

Preparing For An Acting Headshot Photography Session

The fact that you are reading this is a start. The rest of the process should be somewhat back-to-front.

As the date of your photography session gets closer, give yourself a few days to think about hair and clothing. That way you will be more confident with your choices and still have time for a last-minute brainstorm. Schedule your photo session to account for your cycles of sleep, medication or exams, and allow plenty of extra time to spend at the studio. Also, give haircuts a few days to fall into place, and shave your face (men, and women when necessary, please) at a time that leaves you neither too rough nor too red. The morning of your session, get a good breakfast and read the paper. Then go wash your face and apply some moisturizer to replace the skin oil you just scrubbed out. Under no circumstances should you stay up late, party or drink the night before your session, even if you are not scheduled until late in the afternoon. You just can't get away with it.

Drink plenty of water. The water will help your skin to appear smooth and clear in the week leading up to your headshot session.

Also, if you arrive overheated and sweaty you'll have to cool down before the photographer can begin to shoot. This is simply because your photographer cannot shoot an actor's headshot when you are glistening, as this will show up clearly as shiny patches around your face. Worse still if you are perspiring heavily, this will show up clearly as beads of moisture and ruin your actor's headshot.

Another thing to think about is the photographer's time. Arriving late or not being ready to shoot when you do arrive, can lead to rush or shortened sessions as the next client may be arriving shortly. I allow a minimum of one hour for each appointment as this leaves plenty of time for late arrivals, stress on arrival and in some cases a reluctance to have a headshot done.

Who Should Take Your Acting Headshots?

A photographer, who is familiar with the conventions of the talent headshot business. Your local family portrait studio is probably not right for the job.

What Is An Acting Headshot?

It's an 8x10 photograph of you, with your name on it, as you look right now, showing how you connect with the camera. The more professional your headshot, the better represented you will be in the industry.

The director wants to see 2 things from a headshot: What you really look like, and if you can connect with the camera. The style of your headshot does not matter. But, simple is better. The photo should be about you, not the background or the environment or a photographer's fancy tricks. Producers want to see if you're professional.

Headshot Photos - What To Wear

The best clothes to wear during a headshot photo shoot are a widely debated topic. The following is a version of what I have discovered.

- Plain & simple, not dated
- I want to focus on your eyes and not be distracted by your clothing. I would like to see

- you in a solid colored shirt (very dark or very light) with an interesting neckline and maybe a textured finish to the fabric.
- Limited Jewelry: Avoid distracting accessories, such as large, shiny jewelry. If you have a pierced ear, wear studs or small hoops. No matter how much you love your gold necklace, remember it will take the focus away from your face.
 - Neckline: Is your neck short or long? A V-neck lengthens the neck; a round neckline shortens it. A collar frames the face well, without taking away length from your neck. A collared shirt with a V-neck or a few buttons undone is most popular. Turtlenecks completely hide the neck, which is very unflattering, and should be avoided.
 - No Logos: Okay. NO WRITING ON YOUR SHIRT. logos mean product placement issues and the production staff must be very careful about legal issues. So if a logo appears in your headshot, it just shows you aren't clued in.
 - You will need to be comfortable in the clothing.
 - Remember your headshot is your marketing/sales tool.
 - Denim jackets: Sometimes they work. Bring it along and we'll see.
 - No shiny leather: Screams "over the top". It limits your potential and distracts from your face.
 - Glasses: If you always wear glasses, keep them on for the photo shoot. Lighting can be adjusted to eliminate glare. In difficult cases, the lenses can sometimes be removed from the frames, but it is very important to maintain a natural, comfortable look
 - Subdued/No Patterns: Avoid bold colors and crazy patterns. They will present a distraction.
 - Light to dark colors are fine, as long as it doesn't match or come close to your skin tone. Wear items that provide some contrast to your skin tones.
 - Anything that has texture is nice. Its adds interest without being distracting.
 - No polka dots, no wild prints, and no distracting stripes. Clothing of this type can have a tendency to distract the viewer from the most important subject in your photos, *you*. Pastel colors are typically not recommended. Neither is white or black, but more importantly, you should avoid anything that clashes with your skin tone. Colors that compliment your skin tone are appropriate.
 - Don't wear a turtleneck.
 - Avoid blouses with padded shoulders.
 - Don't try to fit in to something too small.
 - Women should bring the correct bra colors for the wardrobe. (please remember to wear a flesh-toned bra under white garments!)
 - Men should bring a couple of different newish t-shirts in different shades.

Makeup Tips – How to Apply Makeup for Photographs

- Skin Features: Do not hide your skin's personality! Flaunt your freckles. Cover your moles. They are a part of what makes you unique. Unique features are what make others sit up and take notice. Of course, if the day of the shoot you are sporting a monstrous zit, use some light makeup, but I'll magically heal it! Generally speaking, unusual attractive features are an asset. Who would ever want to say good-bye to Harrison Ford's chin scar?
- Avoid heavy makeup! During finishing of your selected images, we will take care of blemishes and other 'artifacts' on your skin during the basic retouch process. Heavy makeup tends to look caked up. Remember that my cameras and lenses produce images at far higher definition than even HDTV and my job is to flatter you, but your headshot has to look like the person that walks into the audition space!
- B/W Photo: Remember, if you are going for you're doing this for Black and White, not color; darker colors will appear as shadow, lighter colors as highlight. The trend in the states is for color headshots and in UK is B&W because I shoot everything in color, you'll

have a wide range of choices.

- Ladies with straight hair: You want to frame your face, so if your hair is very straight and long, give it some body to accentuate your face.
- Haircut: Don't cut your hair the day before your shoot! It will look like you just got a haircut. Give your hair a week after a cut to relax.

Remember, it's all about the eyes!

How important are the eyes? They are critical to making your headshot stand out. The wow factor! The eyes define a person. They are the windows into that person's soul. The eyes are one of, if not the single most, important parts of a portrait photograph. It is the first feature noticed. It is also one place where a little post-processing can really make a portrait shine. And your "theater" look is the closest to your natural self in the most positive sense--when you are rested, relaxed in a positive frame of mind and raring to go. For this shot feel free to let your own personal sense of style come through, within the bounds of how you are likely to be cast. Character actors should not dress as ingénues and vice versa.