

## Professional Photo & Headshot Guide

### Photos for LinkedIn Profiles and Personal Websites

First impressions matter, especially online. A professional and approachable image builds trust and credibility. It signals to recruiters, collaborators, or potential clients that you are skilled and confident. It is not just an image but a tool that can be used in your toolkit for your job search, networking, or creative endeavors.

#### Tips for LinkedIn Profile Photos

- Dress appropriately, in business attire or business casual attire
- Ensure your face is clearly visible and centered in the frame
- Smile genuinely
- Make sure you have clear lighting and a clean background
- Review Northwestern's Student Affairs [Photo Tips and Guidelines website](#)
- Review '[How to Take Professional Headshots with a Smart Phone](#)' article

#### Tips for Personal Website Photos

A photo on your website should reflect your creative identity and personal brand. It doesn't need to be formal, but it should be intentional. Here are tips to consider when selecting a photo for your website:

- Dress appropriately. If this photo is being used on a website showing your creative skillset, show your style. You don't need to dress in business attire but should be clean and appropriately styled.
- Use clear lighting and a simple, non-distracting background, or consider a creative setting (like your workspace) if it adds context.
- Show your personality. A candid or in-action shot can work well alongside a more traditional headshot.
- Choose a high-quality image that fits your site layout and is easy to update as your work evolves.

## Headshots for Actors

Headshots are an essential part of an actor's professional toolkit. They serve as your calling card and should authentically capture your look, energy, and essence. They're submitted with resumes to agents, casting directors, or production teams - either as 8x10 prints or digitally. A strong headshot helps decision-makers imagine you in a role.

#### General Advice

- Typically, you would not include stats, such as height, weight, and hair/eye color, on a headshot. Instead, these could be listed on your resume. See resume guidance [here](#).
- Do your research! Find out which photographers your agents, casting directors, teachers, friends, etc. like.
- Find out what the going rates are in your area. Shop around...THEN make an appointment with at least 3 and preferably 5 photographers. Sit and look at their portfolios. See if you like their work.
  - Does it appeal to you? Do you feel like the photos capture an essence? Or are they just pretty?
  - How do you feel when chatting with the photographer? Are you comfortable? The more comfortable you are the more likely you are to get good photos. You should be able to relax with your photographer.
- If you have facial hair or a variable look, consider getting multiple versions
- How often you need new photos depends on how quickly your look changes. The photos should look like you as you are now.
- For digital submissions, request multiple crops and orientations (e.g., horizontal and vertical) and name your files clearly (e.g., Firstname\_Lastname\_Headshot.jpg).

#### Look & Feel

- Standard headshot size for print is 8x10
- Make sure your face is clearly seen.
- Be natural and show your personality.
- Choose a background that is not distracting and compliments your attire.
- Wear colors and necklines that flatter you
- Avoid busy and printed fabrics and anything that will steal focus from you.
- Find out who the photographer recommends for hair/makeup.

#### To Smile or Not to Smile

- Smiling headshots are often used for commercial submissions, while neutral or serious expressions are more common for TV and film.
- Theater can go either way, remember versatility is key.
- Plan to get at least one smiling and one non-smiling option.
- Character shots (e.g., for range or comedic types) can be helpful for digital portfolios but typically aren't printed unless specifically requested.
- Above all, you want images that you feel authentically and suggest the types of roles you want to be considered for.