

# how to <sup>your</sup> choose **B** **ABY** photographer



pixel perfect photography's

*how to' series*



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# *Choosing your photographer*

## **what to look for, what to ask**

You've just had the most amazing experience and brought into the world a precious miracle, a new life. You're totally in love and probably a little overwhelmed. But you know you want to document your new baby's young life, starting as soon as possible because already he or she has started to change right before your eyes. You want to be sure that you select a photographer who is compassionate, competent and experienced. But, finding the right person is a daunting task, especially with all the disruption that goes hand-in-hand with managing a newborn - a baby of any age, in fact. What do you look for? What questions do you ask? While price is always a consideration, we know there are other things you should look for, too, because you shouldn't entrust capturing your baby's life to just anyone. Choose the wrong photographer and you could miss documenting an important stage - every milestone during your baby's first year is fleeting and once a stage has passed you can't go back. So, we've put together a list of things to consider and questions to ask and how to go about looking for a photographer, so you'll feel armed with the information to make the right decision for you and your family.



## Where to Look

First, check around with friends and family. Does anyone have experience with a photographer and what was that like? A baby photographer should be someone who is a great people person - with the parents as well as the baby. He or she should be someone you enjoy working with. If you belong to a mom's group or forum you may try asking there. Do a web search as well and be sure that you check out the photographer's website as well as their Facebook page and their blog. Websites tend to be more static, whereas a Facebook page and blog should have samples of their most recent work. Once you've settled on a prospect, call and ask them to tell you more about their services. A good photography studio should provide you all the information you need to determine if their studio is a fit for you and you should be able to determine, from the conversation, if the studio is one that you will want to do business with.



## Style

In looking at the photographer's work, does it draw you in? Do their images make you think 'I want that?' Does the photographer have a variety of images in his or her portfolio? At our studio we pride ourselves on catering to each client's specific needs and always try to provide a balance of images - from the very simple to more complex. If a client has specific input we always attempt to deliver what they are looking for. We encourage our clients to bring in things to personalize a session. We also have a huge prop closet with a variety of very classic, durable and timeless props and backgrounds that enable us to create almost any image a client may request. It's entirely possible that you may not know what you want, but I promise that you will know what you like when you are looking at portfolios so be sure to check them out. Visit us online at [pxpfoto.com](http://pxpfoto.com); view sample slideshows at [www.youtube.com/user/Gmorello55/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/Gmorello55/videos); our facebook page is [facebook.com/theperfectpixel](http://facebook.com/theperfectpixel) and our blog is at [pxpblog.com](http://pxpblog.com).





## Experience

How experienced is the photographer? Not just how long they have been in business but how long they have specialized, or even if they specialize. And, if you have twins (or triplets or any other multiple) be sure to check whether the photographer has a good amount of experience photographing multiples, because that type of session certainly presents unique challenges with which a photographer should be familiar.

Different types of photography call for very different skills. If a photographer is a great event or wedding photographer it does not necessarily translate that he or she will be a great baby photographer. With experience and specialization comes specific skills and consistency, and the ability to 'think on the fly' in any situation because almost every situation has been encountered at one time or another.

Babies are all different but if you have worked with hundreds of them you understand and can anticipate patterns. This is a huge benefit because a baby has a short window of opportunity and it helps immensely to know exactly what you are doing and to confidently move things along. I can't tell you how many sessions I have photographed where the parents want to take me home with them because I can calm babies, I can often anticipate what they will do and I am really good at soliciting a variety of expressions (when they're old enough to have them!). Babies are super comfortable with me because - here's my big secret - I adore them. And they know it. I've been called the baby whisperer more times than I can count. That's because I love what I do, have the patience of a saint (so I've been told), and have the confidence that comes with having photographed 15-20 babies every week for 10 years. This is the type of experience you want to look for.

## Comfort & Safety



Do the photographer's portraits convey safety and comfort? Does the baby look comfortable, relaxed and peaceful? There are some images (like the famous 'head in hands' newborn photo - left) that are sometimes best done in Photoshop by merging two photos together, with the parents or another's hands on the baby at all times. Now, you can't tell whether or not this was done but you can tell by looking whether a baby looks at peace. At our studio we take zero risks with babies, and do all we can to ensure their (and your) comfort. We have an excellent understanding of what babies of all ages are capable of. We strive to make every session peaceful, calm and enjoyable with the highest regard for the baby's comfort

and safety, and that should be the case for any photographer you consider.

## Time

How much time is your photographer willing to devote to your session? Different age groups call for different requirements and, generally speaking, a photographer needs to allow more time than you might think to ensure that clients are not kept waiting and that the photographer is available when baby is ready. We schedule a minimum of 4 hours for a newborn session, and they generally take

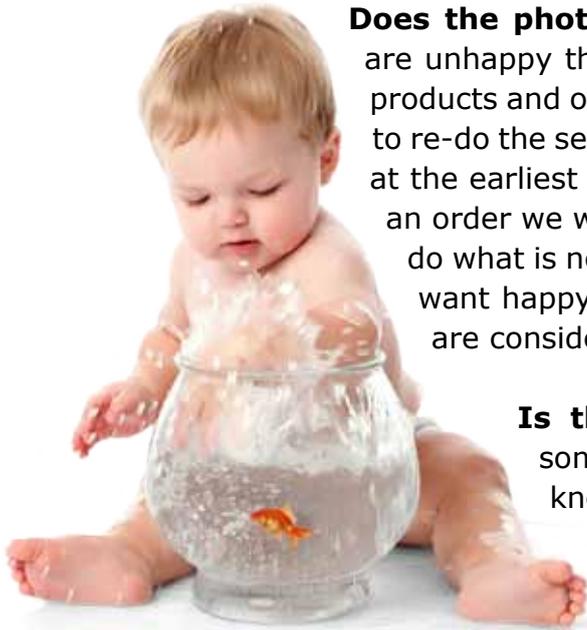
approximately 3 hours. For a 3 month session we allow 60 minutes but generally need only 30 minutes. And, we never schedule sessions back to back if we can help it. We always schedule more than enough time because we know - from experience - that sometimes things happen. Clients with a



new baby can be unexpectedly late, sometimes babies need a cat-nap that no one planned for and sometimes things just take longer than anyone can anticipate. Babies move at their own pace and we move with them. A baby photographer should have a good understanding of the needs at all ages throughout the baby's first year and plan accordingly.

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## Policies



**Does the photographer guarantee his or her work?** If not and you are unhappy then you may have no recourse. We guarantee our portrait products and our services, including your photo session. If we should need to re-do the session or part of a session for any reason then we reschedule at the earliest convenience for all parties. If there is ever a problem with an order we will fix it, re-do it or refund your money. No fussing, we just do what is necessary to make sure that you love your portraits. We only want happy clients and that is something to look for in whoever your are considering.

**Is there a charge for session reschedules?** Babies are sometimes unexpectedly sick. Or just have a bad night. We know this and so our policy is that if you need to reschedule, you reschedule. This causes us to juggle our schedule sometimes but we find that this is the best possible policy for our clients and they do appreciate it. Babies need to be fed, healthy, rested and happy for their sessions and we do everything we can to make sure that they are.

**Are parents allowed to watch during sessions?** We hope that you are not only allowed to watch but included as a vital part of the session. Mom or Dad are the best attention-getters that I have, not to mention spotters when I need one. I couldn't possibly manage a session without at least one parent there. Insist on it!

**Are other family members allowed to watch a session? Can they be included?** We encourage participation by other family members including Mom & Dad and siblings so you have a comprehensive record of your baby's first year. We also have no problem with others attending the session, so long as we keep commotion and attention-getting to a minimum (babies are easily fatigued or confused by too much going on at the same time).



**Does the photographer come to your home or are sessions in-studio?** We conduct all our baby sessions in the studio because that is the most efficient way (for you, the baby and us) that we have found to conduct the session. All our supplies, equipment and props are close at hand - and that is huge, because you never know what you may need during a session; also, we can control the lighting situation exactly which allows us to concentrate on you and your baby and not the lighting, and you don't need to clean your house in anticipation of our arrival! We've found this personally works best for our clients but you should always find out up-front what services the photographer provides in terms of location.



**When is the studio open?** What days is the photographer available? During the week? Weekends? Evenings? What are your needs? The caveat here is that photo sessions should always be scheduled at the best time for the baby, and often that is earlier in the day. So, though in our studio we do offer evening appointments we don't generally schedule baby photo sessions in those timeframes. We do offer Saturday appointments but since we are often booked several months in advance for Saturdays, our advice when a new baby joins our plan is to schedule all your appointments for the year out if you are interested in Saturdays. If you have particular needs it's always best to ask.



**How will you view your pictures?** In our studio, you will return (usually) the week following your photo session to view your images in our awesome multimedia room. We're able to show you multiple images at one time in life size so you can pick your very favorites. And, we're experts at helping you narrow things down and at finding the best possible package for your needs. Once you're familiar with our process we even offer remote viewings if you live a distance from the studio. Different photographers have different services, though, so best to check what is offered so you know what to expect.

**What is the turnaround time for orders?** A reputable studio will have a reasonable turnaround time for orders. Some products may take longer than others, depending on vendor lead times, but overall turnaround should be a matter of weeks and should be consistent. In our studio, it actually took a lot of effort to get our turnaround time to 2-3 weeks consistently. There are products that have longer lead times but we are very up-front when lead times are longer, and for some products such as birth announcements turnaround time is often within days or a week. What you are looking for is reasonableness and consistency from anyone that you may work with.

**Is retouching included with all purchased products?** Babies are gorgeous but often their skin



needs a little help. You should understand whether retouching or other services - such as conversion to black and white - are included or additional. We include expert retouching and conversion to any duo-tone such as black and white with all our portrait products, but be sure to check this one out.

**What is the studio's practice regarding file retention and file management?** Are files retained indefinitely or is there a deletion policy? If you don't place an order within an expected time frame you want to be sure that you know what the studio's policy is in regards to retaining files. Our studio generally will retain files on orders not yet placed for 30 days but if you have different needs you only have to let us know. Also, we will retain forever the files for any portraits that you do order. **Lastly, does the studio back up critical files?** You want to be sure that there is no

possibility that your files will be lost or accidentally deleted. In our studio, our files are backed up in a minimum of 3 places, one of them off-site. We've spent a lot of time, effort and money on our backup processes, it's one of those things that as a client you never see but you want to know (trust me) that a studio has adequate resources to properly manage and maintain your precious files.

**What about portrait products, pricing and financing?** Different studios offer different products and packages and pricing. Some studios are able to offer a wide variety of products, some studios keep offerings to a minimum so if you have particular products you are interested in it's best to ask. Different studios also offer different packages and have different price points so it's best to ask what you can expect to spend at a particular studio.

We happen to offer a great variety of portrait products. We also offer great deals on session fees for babies to make it really easy for you to try us out. And, we offer interest-free payment plans for your portrait purchases. We hold the financing so we can manage the plan to suit your needs - it's not a layaway, put down whatever is comfortable and take your portraits home while paying for them comfortably over time. Our clients love this about our studio because we make it easy for them to buy what they want. Here's a few of our resources regarding products and pricing:

- contact us and we'll send you a catalog at 603-579-0500 or [info@pxpfoto.com](mailto:info@pxpfoto.com)
- check out our products and services and ballpark pricing online at [pxpinvestment.com](http://pxpinvestment.com)
- check out our deal on Baby's First Year at [pxpbaby.com](http://pxpbaby.com)

So, you can see that there are lots of things to consider but we hope that we've given you a road map and some good information to help you make the best decision for you and your family. **If you have questions or if you'd like to talk to us about our baby photography we'd love to chat! Give us a call at 603-579-0500 or send us an email at [info@pxpfoto.com](mailto:info@pxpfoto.com).**

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