

* Portraits without a Studio

- * Subjects may be more relaxed in a familiar environment
 - * The formality of a studio setting can create forced poses and fixed expressions
 - * Children particularly respond well to an outdoor situation where they can play and act naturally, the trick is then to follow the action and take pictures as the session unfolds
- * Less equipment may be required
 - * One or possibly two speedlights and a reflector will generally suffice
 - * The emphasis is on reducing shadows or creating depth and texture to the image

*** What are the positives?**

- * Nothing major
 - * Less control than in a studio environment
 - * Intrusive bright colours in the background
 - * Other people
 - * It can be tricky learning to balance mixed lighting sources
 - * Balancing fill-in flash against daylight can seem difficult to achieve
 - * There is a need to be aware of colour casts
 - * Walls, ceilings, plants etc
 - * The type of ambient lighting can create issues when shooting
 - * High, noon-day sun with stark, contrasty shadows is difficult, particularly with larger noses, deep-set eyes etc
 - * High contrast lighting is also an issue with skin creasing
 - * If outdoors, the weather may be an issue
 - * Safety of subjects, photographer and equipment are an issue

 **And the negatives**



* Make use of your subject's personality.



- * Shoot with wide apertures to control depth of field and separate your subject from the background
- * Open shade gives softer, less intense light with more flattering modelling
- * This can be advantageous when photographing more mature subjects as skin blemishes and lines are less evident



- * Woodland settings can provide an attractive location with diffuse light
- * The downside is that it is easy to end up with a green cast on the pictures
- * Setting your white balance may be necessary, or be prepared to remove the cast in post processing



- * Using soft outdoor lighting and a shallow depth of field can produce a gentle, intimate style of portraiture that is more captivating than a studio shot
- * The surroundings provide a natural ambience to the shot and careful choice of outfits can give a sense of the season
- * In this shot, the cold tone of the light and the model's fur collar immediately suggest winter



- * Flash can help to improve the control of lighting and make the image look more stylish
- * Backlighting with a single Speedlight has added a rim-light to the model's hair, increasing the separation from the background and increasing the texture in the hair



- * Simple window light can provide soft, directional light that is very effective for portraiture
- * North facing windows particularly offer a reasonably consistent light



- * For male subjects, harder lighting can be used effectively to emphasise their masculinity
- * A more direct stare into the camera is an effective way to provide an almost challenging look



For a bridal portrait, a shot that emphasises the bride and recedes the groom into the background is often effective and in one gives the viewer the couple but makes the bride more prominent on the day of her wedding



Children can be allowed to play freely in a favourite environment

Keep pace with what they are doing and shoot as the play unfolds

You can try to gather the family together at some point in the proceedings for some group shots

Try to make these as relaxed and enjoyable as possible

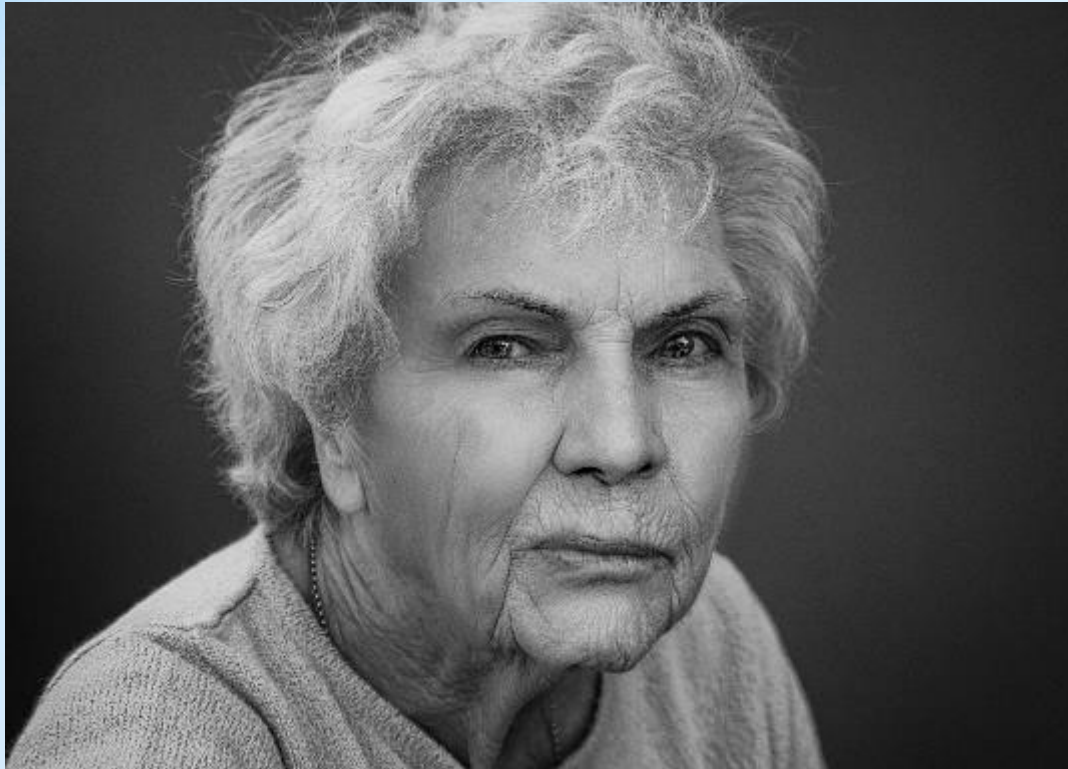
Picnic blankets make a good reference point to gather people together and provide an underpinning for informal groups



Don't forget basic skills.
A quick burst of flash here
has illuminated the
foreground without adding
further to the burn-out in
the background
In this case it was fill flash
using just the camera's built
in flash



Make use of available
props or resources
The groom here was a
flamboyant character and
loves cars
A quick word with the
chauffeur of the wedding
car made it possible to get
this image



- * With a more mature subject, treat them kindly but don't try to make them look young
- * My mother hated having her picture taken but she grudgingly liked this one
- * It doesn't disguise her age, she was nearly 90, and it portrays the indomitable character of someone who has seen life, lived through the blitz in Southampton and who had not long been widowed



Off camera flash can help with illumination and modelling
In this image, there was a quite strong low backlight
A single Speedlight with a diffusion dome on a stand to the left of the camera position lit the model's face and removed the shadow of her hat.



Environmental portraiture

Using the image to tell the viewer something about the subject

In this case it's quite a simple visual clue that the guy is a barman

The background, whilst slightly defocused still shows clearly his working environment



Use of an undiffused Speedlight in the background and another fired through a strip softbox to camera left has created the feel of a movie studio

It was actually shot in the model's living room



- * Using a remote Speedlight fired through a window and High Speed Sync has eliminated the ambient light and created a much more high contrast image than that created by window light.
- * The purists may criticise that the model's left eye is in darkness but another shot increasing the illumination on that side loses some of the feeling of mysteriousness
- * If shooting for creativity, be prepared to go for the shot you envisaged