

THE PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOT GUIDE

ESSENTIAL PREPARATION TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL HEADSHOT



BY AUSTEN HUNTER PHOTOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

Your headshot does more than just show your face—it's a key piece of your professional and personal branding. Research has demonstrated that within the briefest moment—less than 1/10th of a second—we form lasting judgments. Your headshot is not just about the perfect angle or smile; it's about creating a connection and making your mark.

What does this mean for your headshot? It's not merely an introduction; it's a potent tool in your branding arsenal. That's where I, Austen Hunter, come in. As a professional headshot photographer with years of experience, my aim is to create a headshot that truly represents you, ensuring your first impression is not only seen but deeply felt.

This guide is here to help you arrive fully prepared for your headshot session. Think of it as a partnership between us. Capturing the ideal headshot is a blend of your readiness and my experience, turning a simple session into an impactful reflection of who you are, both personally and professionally. Let's work together to make your first impression not just seen, but truly memorable.

WHY HEADSHOTS MATTER:

Most first impressions are now made online. Make yours count with a professional headshot that boosts your credibility and sets you apart.

IDENTIFYING YOUR BRAND

Before stepping into the spotlight for your headshot session, it's important to take a moment for reflection on your brand's identity and aspirations. A headshot is a visual representation of your brand, offering a snapshot of who you are and what you stand for. This requires a deep dive into what your brand represents, its core values, and the message you wish to convey to your audience. This vision affects all aspects of the session, from the choice of backdrop to your attire, ensuring each detail contributes to a cohesive brand story.

Ahead you'll find 5 thoughtfully curated questions aimed at guiding you through this reflective journey. Your answers will not only clarify your branding objectives but also enable us to craft headshots that resonate with your unique story, making every image a powerful ally in your branding arsenal.

Your headshot is your calling card
...what do you want **yours** to say?



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QUESTION #1**What is your primary goal for these headshots?**

Understanding whether you're updating your professional profile, branching into new markets, or making a personal branding statement will guide the session's direction.

QUESTION #2**How do you want to be perceived?**

Think of four adjectives that you'd like people to associate with you when they see your headshot. This can shape the mood and style of the shoot.

QUESTION #3**Who is your target audience?**

Identifying who you want to connect with—be it potential employers, clients, or your professional network—helps in choosing the right tone and approach for your headshots.

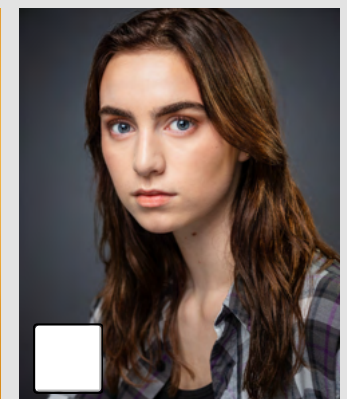
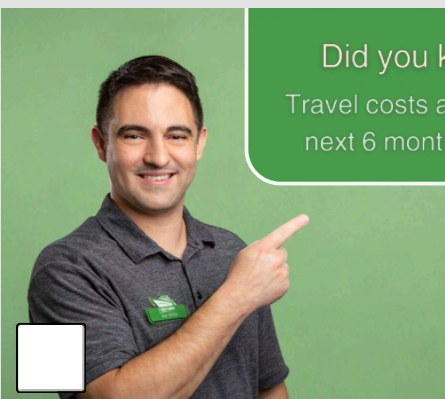
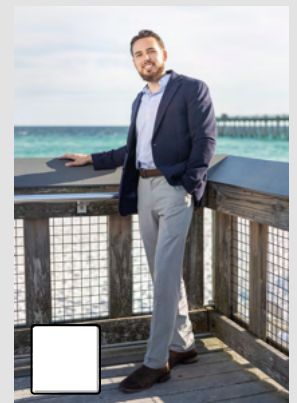
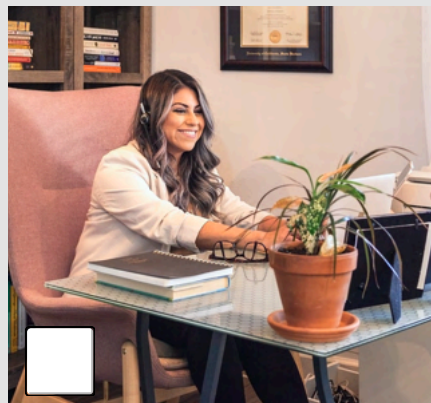
QUESTION #4**What aspects of your personality/brand do you want to highlight?**

Sharing what makes you unique allows us to focus on bringing out those qualities in your headshots, making them truly personalized. The aim is to ensure your headshot embodies your brand's identity, values, and the message you intend to communicate.

QUESTION #5

Which photos do you think your brand may need?

Select any from below:



IDENTIFYING YOUR BRAND (CONT'D)



As you prepare for your headshot session, remember that every element should align with the brand identity you've reflected on. Your answers to the branding questions will guide my approach, ensuring that your headshot authentically represents who you are and resonates with your target audience. Next, we'll dive into what to wear for your headshot to ensure you look your best and stay true to your brand.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Your headshot should reflect your personal or professional brand. Think about the image you want to project. Are you aiming for approachable and friendly, or professional and authoritative? Your wardrobe, expression, and even background should align with this vision.



WHAT TO WEAR

When choosing your outfit for headshot photos, think of it as an extension of your personal brand. Aim for solid colors that complement your skin tone and avoid busy patterns that can distract from your face. Layers can add depth to your look – consider a tailored blazer over a crisp shirt or a well-fitted cardigan. If you typically wear accessories, choose pieces that are understated yet elegant; they should enhance, not overshadow, your appearance. For a truly polished look, remember the details: *freshly pressed clothes, clean nails, and well-maintained hair*. Lastly, bring *multiple outfits* to your session. This gives us flexibility to match your attire with different backgrounds and settings, ensuring we capture the perfect image that resonates with your professional persona.

HEADSHOT DO'S

- Choose solid, flattering colors.
- Wear freshly pressed clothes.
- Select well-fitted, professional attire.
- Bring multiple outfit options.
- Opt for understated, elegant accessories.
- Ensure nails are clean and tidy.
- Style hair neatly and naturally.
- Add layers for depth and versatility.



As you prepare for your headshot session, pay attention to the little things that make a big difference. Ensure your clothing is lint-free and fits perfectly; ill-fitting clothes can be distracting and unflattering. If you wear makeup, aim for a natural look that enhances your features without overpowering them. Consider using a bit of translucent powder to reduce shine, especially under studio lights.

For men, ensure your grooming is on point—clean-shaven or neatly trimmed facial hair can make a strong impact. If you wear glasses, make sure they are clean and free of glare if possible. Lastly, take a few deep breaths and relax before the session. A calm and confident demeanor will shine through in your photos, creating headshots that truly reflect your best self.



HEADSHOT DONT'S

- Don't wear overly busy patterns or logos.
- Don't choose overly trendy or casual outfits.
- Don't forget to bring extra outfits.
- Don't over-accessorize or wear distracting jewelry.
- Don't try new hairstyles or facial treatments right before the session.
- Don't ignore small details like lint or wrinkles.
- Don't wear clothing that doesn't fit well.

PRE-SESSION CHECKLIST

Here's a handy checklist on what to bring and what to do before your headshot session.

Check all that may apply:

WHAT TO BRING:

TOPS

- ☐ Minimum of 2 Solid Color Tops
- ☐ 1 Bold/Patterned Shirt

SUITS/DRESSES

- ☐ Fitted Suit/Jacket
- ☐ Dress
- ☐ Industry-Related Uniform

ACCESSORIES

- ☐ 1-2 Ties (Solid and Patterned)
- ☐ Belt
- ☐ Jewelry: Rings, Necklaces, Bracelets, Cufflinks, etc.

HAIR & MAKEUP

- ☐ Comb/Hair Brush
- ☐ Gel, Hair Spray
- ☐ Chapstick/Lipstick
- ☐ Makeup Bag

BUSINESS PROPS

- ☐ Industry-Specific Props
- ☐ Laptop, Cell Phone
- ☐ Notebook, Pen

WHAT TO DO:

THE DAY PRIOR

- ☐ Prepare Outfits
- ☐ Moisturize your Skin
- ☐ Get a Good Night's Rest
- ☐ Hydrate
- ☐ Avoid Greasy Food

THE DAY OF

- ☐ Have Breakfast
- ☐ Style Hair
- ☐ Practice Posing and Smiling
- ☐ Check Traffic and Route
- ☐ Relax and Breathe Deeply
- ☐ Arrive on Time

CHOOSING A BACKGROUND

The background of your headshot significantly influences its overall impact and professionalism. A well-chosen background can complement your attire, enhance your features, and convey the right message about your personal or professional brand. To provide you with the best options, I offer a variety of digital backdrops. These allow me to customize the aesthetic to match your specific needs, ensuring your headshot aligns perfectly with your brand. Our digital backgrounds range from sleek corporate settings to creative and vibrant environments, designed to elevate your headshot and make it stand out.



HEADSHOTS ON LOCATION

Sometimes, a studio backdrop—digital or otherwise—just won't do. For these moments when you need your environment to tell part of your story, we offer the option to photograph you on location. Whether it's at your office, a creative space, or an outdoor setting, on-location headshots can add depth and context to your professional image.



BENEFITS OF ON-LOCATION HEADSHOTS



1. Authenticity and Context:

Incorporate your natural work environment or a setting that aligns with your personal brand for a more genuine image.

2. Enhanced Storytelling:

The surroundings can tell your story—like an entrepreneur in their workspace or a fitness coach in a gym.

3. Versatility:

Enjoy diverse backgrounds and styles in one session, perfect for creating varied images for different platforms.

4. Comfort and Familiarity:

Being in a familiar environment helps you feel more at ease, resulting in natural and confident expressions.

THE EDITING & RETOUCHING PROCESS

After your headshot session, our work doesn't stop. The editing and retouching process is crucial to ensuring your headshot is polished and professional. Here's what you can expect:

First, we review all images from your session and select the best shots based on expression, pose, and overall quality. We'll send you an online proof gallery where you'll then have the opportunity to review and choose your favorite images.

Next, we perform basic edits, which include adjusting color balance for natural skin tones, fine-tuning exposure and contrast for a well-lit, balanced image, and enhancing composition by cropping to focus on your face and eliminate distractions.

Lastly, advanced retouching follows, where we subtly smooth skin to remove blemishes while maintaining natural texture, minimize the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, brighten eyes and remove any redness, and enhance the brightness of your smile.

WHY RETOUCHING MATTERS:

My goal is to present you in the best light possible while maintaining your natural appearance. Professional retouching subtly enhances your features, ensuring your headshot looks polished yet authentic.

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5 HEADSHOT TIPS FROM AUSTEN HUNTER PHOTOGRAPHY



TIP #1**KNOW YOUR BRAND**

Your headshot is your chance to tell a story, so consider the message you want to send. Are you showcasing your creativity, leadership, or approachability? Your wardrobe, expression, and posture should all work together to communicate this story. A clear vision will help your photographer capture the essence of your brand.

TIP #2

CHOOSE THE RIGHT OUTFIT

Wear clothing that makes you feel confident and comfortable. Solid colors often work best, avoiding busy patterns that can distract from your face. Bring a few options to the session to give me flexibility in matching your look to various backgrounds.

TIP #3

GROOMING AND HYGIENE



To ensure you look your best for your headshot, schedule a fresh haircut or trim a week before your session. For women, keep makeup natural and clean; for men, trim or shave facial hair the night before. And don't forget to hydrate and moisturize your skin for a fresh, confident look in your final images!

TIP #4

PRACTICE EXPRESSIONS



Practice your expressions in front of a mirror to get comfortable with different looks. Focus on subtle variations—like soft smiles, confident gazes, and relaxed faces—to find what feels most natural and authentic. The more you practice, the easier it will be to nail the perfect expression during your headshot session!

TIP #5

TRUST YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER

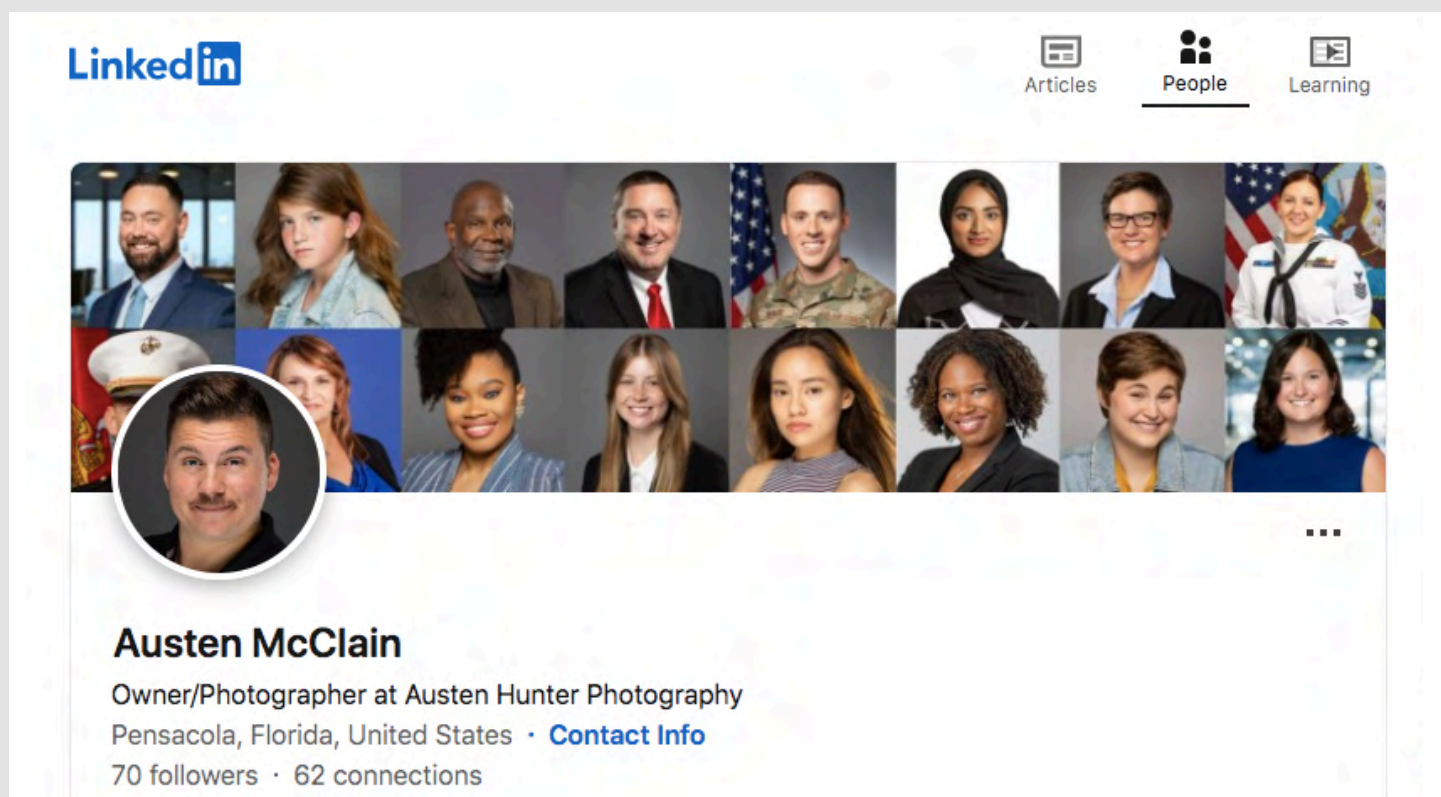
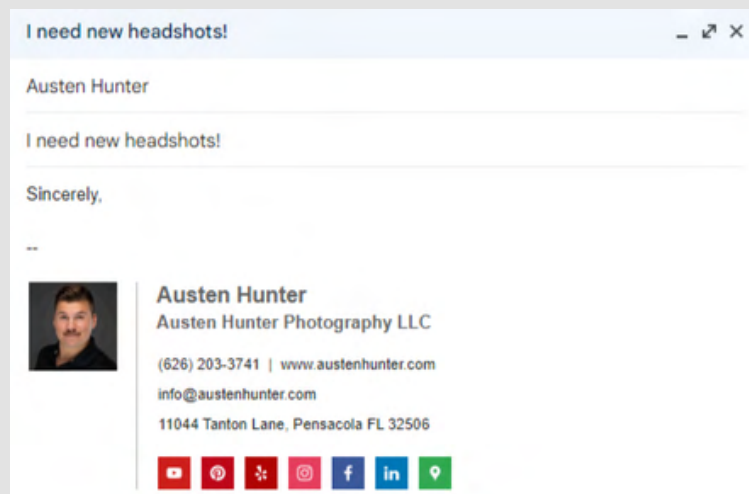


Trust your photographer to expertly guide you throughout the session. By relaxing and allowing them to bring out your best features and personality, you'll ensure your headshots come out polished, natural, and filled with confidence.

POST-SESSION TIPS

So you've completed your session, and now you have some brand new headshots. Congratulations! Here's a few different places you can start immediately showing them off and creating a cohesive brand:

- Social Media
- LinkedIn Profile
- Email Signature
- Business Card
- Website and Blogs
- Media and Press Kits
- Print and Marketing Material



BOOST YOUR LINKEDIN PRESENCE

Did you know that LinkedIn profiles with professional headshots get *14 times* more views? Recruiters are more likely to engage with candidates who present themselves professionally, opening doors to new career opportunities.

HEADSHOT FAQ

Q: How often should I update my headshot?

A: It's recommended to update your headshot every 1-2 years or whenever there's a significant change in your appearance or professional role. Keeping your headshot current ensures your online presence remains fresh and relevant.

Q: Why are headshots important for my online presence?

A: A professional headshot is essential for making a strong first impression online. It conveys your professionalism, credibility, and personal brand, helping you stand out on social media, professional networking sites, and your company website.

Q: How should I prepare my hair and makeup?

A: Style your hair as you would for an important event. For makeup, apply it as you would for a professional setting and bring touch-up items like powder, lipstick, and concealer.

Q: What if I don't feel comfortable in front of the camera?

A: Don't worry! I will guide you through poses and expressions to help you feel at ease and capture your best look.

Q: How far in advance should I book my session?

A: I recommend booking at least 2 weeks in advance to ensure availability.



MEET YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER

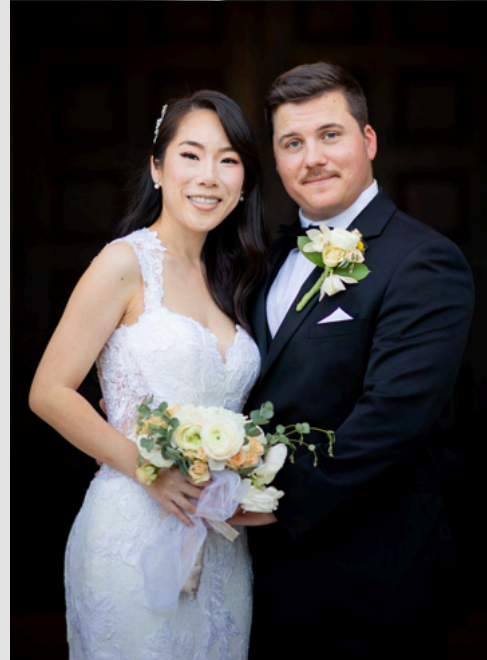
Hi, I'm Austen Hunter, the photographer behind Austen Hunter Photography in Pensacola, Florida. Specializing in portrait and headshot photography, I love capturing the essence of each person who steps in front of my camera. My clients range from working professionals to military personnel and young families, and I strive to make every session relaxed and enjoyable.

Photography started as a hobby for me—appreciating how a single image can tell a story. Over time, that hobby turned into a pursuit of excellence in portraiture. I believe a great headshot is more than just a picture; it's a tool for personal and professional growth.

What sets my work apart? I focus on making you feel comfortable and at ease during your session. Being in front of the camera can be intimidating, so I work to create a relaxed vibe, blending technical skill with a genuine interest in your story.

When I'm not behind the camera, you'll find me exploring Pensacola's beaches, connecting with other photographers on Instagram, or teaming up on creative projects with my wife, Sarah, who is an essential part of our photography business.

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TESTIMONIALS

Here's what past clients say about Austen Hunter Photography:



Gabby P.

"This is my fourth or fifth time working with Austen Hunter Photography... I love them! They have always made me feel comfortable, which is not always the case with other photographers. They make it very easy to be creative during our shoots, offering their ideas and always implementing mine. Definitely recommend using them for your next shoot!!"



Michael B.

"Look no further. Austen is professional and his products are top notch. He is patient and works with you through the entire process to get the image that YOU want. I couldn't recommend him more. For the military folks, highly recommend you reach out to him for a professional headshot. Since he is a veteran himself, he follows all military guidance and gives you a quality picture that can be used on your Bio or passed down to your kids."



Larraine D.

"I followed Austen on IG for a few months watching his work before I hired him. I'm extremely pleased. I was nervous but him and his assistant were very friendly and professional. They were prepared with all the things we needed for the shoot and even supplied some snacks and cold water. Very thoughtful. I appreciate the professionalism, but I also enjoyed the laughs. Headshots can be difficult but it wasn't with Austen. Definitely a go to. "

BOOK YOUR SESSION

Thank you for reading "The Professional Headshot Guide"! Now that you understand the value and impact of a professional headshot, are you ready to make your own lasting impression?

I invite you to book a session with me and see how a great headshot can elevate your personal and professional brand. Let's capture your best self together!



BOOK TODAY



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