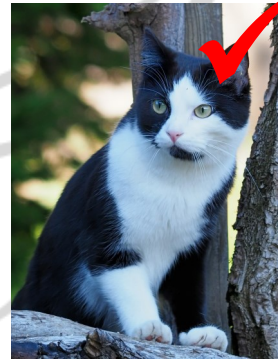
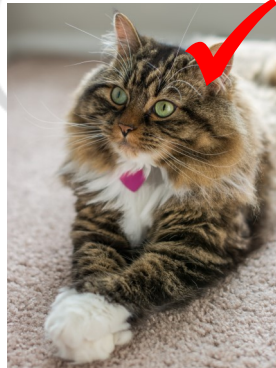
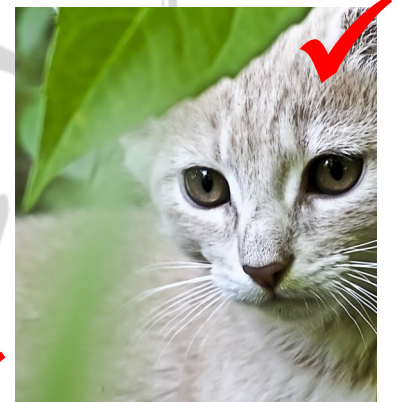
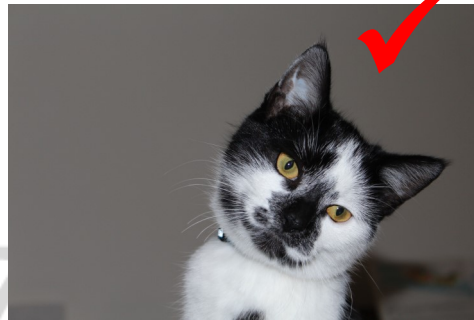


Choosing Reference Photos For Your Painting

I am excited to work with you to create a beautiful portrait of your cat! The first step in this process is to decide which pose and photographs we are going to use for your one-of-a-kind piece of art.

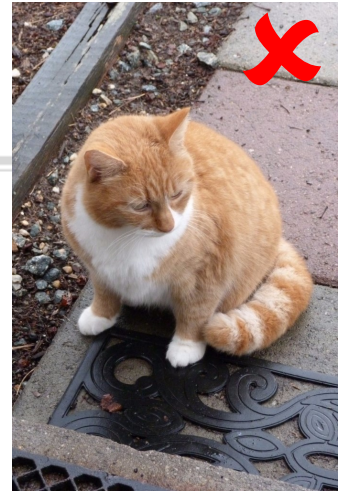
Choosing a Pose

Your first decision in choosing a photo is choosing the pose for your cat. Many people like the portrait style of just the cat's head and shoulders. However, I encourage you to consider what makes you smile when you think of your cat? What is your cat's favorite toy, activity, or location? Does he or she have a head tilt when excited or playful expression? Are you placing two pets in one portrait? Do you have a favorite background or location that reflects the personality of your pet? Do not be afraid to think outside of the box and choose a pose that shows personality, activity and play. The size of your painting will also help determine your pose. Smaller sizes will not be able to accommodate a full-body pose.



Get On Eye Level

When you are photographing your pet, be sure to get on eye-level—your camera should be the same height from the ground as the cat's head. This might mean crouching down or lying on the ground in order to get a good photo. This helps prevent distortion and lets the cat be in a more natural pose. It will also ultimately feel more natural for you as an observer, because your painting will hang at eye level.



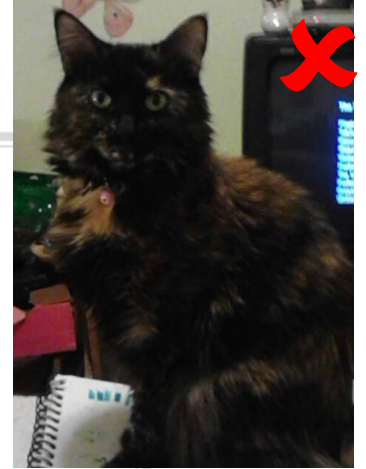
Fill the Frame with your Subject

Although I can combine multiple photos, I cannot capture important details if I can't see them! If you are wanting a head portrait of your pet, be sure to fill the frame with your cat's head. If you are wanting a full-body pose, then it should fill the frame as well. However, I cannot make a beautiful detailed portrait of your cat's head from a full body pose. You can send photos to show your ideas for the background or composition where the cat is small, but they need to be in addition to photos that show all the details. Use the zoom judiciously—don't stand so far back that you zoom in, but the resolution drops.



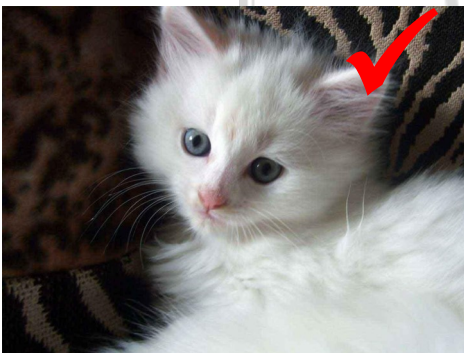
Lighting and Flash

The best time for taking photos is the “golden hour” in the morning or late afternoon. Try to keep the sun behind you so the subject is not backlit. Natural light is always preferred. If you can’t go outside, try placing your cat near a window to get natural lighting. Try to avoid using the flash where possible as it often flattens details and causes the infamous red eye. If you do use the flash and find you love the pose, but the coloring and lighting is not good, be sure to take multiple other photos in good lighting, and we’ll see if we can combine the photos.



Accurate Color

Some cameras can wash out color, so be sure to double-check that the photos you are sending me accurately represent the cat's color. Cats with either black or white coats can be the hardest to photograph. Black cats can just look like black blobs, and white cat can be completely washed out. Try to use natural lighting to show the reflections and depth.



What kind of photos?

Digital photos are preferred because I can blow them up if needed. You can send me photos by text, email, Facebook, Drop-box etc. However, if your animal is no longer around for photos, we can work together to use your print photos. I will scan them into my computer and return the originals to you. **Be sure to send the highest resolution you can** (I definitely need to work with images that are larger than 1 mb). When sending photos, cameras and computers often shrink or compress the images for speedier sending. Make sure to check “original size” when you send photos to me, so I can have all the necessary details.

I cannot add detail to blurry photos, so be sure to send clear, sharp images. Do not send photos that have filters applied from Instagram or others which can blur or change colors and details.

All photos *must* be copyright-free or you must own the right to reproduce them. I cannot use another artist’s or photographer’s work without his or her permission.



Be patient and have help

Be sure to have plenty of time when you photograph your pet and try to work where your cat is most relaxed. It is often useful to have another person who can attract the cat’s attention with a squeaky toy, a treat, or a crinkling piece of paper. I can always edit out collars or other things.

Send lots of photos!

In this digital age, it is easy to send me a variety of photos—this means I can fix the shortcomings of one photo (a cat has one ear back) with the strengths of another photo. It is best if they all have the same lighting. If you love the pose of one photo, but it’s slightly blurry, sometimes I can add details through the clarity of another photo. Please send at least 5 photos (but when I go photograph pets, I often take several hundred!)

What if my cat is no longer living?

If your cat is no longer around and you only have some older print copies, we can still work together to create a portrait! We might be slightly more limited in poses. Often I can combine photos of your cat with stock photos of similar breeds to fill in the detail. Similarly, if your cat is currently elderly, but you would prefer a portrait when he or she is younger, we can work together to make that happen.

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