



Frequently asked questions

Please take the time to review, so you feel calm, confident and fully prepared going into your shoot.

What is a headshot? A headshot is an accurate, clear photograph of an individual's head and shoulders, sometimes going as low as their waistline. Typically a headshot is used as a professional identity to market someone's services/talents.

What makes a great headshot? A great headshot will convey your unique talents and make you look your best to potential directors, clients and the public in general. It will show something about who you are at your core and leave a positive lasting impression. A great headshot feels alive — it stands out and makes whoever is looking at your picture want to know more about you.

Who uses headshots? Headshots are most frequently associated with actors, musicians and models, but all sorts of professionals use these kinds of pictures. Authors, editors, comedians, chefs/bakers, realtors, bankers, engineers, attorneys, doctors, wedding/event planners, artists/designers, coaches, business owners, personal trainers, pilates/ yoga instructors, CFOs/CEOs and more. Some folks have come to balance for headshot sessions strictly for use on social media sites and/or dating sites (LinkedIn, Facebook, Match.com, etc.). Clients come to balance from the local Baltimore/Washington DC area, as well as New York and even a few from LA.

Do you only shoot actors? A large number of our headshot clients are actors or entertainers, however almost an equal number are other types of professionals. In the age of Facebook and LinkedIn, almost everyone in any business can benefit from a high quality headshot to use for marketing.

Do you work with children? Sure. We've done headshots for child talent for many years at balance. We love working with kids and child talent agencies.

How often do I need new headshots? An average time is every 2 to 4 years, however if anything dramatically changes about the way you look, it's a good idea to refresh your pictures. This could be a shift in hair style/color/ length, weight loss or any other sort of noticeable visual change.

Why hire a professional for my headshots? If you want to be taken seriously, you should present yourself seriously. Amateur pictures will make you look like an amateur. It will tell anyone thinking of hiring you that you're the kind of person who isn't entirely committed to excellence in your craft. Do yourself a favor from the beginning: Save time and money by hiring a professional to make you look your best. For actors in particular, directors and agents see hundreds of professional-quality headshots every day, so don't put yourself out there in an unprofessional photo. You won't be able to get your foot in the door until you present yourself as a serious actor.

What defines your shooting style? At balance we take headshots very seriously. Each shoot gets our complete attention as we custom craft an image for you. We believe headshots are a collaboration between photographer, subject and make-up artist. Each component is key. We create natural-looking, organic, relaxed headshots that



are extremely approachable and show personality. We aren't about showcasing our "special style" — we're about making the best possible headshot for you. Your headshot from balance will always be about you, not about us.

What makes balance special? The main thing that makes us special: we have a lot of fun working with headshot clients and we love what we do. That shows in our work. We have been doing professional headshots for over a decade and have the experience to make you look and feel your best — because you will be comfortable and at ease. We've seen trends come and go in headshots. What remains is that a solid headshot that brings out you at your best will always be in style. Your fabulous headshot will be an asset to you as you move forward to compete in any market.

Why a green photography company? The team at balance is dedicated to being green in all aspects of our business and lives. As photographers and artists, we have a high regard for the beauty of nature. It's a big part of our work. We are committed to having a light footprint so that all the incredible natural elements we enjoy are intact for future generations. We invite you to check out our green mission ([link](#)) and if there are any questions we can answer to help you make your life or business more sustainable, we are glad to assist! Do you see anything we can do to make our business greener? Let us know. We are always eager to learn.

How many sessions do you book in a day? We can only fit in two or three headshots in one day. We don't cram in too many — we want to be fresh and creative for each client. Balance is not a headshot factory. We are artists creating custom work for you.

Are there differences between various kinds of headshots? Absolutely. For example, headshots for an actor should show his or her scope — allowing a casting agent to picture them in roles as varied as school teacher to street thug if their acting range allows for it. But a doctor's headshot should portray him or her as a trusted, educated medical professional. Through a single headshot, many different things about a person can be expressed.

How much experience do you have doing headshots? We have been doing headshots since 1998 ~ 13 years.

Where do you shoot? The majority of our headshots are done on location. It creates a signature look and gives each client a truly personalized session. We have shot indoors and outdoors, in natural light and studio set-ups, all over the Baltimore/Washington D.C. area. The majority of our headshots are shot in Catonsville and Ellicott City. We do have a fully-equipped studio on site.

Where are you located? We are based in Catonsville, MD.

How do you handle lighting? We prefer to work with natural light. We aren't going to just stick you outside in the sunshine ~ we will use reflectors, shades and artificial lights as necessary, too.

What is the best time of day for natural light pictures? Ideally, natural light images are shot in the early morning just after sunrise, or in the evening, just before sunset. These times are known as the "golden hour" for



photographers. But in reality, shoots can't always happen at these times. We try to schedule headshots in the early morning, so we aren't rushed like it can be at sunset. If your schedule does not allow for early morning shoots, we can also do headshots in the afternoon and early evening. Leave the lighting to us, that's our job.

Do you shoot all outside or are some pictures inside? We shoot a large number of our headshots outdoors, on location. It offers a greater variety in backgrounds/ambiance than any studio can offer. However, we do shoot some inside too, using both window light and our studio set up.

What about people seeing me in public if we shoot outside? Normally nothing happens when the general public sees us doing a photo shoot. Occasionally subjects are whistled at or get some other admiration, but it's not a big deal. It's nothing to be nervous about. Most of the time, no one notices because many of our favorite shooting locations are just out of sight of main intersections.

What's better — studio or location shoots? Does either have an advantage over the other? Neither one is better than the other, generally speaking. They're just different. Studios are more convenient for photographers, as they don't have to leave their space to do a shoot. Working on location can be trickier and throw photographers more curve balls. Studio backgrounds are simple and non-distracting, but generic. Location backgrounds have more depth and personality. Both have pluses and minuses. The answer to this question lies entirely in personal preference. At balance we can work fluently in either scenario, however we prefer to shoot on location.

Do you have studio/indoor options? Yes. Please discuss it with us before your shoot if you prefer a studio style look. Unless previous details are discussed, all balance headshots are done on-location in natural light, and if you want studio style images, we will need time to prepare before you arrive.

What do you do in the winter or if it rains or if it's really hot? The show must go on, and so do we. Shoots can proceed in fog, rain, snow and cold or hot temperatures. In fact, ideal shooting is on an overcast, slightly cold day. The best natural light all year... is in the winter, thanks to the less direct angle of the Earth. Snow also makes gorgeous lighting conditions. If it's summer time during your shoot, we strongly suggest you plan to get here early — before the humidity and insects make their daily appearance.

We will check in with you the day before your shoot, but we will go on with all shoots in most weather conditions. Shoots are rarely cancelled due to weather. But, there are some situations when safety comes first, no matter how urgently you need your pictures.

Here are the occasions we will reschedule for weather, due to health or safety concerns....

- 1) Temperatures are below freezing (32 degrees F) or above 95.
- 2) There is flooding reported in our area, or in the area between you and us.
- 3) Storms with lightning and thunder, or extreme wind.
- 4) Sleet or ice are falling from the sky and it's not safe to drive.



- 5) Snow is too deep to drive in.
- 6) The State of Maryland has declared a state of emergency, such as a hurricane, tropical storm, earthquake or other Act of God, and all non-emergency personnel must be off the roads.

How do you travel to locations? We drive. Most of the locations we use for headshot shoots are within 10 to 15 minutes of our studio in Catonsville. We drive a Toyota Prius and it comfortably seats 5 adults.

Who will be actually taking my pictures at balance? Either Rissa Miller or Nathaniel Corn.

Who will be at the shoot? Your photographer (either Rissa or Nathaniel), as well as an assistant (Brittany or Jess) and a make-up artist if you elect to hire one. Aside from that, it's just you! Over the years, we have found most of our clients are more at ease with fewer people observing.

Can I bring a friend/escort to the shoot? If you are under the age of 18, you must bring a parent or guardian to your shoot and they must stay through the entire session. No exceptions. If you are over 18, you may bring one friend along to your shoot, but no more. We are not equipped to handle entourages and there simply is not enough space to handle more than one guest per client.

Can I bring my iPod/music? Of course. We have an iPod dock and you are welcome to bring your music along.

How long will my shoot last? It depends on your package and whether or not you hire a make-up artist. For most packages, set aside 2 or 3 hours. It's likely you will be done before that.

Can I see my pictures during the session? Sure. As we go along, we will share some of your images with you, to make sure the shoot is going in the direction you desire. We want to make sure you love your headshots.

What is the booking process? To book a shoot, you should email or call. From there, we will pick a date together and go over some getting ready tips. To hold all shoots, we require a non-refundable \$100 retainer fee. Your shoot is not officially booked until we receive your retainer fee.

How much time is needed to book? We are busier at different times of the year. Be sure to get in touch at least two weeks in advance of the time you want to book your shoot. Most headshots are done during the week. If you need a weekend date, call a month before you need your shoot. Weekends book up much further in advance. The more time you give yourself, the more likely you are to get the shoot date you want.

What is the process of a shoot, from beginning to end? First, you will call and book your shoot date. To hold the date, you'll send us a retainer. You should hire one of our suggested make-up artists at this time as well — they can book up in advance, too.



Leading up to the shoot, you will prepare yourself and wardrobe, and contact us with any questions you have. The day of the shoot, you will arrive with your wardrobe ready. We'll go through clothing options together and finalize your choices. Next you will get your hair and/or makeup done if you hired a stylist. Then we will be ready to shoot!

You will look at a number of location options in sample pictures to see what you like/don't like, and make suggestions. Finally we'll go to the location and take pictures. After we shoot the first look, you will change into your next outfit and we will repeat the shooting process as many times as your package permits.

At the end of the shoot, we will go over paperwork and you will pay the balance of the package fee. About 3 to 5 days later, you will get a password-protected website with your pictures that will be accessible from any computer. You will make your final selections and we will retouch them for you. Based on your package, you will also get a disc and/or postcards/comp cards. That's it! We are available to you all along the way to help with questions and make sure you have incredible headshots.

What is the turnaround time after the shoot for my pictures? For all shoots, standard turnaround time is 3 to 5 business days. If you need your images faster, rush turnaround (24 hours) is available for \$75.00. For retouching, standard turnaround time is 3 to 5 business days. If you need your retouched files faster, rush turnaround (24 hours) is available for \$25.00 per image. We do not offer turnaround "at the shoot", i.e., we do not process pictures "while you wait." Our post-production process takes twice as long as your shoot. We are not "shoot and burn" photographers — we need time to make your headshots look even more spectacular.

What about copyright release? Who will own the pictures? Because copyright laws favor the artist who creates a piece, we will own the copyright to all pictures. However, with your headshots, you will also get a legal form allowing you to use the images. This is called a copyright release or permission. It is included with all standard packages. After all, what good are your headshots if you can't use them?

How many pictures will I get? We will shoot until both you and we are satisfied. The number varies with each shoot, but you will leave with more than you need and plenty of choices. We promise. One comment we hear all the time from clients is that they had too many good pictures to pick from.

How do I pick my selects? This is a tricky step — it's when you narrow down all the images from the shoot to your favorite one or two that will represent you. If you are an actor with an agent, you're in luck — chances are good that your agent will make this decision for you. However, for the rest of the world, you will need to make your own selects. We always suggest showing your favorite 10 pictures to a bunch of people. It's great to share them with your spouse/partner/parents/kids/BFFs — but it's also good to ask for opinions from folks who don't see you every day. They will have a fresher perspective and generally, someone looking at you for a casting/job/etc. is someone who may have never seen you before. Take comments from folks with fresh perspectives seriously — these are most similar to the people you are trying to impress. And at the end of the day, you must pick the images you LOVE. You will be handing them out on all your promotional materials and showing them off on Facebook and other websites. You must feel 100% confident about your final headshot.



Will you help me to make my selects from the shoot? Generally, we do not make selects for clients. Over the years, we have found that people feel best about images they choose themselves. If you would like a Photographer's Edit of selects, we offer it for \$50.00.

Should headshots be in color or black & white? Nowadays, headshots are almost always used in color. Because we use digital cameras, color files can be converted to black and white if you need it for some specific use.

Have you done headshots for individuals of different ages/ethnic types? We sure have. Our clients have ranged from under one year old to an actor in her mid-80s. We've photographed clients of varied ethnic types as well. If you have specific concerns, please talk to us.

What kinds of packages do you offer? Current packages and rates are listed on the headshots prices page. ([link](#))

What forms of payment do you accept? We accept cash, checks and credit cards (Visa, Mastercard and Discover).

Do you offer any discounts? Yes. Clients may only apply one discount per shoot. Children's Headshot Update Shoots are not eligible for discounts.

- **Students:** \$50.00 off for all students. To get the student discount, you must be obviously 18/under, or have a valid college ID. All clients under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian at their shoot.
- **Green Wheels:** \$50.00 off for any client who arrives at their shoot in a hybrid or electric vehicle.
- **Carpool Discount:** Come with a friend for headshots on the same day and you each get \$50.00 off.
- **Send-A-Friend:** Refer new customers to balance, and each time one of your friends books a headshot, you will accrue \$25.00 in credit to apply towards new pictures. If you send us enough new customers — we will shoot your next headshot for free! (Yep, people have done it!)

Do you offer payment plans? Custom payment plans are available, however no matter the plan, all fees are due by the day of the shoot.

Do you have gift certificates? We are not currently selling gift certificates. If you wish to "gift" a shoot to a friend or loved one, please call and we will make personalized arrangements for you.

Do you offer consultations? For headshots, we are happy to have a complimentary phone or iChat/Skype consultation with you. Phone or video chat consultations must be scheduled in advance and will last about 15 minutes. We ask that you please review our entire portfolio and read all the information in our FAQ, policies/prices and about pages before your consultation and have specific questions ready to go.



If you would like an in-person consultation for your headshot from balance, we can set up a meeting at our studio. In-person headshot consultations are \$20.00, paid in advance, and the fee will be applied to the cost of your shoot.

For corporate headshot shoots, we offer complimentary phone or iChat/Skype consultations and can arrange in-person consultations based on the requirements of the job. Please contact us for details, especially if your needs include headshots of 10 people or more.

What is your policy for rescheduling or cancellations? If you need to cancel for any reason, one reschedule is permitted with 48 hours notice. The reschedule date must occur within 30 days of the original shoot date. Retainer fees are non-refundable. If you need to reschedule, contact us immediately. Additional reschedules beyond one will incur a second retainer fee.

Why do I need a professional make-up artist and/or hair stylist? Humans see in three dimensions — our eyes see a person and our brain fills in the 3-D shape. Cameras see in two dimensions. They don't have a brain to fill in the shape. Basically, cameras flatten objects from 3-D to 2-D in a picture. This is why they say the camera adds ten pounds — because it flattens your appearance. To look natural, your face and neck should have contours for light to accent as both highlight and shadow. A professional make-up artist is trained to recreate the contours of your face for the camera, so you have a more three dimensional appearance. In addition, professional make-up artists use camera-ready make-up, which doesn't reflect light. Regular make-up from the drugstore or even most from the cosmetics counter contain light-reflecting ingredients. This can make you look pale, shiny, washed-out or sickly to the camera, even if it looks great to the naked eye. The services of a professional make-up artist are absolutely necessary for a polished, even look in a photograph and are highly recommended for men, women and children over the age of 13. Quite simply, if you do not hire a make-up artist from balance's preferred list, we cannot guarantee the results of your shoot.

Do guys get make-up? Absolutely. Make-up is highly recommended for all males over the age of 13. For men, the make-up is designed to make you camera-ready and even. You won't look like a drag queen.

Can I bring my own make-up artist or do my own make-up? Of course you can. It's your photo shoot and we want you to be happy. The make-up artists on our list have all shot with balance multiple times (some for almost a decade!) and are familiar with our lensing and lighting techniques. We strongly recommend them for this reason — we know they can make you look great. But if you are a trained make-up professional yourself, or are affiliated with someone who is, please feel free to use them. Please note that additional retouching fees may apply.

How do I decide on my different looks? When you're selecting your looks for the shoot, consider what you want your pictures to say about you. Are you upbeat and perky? Serious and intense? Your clothing speaks volumes about your personality. Simply decide what is most important to convey and style your look to communicate those qualities.



How many times can I change clothes? Each package comes with a set amount of looks — i.e., changes of wardrobe. If you feel you need more looks, you can bump up to the next package or add and a la carte additional look. (Link to packages here)

Can you help me with posing at the shoot? Definitely. We give a lot of direction for posing and expression. It's part of our job to understand how to show off your features. You should do your homework, though. Look at pictures online and in magazines/books. Find images with people who look like you — both in age and body type. From there, decide what you like and practice in the mirror. That's not a joke! You really should practice posing and smiling before you come to your shoot! Being familiar with your own face really helps.

What if I'm nervous? We totally understand. Many people are nervous about going to a photo shoot. We've done this a bunch of times — let us put you at ease. We're a laid back bunch and we have so much fun, the shoot will be over in a blink.

What about my glasses/wedding ring/jewelry in the headshot? This is always a subject of controversy in headshots. Our feeling is if you normally wear glasses or your wedding rings, you should wear them in your pictures. Be yourself. If you typically wear jewelry, wear some in your pictures, as long as it's not too distracting or trendy. We can always take a few extra pictures as well with no glasses/wedding rings/jewelry, so you have all your bases covered.

How do I get ready for my headshot? When you book your shoot, we will email you a document with loads of tips to help you get ready. Please read it and take it all to heart. We've been doing this a long time and have shot hundreds and hundreds of headshots. But some short advice... drink lots of water and get hydrated. Be sure to rest before your headshot. Exfoliate any skin that will show in the images (face, neck, shoulders, hands). Make sure your clothing fits well — try it all on.

Seriously, what does exfoliate mean? Skin exfoliation dates back to ancient Egypt. Really! It's the process of removing the top layer of old, dead, dry skin and makes a big difference in pictures, especially with digital photography. It doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. If you're very particular, go to a professional esthetician and have a full or half facial about a week before your shoot. If you are on a budget, use about one cup of fine sugar in one cup of olive or jojoba oil and gently scrub your skin. Many commercial exfoliants are available at grocery stores, drug stores and department stores. If you choose one of those, be sure it is right for your skin type. Exfoliate about a week before your shoot — not the night before — for best results.

What should I bring to wear? It's always best to bring more clothing than you will need. Solid colors with interesting texture photograph best. Make sure your clothing fits well, is clean and ironed — and is ready to go well before the shoot. Don't select anything too trendy that will be out of style in a few months or anything with patterns/logos that will be distracting. Avoid baggy, boxy cuts of clothing — they will add weight to you in a picture. Try to select colors that compliment or mimick your eyes. Women should look for a variety of necklines. Guys should consider a jacket and dress shirt, as well as something more casual. If you are working with an agency,



be sure to ask them exactly what they want you to wear. Frequently, agents will have specific looks in mind.

Do you do retouching? How much retouching is included? It is our strong belief that your headshot should look like YOU! Like you at your best, in present time. Not looking older or younger or thinner or thicker. But how you really are. To that end, the following Photoshop work is included in your headshot selects retouching: overall image toning/color correction; cleaning up background elements; general lighten/darken of image; teeth whitening; under-eye circle lightening; blemish removal; stray hair removal; light skin smoothing; removing skin shine; fading wrinkles/age spots.

If we don't include it on the list above, we want you to think hard about whether or not you really need it — if it's really you. If you're wondering... can they make me look thinner/thicker/younger/blonder/etc.? The answer is yes, we can. In fact, we can do just about anything you need with Photoshop. But the next question is — should you do that? Your headshot should be an honest, authentic picture. We can make you look however you want. But ultimately, when you show up in front of a director/agent/client/human being — you need to look like the photo you sold yourself with. We will Photoshop whatever you like. We include the list above and offer an a la carte list as well ([link here](#)).

Please note: *if you do not use one of our recommended professional make-up artists, additional retouching fees may apply, as non-professional make-up, or make-up applied by artists not familiar with our lighting/shooting style typically require additional labor on the computer. A great deal of retouching can be avoided — and thus a more natural photographic look achieved — by hiring the right make-up professional from the beginning. For all clients 13 and over, male or female, professional make-up application is recommended.*

What kind of computers/software do you use? We use Mac computers and are currently running 4 of them. Adobe Photoshop CS5.1 is the software we use on all images.

What kind of cameras do you use? We use Nikon Professional DSLR cameras with Nikkor lenses and Nikon flashes. The lights in our studio are Alien Bees and White Lightnings, both made by Paul Buff in Nashville, TN.

What is a comp card? Also known as a composite card or z-card, comp cards are standardized 8.5 x 5.5 cards with four images on the back and one image on the front. Typically, talent use comp cards to showcase their range and highlight abilities. Models use comp cards the most frequently, however in recent years, more and more actors need them.

Do actors get comp cards? Yes. Since rising to popularity in the 1970s for models, comp cards have expanded in usage. Now they are used for many kinds of talent to show range and recent work/looks to potential clients and casting agents, to apply for commercial print jobs and other varieties of self-promotion. Comp cards allow a more dynamic introduction for actors than a standard 8x10 alone.

What are the postcards? Headshot postcards can be used by actors as well as other professionals. These are one-



sided color postcards with your image (one, two or three pictures) on the front in color and a blank back. They can be used to send thank-you's, follow up with auditions/interviews, or for professional correspondence. Postcard sets from balance are printed on recycled card stock and have a custom cover design which can include text.

Can I buy prints? Sure. Prints are available for sale right from your proofing website. You or your friends/family can order directly from there.

Where do I get large quantities of prints for auditions or promotions? We do not print 8x10 reprints for actors and talent. Many companies offer quality reprints for actors. We like Photocopy, ABC and Spotlight Printing.

Do you do stock? No, we don't shoot stock photography and we don't buy stock photography. Your images from balance will never be sold for stock. Every image you see in our portfolio was shot by a member of the balance team and was not purchased from stock.

I want to be on your website — will you add my picture? We love updating our website with new pictures and showing off how great our clients headshots look. We'd love to have you on our site!