

Pet Photography — Workbook

This workbook accompanies the Pet Photography course and turns each module into applied practice. Complete each exercise before moving to the next lesson — the skills compound. Use the templates to track your gear settings, session planning, and client pricing so you build repeatable systems, not one-off results.

Camera Settings and Gear for Animal Subjects

Calibrate your camera configuration and gear decisions before your first real session.

Exercise: Exposure Preset Drill

On your camera body, create two custom shooting banks as described in Lesson 1. Then photograph a moving subject (a person walking, a hand waving) at each setting to confirm sharpness.

- What shutter speed did you use in Bank A (outdoor daylight) and did you get sharp results on a moving subject?

- At your camera's high-ISO ceiling (e.g., 6400), take a test frame in indoor light and describe the noise level and whether it is acceptable for your primary use case.

- Which autofocus mode and subject-detection setting did you enable, and how did it perform on your test subject?

Worksheet: Gear Audit Sheet

List every piece of gear you currently own and rate its suitability for pet photography. Identify gaps and prioritise one purchase or rental.

Camera body and maximum usable ISO

Primary lens (focal length, max aperture)

Secondary lens (focal length, max aperture)

Memory card(s) — brand, speed class, capacity

Attention tool(s) available (toy, treat pouch, whistle)

Reflector owned? Size and type

Top gear gap to address and estimated cost

Checklist: Pre-Session Gear Pack Checklist

- Camera body charged with two batteries
- Bank A (outdoor) and Bank B (indoor) exposure presets saved
- Primary lens and one backup lens packed
- Two formatted memory cards (UHS-II or fast UHS-I)
- Squeaky toy or crinkle attention tool
- High-value treats in a sealed silicone pouch
- 43-inch 5-in-1 reflector
- Microfiber cloth and lens cleaning pen
- Knee pads or foam kneeling mat

Lighting Techniques for Animal Subjects

Practice reading and shaping light in real locations before bringing a client animal.

Exercise: Location Light Test

Visit a potential shooting location at the time of day you plan to use it. Photograph a static object (a stuffed animal toy works well) in three distinct lighting positions: direct sun, open shade, and window light or reflected light.

- Which of the three positions produced the softest, most flattering light on a fur-textured surface and why?

- Where did you notice the natural catchlight source (sky, window, reflector)? Describe its position relative to your subject.

- What would you change about this location or the time of day for a real session based on what you observed?

Worksheet: Location Scouting Log

Document each potential shooting location with enough detail to return reliably and set up efficiently. Location name and address or GPS pin

Date and time of scouting visit

Light direction and quality at session time

Open shade available? Describe position and size

Background options (2-3 specific spots with distances)

Safety assessment for off-lead dog (enclosed? near road?)

Parking and client access notes

Best months / times of year for this location

Checklist: On-Location Lighting Setup Checklist

- Identified open shade or window light as primary source
- Camera position angled so light source is at 45 degrees to subject face
- Reflector positioned on shadow side at 1-2 metre distance
- Test frame taken and catchlight confirmed in eye
- Background distance assessed — minimum 5 metres for soft blur at f/2.8
- Distracting background elements (signs, litter, foot traffic) assessed and avoidance plan noted
- Mixed colour temperature sources (fluorescent overhead + window) eliminated or planned around

Animal Behavior, Direction, and Session Management

Develop your behavioral toolkit and session management process through structured reflection and pre-session preparation.

Exercise: Behavior Observation Practice

Observe any dog or cat (your own, a friend's, or in a park) for 15 minutes without a camera. Focus entirely on reading behavioral cues and predicting the next action.

- Describe three specific cues you observed (ear position, body posture, tail movement) and what followed each one within 5 seconds.

- Did you observe any stress signals? What were they and what appeared to trigger them?

- Which moment during the observation would have produced the strongest portrait frame and what cue would have told you to press the shutter 0.5 seconds earlier?

Worksheet: Client Intake Questionnaire Template

Use this template for every new client. Fill it in from the client's responses — either via a form tool (Typeform, Google Forms) or a phone call.

Pet name, breed, and age

Temperament around strangers (shy / neutral / social / reactive)

Reliable training commands

Highest-value treats (brand and type)

Favourite toy or attention object

Any physical limitations or health conditions

Primary image use (print / social / gift / commercial)

Desired mood or style reference

Other pets or family members to include

Preferred session location (their home / outdoor park / studio)

Checklist: 48-Hour Pre-Session Briefing Checklist

- Confirmation email sent with date, time, location, and parking details
- Three client instructions included: normal energy level, bring toy and treats, stay hands-off unless directed
- Expected deliverable number stated explicitly (e.g., minimum 20 edited images)
- Intake questionnaire reviewed and unusual items flagged (reactive dog, health limitation, multiple animals)
- Session duration confirmed with client and appropriate length booked per animal type
- Photographer gear pack confirmed against pre-session checklist

Editing, Delivery, and Commercial Strategy

Build your Lightroom workflow and pricing framework so your commercial systems are as reliable as your camera settings.

Exercise: Editing Sequence Practice Run

Take 20 raw files from a previous shoot (or practice session with any animal) and apply the full editing sequence from Module 4: cull, basic exposure, eye enhancement, fur texture, noise reduction, and export.

- What was your selection rate (final edits divided by total frames captured) and did it fall within the expected 10-15% range?

- Describe the specific Texture and Clarity values you settled on for this subject's coat and why those values worked.

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- How long did the full cull-to-export workflow take for 20 edited images? What step consumed the most time?
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Worksheet: Pricing and Package Builder

Calculate your cost of doing business and build a session package structure. Work through each row before completing the package rates.

Annual gear depreciation estimate (\$)

Annual software subscriptions (Lightroom, gallery platform, etc.) (\$)

Annual insurance cost (\$)

Annual travel / fuel estimate for sessions (\$)

Annual marketing cost (website, ads) (\$)

Total annual CODB (\$)

Target number of sessions per year

Break-even session fee (CODB / sessions)

Session fee at 1.5x break-even (\$)

Digital package 1: number of images and price (\$)

Digital package 2: number of images and price (\$)

Digital package 3: all selects price (\$)

Entry-level print product and price (\$)

Premium print product and price (\$)

Checklist: Post-Session Delivery Checklist

- All raw files backed up to two locations before culling begins
- Three-pass cull completed — final selection rate documented
- Develop settings synced across frames shot in same lighting sequence
- Eye enhancement mask applied to all selects
- Fur texture Lightroom adjustment applied via subject mask
- Noise reduction applied to all frames above ISO 1600
- Export preset used matches delivery type (web / print / social)
- Client gallery uploaded to Pixieset, Pic-Time, or equivalent with password
- Gallery link emailed to client within 14 days of session
- Model releases collected for any humans appearing in commercial-use images

Your Action Plan

1. Save your two camera exposure presets (Bank A outdoor, Bank B indoor) and test them with a moving subject before your next session
2. Build your pre-session gear pack exactly as listed in the Module 1 checklist — do not substitute or skip the attention tool
3. Scout one outdoor and one indoor location using the Location Scouting Log worksheet and visit at your planned session time
4. Complete the Client Intake Questionnaire for every new booking — send it as a form two days before the session
5. On your next animal encounter (own pet, friend's pet, or shelter visit), spend 15 minutes on behavior observation without a camera
6. Edit a practice set of 20 raw frames through the full Module 4 sequence and time yourself — identify your slowest step
7. Calculate your CODB using the Pricing and Package Builder worksheet and set a minimum session fee before taking any paid bookings
8. Create a Pixieset free account and set up a sample client gallery so the delivery workflow is ready before your first client session
9. Research the top three stock platforms (Shutterstock, Adobe Stock, Alamy) and review their contributor requirements and average RPM before deciding whether to pursue stock alongside client work
10. Schedule a low-stakes practice session with a friend's pet — treat it as a paid session and run the full intake, shoot, edit, and delivery workflow from start to finish

