

WORKING WITH YOUR SUBJECT

“There’s this idea that it’s the photographer’s job to set the subject at ease. I don’t believe in setting people at ease.”

—Annie Leibovitz

SUBCHAPTERS

- Checking the Picture on a Shoot
- When Is a Shoot Over?
- Being There
- Playing With the Subject

CHAPTER REVIEW

Subjects who are not used to having their picture taken are usually uneasy about being with a photographer. Even people who are used to it don’t like it that much. While Annie feels that some discomfort might make the picture more interesting, in general she finds that her subjects relax after a few minutes. For one thing, they know that she knows what she’s doing. They can trust her to take a good picture.

Trust is important. And respect. For instance, checking the back of the camera frequently to look at the picture might seem rude, unless you show the subject what you are looking at too. Making the subject stay for hours will not help things either. If things aren’t going well, it is better just to schedule another session.

How you conduct yourself is going to affect the shoot. Talking alone with the subject before things start is the best way to establish a fruitful rapport. Then when the shoot gets going, you can go back to your role as observer.

LEARN MORE

- Annie discusses photographing Queen Elizabeth. View those portraits for *Vanity Fair* [here](#).

ASSIGNMENTS

- Consider asking a friend or family member who is camera-shy or who has never been photographed in a formal setting if he or she is willing to participate in a photoshoot with you. Be mindful of your subject’s experience throughout. Annie advises that you shoot your subject as quickly as possible, although you shouldn’t give the impression of rushing. You don’t want to seem hasty or nervous.
- If you discovered any techniques for drawing out your subject, share them with your classmates in [The Hub](#). Perhaps they found techniques that would be useful to you as well.

PHOTO INDEX

11. WORKING WITH YOUR SUBJECT



Bruce Springsteen
Philadelphia, 1999



Ben Stiller
Paris, 2001