GRIZZLY PHOTOGRAPHY • NEW ORLEANS

FREE PORTRAIT GUIDE

What to wear for portraits that look like you

Wardrobe tips written for our skin, our hair, and our families - from a Black portrait photographer with 20+ years behind the camera. Rich color, real texture, and outfits chosen the night before, so you walk in already confident.





The one rule underneath everything in this guide: the right outfit does not compete with your skin - it honors it. Nobody should remember what you wore first. They should remember *you* - your face, your hair, your presence.

01 • COLOR STARTS WITH SKIN

Start with your skin, not the whole closet

Most wardrobe advice was not written for melanin-rich skin. Ours is. Deep, warm, golden, and cool brown skin does not need to be toned down - the right colors make it glow. Start with two or three rich colors, add warm neutrals, and build from there.

EMERALD	BURGUNDY	GOLD / MUSTARD	CREAM / IVORY	DEEP NAVY
Makes deep skin luminous, stunning outdoors and in studio	Warm, rich, regal - never washes you out	Echoes warm undertones - use for a dress, top, or accent	Choose this over stark white - softer, richer against brown skin	The polished alternative to black - keeps detail and depth

WHAT THE CAMERA SEES ON OUR SKIN

- **Jewel and earth tones win.** Emerald, burgundy, deep navy, gold, rust, and warm olive bring out warmth and depth. They hold up in City Park green, against brick, and under studio light.
- **Go easy on ashy pastels.** Pale powder blue, dusty lavender, and chalky pink can turn grey against deep skin and drain the glow. If you love a light color, choose its warmer, richer cousin - cream instead of white, peach instead of powder pink.
- **Stark white and jet black need care.** White can blow out next to deep skin; black can swallow detail. Cream, ivory, charcoal, and navy give you the same polish with the detail kept.
- **One statement, well placed.** A gold top, an emerald dress, a burgundy blazer - let one piece carry the color and let your skin carry the portrait.

> **Quick test:** Hold the fabric up to your face in daylight and take a phone photo. Does your skin look warm and alive, or grey and tired? Trust that photo - the camera will see the same thing.

02 • FIT, FABRIC, TEXTURE & HAIR

Fit, texture - and room for your hair



FIT: TAILORED, NOT TIGHT - AND HAIR HAS A SAY

- Choose clothes that skim, not squeeze. If you cannot sit, breathe, and raise your arms, the camera will see it.
- **Give your hair space.** Braids, locs, twists, an afro, a silk press, or a headwrap all need a neckline that respects them. Open, scoop, and V-necks frame volume and length; tight turtlenecks and high stiff collars crush and compete.
- Bring layers - a blazer, cardigan, or wrap you can add or remove makes two looks from one outfit, and will not fight your style.

FABRIC: TEXTURE YES, SHINE NO

- **Photographs beautifully:** linen, denim, knit, matte cotton, and woven texture. They add depth next to skin without stealing light from your face.
- **A heritage accent, with intention:** one Ankara-inspired scarf, pocket square, headwrap, or dress panel can root a portrait in who you are. One accent reads as pride; head-to-toe pattern reads as costume.
- **Gold loves our skin.** Simple gold hoops, a chain, or studs warm up a portrait and catch light kindly. Silver works for cooler undertones - pick the metal that makes your skin look rested.
- Steam the night before and hang outfits - do not fold them into a bag for the drive over.

03 • PATTERNS & GROUPS

Coordinate the family - do not match it



Our families hold a beautiful range - light to deep skin, babies to grandparents, locs to fades to braids. Matching outfits flatten that. A shared palette honors it. Pick the palette from page 2, let each person wear it their own way, and check that no one disappears: do not put the deepest skin in the darkest color against the darkest background.

BRING THIS

- One patterned piece per group - an Ankara-inspired scarf, plaid, or subtle stripe
- Simple gold or classic jewelry that frames, not distracts
- Clean, broken-in shoes that fit the outfit
- A second top for variety and insurance
- For headshots: a solid, rich color and a neckline that frames your face and hair

LEAVE THIS AT HOME

- Big logos, brand names, and slogan tees
- Tiny stripes and small checks - they shimmer on camera
- Neon that casts color onto skin and steals the face
- Ashy pastels that wash out deep skin
- Brand-new outfits and brand-new hairstyles worn for the first time

BY SESSION TYPE

Headshots and branding: solid jewel or earth tone, a structured layer, and the outfit your best client should meet you in. **Families and reunions:** start with Mama or Grandma's outfit - the anchor - then build everyone else around her palette. **Seniors and creatives:** one classic look, one look that is unmistakably you, hair and all. That second look is often the favorite frame.

04 • THE NIGHT BEFORE

Lay it out, steam it, protect the hair

- **Lay out every outfit** - top to shoes - and photograph it on the bed in daylight. Check the colors against your skin, not just against each other.
- **Try it on with your hairstyle in mind.** Sit down in it. Check the neckline against braids, locs, or volume, and look for gaps, pulls, and missing buttons.
- **Do hair the day before, not the morning of.** Fresh braids, a fresh retwist, or a fresh silk press needs a night to settle. Sleep in your wrap or bonnet so you wake up ready, not redoing.
- **Steam or iron,** then hang everything by the door.
- **Moisturize for glow, not shine.** Skin should look nourished in photos - lotion or a light shea the night before and morning of, blotting papers in your bag for T-zone shine at the studio.
- **Pack a backup top** in the same palette, plus the small kit: lint roller, safety pins, edge brush, hair ties, lip balm, and blotting papers. New Orleans weather is real.
- **Hands and nails show.** Clean, trimmed nails and moisturized hands - close crops catch everything.
- **Sleep.** No outfit fixes tired. Rest is part of the wardrobe.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Book a portrait or headshot session at Grizzly Photography in Mid-City New Orleans, and bring this guide with you - we will do a quick wardrobe and color check together before the first frame.

Headshot sessions from $250-450. Free estimate on every booking.



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