

*Photographing
The
Retired Racing Greyhound*



*For
Websites or Publication*

*By
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This work is dedicated to:
King Cob
1838 —
Grandfather to them all.

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The First Page

This first page is for those of us that never read past the first page. If this describes you, then absorbing this first page will give you everything you need to know, but you will miss the pictures.

Get down to the level of the Greyhound.

Never stand when photographing a Greyhound

Try to photograph in open shade or on overcast days.

Avoid, at all costs, confusing or colorful backgrounds

Backgrounds should be neutral with no hot/light spots and should not compete with the subject. An unrecognizable background is good.

Avoid photographing the leash

The leash should be behind the subject.

Get the Greyhounds attention any way you can.

Ears should be up and tongue out of sight.

Colorful collars and/or any fancy adornment must go.

Remember what you came to photograph. I am sure it was not the collar or the scarf.

If, after reading this First Page, you are in the mood for more, or just plain don't think it can be done, then by all means turn the page, there are pictures that follow.

And, by the way, you can do it.

The Assistant

The assistant is one of the most important element is the successful greyhound photograph. This person should be a greyhound person and live with one or more. A greyhound person kisses their Greyhound on the head regularly. A Greyhound person is comfortable pushing and prodding the Greyhound into position for the photograph. A Greyhound person trusts the strange Greyhound enough to make the photography session successful.



The assistant needs to have the confidence in the unfamiliar Greyhound to push, pull and otherwise prod it into position. Above all else everyone must have patience, after all this is not a comfortable situation for the Greyhound.

The assistant should be familiar enough with the end product to see when something is wrong. In this case, the leash and collar were on the wrong side and the assistant moved it to the back side.





At times one or both of the rear side legs may not be properly placed. The assistant must understand the position and try to place the leg properly. At times it may be necessary for the photographer to change the angle so both rear side legs are visible. Sometimes walking the Greyhound around a bit will fix the problem. Many times the dog will naturally stand in an appropriate position.

The assistant must get out of the way when the time is right. Greyhounds have a tendency to follow you when you step back, so you both must have the patience to do it all over again. With dogs just off the track it is not uncommon to do it five or six times.



This is the patient result of the assistant to do it correctly. Then by removing the leash with the computer graphics program, you have a solitary Greyhound without any distracting elements, ears up and mouth closed.

Lighting

Natural Available Light

Open Shade

Open shade with a bright north sky is best, however any open shade will work.



Even the black Greyhound photographs best in open shade. When the black is coupled with white, the contrast range between the two hues is much easier to handle in this lighting situation.

Notice how the open shade casts no shadow under the Greyhound. This fact is then carried throughout the photograph. All parts of the image are softer and easier to handle. This lighting also shows the Greyhound to its best advantage.



Sunlight

Direct sunlight can work, however has some serious problems and is much harder to control than open shade.

Sunlight, with its heavy contrast, casts deep shadows. White greyhounds are harder to photograph in sunlight.



Notice the heavy shadow cast on the grey's chest and rear leg. It can be distracting, and tends to obliterate detail in the coat.

With the head turned into the sun, the face has detail, however, with the head turned left the same shadow will be on the near side of the face.

When faced with the challenge of Greyhounds with white and dark coats, the whites may tend to lose detail in sunlight. Notice also that turning the head can cast an unwanted shadow on the dark side of the face. Many times it is best if the sun is nearly behind the photographer. However then the photographers shadow must be avoided.

Sunlight also tends to lighten backgrounds making them difficult to handle.



Flash

Flash is a poor alternative to daylight, and will create problems of its own.

Flash can cast ugly shadows which distort reality.

Flash tends to flatten the subject.

Most consumer digital cameras will automatically flash indoors giving you unpredictable results.



Flash will include everything in the room, including the kitchen sink. In this case it is the childproof gate. It will cast bad shadows on the background unless the subject is very far away from it. Red-eye in Greyhounds is usually green, and is always disturbing.

About the best you can hope to do with flash is at night where the background disappears into darkness. This technique is only slightly better than indoors and is a poor substitute for daylight.



Posing

Get Down To Grey's Level

Much like photographing anyone shorter than you, get down to the subjects level. Photographing down on a subject from a standing position tends to demean the subject and in fact may intimidate a shy dog. Most will respond better to a person at their own level and this vantage point is more flattering to the Greyhound.



Getting down to the level of the Greyhound will entail putting one or both knees on the ground. It is advantageous to have a pair of garden knee pads on hand. If there is to be much photography, the knees tends to become sore.

The result is a proper vantage point, one that flatters the Greyhound by exposing as much of the stately body as possible, including the inside of the far legs.



Posing Pitfalls

Backgrounds



The lattice background might seem fine at first glance. In the final photograph it is loud and is the first thing the viewer sees. In this photograph an additional problem exists, in the green collar, and the almost straight on pose. Notice also there is a bottle standing at the corner of the fence. Always do your house-keeping before photography

Here we almost have the background that we want. Then included is the tree growing out of the Greyhounds head, much like a set of antlers. Additionally, the horizon line, which in this case is the bottom of the fence, splits the dogs head horizontally across the eyes. Avoid in-focus background lines cutting important elements of the head.





Many times, with a nervous Greyhound we are tempted to give up and stand close for the photograph. The assistant's legs do not flatter the Greyhound and seldom make a proper background. Notice also the two collars which are not necessary for the photograph.

Again we see the assistant behind, with the addition of the looped leash and sad, ears down look. In this case the helper feels compelled to actually hold the Greyhound in position. If you have patience eventually the helper can step out of the way.



This is another, and better example of the horizon line cutting the Greyhounds face.. A slightly lower angle, however, has moved the horizon to a more favorable location. An even lower angle might have been even better.



An otherwise wonderful pose and expression can be ruined by the sun filtering through the background. It might be better to deal with the direct sunlight rather than fight a situation such as this. This is especially troublesome with the brindle Greyhound.

Unless you have the talent to manipulate images using a computer graphics program it would be wise to watch hot spots such as this in your background. An image such as this can take considerable time to repair even for the seasoned graphics technician.



Here, the background is nothing more than a person in a bright red shirt and a very garish leash wrapped around a hand resting on the Greyhounds back. Very distracting to say the least.

Inappropriate Poses



It is best, if possible, to save these poses for the family album. We all have these pictures, but for the web site or for advertising adoptive Greyhounds the best photograph is a more formal one. Leave this type of photography to the family in the forever home.



Expressions



Greyhound owners may see this pose as adorable. Potential adoptive families may see it as menacing, sad, or abused. What seems natural to Greyhound people may not be to others. Avoid the ears down, sad eyes, and wistful look if at all possible even though it is completely natural.

The ears down and slightly fearful look is accentuated by the out-of-focus nose and garish purple collar, not to mention the leash clip. Automatic digital cameras are unforgiving in low light conditions and will throw close things out of focus. It is best to stay back a bit and crop the final image in the computer to the size needed. Or, better than that, avoid the full face pose altogether.



Greyhound lovers will recognize this look as a very relaxed and comfortable dog. It cannot be overstated that strangers to the breed may misinterpret this as sadness, or worse as aggression. Avoid the ears down doe eyes look whenever possible when photographing for website or publications dedicated to adoption.



Detracting Elements

An otherwise fine photograph may be ruined by including an inappropriate collar, leash, or other adornment. As pretty as a red collar is, it screams at you to notice it. We are here to photograph Greyhounds, not collars.



The scarf is always fun, you get one usually at the charity dog wash, or after the first bath before photographs for the web site. This adornment is best left for the Valentines Day parade.

By this time you should also notice the distracting background as well as a very bad expression.

Foster families will go to great lengths to dress their new family member. It is best to remove these adornments before making photographs to advertise adoptable Greyhounds. The back deck is a safe place to make the photograph, however, seldom has a suitable background.



Command Attention

You must get the attention of the subject. Without it the Greyhound may look frightened, sleepy or worse. An attentive Greyhound will usually have its ears up and mouth shut. Noise makers, soft toys with squeakers should not be used by the photographer. To do so will guarantee to get you a full face look, right into the camera, which is not what you want.



It is a warm day and the sun is shining. He has a full stomach, all is right with the world. It looks like time for a nap. Unfortunately we want to show him as a vibrant and interesting Greyhound. Command his attention off camera and



This is what results. Ears up mouth closed eyes open and sparkling, a very different Greyhound indeed. This photograph made only a few seconds later.

It's easy to do

Roll up a section of the Sunday newspaper and put masking tape around it. Put it in your back pocket and wherever you want the Greyhound to look, simply toss the roll in that direction. Greyhounds will almost always close their mouths and raise their ears when they see it in the air or when it hits the ground.



In this case the photographer wanted the Greyhound to look to his right. The rolled up paper was thrown in front of the dog to the photographer's right, with the left hand. Notice how the dog's mouth is open and his ears are down.

The result of the rolled up paper distraction is a Greyhound with his mouth closed and his ears up.



Full Length Pose



Notice all four legs are apparent. This is an animated pose with ears up and eyes alert. It is difficult to artificially pose the retired racer. The pose will usually be natural if you have patience and are able to recognize it. This example shows the modified side view with the head turned back over the shoulder. The distraction of the rolled up paper is obvious.

This is the classic side view with ears up, eyes bright and tail relaxed. At times it will be difficult to get the tail from between the legs. Usually the thrown paper will do the trick. The distraction of the collar and leash have been removed with the use of a graphics manipulation computer program.



Head Shot Pose



The classic profile, notice the collar is befitting the animal. Black will almost always work on the brindle. Other colors may be questionable. The head is up, ears alert, and sparkle with interest. The background is dark and unobtrusive. There is just enough detail in the background to mentally place the Greyhound in an environment.

The three quarter profile is about as close to full face as you will want to do. Both eyes are showing, the ears are up and the eyes show interest. The nose is not pointing directly at the camera and is sharp. This pose can be problematic if you move in too close. The nose may fall out of focus. The beige or natural leather collar photographs best on the fawn.





Adopt a retired racing Greyhound

Questions or help with elements of this booklet may be sent to:

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