



## **If You Have a Great Dog (and we all do), You Can Make Great Dog Pictures**

Here is the secret to great dog photography: being smarter than your dog (at least temporarily). At my house this takes focus, hard work, a polished plan of attack and a well-developed sense of humor. Here are a few tips, tricks and hard fought lessons that might help you make some pictures of your best friend worthy of framing, displaying on your desk at work, or even showing to complete strangers at the grocery store.

**Equipment Part 1** - Almost all cameras have a “Portrait” setting – if you can find the little picture of a human head on the dial on top of your camera, you’re good to go. The little picture of a sprinter is best if you want action shots or expect them to happen unintentionally.

**Timing Part 1** - When is your Boxer most likely to pay attention to you for ten consecutive minutes? Are they a morning dog or a night... uh... owl? Schedule your photo sessions for whenever they’re usually awake but not necessarily up for a jog.

**Location** - You have enough pictures of your Golden Retriever playing in the pool. Go to a park. Go to a National Park. Go anywhere and make a day of it. Good dog photography is about documenting good memories with your best bud – get off the couch and go make some.

**Perseverance** – Don’t expect great pictures from a single session. Going back several times to the same place at the same time of day will create some familiarity for your German Shepard. With that sense of routine, they’ll be more calm right out of the car and become used to seeing a camera in front of your face and in theirs.

**Timing Part 2** - Photographers talk about the “Golden Light” shortly after dawn or before sunset when, oddly enough, sunlight does have a golden tone. If your dog is naturally chilled out during this time of day than you are, as they say, Golden. (Yes, I did just say that and I am so, so, sorry). Otherwise, avoid shooting at midday if at all possible.

**Equipment Part 2** - For those that have expensive cameras or want to take more control over the result (either one of you), use Aperture Priority, f/5.6 with an ISO of 400 or 800.



**It's Not Always About the Dog** - It's sometimes about the background. Your dog is cute enough to ensure beautiful pictures but ALWAYS pay attention to the background because cute pictures don't count when your Terrier has a flagpole sprouting from their head.

**The Center of the Universe** – Once you've found a good location and have mastered the suggested camera settings, put some distance between your Weimaraner and the background. The result will be images where your dog is in focus and everything else is nicely blurred.

**Creative Direction** - Who has ultimate authority at this photo shoot? Not you. The images you will value most are the ones that catch your Pitt Bull's patented look of exasperation (two minutes into the shoot) or that look of bliss as they curl up to take a nap (five minutes into the shoot). They know what makes them cute - listen to them and execute the shot.

**Pace Yourself** – Don't break out the treats too early. Favored snacks will work later in the shoot, but do your best to capture your pics when the dog is interested in what you're doing rather than what's in it for them.

**The Shotgun Theory of Effective Pet Photography** - Even if you can get your dog to sit still, perfectly quaffed and posed (or for you dreamers out there, with their tongue in their mouth), 90% of your shots won't be as good as you thought. Digital "film" is free - use it all.

**Respect the Dog** - Treat your Beagle like a Buddhist Monk. Keep your camera/eyes at the same level as or lower than theirs – at least for a majority of the shots.

**Prepare the Field of Battle** – Small dog owners who treat their Pomeranians like Buddhist Monks will find themselves splayed flat out on the ground. If you're shooting in the back yard, definitely, positively, and without hesitation "clean up" the lawn before the shoot. The same rule applies for shooting at the park. Trust me, you won't regret that little bit of extra effort.

OK, the truth is that you aren't likely to ever be smarter than your dog. No dog photographer ever is. But if you follow these guidelines and pay attention to how your Collie poses naturally, you'll have a leg up on other photographers. So to speak.