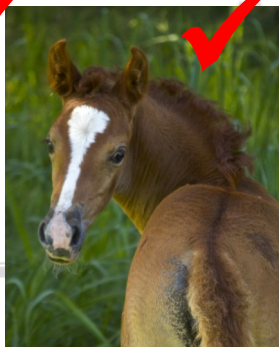
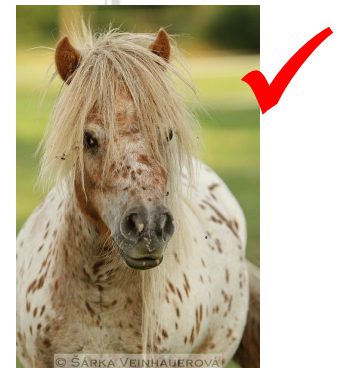
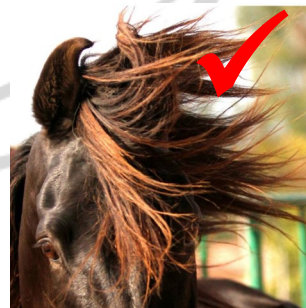


## Choosing Reference Photos For Your Painting

I am excited to work with you to create a beautiful portrait of your horse! 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 horse. Many people like the portrait style of just the horse's head and shoulders. However, I encourage you to consider what makes you smile when you think of your horse? What is your horse's favorite toy, activity, or location? Does he or she have a head tilt when excited or playful expression? Are you placing two horses 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.



## Minimize Distortion

The greatest challenge with horse photography is distortion. The two keys to preventing distortion is using the zoom feature and making sure that the camera lens is level with the horse.

For a full body shot from the side, the camera should be perpendicular to the middle of the horse's shoulder or barrel, just behind the withers. 3/4 views are interesting, but at the wrong heights and angles they can cause distortion—usually the horse's hindquarters will look disproportionately small. Step a few degrees toward the hindquarters to get better balance. Zooming in slightly will help flatten everything.



For a head shot, stand back, crouch slightly, and zoom in slightly to help eliminate the head becoming giant and out of proportion. Horses generally look best with a three-quarter view, but experiment!



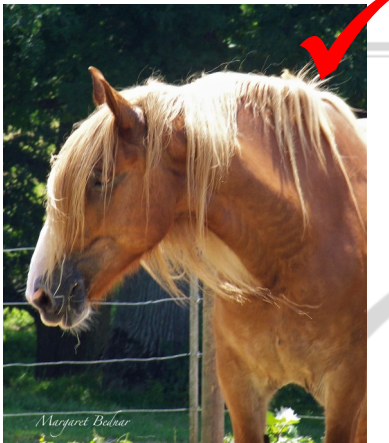
## Fill the Frame with your Subject

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 horse, be sure to fill the frame with your horse's head. If you are wanting a full-body pose, then it should fill the frame as well. I cannot make a beautiful detailed portrait of your horse's head from a full body pose. You can send photos to show your ideas for the background or composition where the horse is small, but they need to be in addition to photos that show all the details. If your horse has unusual markings, include some close-ups of those. 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. Try not to take photos of your horse in the barn or stable—the shadows will often be odd from a variety of light sources. If you can’t go outside, try placing your horse near a window or door 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 horse’s color. Horses with either black or white coats can be the hardest to photograph. Black horses can just look like black blobs, and a white horse can be completely washed out. Try to use natural lighting to show



## 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. When you try to capture action shots, use the burst feature on your phone to take a bunch of photos rapid fire. However, these often do not have the resolution or detail of a regular photo, so take some individual stills as well so I can combine them together.

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.



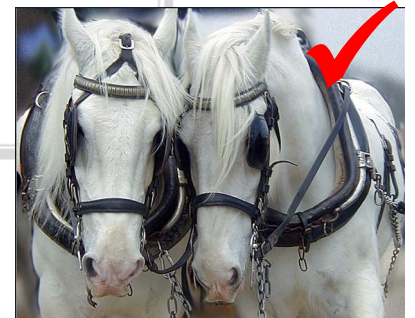
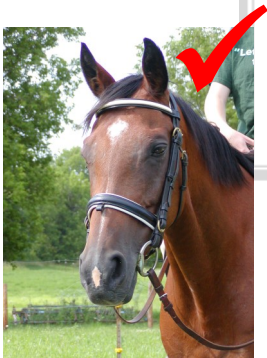
## Be patient and have help

Horse photography usually requires two people and sometimes three. One person holds the camera and the other 1-2 people attract the horse’s attention (crinkle a piece of plastic, toss some leaves etc.) or encourage the horse to move (shake a plastic bag, wiggle a lunge whip or lead rope, for example).



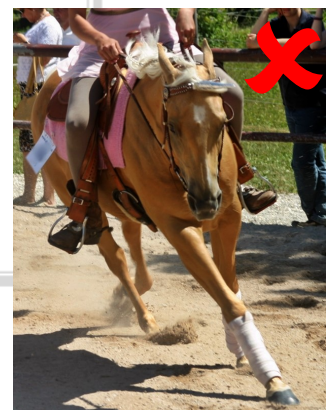
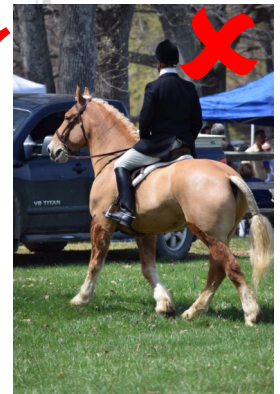
## Tack or No Tack?

You will have to decide, do you want your horse to be portrayed in tack or not? If you want the horse in his or her natural state, sometimes, you’ll have to use a halter to position the horse correctly. This is fine *if* you also include several photos of the horse’s head in the *same lighting and photographic angle* with no halter. Although I know horse anatomy well, I do not like to guess when trying to capture your horse’s facial structure. I will not be able to remove rugs/blankets, bridles or saddles.



## Include the rider?

When choosing your photo and pose, you will need to decide if you want to include the rider or not in your painting. Ask yourself, what would you like this painting to represent? Will you still love the painting if you change disciplines or riding styles in the future? Will you look back eventually and see flaws in your riding that you don't want displayed on your wall? Perhaps you should consider including a rider or tack in a more artistic way that only shows part of the horse or the activity. Regardless, if you do plan on including the rider, be sure to pick a painting size to accommodate the extra detail. As an artist, I will not be able to change or correct the rider's posture, clothing, or tack except in very minor ways, so consider if the rider should be formally dressed or not, wear a helmet or not, etc. Make sure to take a great many photos when including a rider, and remember the rules of distortion.



### **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 horse 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 horse is no longer living?**

If your horse 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 horse with stock photos of similar breeds to fill in the detail. Similarly, if your horse is currently elderly, but you would prefer a portrait when he or she is younger, we can work together to make that happen.

### **Visit Catherine Graul Art to start your own unique portrait today!**

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