

# THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

It seems to me that portrait photographers have a lot more fun today than they did 10 or 15 years ago. The growing trend in portrait preferences is to get away from the stuffy “traditional” poses that have long dominated living room walls. Now many subjects are looking for something fresh and original, something with a little more personality. While the time tested “classic” pose in the studio will probably never go away completely, there is much more demand for something a little more fun and relaxed. Here are a few ideas to help you starting thinking outside the box.



The very first consideration should be location. While studio portraits are still in high demand, more and more people are preferring portraits done “on location” either outdoors or in their homes. If you will be shooting in your studio, consider backdrop choices carefully. Black and white backdrops are both popular choices, as well as a number of other colors and styles. Familiarize yourself with the versatility of your backdrops, and use them to create unique portraits! If you will be shooting on location you will more than likely have a wide variety of choices for a background. Photographers who shoot out of doors regularly would be wise to familiarize themselves with the best locations in the area. Be aware of which locations are better at different times of day or in different seasons. Customers will appreciate your knowledge and expertise when choosing a location for their portraits. One final reminder about location: Don’t always restrict yourself to areas that are “popular” or have a classic look about them. Don’t be afraid to branch out creatively and seek new locations with a fresh look about them.

Another great way to think outside the box comes when posing the subjects. There are countless “traditional” poses that have been used and used. But it’s so much more fun to get creative and pose the subject in non-traditional ways. Seek for poses that are more expressive of the subject’s mood and personality. An additional advantage is that these poses often also help the subject to relax and feel more comfortable, which leads to a better portrait overall. For photographers who could use a little extra help when posing subjects check out the Ultimate Posing Guide at [www.PortraitTutor.com](http://www.PortraitTutor.com).

There are a couple things photographers can do with their camera to mix things up a bit. One has to do with the camera orientation. Traditionally portraits are taken with camera orientation being vertical (also referred to as portrait). However you should not feel restricted to this. Many stunning portraits are taken with the camera oriented horizontally. Explore the creative options that both offer, and don’t feel restricted to one or the other. Instead, use them both freely and creatively. Another thing you can do with your camera is to explore different camera heights and angles. Try looking at the subject from way above them, or way below. Maybe you get behind them, and have them look back at you. There’s really no limit here. Let your creativity be your guide!



Two other standards you can rethink are the use of props, and composition. Props have been around for ages, and are very useful in bringing focus to por-

traits. But think of new ways to use them. For example, instead of having a young girl hold the flower in her hand, put it in between her toes. Think of new ways to reinvent old ideas, and all your portraits will have personality. The same is true for composition. Don't be afraid to break the rules occasionally. Instead of having your subject front and center in the frame, maybe you leave them off to the side, creating a more striking image. Again, be creative! Figure out what works and what doesn't.



Here's another rule to break: Why not let the portrait be of something other than their face? For a pianist, a photo of their hands on the keys of a piano, would be a true reflection of them. Or maybe a young ballerina's feet in her toe shoes. Find out what the subject's interests are, and see if you can find a way to utilize this creative tool.

One of the best things you can do to create portraits that will be treasured for years to come is to allow the subject's expressions to be real. If they're feeling grumpy about having to get their picture taken, capture that expression! If they're being goofy and silly and can't stop laughing, don't wait for them to calm down – capture that image of who they really are! If you're shooting a group, shoot candid moments of them interacting with one another. Allowing your subjects to really be themselves will aid you in capturing images of them that truly reflect their personalities.

And if that's not enough ideas for you, here are a few more things you can do to think outside the box: Try a different lighting technique with a strong impact, such as Rembrandt lighting. Instead of shooting head on, shoot profiles, or even better – silhouettes. Have the subject focusing on something off the camera – instead of looking directly into it. Capture images of your subjects in motion, or with the motion around them. Try using different filters, or even gels, for different effects. Have the subject make faces at you, expressing different emotions. Ultimately, there are countless ways to make portraits more interesting, and a little more unique. Explore your own ideas of how to accomplish this, and create your own unique style!

