

Photo Guidelines

I work from photos to create my pet portraits. Drawing a realistic and accurate portrait requires good photos.

I usually make arrangements to take the photos myself, and I'm more than happy to do so. Not only does that allow me to get to know my subject better, but I'm able to photograph a characteristic pose that will allow me to create the best likeness. For the sake of good detail, I will often take a close-up photo of the animal's eye, nose or other crucial features or markings.

Unfortunately, due to limitations of distance or access to the pet, it's not always possible for me to take my own photos. Some pet portrait commissions are intended as a surprise for the recipient, so it's often difficult to schedule a photo session without spoiling the surprise. If the pet is in the Sacramento or West Placer area, please discuss arrangements with me.

If you are providing your own photos, please follow these guidelines:

- The photos must be of good quality with good detail of the pet's face.
- A 3/4 angle usually works best, although cats and short-muzzled dogs (i.e. pugs) can be photographed straight-on. Try to include the pet's neck down to the chest and shoulders also.
- The pet should be as large as possible in the photo. Be careful not to get too close, however, or the perspective will be distorted. I usually use a zoom lens, so I can be a bit farther away from the pet. For digital cameras, provide the original digital files; for film cameras, have the photos developed as 5"x7" prints.
- Focus on the pet, don't worry too much about the background; this is a reference photo, not a work of art.
- Take the photo in bright light, with a minimum of shadows falling on the pet. Overcast days are actually good days to take photos - harsh shadows are minimized.
- Choose a pose that is characteristic of the pet and take several photos from different angles (more than one photo is helpful for reference).
- If you want the drawing to include the pet's body too, follow the same guidelines, being sure to get good detail for the body. Get the pet to sit or stand in a natural pose and also take some head shots.

As you can see, it takes some effort to get good photos, but it makes all the difference!

