

How to avoid the 7 biggest mistakes that will ruin your high school senior photographs.

Dear High School Senior,

What's most important to you about your senior portrait?

The most important thing is you probably want to look great. Right? You want to look better than you've ever looked before in a portrait. Right?

In this letter I'm going to reveal some powerful secrets to helping you look great in your portraits. Think about this for a moment...more people will see this portrait than any other photograph you will ever have taken! So you really want to be thrilled with it. Right?

Well, research has proven that the two major things that are important to most seniors about their senior portrait is that:

1. You look fantastic in the portrait, and
2. You want the portrait to have some kind of "artistic quality" to it. That is, yes, you really do look great in the photograph, but then also, the photograph looks beautiful as well. There's a three dimensional feeling to it and there's quality to the light. And your personality comes through. The portrait has what I call "SPARKLE" to it.

By sparkle I mean that when your friends and family look at your portrait, they say "Wow" you look like a million bucks. It's like you're going to step right off the paper and speak to me! It almost gives me chills." That's what I call sparkle.

Here's how to avoid the 7 huge mistakes that 9 out of 10 Seniors and their parents make with their Senior Portrait.

Obviously, I'd like you to contact me about whether or not I have any openings left to create your senior portrait. I am very booked right now, but hopefully I still have some openings so I can do your senior portrait for you.

But that's not the point of this letter. The point of this letter is to give you these 7 major mistakes that most seniors make. If you don't decide to work with me that's fine. I still want you to be aware of these major mistakes, so you don't make them yourself when planning your senior portrait, no matter who the photographer is.

Mistake #1 ruins more portraits than anything!

Mistake #1 is wearing the wrong clothes! This is very normal. You see, people just don't know what clothing photographs well. They simply don't know. Why would they? Well...we know. That's our job and we love it. And we're really good at helping you select the best clothing for your photographs – clothing that will help you look your very best.

For example, the wrong clothing can make up to a 44 pound difference in the way you look in a portrait. 44 pounds!!

Now most people are very conscious of their weight, and you certainly want to be sure you look really great! Well, make sure your photographer talks with you about clothing ahead of time to help you look your best in your portrait.

Mistake #2 is a “Silent Killer” of senior portraits!

Many seniors do not understand (or they don't want to admit it) that most people get nervous in front of a camera. And they don't know what to do about it.

Did you know there are over 30 muscles in the face? If you are tense, your muscles tense up and that will show in the photograph. You might not even know why you don't like the image, you just know there is something about the expression that does not look right.

One of the keys to our success in photography is that we will not photograph any senior without having met with him or her in advance. What's the purpose of this? Yes, we're going to talk about clothing, hair and make-up. But the main purpose of this meeting is to give you the chance to meet us, get to know us, and see just how well we are going to take care of you through this. You'll see the studio. We'll spend some time so you'll begin to feel comfortable and confident about how you can trust us and take our advice.

This is going to make an enormous difference in how natural and relaxed you'll look on the day of your session. It's almost like magic. You will be impressed.

I can't stress this enough. You see, most photographers just are not willing to do this. Why? Because it takes time. All they want to do is crank you through their studio like a factory. This is what's called “assembly line” photography. Click, click, click, click....next person please.

We will not do that to you. We're going to meet you ahead of time and we're going to treat this as if it were the most important photo of your life...because it

is. You will not walk into a strange room, with a strange man who starts flashing lights and commanding you to smile.

What a huge difference this will make in helping you look natural, relaxed and fantastic, not stiff, tense and rigid with some fake cheesy smile.

Mistake #3 will ruin your senior portrait if you aren't aware of it.

Most seniors don't realize that it takes longer than 15 minutes to create outstanding senior portraits.

One of the unique things that separates us from all of the other photographers in the area, is that we take all of the time that is necessary to create portraits of you that are wonderful and expressive. Photographs that both you, and your friends and family will LOVE!

That's what we're all about. We're not going to rush you through like it's a 'photo factory' and all we care about is getting through the line of people. We're going to take good care of you. We're going to help you through the whole thing. We understand that this portrait is important and we're not going to rush you through it. We'll take whatever time is necessary to make sure it is done right.

Mistake #4 is critically important to your appearance in your portrait!

Most seniors don't realize that sometimes "today is just not the day" for their senior portrait to be done. The hair just isn't right today. You didn't sleep well last night. You've had too many stresses at home. You wake up with a toothache that's making your jaw swell to twice it's normal size!

Well, we do understand this. We honestly understand that the day we set up for your photography may end up not being the best day, when it arrives, for whatever reason. We have no problem, whatsoever, with you calling us and rescheduling your session, if "today isn't the day." We want you to do that.

We are very busy, and often booked up weeks in advance, but we don't treat you like a number. We understand. We won't make you feel guilty. Why? Because we've been doing this a long time and we understand how you feel. It's no problem at all.

We understand this is a once-in-a-lifetime thing. Now I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "Give me a break, it's just a picture." Yes, but it's

your Senior Portrait, and it's the only one you're ever going to have. And all of the people who matter in your life are going to see this portrait. So let's make sure we do everything to insure you look your best on that day, even if it means rescheduling.

Mistake # 5 is a little technical, but extremely important to you!

Seniors and their parents often don't realize how critical light is in photography. Many 'so called photographers' don't realize it either! They think all you have to do is throw some light on the subject and get a decent exposure and that's it. Do you realize the wrong direction of light can add 10-20 pounds to how you appear and bring out your worst features? Do you realize the direction of light in relationship to the angle of the face in relationship to the position of the camera will make all of the difference in the world?

It really is a matter of life and death in portraiture. The light is the "paint brush" with which I "paint" your senior portrait. It's very important!

Now one of the things that separates our photography from all of the other photographers in the area is that I have personally gone to and studied light from the true Masters of fine portraiture.

I understand that there is only ONE type and direction of light that will help you to look your very best. Only one. And this is different for every person! Again, that's another reason why we must meet you in advance, so we can determine the very best light for you and have it ready to use at your session when you arrive. This is true whether we do your portraits indoors or outdoors.

Mistake #6 is of enormous Importance! Don't miss this one.

This mistake has ruined so many senior portraits. It's the mistake of not choosing a photographer who guarantees that you will be really happy – and who will give you all of your money back if you aren't.

Here's your guarantee: **"You will be thrilled with your senior portraits, or we will do whatever is necessary for you to be thrilled, or we will return every penny of your money. No hassles and no hard feelings either."** We want you to be thrilled with your portraits and proud to share them with others. We will spare no effort to see to it that you are. We put it in writing and we stand by it.

You see, only a photographer who really believes in his/her product and service is going to be willing to have such a guarantee. The guarantee is your first indication

of whether you even want to work with them. I just can't stress this enough. Ask about the guarantee. Listen to their reaction. That will tell you if you want to trust your senior portraits to them.

Mistake #7 is so obvious, and yet most seniors or their parents don't do it.

What's this mistake? Not asking lots of questions when you are talking with photographers. Now, if you are still reading this, you certainly have the questions to ask, right?

Remember, you are the customer –it's your money and your portraits—you have all the rights. You have the right to ask tough questions, before you make any decisions.

Ask them first about their guarantee, and see how they respond.

Then ask them if they will meet with you in person, at no charge, to discuss clothing, style, prices and to see their studio and work.

Ask them about lighting techniques. Do they know the difference between narrow lighting and broad lighting? If so which do they use? (Hint: You don't want broad lighting...but if they don't know the difference then that's probably what you'll get.)

Ask them if they have ever studied the lighting and posing techniques of the great living masters such as the legendary Joe Zeltsman and Monte Zucker, or if they are just 'self taught'. If they are self taught, they might be fine people, but don't trust your once in a lifetime senior portrait to them.

Ask them how much time they are going to spend with you. And do they do outdoor portraits as well as indoor portraits.

Ask them if they are understanding if you call on the day of the session, to reschedule because "Today isn't the day", or do you lose your deposit?

So what should you do right now?

Now, while it's fresh in your mind, pick up the phone and dial 812-335-1470 and we can chat on the phone for a couple of minutes. No charge. No obligation. No sales pitch. We're not that kind of studio. We'll just chat.

You can ask us any questions you may have. We'll check our calendar to see if there are any session times still remaining for seniors. If there are, and you'd like

to, we can set up a time for you and your parents to come in and we can show you the studio and chat a bit. There's still no charge or obligation.

You do not have to make a decision to hire us, before you come in, and if you need to go home and think about it some more, that's fine too. We are here to help in any way we can. We're not here to pressure you into doing anything you don't want to do. That's completely up to you.