

If you would like me to work from your own photos, there are a few tips I can give you which will help you to help me get the best result. What makes a good photo is not always the same as what makes a good painting.

Camera

You don't necessarily need an expensive camera to take great pictures - a compact camera will do as long as it has a good (and clean) lens and gets the focus and exposure right. I am happy to work from either digital or film images as long as the quality is sufficient. Use a good brand of film, or your camera's highest quality digital setting to help capture maximum detail.

Lighting

Contrary to popular belief, the best light for photography is not bright sun, but diffused daylight - the kind you get on a cloudy day but when the light is strong. This means that there is enough light to give highlights and shadows but without the strong contrast you see with sunlight, which can cause detail loss in large areas. If you prefer to take your pictures in sunlight (for example you may have a horse with a shiny coat which looks best in the sun) try to keep the sun behind you, but watch out for your own shadow casting onto your subject. A definite no-no is direct flash: this flattens everything horribly and I hate it! If it is absolutely the only way you can get a picture I may not refuse it, but you must be aware that it will detract from the quality of the result.

Background

One thing you definitely don't need to worry about is the background! It doesn't matter in the least to me whether there's a pile of dustbins or an open field behind your dog, I won't be painting them anyway (unless you ask me to). Just make sure there isn't anything in the foreground obscuring your subject when you take the pictures.

Posing Dogs

The ease of this will depend on how well trained your dog is! Food is usually the best bribe if your dog isn't too greedy - you don't want him/her to be drooling. Otherwise a toy, a whistle or using your voice can produce the required expression of alertness. Avoid telling the dog off if it won't sit still - they are such expressive animals you will end up with a miserable-looking dogs on your pictures. Squat down to take the photos: you should hold the camera at the dog's eye level. You may need an assistant to attract the dog's attention in various directions. Much patience is needed with lively dogs, and as always, take plenty of shots. Before you start, make sure the eyes and nose are clean, and decide whether you want the collar on or off.