



# mazart|studio

Handy guide for choosing portrait photographs.



**As a professional artist, working with your client to choose the right reference photograph is essential and will make all the difference in the quality of your artwork and client satisfaction.**

I have created this handy guide for you to print out. This will help you to confidently discuss photo choices with your potential clients.

Recommended  
**MazArt  
Brush Set**

*A PDF version of these handy booklets is FREE for you to download with the purchase of this course. However, if you would like to purchase these beautiful glossy booklets, please visit [www.mazartstudio.co.uk](http://www.mazartstudio.co.uk)*



**[www.mazartstudio.co.uk](http://www.mazartstudio.co.uk)**



**Client's expectations of commissioning an artist can be very unrealistic, and it will be your job to guide them.**

Often a client might think you can “make things up” and whilst it may be the case in some situations, quite often it is not. If you cannot see the eyes, for example, you will not be able to make them up and produce a good likeness.

***Your artwork is also your business.*** As a professional portrait artist, I would rather refuse a commission than to spend hours struggling with a difficult photograph and risk a dissatisfied client who refuses to pay!

You want to be able to work from a photo that shows the quality of artist you are. A poor photo will produce a poorer painting and that is not good for future commission work.



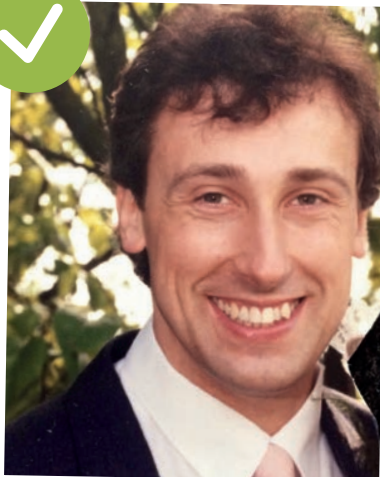
**All you need to succeed is a good quality photograph to work from... I cannot stress enough that the better the photo, the better your finished portrait!** Encourage your client to follow these useful tips when photographing their subject or choosing a photo for commission work.



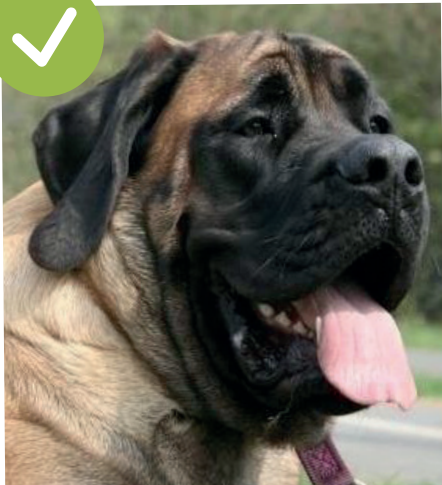
# Photographing your subject



*A lovely photo but would be a difficult head and shoulder portrait. Too much of the body showing so the head would be too small. It is also a little blurred.*



*Great photo! Balanced lighting taken in natural light with clear focus AND without a flash. This chest-level image also fills the frame perfectly.*



*A beautiful photo! Good pose and lighting. This 3/4 head and shoulder shot is ideal for portrait painting.*



*A blurred, badly cropped photo taken using a camera phone or pulled from the Internet. These might look okay on a screen but the resolution is too low for printing fine detail.*

# Photographing your subject



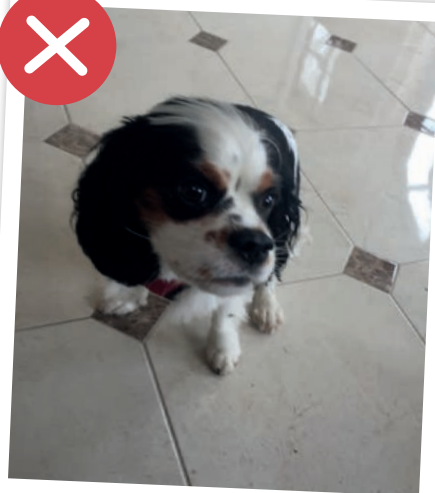
*A beautiful photo but not a great for a portrait. There is too much of the body on show - it would need to be cropped to chest level and still remain sharp.*



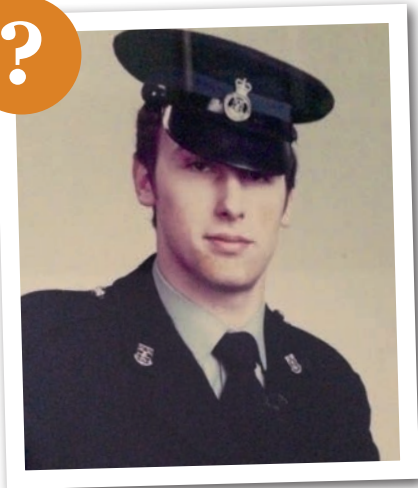
*Very cute pose with potential, but the essential details are too small to work from. The eyes are also in deep shadow and difficult to make out.*



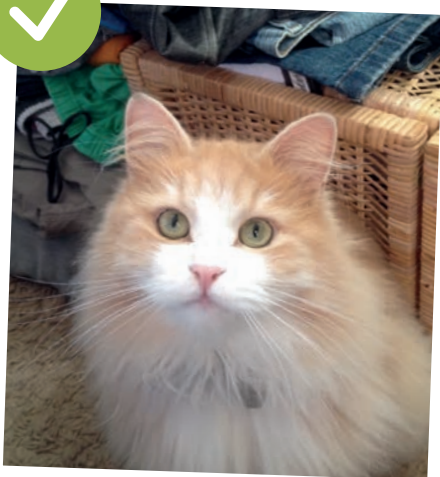
*Beautiful 3/4 pose with dog in full frame. Lots of light and shadow and very sharp focus with high resolution and file size above 3mb/3000kb.*



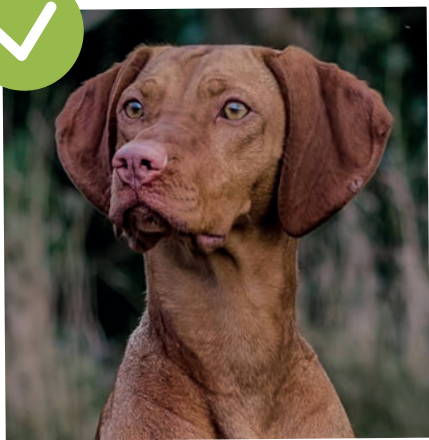
*Poor photo. The dog is at a bad angle that also isn't at eye level. He also hasn't filled the frame of the shot.*



*Old photos can be difficult to work with due to the quality. However, with experience you may be able to work with this photo it is a great pose although the eyes are in shadow.*



*A good, clear photo. The lighting is even and details are sharp. The angle is also nice for a portrait.*



*A professional photo can be worth investing in! This is taken with a high resolution SLR camera. Perfect lighting, posing and focus. Wonderful!*



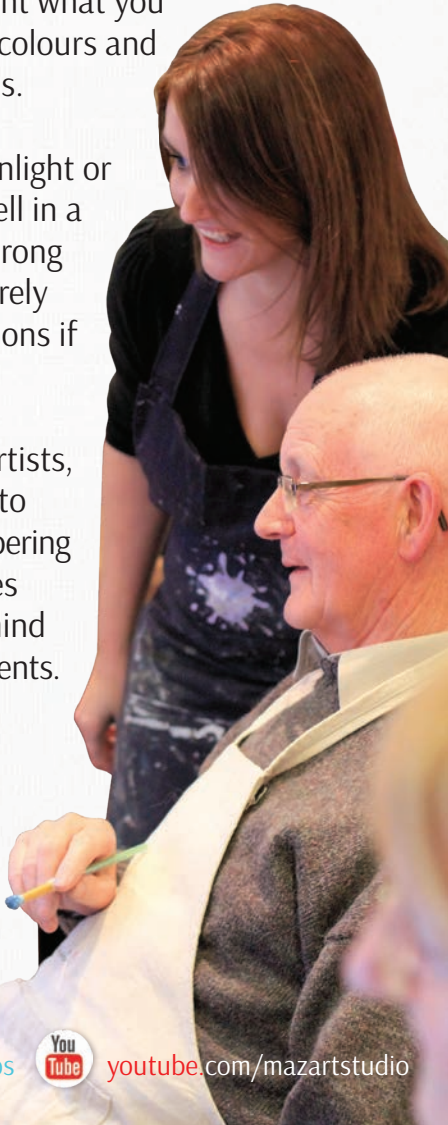
*Not an ideal photo as the quality is poor. However, with experience, you may be able to work with this photo. Find detailed eye pictures of the dog breed from the Internet to help with this type of commission.*



# Some final things to remember...

- **High Resolution Photographs** – Are your photos high resolution? Ideally, anything over 1MB is excellent although smaller photos can be used. Remember the higher the quality and the clearer the image the better.
- **How sharp is the image?** You can only paint what you can see; your photo needs to clearly show colours and details. Make sure your photos are in focus.
- **Lighting** – Try to avoid photos in strong sunlight or dark shadows, as it doesn't come across well in a painting. Squinting is never ideal nor are strong shadows across the face where you can barely see details. Be aware of the lighting conditions if you are taking your own photos.
- **Backgrounds** - the great news is that, as artists, we can pretty much alter the backgrounds to suit the portrait. However, it is worth remembering that a very busy background can sometimes detract from the portrait, so keep that in mind when discussing background options with clients.

I will often charge extra for a complicated background, and keep one simple price for a softly blended background (something I recommend often for a simple head and shoulder style portrait).



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As seen on Sky TV and Freesat's  
'The Painting and Drawing Channel'

