

UPGRADE YOUR \$400 HEADSHOT TO A \$1,500 ONE WITHOUT SPENDING A DIME MORE

LEARN HOW TO GET AMAZING SHOTS WITH ANY PHOTOGRAPHER, ANY TIME



CITY HEADSHOTS
IT'S ALL ABOUT EXPRESSION

MARTIN BENTSEN

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HOW TO PREPARE

The goal of this booklet is to teach you exactly how to get the best headshots possible regardless of your photographer's skill level. Most lower-priced photographers can take a well-lit, professional-looking shot, but are lacking in ability to direct subtle expressions and help clients find a well-defined brand. This can lead to a less memorable shot which, in the end, winds up being less effective. It really is the main difference that separates \$400 headshots from \$1,500 ones.

As a way to close this knowledge gap, we wrote this booklet to teach you as a client exactly what you need to know so you can take care of all those details yourself without the help of a photographer.

As you probably know, doing your homework now will save you loads of money down the road, so let's get started.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Start by reading through each section so you know the basics, and then before any shoot you have, you can re-read the parts you are least familiar with to make sure you have everything prepared for your shoot.

If you do this, you'll be able to work with almost any technically proficient photographer and capture a headshot that stands out. You'll essentially be able to upgrade a \$400 headshot to a \$1,500 one.

WHAT PHOTOGRAPHERS WILL THIS NOT WORK FOR?

You need to be aware that this process won't work with certain photographers, so that's the first and most important part. Remember, even if you have the best expression in the world, a poorly-lit, unprofessional photo will not open any doors for you.

1. **Photographers who do not own professional equipment.** The photographer must own high-quality gear and great portrait lenses. You cannot work with a friend who has a kit lens and a cheap dSLR or iPhone camera. Even if your friend seems to have a lot of talent, you'll be wasting your time. There are certain aesthetic qualities of a professional headshot that are just impossible to capture with entry-level equipment.
2. **Photographers who do not let you see the images during the shoot.** If you're to direct yourself, you absolutely **MUST** work with a photographer who lets you see the photos throughout the shoot. Some photographers don't like to show their images until they are finalized and ready to be sent to you, but for the purposes of being able to direct yourself, you won't have a chance at a good shot if you can't see what things are looking like in real- time.
3. **Photographers who do not have excellent technical skills.** The photographer must have excellent technical ability or they won't be able to capture a good headshot no matter what you do. Look through their online portfolio and be sure that their images have professional lighting and a blurred outdoor or flat-color backdrop. See the example images below for reference of what we mean by professional (you can also look at the images on www.cityheadshots.com). If the photos don't really stand out to you, you probably shouldn't work with that photographer.
4. **Photographers who have really high prices (above \$600).** The whole point of this is to save you money, right? Most photographers who are highly skilled at directing and guiding you through the headshot process will charge a lot (we are one of the few photography studios who don't because we hire more team members as demand grows and expertly train them all). The point of this booklet is to teach you how to do your own directing and guidance so you can work with a cheaper photographer who has good technical ability, but can't direct you well.



To summarize, what we're looking for is someone who is not great at directing but can get you a fantastic-looking photo with their equipment and technical skill. By studying the information in this booklet, you'll be able to direct and guide yourself into an expression and angle that effectively upgrades a \$400 headshot into a \$1,500 headshot.

Ready to get started?

KNOW YOUR ANGLES

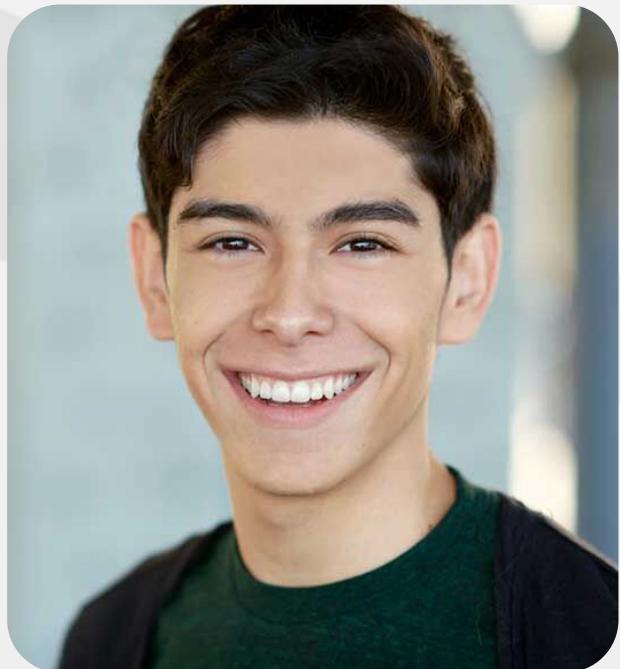
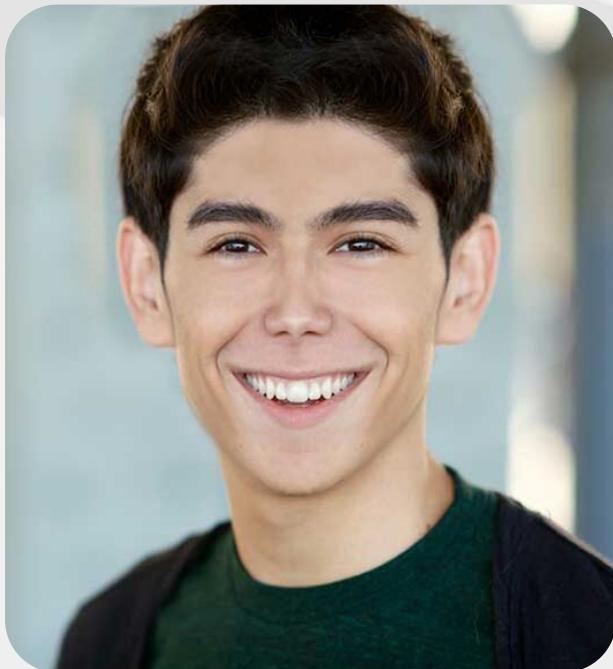
Do you know your best side? Do you know how light can work to flatter your face? Remember, assuming you're working with a technically proficient photographer, if you can explain to them right off the bat which angles you like the best and where the light should be positioned to look more flattering for you, you're going to save time and start getting great shots right away.

Too many actors waste the first hour of their shoot with lower-level photographers by trying to figure out what angles and expressions look best, and by the time they start capturing their best stuff, the shoot is over.

HOW TO FIND YOUR BEST SIDE

90% of people look better on one side than the other. Why? because our faces are not perfectly even. If we were to take a photo of someone and cut it in half and flip it over so both sides match perfectly, the photo would look really weird.

Take a look at the two photos below:



As you can see, people look more normal when their faces are not entirely symmetrical.

This calls into question whether we want the lighting to be coming perfectly from the center and whether we want our face directly straight forward into the camera, or tilted or turned one way or the other. What looks best and how can we find out?

The easiest way to find your best side is to use a simple point system for now, until you start to get the knack for why one angle or the other looks better for your face and you can tell just by looking at yourself.

Let's assign a numerical value to each facial feature so we can figure out which side is your best. Follow the steps below, looking at yourself in a mirror while doing it:

- 1 **Eyes:** First, look at your eyes and notice if one is bigger than the other. In about 70% of cases, the bigger eye should be the one positioned closer to the camera. Give the side of their face with the bigger eye one point. If both eyes are almost the same, no points are needed. *Note: To make it easier, touch your face on the side where you're giving yourself a point, because since you're seeing a mirror image of yourself, it can be easy to get confused.*
- 2 **Jaw:** Look at your jaw. Turn your face a bit to each side and notice if your jaw looks fatter or thinner on one side or the other. In about 70% of cases, shooting with the face turned so the jaw looks thinner is the best choice. Give the side of your face that makes the jaw look thinner another point. Again, it's possible that both angles look about the same. Only assign a point if one side is noticeably different.
- 3 **Nose:** Look at your nose. Does your nose look larger or smaller from one side or the other? Does it seem to be more pointy or distracting from a certain angle and less from another? If one angle or the other looks significantly better, assign another point to that side.
- 4 **Blemishes & distractions:** Look for blemishes or distracting elements. If there are some big blemishes or distracting marks, or you don't like your hair from a certain side, think about whether you're planning on having the final photo retouched. If you are, you don't need to worry about this step because the issue will be fixed afterwards. If you're not planning on retouching your final photo, give the side where the blemish doesn't show another point.

- 5 **Add it up.** Add up all the points and see which side had the most. Let's say your nose looks better on your left, but your eyes and jaw look better from the right. You're not planning on retouching the final photo and can hide a blemish when you turn your face to the left. If you add up the points, you would get 2 points on your left side and 2 points on your right. So in this case, you probably look even from both sides and you can easily do shots facing both directions.

If, however, your eyes look perfectly even, that means you would have 2 points for the left and one 1 point for the right, so you'd probably want to be shooting on left side of your face for most of the shoot.

Remember that in the end it all comes down to personal preference. If you think you prefer a side opposite to what the point system suggests, you can ask the photographer to do a test shot of you facing each direction and take a look and see which image you like best.

Remember, the steps above are just a simple starting point and only work correctly about 70% of the time.

HOW TO FIND THE BEST LIGHTING FOR YOUR FACE

Once you know your best side, the photographer should position the key light so that your nose is pointing towards it. Essentially you want your face pointing towards the brightest light source, not away from it for the beginning few test shots. If you're pointing away from the brightest light, it can sometimes make your face look fatter or cause parts of your face to be obscured by shadow, which definitely won't work for a headshot.



After the photographer gets the lighting set up, you should ask to see the photo so you can get an idea of where the light is coming from and what it's doing to the shape of your face. There are a few fixes we will discuss below that can help your face look better on-camera if you remember to try them during your shoot: