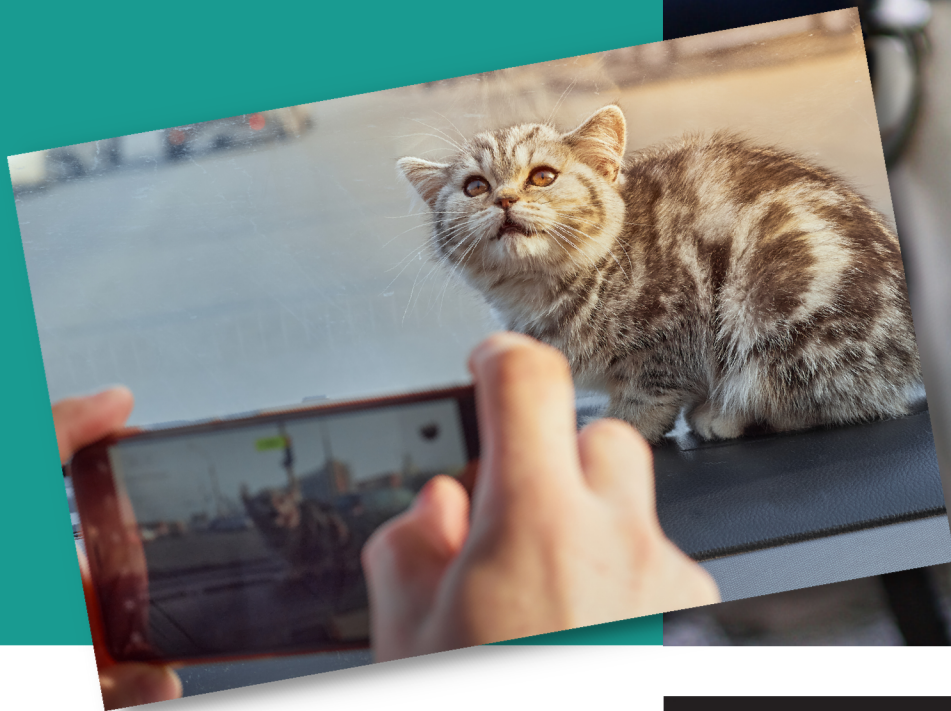


10 Steps to Awesome Pet Painting Reference Photos



*Parnell*STUDIOS

Marla Rush Parnell

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10 Steps to Awesome Pet Painting Reference Photos



Let's Get Started!

When commissioning a custom painted portrait, it's important to provide high-quality reference photos that capture the unique features and personality of your pet. If you choose to provide your own photos, keep in mind these simple guidelines to help you capture the best images possible.



1

First and foremost, take your photos in good natural lighting conditions

Avoid harsh overhead lighting and strong light behind your pet, and instead opt for natural light.

Don't use a flash because it washes out details, especially in faces.

Plan to shoot outdoors in the early morning or late afternoon, or indoors near a window with indirect sunlight.



Sometimes backlighting, or "rim light" results in a dramatic image, and will make a gorgeous painting.

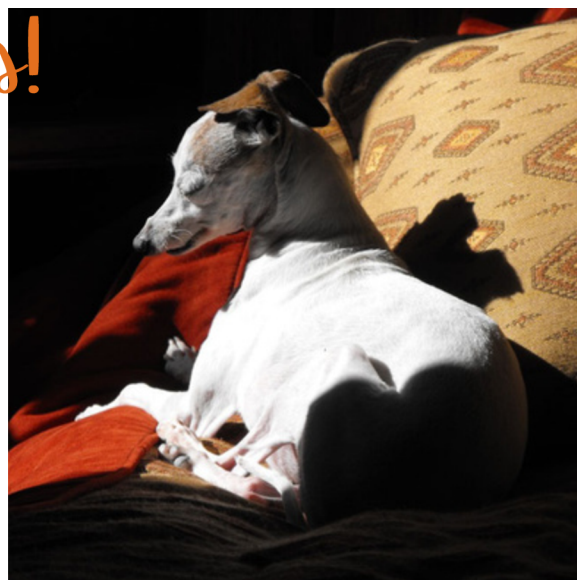
2

Dramatic lighting makes the most stunning portraits!

I paint how light moves over an animal, highlighting the pose, features and fur. Look for good lights and shadows, which contribute to stunning paintings!



Good
Examples!



I painted both these Sheltland Sheepdogs, but the photo on the left, with the strong lighting from a window, made a much more interesting portrait. The overall flat lighting of the Sheltie on the right resulted in a painting with less dimension and interest.



3

Choose a photo with a closeup of your subject



Get down on your pet's level, and don't shoot from your point of view above. Animals looking up don't make attractive portraits!

Get back from your pet and zoom in for that closeup. Shooting too closely results in distortion, like a huge nose in the foreground!



Examples of Poor Photos

4

Focus for details

Make sure the details of your pet are in focus. The sharper the image, the more detail I can put into your painting.

Use a tripod or hold your phone or camera steady against a stationary object.

Don't worry about the background, unless there's something back there you plan for me to paint.



5 A portrait with more than one pet

For multiple pets to be included in the same portrait, you may supply separate photos of each subject.

Be sure that the direction and brightness of the light are the same in each photo to ensure that the colors and shadows are consistent across all the subjects.

Original Photos

It's also helpful to provide a photo with all the pets together.

This helps me to create a composition that accurately reflects the size relationship of the pets.



It's okay if your hands are in the frame helping to pose the pet, as I can eliminate them!



Using Photoshop, I arrange multiple pets into a good composition. You'll approve the arrangement before I start to paint.



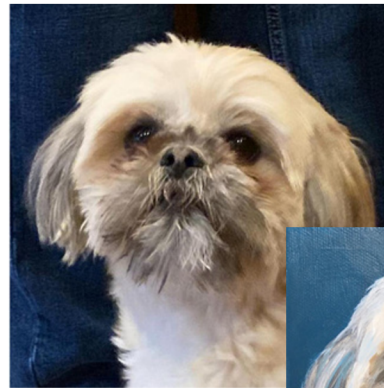
6 Choose a photo that captures an expression that you love

The view you provide of your pet will be the view that I use to capture the essence and personality of your pet.

I'm limited to the reference photo you give me. I can't change the position of your pet's head, alter their expression, or open their squinting eyes.

Choose a photo that best represents your pet and showcases their unique features and personality.

I can help you choose just the right image!



1 Provide a variety of photos

Every pet is unique. That's why I encourage you to provide a variety of photos for color reference or background ideas.

Extra photos help me better understand your pet's character and create a more personalized and meaningful portrait.

I'm also happy to make small adjustments to the photos you provide, such as removing a pet's collar or even adding a name to a tag.

Just ask me!

Photos taken with your phone

...are absolutely fine! Just be sure to follow all the guidelines suggested on these pages to get the absolute best quality reference pictures.



8 Emailing your photos

So I have the best possible reference photos for your pet portrait, please email them to me directly and I'll confirm receipt of your files.

Send high-quality photos up to 10MB in size. This will ensure the details of your pet's features are visible and can be accurately painted in the portrait.

The resolution for digital photos should be at least 300 dpi for a clear, crisp image.

It's usually fine to use photos taken on a phone. Not sure? Just send it to me to check.

You may send me your photos in a variety of formats, including jpg, tif or pdf files.

Once I receive your photos, I'll carefully review them. If I have any questions or concerns, I'll reach out to you to discuss them before beginning work on the portrait.



9 Mailing your photos

If you need to send photos not available in digital format, contact me and I'll give you my mailing address.

I recommend using a shipping method that includes tracking and insurance to ensure that your materials arrive safely.

I'll take great care in handling your materials and return them to you with your completed portrait.

10 Using Professional Photos

I welcome using reference photos shot by a professional photographer. However, you must first provide a written release signed by the photographer that grants us the use of his/her original photo(s).

That will keep everyone happy!

Thank you for requesting my Pet Painting Photo Reference Guide!

I hope you've learned a few tips that will help you shoot great reference photos of your pets, not only for me to use in painting their portrait, but as keepsakes for you.

Pets are an important part of our lives and capturing their unique personalities and traits through photography is super fun!

Creating a custom pet portrait is a truly heart-warming experience for me, and I describe it as sending joy out into the world.

Let me send you some joy!

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- Signature Member of Pastel Society of America, New York City, NY
- Gateway Pastel Artists, St. Louis, MO
- International Association of Pastel Societies

Award-winning canine portrait artist with a pastel painting in the permanent collection of the American Kennel Club Museum of the Dog, New York City, NY.



One very last thing you should know:

I have drawn and painted animals for as long as I can remember. Yeah, I was one of those kids.

This is a portrait of my first dog, Torky, who came into our family when I was seven. I've been obsessed with dogs ever since.

I am currently Dog Mom to two Shelties, Zookie and Zeke.