

Senior portrait specs—it's that time of year again.

It seems like every year, in late April advisers start to ask me if I have any recommendations for senior portraits for the coming year. The photographers who specialize in those types of pics like to get an early start and shoot them all summer. That's great for us, deadline-wise. So let's help them out by giving them some direction.

At right is a great example of what you should send them. We asked some of our most experienced advisers what they tell their senior portrait photographers. We then put the best of what these advisers told us into this article for you to use.

You can use this form as is, or you can change things so that they work for you and your school. Either way, we hope the list helps.

You may decide that these specs are either too lax or too restrictive but use them as a guideline. Some schools go so far as to tell seniors what they are allowed to wear. Many still require caps and gowns, or tuxedos for guys and fur drapes for girls. Others allow any kind of picture at all as long as it is the correct size. We do recommend that you limit background colors since almost every school will be printing the pictures in color. Bright or outdoor backgrounds tend to draw attention from the faces themselves to the backgrounds.

Sample Senior Portrait Specifications for Your Yearbook

Below is a set of sample senior portrait specifications. This should be sent to all seniors, their parents and all photographers who you think will be sending you portraits. It is important that parents receive this as some will attempt to take their own pictures.

Ideally, these specs should be sent out to photographers in May, and to parents as a part of a letter soliciting yearbook and senior ad sales sent before school is out. If specifications such as these have not been sent out prior to the end of this year, it may be too late to invoke them at the start of the year. Many of the portraits may already be taken, and you may need to live with what you get this year and make these changes for the next year.

Senior Portrait Specifications for the Yearbook

It's time to have your future senior's portrait taken if you haven't already done so. Pictures are due to the yearbook staff no later than **PUT YOUR DATE HERE**. Portraits received after **YOUR DATE** are not guaranteed to be included in the yearbook.

Summer is a great time to get portraits taken. Not only do you avoid the rush, but people also tend to be happier with the results. After a two-month rest, students are refreshed, which is reflected in the pictures. Students usually have a healthy glow from the summer sun to both skin and hair.

While most major photography studios in the area already have these specifications, please have your photographer make a print that matches the following:

- ✓ Head-and-shoulder shots only.
- ✓ No full body, no props. (This rule can save you many problematic discussions.)
- ✓ Plain backgrounds preferred in either gray or blue.
No outdoor shots or bright backgrounds allowed.
- ✓ Photo size: 1¾ inches tall by 1½ inches wide.
Photos can be larger as long as the head size is correct.
- ✓ Photos must be vertical.
- ✓ Head size from top of head to chin:
1 inch maximum.
- ✓ COLOR photos, please.
No black and white.

Special note:

It will really help if you send along a photo like this so that the photographers (especially the non-pros) can see exactly what you are looking for. You may want to make the face larger or smaller. That's your call.

