

Taking the pictures

Ok, I admit it, I am a little over the top about the photos we use for your animals portrait but, I promise this will be worth every bit of the effort. Just remember your pet has given you unconditional love for a long time and you are spending a chunk of change on an original painting so, we want them to look their absolute best!

1. I need you to go outside with your pet (indoor cat instructions to follow).
2. Shut off the flash on your camera. **This is by far the most important step.**
3. Make sure it is either morning or evening and **not the middle of the day.** If the sun is high in the sky your pet will appear washed out and dull so let's get that really good horizon light.
4. Get the sun behind you or just off to one side (**not behind your pet**).
5. Now, I need you to find a way to be at eye level with your pet. This may mean lying in the grass or dirt or flower bed (please no cement or snow in these pictures, it is too bright and will change the coloring!). Or if this is a big animal you may need to stand on something.
6. Now take about 100 photographs and I'm not kidding. When I photograph a dog I average 70-100 pictures. And remember to be very close to them, 4 feet away or closer please because then we will get great eye details.
7. Now load the pictures into your computer and find some that you like.

At this point I will have you send me several and ask you to explain what it is you like about these particular photos. It may be helpful to think about a few things before you go outside with your pet:

1. Do you want their ears a certain way?
2. Do you want their tongue in or out? And if it is out, how far out?
I like Shepherds' and Golden Retrievers' to have their mouths open a little because they appear to be smiling and some hunting breeds actually look alright at a full pant. And if we need the dog on point then you have to plan to make that happen. Another great look is a dog cocking their head to listen, so, if that fits your dogs' personality then plan to set it up. I have even painted a few dogs with their cheek caught up inside their mouth. If it helps to symbolize their personality then we need to stage it for the photograph.
3. Also think about any special markings that tell us who this is and plan to include the mark in the photo.

It may help to send me some stories about your pet before hand so I can give some suggestions about good poses to stage.

The indoor cat photographs

Cats are tougher because so many never go outside and if we made them do it for a photo then they would act really strange. So, your job is to keep the camera at the ready and **never, never, never** (did I say never?) use a flash. If we use a flash then the cats beautiful eyes will be lost and the painting will look amateurish.

I have two cats and one is lazy and lies in the sun so it is really easy to snap a shot of her lying on a chair near a window, you may have to move their favorite chair near a window and wait for them to find it. My other cat is very attentive and quite a hunter so I try to photograph her at full attention outdoors.

It can also look great if a person is holding the cat. In this case you may want to think about the cats coloring and what color clothing you should wear in order to help bring out the cats color. I will probably only paint your arm and a bit of your body behind the cat so don't be concerned if there is too much of you in the photo, I will edit that out as needed.

If you have questions or concerns then please email and we can talk through this process.