

How to Pose Hands in Portraits

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Sometimes the smallest things in a photo can impact the overall feel of the image.

I learned this important lesson the first time I photographed a wedding.

The groom's hands gave it all away.

On the day itself I thought the bride and groom were very relaxed and enjoying the day, but on getting the photos back I was immediately drawn to the hands of the groom. In virtually every shot they were clenched or grasping at the sleeves of his suit coat.

In showing the photos to others I found that quite a few of them noticed the same thing while others thought he looked stressed but couldn't quite put their finger (no pun intended) on why.

I later found out that the groom was having second thoughts about what he was doing all day long. His hands told the story.

The hands and fingers are often giveaways to how the rest of the body is feeling.

How to Photograph Hands

1. When posing a subject pay particular attention to their hands and encourage your model to keep them relaxed and their fingers separated.
2. If your subject can't seem to relax their hands - consider composing shots that don't include the hands (head shots and upper body shots).

3. Sometimes the best thing to do with hands is to give them something to hold or do. Consider using a prop (as long as it adds to and is relevant the shot and isn't distracting) or have them rest upon some other element in the shot (a leg, a chair etc).

4. Lastly - hands tend to look best when shot from the side. Front on shots of hands can often look quite blob like.