

I LOVE photographing families! Family photography is incredibly challenging, but it's so amazing to be a part of and to capture those sweet precious moments. There's a bit of prep and planning that needs to go into these sessions to make them more successful though. I've compiled a few tips below to help me get the very best out of your upcoming portrait session.

LOVELY LIGHT!

I ask that you open all of the blinds and curtains in your home prior to my arrival. This enables me to find the best source of natural light in your home, so that we can shoot in the best possible location. Nothing flatters like natural light, so I prefer to use it whenever possible. For this reason, sessions are normally done mid-morning to late-afternoon when window lighting is as its best.

When I arrive, I'll walk through your home looking for the best light and that is where I'll do a majority of the shoot. Sometimes the best location ends up being a foyer, by the backdoor or kitchen...usually wherever there is a large window. It may feel weird in the moment, but trust me, it will make for the best photos. That said, I'll also bring additional lighting equipment to help out when needed.

WHAT DO "I" WEAR?

I think this is the perfect time to pamper yourself! Go have your hair + makeup done (or better yet, have someone come to you!), schedule a massage or have your nails done. Looking super relaxed and at your best will make you feel more comfortable during the session. This is an exciting time in your life and I want to capture all of that...so take care of yourself first! And feel free to tell your husbands that I'm making you if they need a little convincing!

As far as clothing? Keep it simple. Throw in a little color if you'd like, but skip the patterns. (And don't feel the need to match everyone in white shirts and jeans – there's simple...and then there's boring! ;)

FOR THE MEN.

Your hands, and possibly even your feet, will play a major role in this session, so it's important that you tend to them too! Trim and tidy your nails and apply lotion to any dry skin. (It also never hurts to dab a little moisturizer on your face to help you look more refreshed. Those late nights and long days with the kids can take a toll on your skin!)

A little clothing advice? Long or short sleeved knits - think polo or button-down - are best. (Make sure there isn't too much bagginess in the sleeve.) Make sure your t-shirts are free of logos or writing. *Wrinkles do show up in photos, so please make sure all clothing is ironed or steamed.

MAKE THE BED!

Is there anything more simple + gorgeous than a new family cuddled up in bed together? The answer is no! So I might suggest that we move the session to your bedroom at some point. If that's something that appeals to you, a few tips: 1) Make the bed, just this once. ;) 2) A solid blanket/comforter (or something that isn't TOO busy is best.) 3) I highly recommend white to light cream bedding to keep things light and airy. And I'm more than happy to bring some along if needed – just let me know!

For newborns/babies under 6 months:

CRANK THE HEAT!

I recommend that you keep your home a bit warmer than normal during the session. (Like a toasty 80 degrees or so.) Newborns are used to being all bundled up, warm + cozy...and then I come in and yank off all their clothes for those adorable naked baby shots. They tend not to like that too much! Pushing up the thermostat is guaranteed to make the session flow more smoothly and help them sleep better. We may be sweating, but baby will be nice and warm...and that's really all that matters!

Crank the heat 30 minutes before our session to ensure that it's warm enough in time for the clothes yanking. Bonus points if you're willing to make a few back and forth trips to the dryer to keep baby's blankets warm! They love that!

POSED VS. CANDID

While I love the classic, timeless posed shots, I tend to find that clients are the most happy with the real-life, behind the scenes candid shots. We will get both - and plenty of them. It's always a little awkward having someone come into your home and just point a camera in your face and say ok, GO, so I encourage you to direct me too. Take me to the rooms that mean the most to you, the places where you spend the most time. These are the places where everyone will feel the most comfortable.

I typically like to start in a place like this while you and your fam warm up to the camera. Then when you are more relaxed and used to a camera in your face, I will start giving you more direction and poses. Keep in mind that sometimes certain poses just do not work! Everything is unpredictable with kids and I am used to that. Sometimes the best shots end up being the candid of a failed pose, so don't get frustrated if you feel like your family "isn't doing a good job"!

Feel free to also tell me if there is a certain pose you want! My mind is racing and focusing on lighting and settings and poses that I had planned, so please speak up if there is a certain shot(s) you want!

LOOSEN UP!

If you want the naked baby shots, undress baby and loosen baby's diaper completely about 30 minutes before the session. This allows time for the diaper's imprint marks to disappear from their skin. Swaddle baby in a warm blanket until I arrive. If baby's skin is a little dry or flaky, try applying a small bit of baby lotion to those spots the day before my session. But

don't worry if it doesn't go away completely...Photoshop does wonders on red, flaky, bumpy newborn skin!

SLEEPY

Most of the images I'll be shooting work best if the baby is in a deep sleep. To encourage this, I recommend that you do whatever it takes to make sure baby is nice and exhausted. Keeping your little one awake on top of your own sleep deprivation might feel like torture, but I think it will be worth it in the end!

HUNGRY

A well fed baby is a happy baby! Please feed and burp baby right before our session to ensure a happy, sleepy ("milk drunk") baby. I'll also be more than happy to take as many breaks as needed to help him/her re-fuel. It's tough work being a model!

VOLUME CONTROL!

Please do whatever you can to keep the noise level to a minimum during my session. If you have other children that might create noise, try to find a sitter or family member to take them away from the home for a few hours. If you have a noisy pet, you may want to do the same. I'll bring a white noise machine, but it doesn't always block out tantrums and playtime.

* If you have children and would like them to be included in some photos, I recommend bringing them in at the beginning or end of a session and then having someone take them. Only those being photographed should be present to help maintain a calm environment.

RELAX!

Let me say it again... Relaxxx! I'm pretty comfortable holding and posing newborns. Your baby is in safe hands, I promise! So yes! Feel free to rest and leave the room for a bit if you'd like. I've had parents who've used this time to take a nap, shower, eat... All totally acceptable to me! If I have a question or need you for feeding, I'll come and track you down.

PATIENCE IS KEY!

Family/newborn sessions can be tough. It all depends on the little one's mood and with newborns, their willingness to sleep. Unfortunately...this isn't something we can predict! I ask that everyone remain calm, should he/she not want to sleep, since your baby will pick up on any frustration in the room. And if sleep doesn't happen, that's okay! Wide-eyed newborn photos are beautiful too.

IN CASE YOU MISSED THAT: RELAX!

Moms tend to stress out because this is a new experience...and they aren't used to the waiting game that is *newborn photography*. They see their baby being fussy or having a

difficult time getting settled and panic. "This is a disaster! They aren't going to get ANY good photos!" It isn't, and I will! I take the baby's lead; getting them to sleep before posing takes time and they may need to be fed or cuddled a few times first. In fact, I'd say that a good 50% of your session will involve feeding, diaper changes, and cuddling to get baby comfortable. If that doesn't work, I'll take a break or I'll work with what baby is giving me. Sometimes the best photos happen when baby doesn't do what I want.

Just remember: Babies can sense stress and anxiety (especially from their mommy's!) It's super important that EVERYONE remain calm and relaxed during this session. Keeping the environment as mellow as possible is pretty much the only way I'm going to get the shots I'm looking for.

POOP HAPPENS!

If your baby is going to be in the buff for some of this shoot. Please don't panic if your baby decides to use my blankets (or me) as his/her own personal potty. This is natural and I expect it! Please don't feel embarrassed or worry when this happens, because they all do it. It would definitely be helpful if you had a stack of old towels, extra wipes and blankets available for when things get messy though.

*If you would like shots in a diaper, it's a good idea to have a cloth diaper, diaper cover in a solid color, bloomers, or something to put over the diaper. Diapers on their own tend to look a little messy and distracting in photos, but throwing a cover over it cleans things up.

DON'T HESITATE TO ASK IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS - AGAIN THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR SESSION IS THAT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE RELAXED AND HAVE FUN!

SHOT LIST:

NOTE: Feel free to send me any inspo shots that you want to try to get prior to our shoot!

Newborn only

1. Swaddled on the bed or couch, close up shot
2. Swaddled on the bed or couch, pulled back to show baby and bed
3. Directly overhead
4. Swaddled in the crib
5. Directly overhead in crib
6. Shoot through crib slats
7. Get facial expressions - crying, smiling, yawning, etc.
8. Use macro lens/filter to capture details - eyelashes, nose, lips, profile, toes, ears, fingers

Newborn + mom

1. Mom snuggling baby in nursery rocker up close

2. Mom snuggling baby in nursery rocker, pulled back to show entire room
3. Baby laying on mom's chest (focus on interactions - mom kissing, smiling, baby holding mom's finger, etc)
4. Baby with head in mom's hands, laying in her lap, her elbows resting on her thighs. Stand directly overhead and shoot down, with focus on baby
5. Backlight mom in a window (shoot from the side and in front of her)
6. Mom holding baby with you shooting behind her, over her shoulder
7. Nursing shots (with permission - as a courtesy, these are for the family's eyes only and don't belong on in a blog post, in marketing/advertising materials or on social media!)
8. Mom holding naked newborn with baby bottom visible
9. Mom smiling down at baby

Newborn + dad

1. Baby snuggled in dad's arms, with dad barely kissing baby's nose/forehead/cheeks, close up (dad and baby's faces should fill the frame)
2. Baby snuggled in dad's arms, pulled back
3. Dad cradling baby's head in his hands. Shoot from the front and from above.
4. Get baby peeking over dad's shoulder (baby should be 2+ weeks old)
5. Get dad engaged in action with baby - reading, swaddling, bathing, etc
6. Dad backlit in front of a window
7. Dad holding baby in a location that is special to him - "his" chair, man cave, home office, etc.

Newborn + siblings

1. Sibling(s) kissing newborn
2. Sibling(s) holding swaddled newborn
3. Siblings(s) laying on bed with newborn
4. Sibling(s) playing with baby (counting toes, fingers, etc)
5. If parents are comfortable, add pets into shots

Family

1. Family standing over baby in crib
2. Family engaging with each other with baby in crib
3. Mom holding newborn while dad holds sibling(s)
4. Dad holding newborn while mom holds sibling(s)
5. Family reading together on the couch
6. Focus on mom while family is cuddled together on couch/bed
7. Focus on dad while family is cuddled together on couch/bed
8. Focus on baby while family is cuddled together on couch/bed
9. Siblings kiss baby while parents watch
10. Dad tickles older sibling while mom holds newborn
11. If family is comfortable, add pets in with couch/bed shots.

Details

1. Create a flat lay with baby's tiny things: diaper, outfit, pacifier, shoes, any documents/bracelets from hospital, tiny knick knacks in nursery
2. Close-up of anything mom made for nursery - decoration, mobile, blanket, clothing, etc
3. Shot of entire nursery
4. Shot of special places in nursery - crib, rocker (don't be afraid to stage it with stuffed animals, sweet blankets from the room, etc)