even doing this session. Make sure while lighting faces that you are paying attention to what is happening to the body and belly. I see maternity portraits all the time where the momma's face is gorgeously lit and then the belly is hit broadside with light, spreading it and making it unflattering. Would you do that to a face? *Nope*. Would mom want to order a picture of her face all wide and unflattering? *Nope*. And she definitely won't want one of her body that way.

Use lighting techniques that provide flattering shape and yet minimize overall size. Short lighting is going to be your best friend for making the belly look amazing. Remember to use light to cut shapes and flatter the body. Don't make it look even larger than it is. Thinking of the belly as a face helps you with posing as well. You want to feature the belly as if it were a person. So, when you are posing mom and dad together, you don't want it squished in between like a forgotten blob. You want it positioned as if you were shooting a family of 3, well, cause you are! Same thing with your body angles. You don't want to turn mom away from you so far that you start featuring her love handles and back more than the belly. First off... that shit is a great way to make your clients cry. Second of all... in terms of thinking like it's a face, it's like shooting the back of your client's head. *You wouldn't do that*. There is no need to see her back unless it is a profile. Keep the belly forward and it will help slim her shape and hide those trouble spots that she might be less than enthused about. Angles matter too! Would you shoot *up* your client's nose? *No*. So why are you shooting *up* into your client's belly? This spreads her body out, makes the belly look disproportionate to the rest of her, and overall is not her best angle. Treat that "belly face" to the same slimming and contouring angles you normally give faces. Your focus is the belly. Make sure it is always featured in flattering light and angles.



Image © Casey Dittmer



Image © Casey Dittmer

2.CONNECTION

So now that you will forever see a face when you look at someone's belly, let's move on to the next key to dominating maternity portraits. Connection. I'm going to talk about connection in a couple different ways. First, connection with your clients. Maternity portraits—well, pregnancy really—is a funny thing. It's temporary. Women either love it or they hate it. So, your job is not only to be a photographer, but a lot of times you are a cheerleader and therapist. Many women are uncomfortable with their bodies. It's foreign and they need someone to give them the confidence to not only go through with booking a maternity session, but the confidence to rock the shoot. That all comes from you. Your biggest tool in accomplishing this transfer of power is to listen. Listen to what clients are saying and what they are not saying. Acknowledge their fears and insecurities, don't try to belittle or sweep them aside. I find that by hitting it head-on, they feel more confident in my ability to make them look great because I will be aware of those things while posing, lighting, and shooting. It's always great if you can relate to them in some way or hey, if you can't, tell them that! Honesty and just being approachable will go a long way. It will help them feel at ease and build trust between you both. Listening will help you know what approach to take and to learn their "why" for this session. Knowing that can be powerful.

Equally as important as building a connection with your client is creating connections while you are shooting. This could be a connection between mom and soon-to-be baby, dad and mom, siblings and baby, children and mom, and even connecting with your viewer. This is all achieved by hand placement, body position, and expression. Without building and creating connection, it's just someone showing off that their belly is large and in charge. Pretty sure no one does maternity portraits just to show that. What are you trying to show? Say? Slight changes can completely alter the tone and message of the image. My style of maternity portraits really focuses on connecting mom to her inner strength. It celebrates the amazing woman who is creating a human being! It doesn't shy away from the fact that it's hard and uncomfortable and that we are fucking rockstars just for making it through it. It allows her to be confident and bold and to see herself as the beautiful being that everyone else sees. It's a lifechanging experience for most to feel that way. I use strong body lines and dramatic poses to do this. I want my viewers to feel empowered just by looking at these images. Most women have no idea how to display this type of body language, so you must guide them. Don't be afraid to be assertive and take charge. When I have maternity couples, I want to showcase not only that the family is growing in numbers, but the connections between each family member. Dad focusing on mom and vice versa. Hands on the belly but also embracing each other, caressing each other. It's like an engagement session, just don't forget there is a belly down there when posing. You want to showcase their love to each other as well as the excitement for this new little one. Change where they look, eyes open, eyes closed. Kissing. Give them lots of variety, make them laugh… build the energy. These connections, in any form, will make for stronger images, and ultimately higher sales.

3. HAVE A PLAN

The final piece to your mastery of maternity is having a plan. For some reason we all try to reinvent the wheel when we shoot a session. Especially when you are starting out with maternity, this will cause you to become overwhelmed with what to shoot, how to shoot, or even worse, freezing up and not being able to shoot at all! This is silly. You should have a method to your madness. A game plan. This allows you to create a consistent client experience as well as shooting sessions that are efficient and maximize variety… (read as higher sales potential.) You might think that this is cheating. And it won't allow for maximum creativity. I strongly disagree. If you aren't using all your brainpower to think about the basics, you can use it to add extra special elements, whooshes, and see organic shooting opportunities as they come up. Think of each session like a recipe. You should have all your ingredients in your bag and then the way you decide to mix them together will create the outcome. During your session, your ingredients come in two main categories: poses and location.

Poses: Create a library of go-to poses. This isn't complicated. Profile shot, full body, mid length, close up. Have her look up, down, and at belly. Next, stand straight to the camera legs crossed, looking at camera, looking down at shoulder, looking away… These poses should be consistent shots that you get for every client. Think standing, sitting, on the ground, leaning, couple's poses, family poses… all different categories for this ingredient. Don't get overwhelmed. As you shoot more sessions you will continue to add to these. You will get more confident and it will become second nature.

Location: I'm not talking about the actual park or venue where you are shooting, I'm talking about the different posing areas that you will be shooting during that session. Break it down as follows: tree, river, tall grass, broken fence, dirt road, vineyards… and so on. Also consider if certain spots will be deemed the epic shot, or if it's a great spot for tighter closeups. How can you maximize each area where you will be? Especially during the hotter months, the more walking you make momma do, the faster she will tire. You don't want that.

Now that you have your two main ingredients, you just pull from each one to create your session. It looks like this:

Broken fence- Laying on fence, eyes closed, eyes open, face to sky, full body shot, close shot, belly shot.
Trees- Walking through trees looking forward, looking back/dress whooshed, tight shot just belly through trees, facing forward dramatic symmetrical shot.
Rocks- Dad sitting with mom standing, facing each other, facing me, dad looking at mom/mom looking at belly. (These are very basic examples, but I try to do at least 2 completely different poses, with expression variances at each spot.)

To create your plan, you are just mixing and matching to build combos that fit that session. It's all poses and body positions you are familiar with, so it makes sessions smoother and efficient. See how without even moving momma I am getting 5–6 different shots at each spot? This saves on wear and tear on momma while maximizing the opportunity to sell. You don't need to worry about sessions looking exactly the same. They won't! Just to be safe and to give them their own unique experience, make sure that with each session you create a few "signature" shots. Still use your mixing and matching, but that particular combination of pose, location, and details are all their own.

It's that easy. Like making cookies.









Images © Casey Dittmer



Image © Casey Dittmer

Mastering maternity isn't something that happens quickly. In fact, it's a lifelong journey. You will continue to find new ways to push yourself while treating the belly right and creating connections. You will discover new locations, new poses, and ways to exploit both. The process is simple. So fight the urge to over complicate it. Have fun and push yourself outside of your box. Study others' work while finding your own creative voice. The best way to grow is to shoot. You will try some things that fall short, but most of the time you will find success. Both will grow you as an artist and Maternity Master. So no more excuses or hesitation. Go get shooting and master that bump. ■



Casey Dittmer is an award-winning published photographer from western Colorado. As a 17-year veteran of the photographic industry, Casey has seen trends, economies and businesses come and go. She loves traveling and sharing her knowledge in the hope that it will help other photographers build a strong base for their business and avoid some of the roadblocks she has encountered.

cdittmer.com



ONE WINDOW MULTIPLE SHOTS

with **Meg Loeks**



Image © Meg Loeks Photography



Image © Meg Loeks Photography

The versatility you can achieve with just one window is amazing. I've often heard the excuse, "I don't have a beautiful space or home to shoot in." At one point in my life, while my family was in the middle of building a home, we lived in a tiny, old, drafty apartment. It was far from picture perfect, but in the right light none of that mattered.



Image © Meg Loeks Photography



Image © Meg Loeks Photography

So what's the secret? How can you mask a less than pleasing decor/home, while also capturing versatility in a single space? The answer is two-fold and it's a simple concept, but something I often need to remind myself of. It's just a matter of moving your subject and yourself, and it can be just the slightest adjustment that makes all the difference.

I love working with just one light source. The reason why is because I love the dramatic, directional light I can get from just a single window. The smaller the window, the more dramatic the light tends to be, too. Despite what some people may say, bigger windows aren't always beneficial… especially if you are drawn to moody light. Larger windows means there will be a lot of light flooding in, which also creates shadows that are less dramatic, unless of course you are able to manipulate that light with curtains. It's truly amazing the amount of light you can still get from a small window!



Image © Meg Loeks Photography

Whether you are working with a large or small window, how do you go about masking a less than ideal space while photographing your subject? One solution is to consider placing your subject close to the light source. The closer you place your subject to the light, the more dramatic the light falloff. That means your background is going to be nice and dark, which drastically hides any distractions you may have. This type of strong tonal contrast between light and dark is called chiaroscuro. With your subject close to the window, your background will not only be dark but you will have strong shadows and high contrast as well. The further you pull your subject away from the light, the softer the shadows and lighter your environment and background will be.



Image © Meg Loeks Photography



Image © Meg Loeks Photography

Now, how do you go about obtaining versatility in a single space? As I mentioned earlier, an easy solution is to unglue your feet. I always encourage photographers to get their safe shot first. Maybe that's a simple portrait next to the window. Then move your feet. It can be the slightest adjustment that makes all the difference in both light and composition.

One shot I always love to get is a shot from above. Wide angle lenses work great for above perspectives because it allows you to easily capture more of your subject and the environment while working in a tight space. I prefer to use my Sigma Art 24mm, the widest prime lens I own. Again, I like to place my subject close to the window for a dramatic light falloff. This is also another way to eliminate distractions and an unpleasing environment.



Image © Meg Loeks Photography

Versatility in the use of light while working with just one window can be a simple matter of just changing your perspective. Instead of placing yourself parallel with the window, consider moving perpendicular to the window for backlight. Making slight shifts with your position can have dramatic results.



Image © Meg Loeks Photography

So you captured your safe shot first. Maybe it was a classic portrait by the window, or a detailed shot from above of your child working on a craft. Now it's time to get creative. Challenge yourself to pause, slow down and think of a new way to capture your subject that you haven't done before. One perspective I love to do that's unique and unexpected is to shoot from the outside in. Place your subject right in front of the window, get outside and photograph them through the window pane.

Pro Tip: *Having a dark background like a treeline behind you is going to make your subject more visible through the window. If you don't have trees near any of your windows, consider strategically placing your body in front of your subject. Your dark reflection will make your subject pop.*



Image © Meg Loeks Photography

Think of ways to creatively frame your subject by utilizing the environment around you. I love to frame my daughter with the curtains in her room. Children are naturally curious and playful and she loves to play with the curtains. This gives her something to do and more time for me to compose my frame the way I want to.



Image © Meg Loeks Photography

While I'm primarily a natural light photographer, I do rely on created light from time to time. If I have good natural light, I'm definitely going to use it. However, we know that natural light isn't consistent and I do often find myself in situations where I need to create my own light. While I don't consider myself an expert by any means with studio lighting, I do find that working with created light that mimics the natural light I'm drawn to is best. This often means one single light source and then using modifiers to soften the light if I need to.

In this example, I have a small window by my kitchen sink. Outside the window is a covered porch, so the light isn't very strong in this location. Not only that, my sink is very deep and while I love it, it's not great for photographing my daughter laying down in it for her bath. The solution was to place a Profoto A1x outside my window. I placed the A1x on a light stand with a large deep white umbrella. You can see in this pullback the light has been placed high to allow for more light to fall down into the sink. Since I couldn't leave my daughter alone to adjust settings on the A1x, I was able to change the strength of the light by using the Profoto Connect app on my phone. Having the A1x bounce off the umbrella helped soften the light, and then again through the lace curtains as well, making the lighting look natural on my daughter.



Image © Meg Loeks Photography



I would have never been able to get this shot in beautiful light if it wasn't for using my A1x. This is a great way to make created light look natural by using it in, through or around a window with modifiers. I absolutely love when I share an image and receive questions asking whether the light is natural or created. That's the whole idea, right? I want my work to be cohesive and I want the created light I use to look natural!



Image © Meg Loeks Photography







Images © Meg Loeks Photography

There's a lot you can do with a single window and space. Simply by making slight adjustments to your subjects position or your perspective, you can eliminate distractions and add versatility to your session. I've found that often my second or third shot from a different angle or perspective ends up being my favorite, even more than the image I had first intended to capture. Never underestimate the power of slowing down and moving your feet. ■



Meg lives remotely in Michigan's Upper Peninsula with her husband and four young children. Drawn to low light and color, she is a portrait and lifestyle photographer. Meg is also a mentor and instructor at Clickin Moms, a Sigma Pro and Profoto Legend of Light. She is also a volunteer photographer for The Gold Hope Project, a nonprofit organization which gifts families battling pediatric cancer a free photo session.

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MOTHERHOOD PORTRAITS:
THINKING BEYOND NEWBORN

with **Karen Bagley**

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Newborn portraits just go hand in hand with maternity portraiture. However, if you are like me you probably *love* photographing maternity portraits… but when it comes to newborn, eh, not so much. Now don't get me wrong, I love newborns. They are absolutely precious and it is one of the most significant times in a family's life. When it comes to the photography and business side though, I have always struggled. I am by no means a baby whisperer and I have never been very into the props. I mean, there are so many newborn photographers who have the newborn portraits *in the bag*. I am not one of them. I was in a constant battle with myself trying so hard to force myself into liking newborn portraits. I was shooting myself in the foot from the amount of money I would lose from not marketing and photographing newborn sessions. *So,* I spent almost all of last year really paying attention to what it was that had me so uninspired and not wanting to photograph newborn portraits. What I discovered may help you if you are in the same boat I was in!



In my self-discovery with newborn portraits, if you will, I realized I was photographing newborns how I had seen everyone else photograph them. Mistake #1. The one thing I am always encouraging other photographers to do is to find your groove, find your style. I was guilty of *not* doing this myself. I know... me! Can you believe it?! I mean, my rule of thumb is to create what you want, how you envision it, and then you market so the right people can find you for exactly what you do. We don't shoot like others because we think that's what our clients want. Because we *all* already know most of the time clients have no idea what they want. We educate them because we are the professional and we have a style.

I realized I was *never* excited about the props or wraps I purchased (no matter how cute they were) because deep down I didn't really even want to use them. In my own eyes, my *own* work was becoming something I didn't even want to create. I had to nip that in the bud *immediately*! In a sense I started from scratch in this area. I got some models and kicked everything I knew about newborn portraits out of my head and started creating. I was going to flip typical newborn portraits on their head and turn them into something I wanted to create. Instead of following what's expected, I was going to shoot what I love, and how it was in my head, how I envisioned it could be done. I fell in love! It was suddenly like someone lit a fire beneath my butt and I was rejuvenated.



Images © Significant Moments Photography

I didn't stop there… I dug even deeper. What is it exactly about what I photograph mainly (maternity portraits) that I love so dearly? Well it's personal for me. I got pregnant very young and becoming a mother at that age made a profound impact on me. I love being a mother and then it hit me like a ton of bricks. I love motherhood! I love every moment from pregnancy, to newborn, to the toddler stage, to pre-teen and teen years. I started thinking, why is it just maternity and newborn? Or newborn through the first year? I want to document it all!!! I want to document the beauty and fierceness, the amazing journey motherhood truly is, and in a way that fits me and my style. *Boom*, there it was. I needed to think *bigger*! This whole time I have been losing money not photographing something that goes hand in hand with what I already shoot. So many times—no, *most* of the time—we lose money because of ourselves. We can't get out of our own way. We can't look at ourselves and say, "This is stupid. I need to figure out why such and such is the way it is." We need to think past what is right in front of us, the bare minimum if you will.





Images © Significant Moments Photography

This led me to think back on all of the people who reached out to me for newborn portraits but I turned them away because they didn't book their maternity session with me. You see, I used to only take on newborn clients *if* they were already a client of mine in the maternity field. I know, I know, that is absolutely crazy—but it is 100% true. I just dreaded doing newborn photos that bad.

So, as I am thinking back on all of the money lost because I just didn't want to do those newborn sessions, I am now reaching back out to them all. It doesn't matter that they no longer have a newborn because every age of our littles should be documented. I no longer have put a cap on myself or my business as to the clients I bring in. I feel free. I also feel like I have something to offer. You see, before, I was not in love with what I was doing and I have no one to blame but myself. It wasn't my gear's fault, or my light's fault. It was mine. It was how I was photographing. I was being unoriginal and just photographing things because they asked, not because I truly wanted to. I went into every preview session knowing I wouldn't sell as much as my maternity portraits, and what's worse is, I didn't blame them! Clients can tell when your passion is not there. The truth is, we will not have blinding passion for every session we do but if we do not really love what we do you will absolutely get burned out. I was burned out and I didn't even photograph that many newborns. I had to face facts and fix the problem. To do that I had to be honest with myself and change what I needed to.

If you are or ever have been in a similar boat, now is the time to examine yourself and your business and find the weak links. While of course we do what we love because we love it; We also want to make money. If you are missing out on huge money opportunities, you need to ask yourself why. This can also go in the other direction. If you are a newborn photographer but do not photograph maternity, why? Are you thinking only about the obvious opportunities right in front of you or are you going to create a whole new opportunity?

I am a creator. I will always be on the lookout for creating opportunities that will better my business and quite honestly my life.



As a result of me thinking bigger, thinking beyond newborn portraits… I have had the best first quarter I have ever had in my business. I am booking motherhood sessions months out, filling my schedule. Even with the horrible pandemic plaguing the entire planet, I have a whole new audience to reach and I am so excited! I am just scratching the surface with what I want to create. It is only just the beginning! Remember, while this article is sharing my personal business growth and story in regards to maternity and newborn portraits, it applies to every business regardless of what you shoot.

So, I ask: are you thinking beyond newborn portraits? ■



Karen Bagley is an award-winning photographer and the owner of Significant Moments Photography who specializes in maternity and underwater portraiture. She is a wife and a mother to two girls, and enjoys sharing her knowledge with other photo professionals. Karen's a high-energy artist who constantly creates new ways to make everything she does fun.

significantmomentsphotography.com

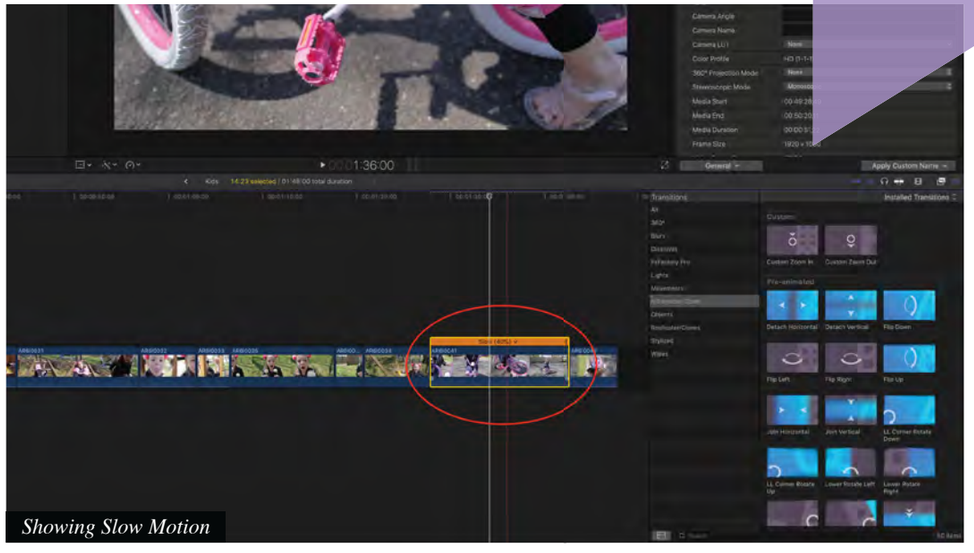
FILMING YOUR KIDS

with **Rob Adams**

In this day and age of iPhones and uber-camera-equipped Android devices, do we really need to consider anything else to film our children? It's a valid question. Phone cameras are getting better with every iteration. Some can even rival DSLR and mirrorless image quality in outdoor, daylight conditions. I would say, however, that if filming your kids is a project that you really want to inject with your full arsenal of photography and videography skills, a phone will be limiting.

Here are some ways to use that high quality, expensive DSLR or mirrorless to get the best results when filming kids and all of their crazy, sugar-fueled antics without causing yourself too much grief when checking focus or editing the video. The first question I get asked when people approach me for camera advice is, "Should I use a DSLR or a mirrorless?" Again, it's another valid question because not many DSLRs I know of have both in-body (or on-board) image stabilization. You can certainly use a lens that has IS, but a mirrorless (depending upon your choice) will likely offer you both. So the first step to chase those little "tricycle motors" around is choosing a camera that offers both 5-axis O.I.S (Optical Image Stabilization) and a lens that allows for dual IS. There are plenty of camera/lens combos on the market that will do this. My choice at the moment is the Canon EOS-R with the 24-70mm f/2.8 IS.

Now, aside from image stabilization (we will get into the reasons why) you will also want to try and use a camera that excels in the area of video autofocus. Filming kids is always going to be easier when you're not chasing them at f/2.0 trying to manually rack focus. There are times that shooting them shallow in manual mode can yield a beautiful result, but it's not the optimal setting for the run-and-gun filming of rug rats. Canon cameras, by far and in my opinion, have the best autofocus technology. Their dual-pixel AF is snappy and accurate. Combined with newer auto-focus features in their latest models like face and head detection and eye-tracking, Canon reigns supreme in this autofocus realm. Next in line would be Sony. Don't trust Panasonic Lumix autofocus. It just doesn't get the job done even in the newer full-frame systems. Not saying you can't film kids with anything other than Canon, but the dual-pixel auto-focus and tracking will make life much easier, plus you'll have more in-focus shots.



Showing Slow Motion

So let's talk about the methods of shooting children and how to capture the action and fun easily. You'll want to work in good lighting conditions to give your camera the best chance for autofocus success. Outside in daylight is obviously the way to go because you really want to try to focus on not shooting too shallow. If you're capturing kids running about or on swings you'll be able to keep the ISO low and your aperture around the mid-ranges of your lens for nice clear video. You'll also want to abide by the universal video shutter-speed rule. By setting your shutter speed to double your frame rate, you achieve realistic motion blur (that's a good thing with video, most of the time) without experiencing rolling shutter, which is a jelly effect that can happen to your image when the subject or camera moves too quickly. So for example, if you are filming video at 24 frames per second or 24p, you will want to set your shutter speed to 1/50th to get realistic looking video. If you are shooting at 60p, you will want to set the shutter to 1/120th. If you can't get 1/120th, go with 1/125th. This rule can be bent or broken for practical effect. If the kids are really running about and you are outdoors and there's water being thrown everywhere and kids running in and out of the water between each other, you may want to consider increasing your shutter speed to freeze the action slightly more. You don't want to go too high but definitely think in terms of doubling the existing setting for the best result. If you are filming 24p at 1/50th it would be fine to jump to 1/100th to capture more detail in moving objects. Just don't go too far up or you may start to see unsightly artifacts in the footage. The choice of shutter speed in a situation is purely a personal preference. Just keep in mind that if the kids are inside a dimly-lit room and jumping on the bed, you probably won't be able to get higher shutter speeds without cranking up the ISO and introducing more noise into the image.





Camera - Canon EOS-R | Lens - 24-70mm f/2.8 IS

When filming kids, shooting handheld is fine and probably the best way to go. Handheld motorized gimbals are great but they do take a fair amount of practice to get ultra-smooth shots. I opt to just brace the camera as much as I can against my body or lean on something stable and get nice stable shots. If I have to swing the camera around, I can do so in a smooth motion and this is where the camera/lens combination image stabilization really comes into play. I don't suggest running while filming because while the O.I.S may help to remove some of the jitter, you will likely get a warping effect from the camera's sensor being jostled around by the electronic stabilization mechanism. O.I.S is definitely made to help reduce mild motion and increase stability in shots, not completely remove all camera motion.

Now let's discuss focal length choice. I usually opt to shoot wider when kids are moving around quite a bit and only use my longer, compressed focal lengths for when they are sitting static so I can perhaps shoot a bit more shallow for a portrait style shot. A good zoom lens with IS will be your best friend when filming children. Another good reason for using a wide angle lens when shooting kids is because kids look adorable when filmed up close with a wide lens. Their features become exaggerated the closer they are to the lens and this can make for a cute, comedic effect. Paired with some light playful music and it's a winning combination in the final video. The idea is to put your kids in situations where you can control the outcome of your video images by having the right tools for the job. If they're sitting nice and playing, you can film for more depth-of-field. If they're raising hell, back up and go wide then spray and pray.

One of the cutest things I've seen done with a kid-vid is strapping a GoPro to a child's head. They make head-mounts, so no need to use duct tape. Placing the GoPro on the mislaid child in the group gave a great worm's eye view of the action and was fun to cut the other video footage showing the larger context. If you're really feeling froggy, strap it to the dog and let it play with the kids.



Camera - Canon EOS-R | Lens - 24-70mm f/2.8 IS

Once you are done, take your footage and bring it into iMovie or Adobe Premiere and start splicing. You can even use an online slideshow maker to trim the clips and make short videos. There's much to be done with audio too. Always record the natural sound of the kids playing on your camera because that can always be used under the footage to bring it to life while mixing with music. You can even ask your kids questions about their favorite activities and use that as a voice-over. No special equipment required. Just make sure they are speaking someplace near the camera's built-in microphone and be sure the audio is recording. ■

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Rob Adams is a veteran wedding filmmaker and educator. During his 22 years filming weddings he has helped to define modern wedding storytelling with his blending of visuals and spoken dialogue. He has been a frequent contributor to Shutter Magazine and has spoken at various photo and video conferences around the globe.

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TIPS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN *(AND PARENTS)*

with **Ana Brandt**

Image © Ana Brandt Photography

Photographing newborns is one thing, but photographing children requires a whole lot of knowledge about child development, bribery, and cognitive behavior. I have been photographing children since I became an aunt 26 years ago. I remember when I first started observing my nieces and nephews, I was in love with their every move. I could quietly photograph them and it seemed so easy. I wasn't their "parent" or their "paid photographer"—just Aunt Ana with a camera.

Once I turned pro, it seemed to completely change! Now I have a child to photograph that I don't really know that well—plus client expectations and payment for services rendered—and it adds a whole other amount of pressure.

I have a baby plan; many of my clients sign up at the newborn session, then come during milestones and each year following the first-year plan. I love watching children grow up in my plan because I can actually get to know them. Then, photographing them is so much easier. I suggest that clients stick with the same photographer from babyhood to childhood because you need to foster that relationship to truly capture great images. Some children work great with strangers, others do not. I have three children and all of them—as many kids—need "warm-up" time.





Images © Ana Brandt Photography



Image © Ana Brandt Photography

I do provide mini child sessions and general family sessions where there is no time limit for those not inside my baby plan. For mini sessions, if it is a "theme," then I can usually have fun, have high energy, and take amazing photos. Our "Holiday Tree Farm" photos were some of my favorite this year. We had so much fun with the children and the sessions were only 20 minutes. I had props hidden in the trees, Christmas music playing, candy canes for bribes, and I can honestly say it was one of my most successful holiday mini sessions ever. I was well-prepared with the staff needed and prepared the tree set in advance.



Image © Ana Brandt Photography

TREE FARM TIPS

Tip 1: You will most likely need to pay the tree farm and book well in advance. We booked the tree farm in the spring! We sold out all 4 days and this year we need to extend that. We also originally only planned on shooting 2 hours before sunset. Because of the demand, we had to start at noon! This required getting very large scrims, very large diffusers, and it was like a movie set! Wranglers, spotters, assistants to hold the scrims in the wind—it was a full-on production crew, but we did very very well with this promotion!

Tip 2: Store little sets in between the trees for various age groups. We had from newborn through college age! Big chairs, little chairs, wagons, benches—be prepared! My clients came in Jimmy Choo shoes, so we had to remind them to bring their shoes and wear boots— because it is a tree farm!

Tip 3: We had candy canes for the kids and little gifts which they absolutely loved.

Tip 4: We played Christmas music on bluetooth speakers and we all wore Santa hats.

Tip 5: Chargers, batteries, water, food, blankets, chairs, props, wagons…be prepared! Tree farms are usually in remote areas and you can't just run to the store!

Pro Tip: *Kids love to see themselves. Show them photos on the camera or shoot to the iPad. They will love it.*













Images © Ana Brandt Photography



Image © Ana Brandt Photography

My clients can choose studio portraiture or on location. I often advise for children who are not walking yet, or who are more sensitive with their surroundings, that they opt for studio pictures. If the children love to run, play and explore, then location is ideal. Of course, it really depends on the "look" the client is looking for. When a client asks me if they should stay "inside" or go "outside" for their child's pictures, there are a few factors I keep in mind before answering.

SHOULD YOU SHOOT INSIDE OR OUTSIDE?

Tip 1: If they are on my baby plan and we have been doing studio pictures for each milestone, it might be ideal to also have 1-, 2-, 3-year studio images to complete a gallery wall for their home. That way the "look and feel" of how they lay the images in their home is similar.

Tip 2: If the first year was outside and the clients loved it and the image will work well in their home, then I tell them they can easily continue the tradition and go outside each year.

I have some clients that love to do beach sessions each year and the sessions are usually very relaxed and fun.









Images © Ana Brandt Photography

When working with children you need to be prepared. In our studio, we have lollipop trees (see photo) as well as M&Ms, Goldfish, and organic options as well. You want to make sure you always talk to the parent quietly before offering a child a treat or a bribe—especially if you are unsure if the child has allergies.

I also highly recommend an assistant, and not just any assistant. If you have an assistant who is amazing with children, you have the golden ticket! As a photographer who has to worry about light, camera settings, and safety while wrangling a child, I know by experience that if I have an expert wrangler at my side, my job will be 500% easier. If you have ever worked on a commercial set where there is a professional child wrangler, you know what I mean! Child wranglers to me are just as important as the photographer. If I have an awesome assistant who is a fabulous child wrangler, it will be the best session ever—even if the child is not so easy. Few children can resist someone who knows how to work with them and make them laugh, it is a special gift! While I think I am pretty good with children and I can work alone—and I have—I prefer to have an amazing child wrangler by my side because I know we can get great images.

After all, your clients are paying you to do your job. They don't want to be bouncing up and down and singing toddler songs and working up a sweat. If the parents can relax and watch my gong show, they will be hugging me as they leave. I know this because it has happened! I have had some frustrated parents come my way and I tell them to just sit and relax and please do not stand next to me taking pictures with their phone. I ask them to just let me do my job, and then my assistant and I go to work. We will do whatever it takes, to blowing bubbles while singing "ABC's" to playing peekaboo. Once the parents see this, they are far happier and will thank me when they leave.

Some of the must-have tools when working with children are:

- Bubbles
- Tickle monster (ours is a feather duster with an extra-long handle) aka tickler
- Ladders (toddlers love to climb)
- Little seats or benches - age height
- Stickers
- Sweet rewards (organic options as well) M&Ms, Goldfish, lollipops, etc.
- Noisemakers
- Elmo for the little ones or other popular characters
- Music is also fun if you have a bluetooth speaker (most parents have favorite songs on their phone for their kids that they can then send to your speaker)



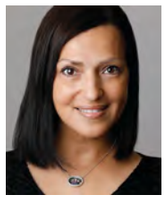




Images © Ana Brandt Photography

I always talk to the parents before the session to find out what are the "must-have" images they are looking for. For some, it's a particular outfit they really want the child photographed in; others may say they want photos that capture their personality. Whatever the parent is looking for, you want to understand before the photo shoot. If they want candid images, running around the beach will be super easy and fun. If they want a formal photo of a child sitting in a chair, for example, it might take a bit just to keep that child on the chair! Any parent who has a child, especially one under 5, knows that the behavior is often unpredictable. Therefore it is super important to manage expectations and have a clear idea of the images they are looking for. Once you know this, know you need to work for that child. I work harder for 3-year-olds than any other age! I get down to their level, I talk to them, play with them, and get to know who they are before I stick a big black piece of equipment in their face.

I think at the end of the day, if you are photographing children, you should probably love them. I mean truly enjoy working with them and playing with them. I truly love and adore children and I love all of the ages and the personalities that go along with it. ■



Ana Brandt is one of the most recognized Newborn Photographers in the world and has been a Professional Photographer for 20 years. She runs a busy studio in California and is an International Educator focusing on maternity and newborn.

anabrandt.com

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL *SLEEPY* NEWBORN SESSION

with **Amy Guenther and Lindsey Stock**



Image © Newborn Nerds

Whether you specialize in baby photography or you just book the occasional newborn client, you've probably experienced one of the most frustrating parts of the job: newborns who don't want to sleep. It probably doesn't sound like an issue at first. So what? Just pose them awake! Except that awake newborns don't always equal content newborns, and it's a lot harder than it seems to pose a wiggly, arm-flailing, cross-eyed, screaming baby. We've had our share of super-alert newborns. We're going to share how we approach those sessions without getting frustrated and still get the variety needed to fill a gallery in 3 hours or less.



Image © Newborn Nerds

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

While every baby is different and there are no foolproof guarantees that every session will go exactly the same, you can take steps to prepare yourself and your clients for the session to go as smoothly as possible.

PARENT PREP

It's a widely debated topic in the newborn photography world: prep guide or no prep guide? Some contend that parents must follow a long list of strict instructions in order for the session to be a success. On the opposite end of the spectrum, others say following a prep guide will stress parents out, overstimulate babies, and the session will be a disaster. We fall somewhere in the middle, and have found that when parents are able to follow our simple guidelines, sessions almost always go more smoothly than when suggestions are not followed.

1. INTERACT WITH BABY

We ask parents to interact with their newborn for an hour or two before the scheduled start time of their session. We don't ask them to keep baby awake all morning, we just don't want them sleeping all morning either. We suggest that they play with baby or give her a bath before they leave for their session. Ideally, baby will be ready for a long nap when they arrive, but not be kept awake for so long that they are overstimulated and overtired.

2. FEED BABY

We ask parents to feed baby a full feeding right before leaving home, or to plan on feeding her immediately upon arriving at the studio. We want baby to start the session with a full belly so she remains asleep for as long as possible.

3. DRESS BABY COMFORTABLY

We ask parents to dress baby in loose-fitting clothing that buttons or zips down the front and does not pull over the head. We want to be able to easily undress baby without disturbing her.



Image © Newborn Nerds

4. BRING A PACIFIER

We ask that parents bring a pacifier for baby, even if she does not normally take one. A pacifier can be useful when transitioning from one pose to another, or to keep her settled long enough to get the shot. We recommend the "Soothie" or "JollyPop" brands, as they are easy to hold onto, easy to pop out of baby's mouth, and they don't leave red markings on the face. A pacifier should not be used in place of feeding a hungry baby—we take as many breaks as needed and expect that babies will want to eat more than normal during a session.

STUDIO PREP

Preparing a relaxing, welcoming environment and having the right tools available are important steps to ensure a successful newborn session. Here's what we do.

1. PLAN AND SET UP AHEAD OF TIME

We have clients fill out a questionnaire of style preferences at the time of booking so that we can plan setups and have everything ready to go before they arrive at the studio. Some examples of style preferences we offer to choose from are vintage, rustic, neutrals, bright colors, and floral. We also offer a free-typing field where clients may list specific colors they do or do not wish to incorporate in their session.

2. MAKE THE STUDIO WARM, BUT NOT TOO WARM

We set the thermostat somewhere between 75–80 degrees Fahrenheit, and also place a space heater next to our posing area that we can turn on or off as needed. The goal is to keep the studio warm enough that baby does not get too cold and wake up, but not so warm that she overheats. Babies can easily become overheated, especially if you're using multiple wraps, so be aware of the signs of overheating.

3. USE WHITE NOISE

White noise machines are available anywhere that supplies baby gear. You can also find free white noise apps on your smartphone. We like the Baby Shusher too—not only does it provide white noise, but it runs on a timer of 15 or 30 minutes, so it helps us to maintain a sense of how long we've been working on a pose or when it's time to move onto something else, without having to keep checking the clock.

4. MAKE PARENTS COMFORTABLE

Our studios are set up with a couch and television, so parents can relax while we are working with baby. We encourage them to bring a book to read, to watch TV, or even take a nap during their session. If siblings are going to be in some photos, we ask that they have someone come with who can take the siblings home or to a park or mall when they are done with their part, to limit the possibility of noise and chaos during the remainder of the session.





Images © Newborn Nerds

WHAT IF BABY IS ALERT?

Sometimes no amount of preparation will result in a sleepy baby—whether they are fussy because they're gassy, going through a growth spurt, an older newborn, or just plain alert and wide awake. Now what do you do?

1. MAKE SURE BABY IS FED, BURPED, NOT TOO HOT OR COLD, AND HAS A CLEAN DIAPER.

Also try to remain calm and not get frustrated. Baby can sense your tension and it will stress her out, too.

2. GIVE BABY A CHANCE TO WEAR HERSELF OUT

Attempting to soothe a wide-awake baby to sleep is an exercise in futility. As long as she isn't screaming or clearly uncomfortable, let her squirm around a little and get tired. Do some tummy time on your posing surface. Put her on her back, unwrapped, and let her get in a little workout.

3. MAKE IT WORK

We place baby directly in the middle of the beanbag on her back looking up at the ceiling, with a small posing device underneath her head and our light to the side, and take some awake shots while she wears herself out. For this, we like to use the footpiece of the Shapeshifter posing set from Hello Little Props. The easiest way to comfortably do this is to take the images upside down and flip them over in post-production. It takes a bit of trial and error to get used to, but give it a try! With a squirmy baby, expect to take a lot of shots to get a few good ones. When taking overhead shots, always make sure to use a wrist strap or neck strap.



Image © Newborn Nerds





Images © Newborn Nerds

4. WRAP

After you've allowed baby some time to squirm around and get tired, swaddle her up for some wrapped poses. Babies will almost always fall asleep with proper wrapping. We start with the Ugly Wrap from our shop as the base wrap to the potato sack pose and subsequently our entire wrapped workflow.

WRAPPED WORKFLOW

Now that baby is asleep and wrapped up, we can get a wide variety of poses while gradually transitioning back to sleepy, unwrapped poses. Start with the potato sack pose. We use our Ugly Wrap, Potato Belt, Butt Halo, and Fat Suit posing tools in order to achieve the perfect "potato."





Images © Newborn Nerds



Next, we move on to potato sack in a prop. We like to use a basket or crate for this pose and switch out the top wrap to achieve a totally different look that does not disturb baby.



Images © Newborn Nerds

After the basket, we remove the Fat Suit and Potato Belt and switch out the top wrap again for another overhead pose in a different prop, such as an antique "trencher." This pose could also be done on a fabric backdrop on your beanbag or other posing surface.





Images © Newborn Nerds



Next, we gently peel down the top of the base wrap to free up baby's arms, and we move on to the bucket pose. We love using the Everlasting Bucket and Bucket Huggers from Hello Little Props to easily achieve even more variety with this pose.



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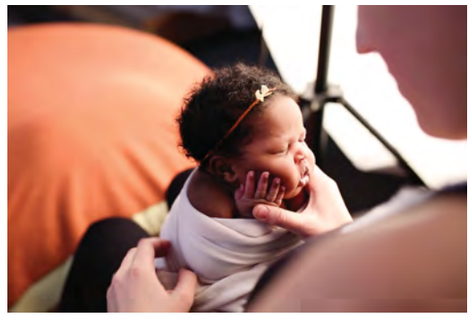
After the bucket pose, we move back to the beanbag for an overhead "tucked in" pose, while still keeping baby's bottom half wrapped up. This tucked-in pose can also be achieved in a prop such as a bed or crate.





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Finally, we move on to the "froggy" pose as our first unwrapped pose. We start with baby's hands while she is still partially wrapped up, and slowly unwrap her bottom half to transition as smoothly as possible without waking her.





Images © Newborn Nerds

If you shoot newborn sessions, you will inevitably get the occasional challenging baby. It's unavoidable and happens to all of us. The more prepared you are, the greater your chances of producing a beautiful gallery with lots of variety. Try putting into practice some of these techniques and suggestions. Find what works for you and fits into your session workflow. And most importantly, take a deep breath and relax, you've got this! ■



Amy Guenther and Lindsey Stock are the founders of The Newborn Nerds. With studios in Cedar Falls and Des Moines, Iowa, they specialize in fine art newborn and children's photography. They've been photographing babies for 8 years under their studio brand, Sweet Little You Photography, and have been teaching the art of newborn posing for 5 years.
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INSPIRATIONS

Inspiration can come when you least expect it. As photographers, we are visual artists. We express ourselves through our camera and the images we create. Inspirations represents a sampling of our industry and the vision of professional photographers from around the world.

Congratulations to all our featured artists. Be inspired and create something that is *you.*

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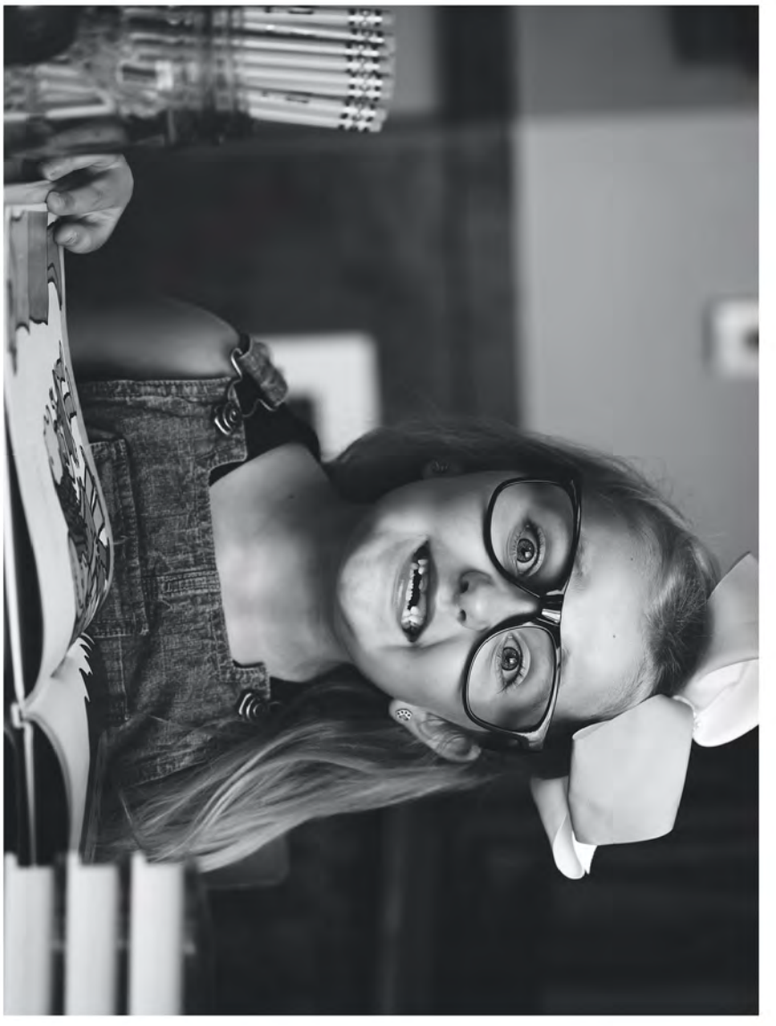




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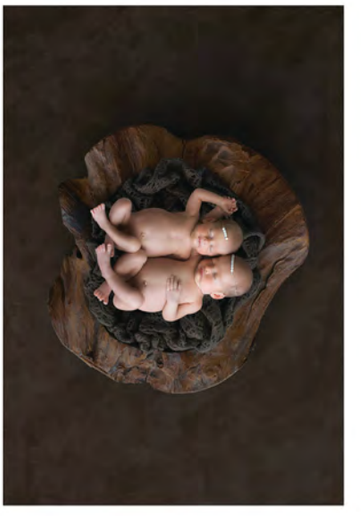


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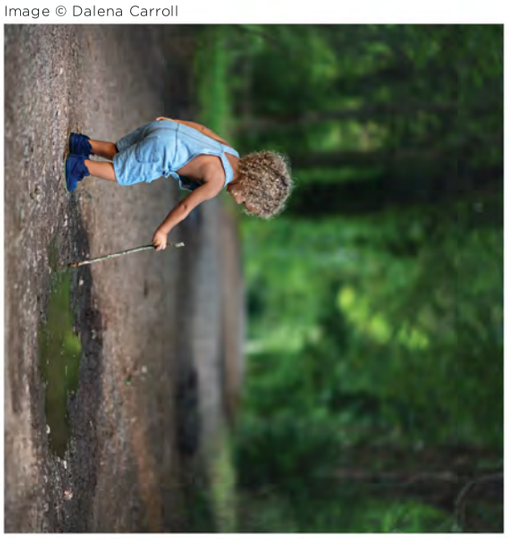


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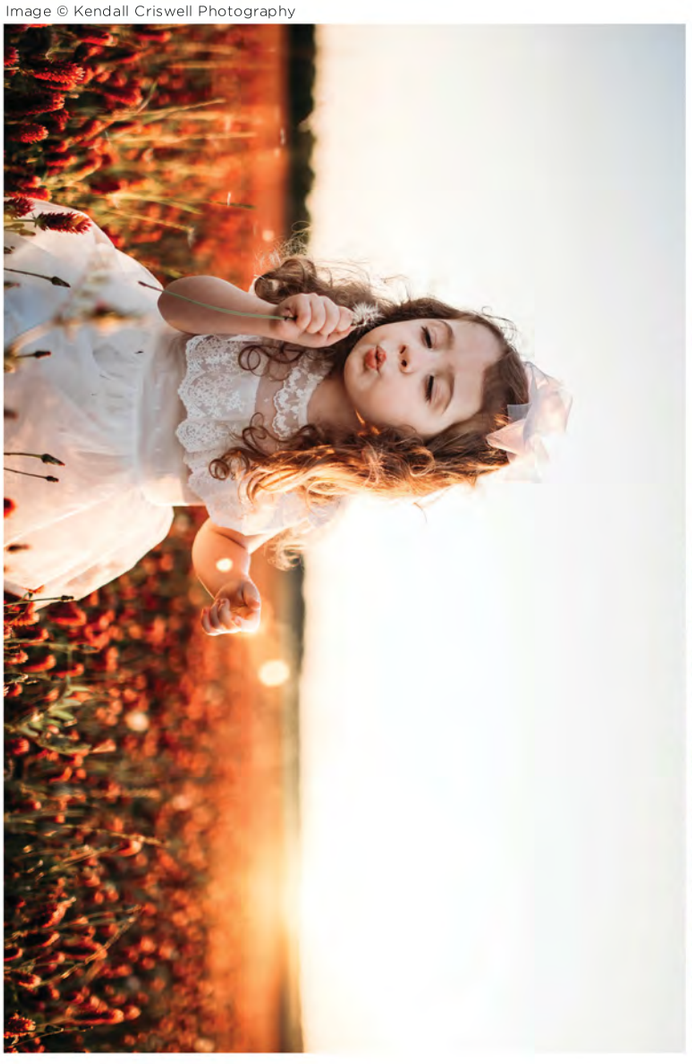


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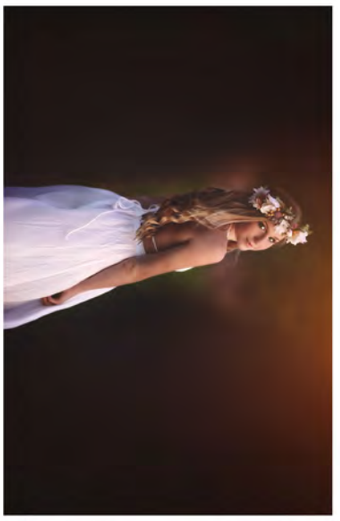




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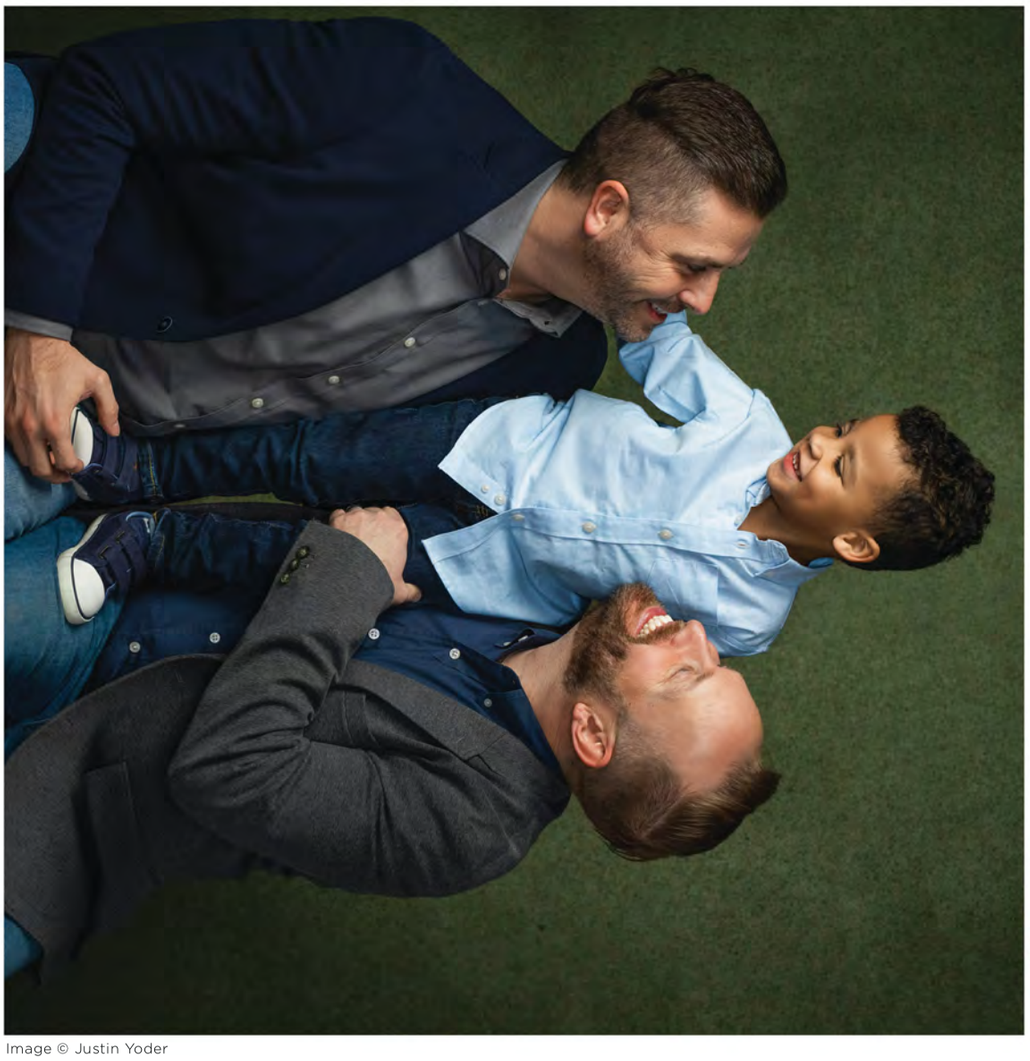


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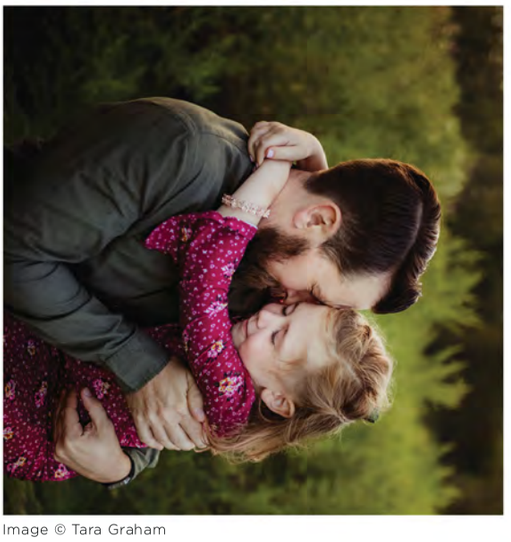


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HOW TO GET YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY PUBLISHED IN A MAGAZINE

with **Vanessa Joy**

Images © Vanessa Joy

Many photographers like the idea of getting published in a magazine. Even having your beautiful photos featured in online publications can be exciting and daunting, especially since there are so many weddings every year with so many beautiful photographs that could be featured. Sometimes the hardest part is just organizing your photographs and doing the work required to submit to magazines.

Luckily, there are services like Two Bright Lights that make it easier to submit. However, that rejection letter isn't the nicest thing in the world to receive, no matter how nicely "no, we don't want your photos" is worded. Thankfully, there are ways to improve your chances of getting your photography published, and with persistence and effort, you'd be surprised how far you can go in the world of magazine wedding photography!



Images © Vanessa Joy

PRINT IS NOT DYING, IT'S CHANGING

Magazine publishers will have you know that print as a medium is changing: there are more localized and niche magazines than ever. If you are paying close attention to your market, you'll see that while the industry has changed to accommodate the growth of online journalism and other publications, it isn't gone! Don't give up on the possibility of being published, but also don't discount highly-popular blogs, online magazines, and other publications. They vary in their reach and shelf life, but there's no reason to ignore the power of print.



Image © Vanessa Joy

A STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER'S LOSS IS YOUR GAIN

As major magazines shift to using more freelancers and submitted work, they aren't keeping staff photographers as often. This isn't great, obviously, for those who want to work full-time for a magazine and for photographers as a whole. We've had to adapt to the ever-changing industry to keep food on our tables. However, part of adapting is thinking outside the box and taking action on the fact that many editors and art directors for magazines will see you as an opportunity to get beautiful photographs without having to arrange for their staff photographer to be on location. When you make yourself a solution to someone's problem at the magazine, you are much more likely to get published.



Image © Vanessa Joy

YOUR INITIATIVE AND STORYTELLING CAN GIVE YOU AN EDGE

One thing is that you won't be as likely to be published simply by sending a pile of photographs to a magazine. If they have to spend a lot of time piecing together what to say with these photos, they may move on, no matter how stunning the photos are. If, however, you can provide copy that explains the love story depicted, the significance of the details you shot, and can make it more like an entire story and less like disconnected wedding photos, you are—again—solving a problem for the magazine editor. The more polished and complete your "story" is, the easier it is for them to quickly see it as a part of what they're doing in their magazine.

BUILD A PACKAGE BY NOTING WHAT MAKES THIS WEDDING UNIQUE

One major way to stand out from the other wedding photographers hoping to be published is to keep track, as you shoot the wedding, of things that make it unique. There are a lot of similar elements in some weddings, but no wedding is exactly like another one. What you choose to emphasize will impact whether the photos you send stand out from the crowd or blend into the background. Create a well-written description of the unique story and details—that's an extra plus.



Image © Vanessa Joy

FIND A HOOK: A SEASON, HOLIDAY, LOCATION, OR OTHER FEATURE

Another way to "do the work" for the publication is to send photographs that are perfect for a particular hook: a wedding with a holiday theme or a great seasonally-driven wedding, all in time for their deadlines and in order to slot perfectly into their themed issues. How to know these things? Well, read the magazines! Often, they have submission guidelines that, by following, you stand out from seasonally-off submissions. It can even be a theme you suggest, like pups at weddings, or exotic animals at weddings.

GET TO KNOW THE VENDORS AND BE KNOWN FOR PROFESSIONALISM

This may seem tangential to getting your photos published, but follow us here. Sometimes, what the magazine wants is the subject of the photo, and they don't care as much who takes it. If they ask, say, an excellent floral designer to do a photo shoot when they're featuring her flowers in the magazine, you want to be the photographer she names! This means that at every job you are on your best behavior, not just for the bride, but for everyone who is seeing you and getting to know you. Get those business cards out and get to know your fellow vendors; it's usually a smaller world than we think, and people talk.



Image © Vanessa Joy

ASK FOR CREDIT BUT SHARE THOSE PHOTOS

Yes, it can be tempting to keep one's photos under lock and key and charge for their use. There is a time and place for that, yes. However, when you are asked for your photos, weigh the benefits of the exposure against any worries you have having them distributed without attribution. Exposure won't pay your bills, but it can build relationships, expand your network, and be a direct correlation to you booking new gigs.

There are plenty of ways to, say, share photos with a venue while nicely asking that they make you a preferred vendor or recommend you to future brides. Once in a while, you'll find a photo out on the internet that wasn't attributed (GAHHHH!!), but the ones that do have the credit given will be advertising for you, giving you exposure that can lead to publication or future jobs! Editors are out on the internet too, noticing when your Instagram or portfolio is full of great work. They can and likely will find you through your network, but only if your network is featuring your photos.



Image © Vanessa Joy

CUT THE EMBEDDED WATERMARK OUT WHEN WORKING TO GET PUBLISHED

One cut-and-dry tip: don't leave an embedded watermark in photos you are submitting to get published. Editors, like everyone, are busy and will not want to email back and forth with you to get the right version without the watermark. When you are ready to submit these photos, take a step of faith and send the unwatermarked versions.



Images © Vanessa Joy

CULTIVATE CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOUGHT-AFTER VENDORS

It's similar advice, but if you take one thing from this topic, make sure it's that your good relationships and good name matter a lot in this business. You don't know whether a caterer has a cousin who runs the biggest bridal magazine in your area, but you do know that you have to work with this caterer today. How you react when they ask for a few photos of the food from tonight may have an impact down the road.

You can take it a step further, though. If you know from the bridal magazines that certain vendors just always seem to have their work featured, get to know them on purpose! See how you can collaborate, maybe by doing a photo shoot for them, and talk to them about how they get their work into magazines. They may be thrilled to introduce you to someone, and your path just got a lot quicker to that publication. ■

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Click here or check us out at
youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



Vanessa Joy has been a professional wedding photographer in New Jersey since 2002, and an influencer in the photographic community for years. Since starting VanessaJoy.com in 2008, she has taught photographers around the globe at almost every major platform in the industry (LearnPhotoVideo.com). Vanessa has been recognized for her talent and business sense at the renowned industry events CreativeLIVE, Clickin' Moms, WPPI and ShutterFest. Her peers love her informative, open-book style of teaching.

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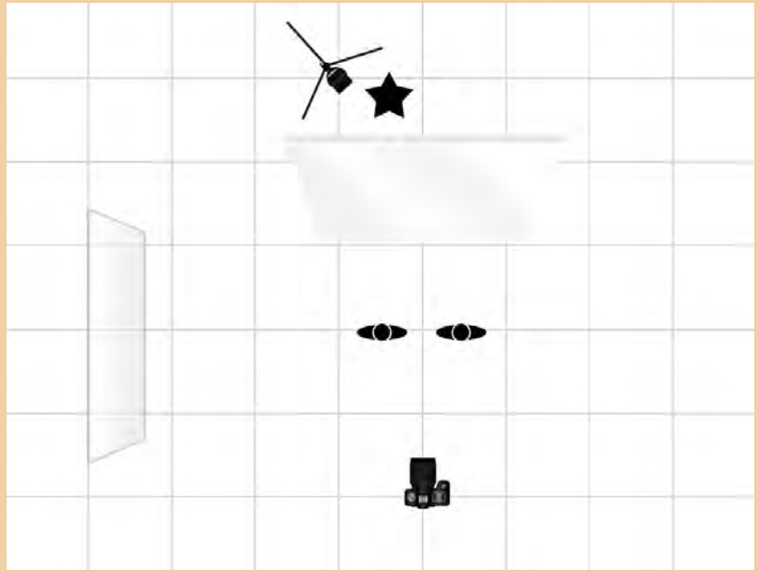




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final inspiration

photographer | meg loeks
image title | in-home theatre



website | www. megloeks.com
exposure | f/1.6 @1/400 iso 800
lighting | profoto b10
natural light
location | marquette, michigan
gear | canon 5d mark iv
sigma art 105mm 1.4



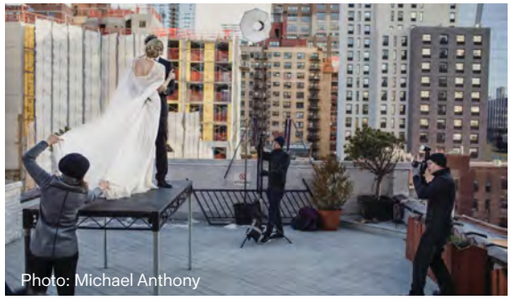
Image © Meg Loeks Photography

Profoto A1
A small light at an even smaller price

To celebrate the Profoto A1, introduced as the world's smallest studio light, we are now giving you the opportunity to buy it at a new and lower price.



Profoto A1
The world's smallest studio light


Photo: Michael Anthony

Light that's both natural and beautiful
Because we designed the A1 with a round head rather than the typical rectangular shape used by other on-camera solutions, the light it delivers is both natural and beautiful. That spread of light can also be easily adjusted from a wide setting, where the light has a soft smooth fall off to something narrower and more focused – with just a simple twist of the zoom ring on the head.


Photo: Michael Anthony

More than light
Being able to work with light is the key to creating better, more creative images. That's why the A1 has a dedicated set of light-shaping modifiers that, thanks to a built-in smart magnetic mount, can be easily clicked on and off or stacked to help you achieve exactly the effect you want. These include the Dome Diffuser, Bounce Card, Wide Lens, Soft Bounce, Gel Kit, Grid Kit, Clic gels and Clic grids.


Photo: Michael Anthony

Never miss a shot
The A1 can keep up because it recycles four times faster than most on-camera solutions – that's every 1.0 seconds at full power. Put simply, you'll never miss a shot.


Photo: Michael Anthony

Less time learning means more time shooting
We designed the A1 to be uncomplicated, so there's no learning curve whatsoever. And because the interface is simple, clean and clear there's no 'death by menu.' That means, you can spend more time engaged with your clients and creating a great image.

Discover more at profoto.com/a1

Profoto