



Senior Style Guide

WELL HELLO!

This is going to be fun!

I am so, so excited to officially have you as a Susan Carolyn Photography senior!!! I love photographing high school seniors, it is truly my absolute favorite work that I do. Photographing each of my seniors is *such* a huge honor, and I can't wait to have a blast together and capture some beautiful images! My goal with this Senior Style Guide is to help you prepare for your shoot and get the MOST out of your experience. Your senior session is SUCH an exciting memory and a big investment...so it's my job to be sure you are fully prepared!

In this guide you will find everything from suggestions for outfits, hair and makeup, ways to customize your experience, what to expect the day of your shoot, how your final gallery will work and everything in between! Please take the time to read it thoroughly to ensure you have all of the information you need to make your shoot the absolute best it can be!

My promise as your photographer is that I will make you look and FEEL like the best version of YOU! I want your shoot and your images to reflect exactly who you are, and I'm here to help ensure we make that happen. Use the content in this guide as suggestions, but feel free to reach out to me at any point in the planning process to chat about how we can make it personal to YOU and create images that you will look back on and love for years to come.

Can't wait to see you!

FOR MOM & DAD...

I am truly so honored!

I know you had a LOT of options for senior portrait photographers...so I just wanted to take a moment to say thank you for choosing me to capture your son or daughter's senior year. I know how proud you must be and how bittersweet it is to know that they have worked SO hard for this moment for so long...and it's finally here! I hope that the images we capture will be a celebration of everything they have accomplished + will continue to accomplish over the next few years!

My goal as a senior portrait photographer is to capture beautiful memories for your family...but also to create a memorable experience from start to finish. My hope is that this senior session is a highlight of your son or daughter's senior year, and that they leave feeling confident, empowered and EXCITED for the big moments to come. I know this guide contains a LOT of information...but it will all be so helpful in creating the best possible experience + images at your shoot!

If you have any questions leading up to our shoot together, please don't hesitate to reach out and ask! And, if you have any creative ideas that come to mind or sentimental moments/locations/memories that you'd like featured during their session...I am all ears!

I can't wait to meet you and create some wonderful memories for you to cherish for years to come!

See you SOON!!!

The Week Before

1. As we get closer to the day of your shoot, you can expect to hear from me with our meeting time, location, and final check-in! I photograph senior portraits at "golden hour" - either 2 hours before sunset or the 2 hours after sunrise. We have likely already decided which time of day we will shoot! These times of day have the most amazing, glowy light, cooler temperatures and less crowds at popular locations. Because of this, I like to wait until we are 1-2 weeks from your shoot date to lock in an exact meeting time based on the time of the sunset. If there are clouds or rainstorms in the forecast, this also allows me to plan around the weather to ensure we get the best lighting possible!

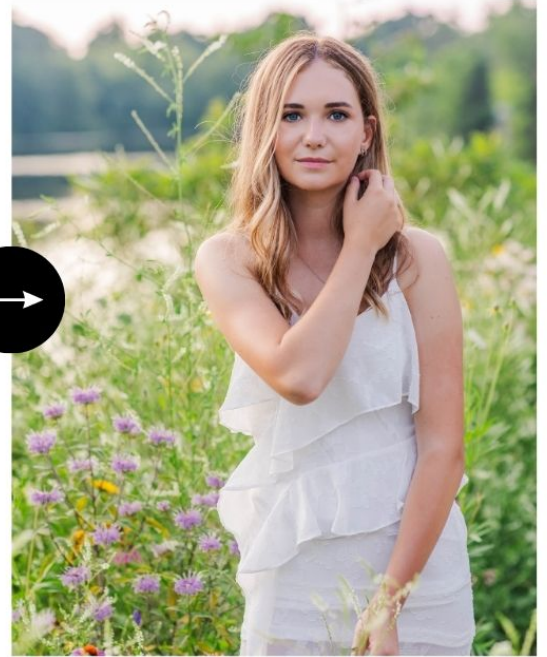


THE SHOOT DAY!

1. This section of the style guide could be its own book in itself! SO many fun things to talk about on the day of your shoot! Your shoot will be 2-3 hours in total. Let's dive into what to expect each minute of your senior session:

The Importance of Being on Time

First things first: being on time for your shoot is VITAL. And I don't just say that because of my time...I say that because we are on the SUN'S time. Since we plan your shoot around the ideal time for golden lighting...being late means that you lose that time off of your shoot. Even being 15 minutes late means that we've lost 15 minutes of light. Once the sun goes down...we can't shoot anymore! So, try to plan to be 15 minutes early for your session. That way, even if you hit traffic or a delay...it doesn't eat into your shooting time!

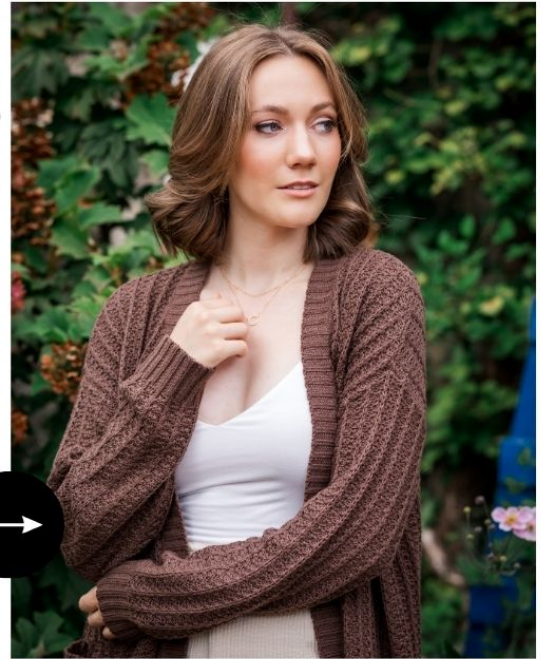


The First 15 Minutes

When you arrive at your shoot, the first thing we are going to do is look through your outfits together! We will run through them together on the day of to map out exactly where we will photograph each look and when you will change. This helps us to go in with a game plan and decide which outfit will look best in which location. Sometimes there will be flowers in bloom that coordinate with a specific dress or a prop that we want to use at a specific spot...so there's some strategy that goes into this!

Changing Outfits + Locations

I frequently get asked where my seniors will change outfits on their shoot day...and the answer is almost always in your car! Typically, the locations that we shoot don't have public bathrooms...which isn't ideal. But you can take a break in your car for some heat or air conditioning in between each outfit! If you'd prefer to have a bathroom to change, just let me know ahead of time and I will be sure to select locations that have this option.



Posing + Shooting



The BIGGEST and most important thing that I want you to know about your shoot day is this: I am going to tell you what to do the ENTIRE time! You do NOT need to have any posing or modeling experience. Part of your investment in your senior portraits is my experience and ability to pose you and make you look (and feel) your absolute best. So, there's no reason to be nervous at all! I will guide you through every single pose and I promise the BIGGEST compliment I get from seniors is that I make it so easy. It's going to be a blast!

After we look through your outfits together, we will start shooting! We typically spend 20-30 minutes photographing each outfit before changing and moving to the next spot. I try to always save the BEST outfit for last...so keep that in mind when planning your faves!

LOCATIONS

Are they a big deal?

Aside from choosing your outfits (which we are diving into next, don't worry!) - choosing your LOCATIONS is a huge part of what will determine the overall style and aesthetic of your images. It also takes a little bit of logistical planning to map out where we will shoot and the travel time between locations. Overall, there are a few things to keep in mind when picking where to shoot:

It's actually not the location that matters most...it's the LIGHT!

YEP. This is hard to understand if you aren't a photographer but hear me out: if you have the most beautiful garden location in mind with tons of fluffy flowers and manicured walkways...but it's in the DIRECT sunlight all day long...it's actually not an ideal place to shoot. It would be better to have the session in a random field on the side of the highway with gorgeous back-light coming through the trees...because the LIGHT is what makes the biggest difference in the whole world! Trust me on this one!

Try to think of an overall "feel" or "vibe" for your shoot...and let this guide your location choices!

While the location of your shoot totally matters...it may not matter quite as much as you think. The majority of the images in your final gallery will be close-up images... meaning you can't see a whole lot of the background. What you CAN see is the colors, light and overall "feel" of the location. The point is: don't get so caught-up and stressed over one specific location. Choose a "vibe" that you want...and I can help you pick spots that will make that happen!



I have one
request:
pretty please
TRUST me on
this part!

When I tell you that some of my most AMAZING images have been created in the weirdest locations...I mean it! I've asked my seniors to crawl into random floral bushes and sit in crazy positions to get the right angle. I've even balanced on rocks in the water to get the perfect shot! These seniors all got some of my BEST work I've ever created because they TRUSTED me as their photographer. I may have an idea or location suggestion that sounds crazy...but give it a chance! I promise to listen to you and get all the shots you're hoping for during your session.

LOCATION OPTIONS

These are examples of common location types or “vibes” that my seniors want for their shoot. If you want more than one, that’s totally okay! 2-3 locations are included in your senior package, and we can achieve a wide variety of looks in a short time. This section of the guide will give you examples, visuals and inspiration for common styles... then you can tell me your favorites in detail on your questionnaire!

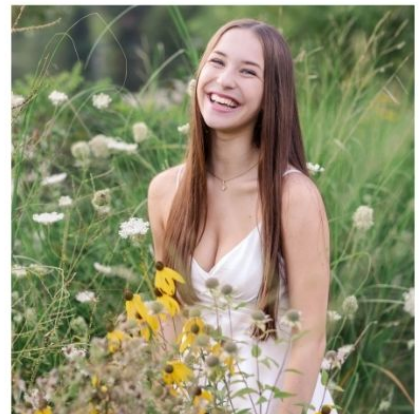
Rural + Rustic

Think country chic: open fields, barns, wooden accents + tall, overgrown grass.



Nature + Floral

This is one of my personal favorites! Think florals, lots of color, lots of nature in your images!



Colorful Downtown



Urban + Edgy

Don't want something super girly or preppy? Totally okay! More urban locations have a city-vibe to them. Iron gates, mirrored windows, textured brick...the options are endless!





WHAT TO WEAR?

1. BE COMFORTABLE

The NUMBER ONE, most important thing to remember when planning your outfits: if it's not comfortable to wear in real life, it won't make you feel confident on camera!

If you do not like fitted clothing (super tight dresses or pieces that fit awkwardly) then leave them at home! So, if there are pieces in your closet that make you feel self-conscious or uncomfortable, don't include them in your senior portrait wardrobe! I also recommend trying to steer clear of anything that you have to constantly adjust or is at risk of being revealing. You'll be doing lots of moving and posing, so if the outfit is super low-cut...you're at risk of things slipping while we shoot!

2. BE YOURSELF

At risk of sounding cheesy...staying true to yourself with your outfits is so, so important. When you look back at these images in 20+ years...you'll want them to truly reflect YOU! If you aren't someone who ever dresses up or enjoys being fancy...don't feel like you need to go buy a fancy dress just for photos. If you don't enjoy being girly and wearing frilly dresses or lots of makeup...then leave them at home! Don't feel pressured to buy anything new or outside of your usual style just because you are getting photos taken. This entire shoot is meant to be about who YOU are in this exciting season of life...so don't change a single thing about ya!

3. BE BOLD + CONSIDER USING COLOR

Use this shoot as an opportunity to have a little bit of fun with your outfits + colors!

On camera, solid black + white can make skin tones look washed out and unflattering. When choosing outfits for your senior session, try to choose colors that POP and that compliment your hair + skin tones! Primary colors like royal blue and yellow photograph beautifully as well as jewel tones like emerald green, bright purples, pinks, oranges and any other colors that really POP! Sometimes, color combos that may seem odd in-person end up photographing BEAUTIFULLY on camera! Don't shy away from color!

4. ADD LAYERS

In the cold months (fall + winter), adding layers to your outfits always looks STUNNING in portraits! A sweater with a flannel underneath paired with a vest + statement earrings or scarf adds so much dimension to your images and makes for super fun posing options! Even in the warmer months (spring + summer) you can add these layers + dimension by wearing a tank top with a cute sheer cardigan or by throwing a denim jacket over a dress!

5. PLAY WITH TEXTURES

Sometimes textures like feathers, furs and 3D florals can be considered too extra...but, in portraits, they are the BEST! Adding texture to your outfit can make a huge difference. I also love to photograph pieces with MOVEMENT: long, flowy dresses with epic trains or fun feathers that move when you twirl. It adds a super fun element to your pictures!

6. DON'T BE AFRAID TO ACCESSORIZE

There is a whole section dedicated to props and accessories coming up in this guide...but it's honestly one of the most important parts! Adding accessories like jewelry, hats, fun shoes, purses, etc. to your outfits really makes them feel like YOU and adds a whole new layer of detail to your senior gallery. I'm a huge fan of statement earrings, a bright lip color, a super fun shoe, colorful bags, floppy sun hats...ALL of these things give us so much more variety with posing + create such beautiful pictures!

7. MIX IT UP!

When planning your outfits, make sure that you have a VARIETY of looks! I tell all of my seniors to choose from these categories: casual, cozy, dressy, school-related, sports-related, preppy or edgy. I always recommend choosing 3-4 of those categories and finding outfits accordingly. This provides a beautiful array of looks during your senior portrait session, so each outfit looks drastically different and you get tons of variety!

THINGS TO AVOID:

Now, there's a few important things to AVOID that are worth having their own section of this guide! As a general rule of thumb, these are the things to stay away from...

1. Pieces that are sheer, too fitted or potentially revealing

We already touched on this quickly...but it's important! You will be doing a lot of moving throughout your shoot, so wearing pieces that have to sit juuuuust right or that are at risk of slipping aren't a good idea. And, if pieces are super thin or sheer, it may be see-through in your photos or easily show sweat marks in the summer months.

2. The wrong undergarments

This is something that may slip your mind as you are planning your outfits...but it is SO important! Be sure to bring along multiple bras if you are wearing something strapless or that requires a sticky/backless bra. And wearing a neutral pair of undies is the best way to go to ensure it's not showing through anything!

3. Pay attention to wrinkles

We will be doing a lot of moving around, sitting, walking, etc. at your shoot. If the material of your outfit easily wrinkles...you may want to be careful. Pay close attention to textures and remember that not everything is as easy to edit out as you may think! Editing out wrinkles from a dress can take hours PER PHOTO...which can result in your images taking a lot longer to get back or requiring additional fees for extensive edits.





DRESSING FOR THE SEASONS

Sometimes it can be easier to pick outfits for the spring/summer months than it is in the cooler fall/winter months. I also have some seniors who want to have a separate session during BOTH times of year to capture the different looks and styles that a new season brings along. So, this section of the guide is going to help you break down how to prep your outfits according to the time of year that we are capturing your portraits! Another important thing to keep in mind about the time of year is the SUNSET. In the summer months, shoots won't start until 5 or 6pm... but we will need to start much earlier (3-4pm) in the winter months to accommodate the earlier sunset.



WINTER

You may automatically think winter is a bad time for pictures...but it doesn't have to be! You can brighten up any dull background with bright colors, fun textures and lots of layers! Fun hats, scarves, gloves and even earmuffs can photograph SO cute!

SPRING

When all of the flowers are in bloom! Some people feel like they need to shy away from color so they don't clash with the blooming flowers...but I disagree! A bright pink against a white floral bush is a DREAM...try coordinating with the colors + add in pastels!

SUMMER

The only downside of summer portraits is the HEAT. You'll want to keep that in mind when choosing your outfits. Save the warmest outfit (i.e. layers or thick material) for the END of the shoot when it's cooler outside...and consider wearing BRIGHT pops of color to stand out against everything being in full bloom!

FALL

This is my favorite time of year to shoot! I love the cooler temps, the fall color palette, and incorporating layers into your outfits opens up a whole new set of options for posing. Cute booties, scarves, jackets, cozy cardigans...I'm here for ALL of it!

HAIR AND MAKEUP

I highly recommend all of my senior clients invest in professional hair and makeup. If it is in your budget, hiring a professional for your hair and makeup will make a huge difference in the quality of your photos and senior portrait experience. You are already making a large investment in your senior portrait experience...so why not make it the best it can be?!

Let's talk about why it can be such a big game-changer for your experience:

1.THEY ARE TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

When you are investing in a professional photographer, you want to make sure that the images look their absolute best. Professional hair + makeup artists are TRAINED to do hair + makeup so that it photographs well. While your makeup may look AMAZING in person, it can look completely different on-camera, and these professionals are trained to know the difference! They will conceal spots you don't like, contour your face so it looks the best at every angle, use colors that compliment your skin to make it look flawless, make your eyes POP with false lashes + shadows, manicure your eyebrows to perfection and more!

2. LESS STRESS

Preparing for your senior portrait session can be stressful in and of itself. Trying to do your hair and makeup by yourself can make things even harder. Professional camera equipment is designed to pick up every little detail in an image (even details that the eye can't see) so hiring a professional makeup artist is the best way to go.

3.WHO DOESN'T LIKE BEING PAMPERED!?

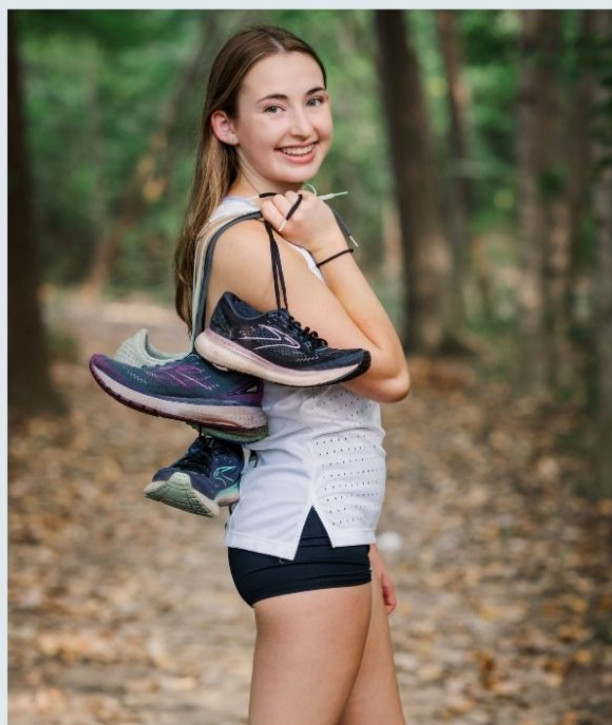
I don't ever want my seniors to feel like their portrait session is just simply "taking pictures", I want it to be an EXPERIENCE. So, if my seniors arrive after an hour of being pampered + beautified, the entire experience has already started on a good note! If a senior arrives flustered or stressed after trying to get ready themselves, it can affect the entire experience, including the way you look in photographs!

PROPS & ACCESSORIES

Now that we have a better idea of the overall style for your session based on your outfits and locations, let's add in the details! First, let me clarify: this part is **TOTALLY** optional! If you don't want to add any props or accessories to your shoot... you don't have to! All we need is **YOU** to make your shoot amazing. But, if you want to personalize your shoot even further and add in some fun "extras"... this section of the guide is going to help you!

Make it feel like YOU!

This is clearly a theme of this entire guide! The goal of adding in props or accessories is to make the shoot feel even more like **YOU**. Try to think creatively about the things that make you who you are. What are your hobbies? Favorite colors and styles? Extracurricular activities? Do you **LOVE** bright, girly colors and want to have a ton of florals in your images to compliment that? Are you an athlete with medals and trophies that you want to highlight? Do you already know your plans for college and want to have celebratory images to share about your next steps? Let's do all the things!!!



Fluffy Flowers, anyone?

One of my FAVORITE ways to elevate any senior session is to add in some beautiful florals. To my girly girls, this one's for you! There are so many ways to incorporate flowers into your shoot. You can contact a local florist to put together a floral crown (paired with a long, flowy dress), buy some grocery store flowers to fill a purse, have a small bouquet as an extra detail or as grandiose as a floral installation at a location that you love. If you want to talk more about how to incorporate florals, reach out to me and I'm happy to help!



Friends + boyfriends + pets, oh my!

We talked earlier about how to decide WHO to bring with you at your shoot...and I just wanted to encourage you one more time to include the people that matter most to you! If you have a pet, a friend, a significant other or a family member that is a huge part of your life...they should be featured in your photos! You'll be so glad you did when you look back at your images 10 years from now. If you plan to bring a pup or a pet, I just ask that you bring someone along that can watch them for us when we aren't taking pictures with them!



SPORTS + HOBBIES

One of the most fun ways to customize your senior experience is to add in some of your favorite things that you do every day! I've had seniors want to highlight the sport they play, their favorite foods, their love for reading, shopping or horseback riding ... I've done it ALL! Use this section of the guide to start brainstorming ways we can creatively incorporate what makes you YOU!

Athletics + Sports

If you play a sport that is a huge part of your high school career...we need to highlight it! You can bring along your uniform + equipment (volleyball, lacrosse stick, etc.) for some really fun photos. You can also consider adding in any medals, trophies or letters you have to highlight

Cheer + Dance

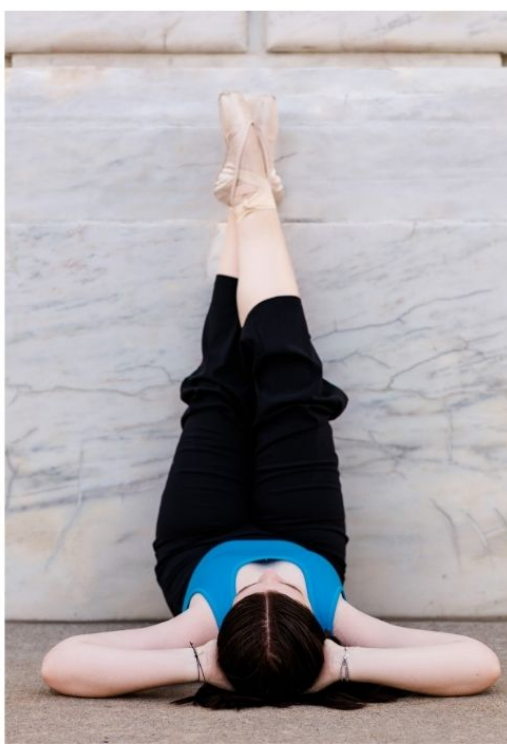
Let me just start by saying these are BOTH also sports...but they deserve their own section! It's so fun to capture these photos. Bring along your uniform + poms, or your leo and pointe shoes...we will get some STUNNING action shots for you, as well as the traditional posed images!

Hobbies + Artists

As a photographer, I love finding creative ways to highlight your talent! If you paint, write, read or are a photographer yourself... let's show that off! We can find some really fun ways to highlight this, and I would love to have you bring along any pieces you are proud of to incorporate in your images!

Favorite Things

Incorporating your favorite things into your pictures can be really creative...and also really funny! Are you someone who can't live without your daily Starbucks Pink Drink? Have a Chick-Fil-A obsession? In love with your car or have a shopping addiction? Let's brainstorm together to find some fun ways to highlight these things at your shoot!

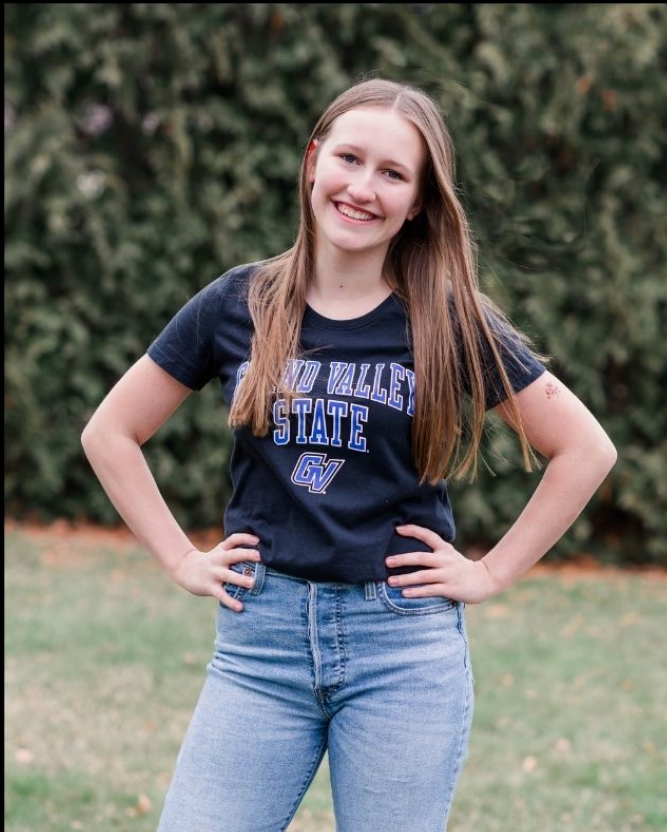


COLLEGE GEAR

Already know where you plan to head to school next year? AMAZING! The biggest congratulations to you!! If you want to celebrate by capturing some images rocking your college gear, let's do it! I typically tell my seniors to bring this as an "additional" outfit - so it doesn't count as one of your 3-5 outfits in your package. We'll throw it on for a quick 5 mins and give you the perfect photo to announce your plans for next year!

What to Wear:

A super fun way to highlight your university is with a football or other sports jersey! If you are planning on playing a sport at college, you can also bring your own gear to use in these photos. If not, just grab a college tee, hoodie or crewneck to throw on! If you want to bring along your acceptance letter or a fun sign, we can capture that, too!



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Here are some questions that I get often, and what to do if anything goes wrong leading up to your shoot date!

What happens if we have bad weather?!

This is by far the most asked question I get about things that could go wrong, which makes total sense...because bad weather happens all the time! If there is bad weather in the forecast for your shoot, rest assured that you have options and I am MORE than happy to reschedule! I typically wait until we are 48 hours out from the session to make a final decision about weather because it changes so often.

If there is a 50% chance of rain or LESS: It is TOTALLY up to you whether you want to move forward with trying to shoot, or if you'd prefer to reschedule to another date. If we shoot and it DOES rain...we will have to finish the session despite the weather (we can't do two shoots if you decide to move forward but the weather doesn't cooperate). But we can make some REALLY cute photos happen in the rain!!! However, if you have your heart set on glowing light and bright images...I'd recommend rescheduling to be safe.

If there is a 50% chance of rain or MORE: My professional recommendation in these scenarios is to reschedule. Even if it doesn't end up raining, it's always better to be safe than sorry, especially if you are really excited about bright, sunset light in your photos!

Wind: There has only been one time I've had to reschedule a session for bad wind...and it was CRAZINESS! Typically, we can shoot despite the wind if we are strategic with WHERE we shoot. But if there are crazy gusts and you would prefer to move to a day when we know your hair won't have flyaways... we can make that happen!

Fog: Typically, fog is only an issue with sunrise shoots.... but I've had it happen! If there is severely thick fog, it will impact your images because they will be cloudy and grey...which is not my typical shooting style that you booked me for.

Cloudy: I have a lot of seniors who get worried about cloudy days because they think their images won't be as bright and beautiful...but rest assured, that's not true!! Cloudy days are actually AMAZING for photographers...because it means there are no harsh shadows!! Unless it is a seriously grey day with heavy fog or severe storm clouds...cloudy days are our friend!! AND they aren't as hot!!

What if we do have to reschedule because of weather?

That is COMPLETELY okay! We will make the final call 24-48 hours before your session. Part of the reason I only take 4 senior sessions per week is to leave TONS of room open for rescheduling if we need to for reasons outside of our control (i.e. sickness, weather, emergencies). Typically, you won't have to wait longer than a week if we have to move your date!*

*This does NOT include needing to reschedule because of poor planning, running late or any other reason. These reschedules are required to book for my next available date - which is typically 3-4 weeks out.

My skin is breaking out like crazy...HELP!

We've ALL been there! Don't worry one bit. I am happy to remove any large blemishes in editing - you won't even know it happened! Promise!

Where am I going to change my clothes?

I mentioned this briefly earlier in the guide...but it's a question I get a lot! Typically, my seniors choose to change their outfits in the car. A lot of the time, we are photographing at locations that do not offer public bathrooms, so it's the quickest option! I recommend trying to organize your outfits + accessories ahead of time to make this process super quick and easy. If you would feel more comfortable changing in a bathroom, just let me know ahead of time - I'm happy to select your locations based around which ones have public bathrooms!



The Sneak Peeks

After your shoot, my favorite part of the process is sharing your same-day sneak peeks! Yep, THE. SAME. DAY. I truly get just as excited about your images as you do...and I go home straight from your shoot to edit a handful of my favorites and get them in your hands ASAP! You can expect 2-3 sneak peeks to be shared the night of your shoot...and you are welcome to share them anywhere you'd like, too!

The Gallery Delivery

Editing your final gallery typically takes up to 10 days, and gallery delivery day is THE MOST EXCITING!!! I will send you the link to your final gallery in an email. This gallery is where you can easily download, share and print all of your high resolution digital files. Your gallery is SO easy to use, and my hope is that it makes sharing your images easy.

#SENIORSUNDAY

Now for the fun part: sharing your images!

You can download your senior photos on your phone the SAME way you can download them on a computer - it's super easy! For the best quality, I recommend downloading them directly to your phone - or using AirDrop to send them from your computer to your phone. This way, you can easily share them on social media!

I will be sharing Senior Sunday photos starting in January of your senior year!!





I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU!

We are going to have the BEST
time...I promise! If you need me for
anything before your session you
can reach me at
Susancarolynphotography@gmail.
com. See you soon!