



*emily march*

*2022 Branding Session Guide*





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Your Brand



## *What is a brand?*

There are a lot of ways to describe what a company's brand is, but the simplest way to think about it is by how that company makes you feel. A brand goes far beyond color schemes and font styles - it's the feeling that people associate with interacting with your business.

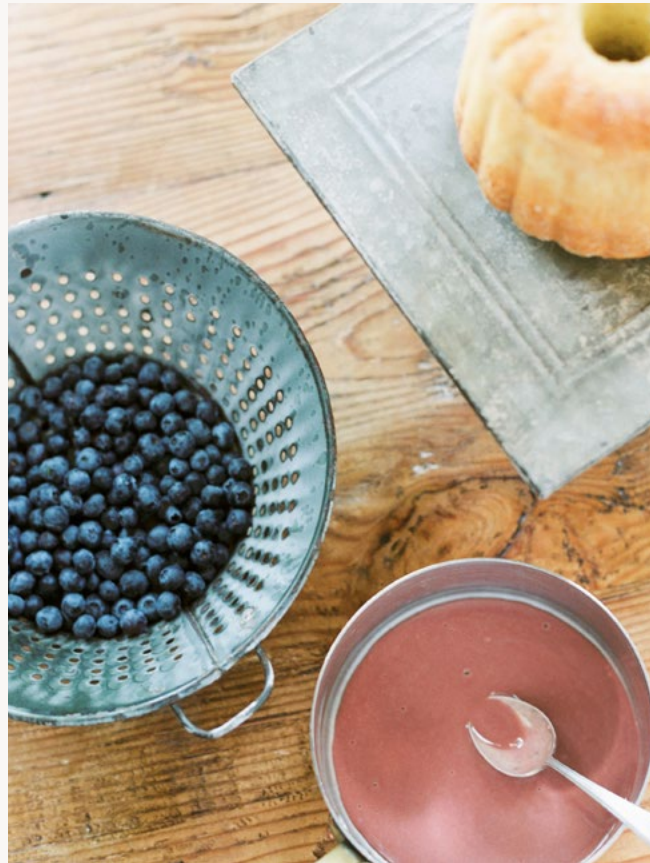
Take a minute and think about walking into Anthropologie - every time I go into one of their stores, it feels like a treat! There's something unique about each store, and the products they sell feel special and even rare. The store smells welcoming as everyone's favorite Capri Blue Volcano candles waft through the air, and even if I'm only leaving with a mug, it's the mug I'll choose first over all the others in my cabinet.

See? No mention of their style or price or web design. Now imagine your own storefront (real or imaginary!) - how do you want people to feel when they walk through those doors and what do you want them to take with them when they leave?



*This image is one I took for Southern Weddings Magazine while photographing their offices. This inspiration board hung above one of the editors' desk and perfectly conveys in postcards and magazine clippings so much of the values and aesthetics embodied by the SW brand.*





# Branding Worksheet

As you know, there's a lot that goes into determining your brand! A solid brand doesn't just happen - it takes intentionality. The why behind your work, style, ideal client/customer, price range and more all go into creating a brand that resonates with your audience and results in the kind of work you love to do. Below are a few questions to help refresh your brand identity so that I can take images that align with your business goals and brand message. I would encourage you to grab a pen and paper as you work through these!

**No. 1** What is your WHY? WHY does your business exist? WHY does the world need what you're offering? What keeps you going when you feel like giving up?

**No. 2** How would you describe your ideal client or customer?

**No. 3** What are some words or feelings that you would currently associate with your brand?

**No. 4** Now what are some words and feelings that you *want* associated with your brand?

**No. 5** What kind of work gets you fired up? What's the dream booking or custom order that gets you giddy when you daydream about it? What work have you already done that continues to inspire you?

**No. 6** What inspires you? Think outside your industry or line of work - what in your free time, what hobbies, what places and scenes inspire you to create something new or become even better in your chosen field?

**No. 7** What do you want your branding images to convey to your target market?

**No. 8** Where do you plan on using your branding images?



*Anna is a fellow photographer and just like me, the girl can't refuse a glass of rose! Simple things like shared interests and favorite foods connect you with your audience and give them some common ground with you.*

## *Your Brand*

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There's so much to a company's brand - I would encourage you to continue spending time thinking about the core of your business and how you can reflect that to your audience. My hope with your branding session is to give you images that become tools that help your business go down the path you want it to.

The rest of this guide is filled with practical tips to help you prepare for your session so that the time we spend together is stress-free, fun and ultimately productive. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or want to talk through any of these topics in greater depth!





Props





*For my own branding images, I wanted to convey all the many things that inspire me - and that's too many to count! So, I gathered inspiring images, postcards from my travels and botanical illustrations, printed them up and created a tangible way to show all the things influence my work.*

## *Choosing Props*

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One of the simplest ways to communicate your brand and what you do in business is through props! Props are great for simple headshots (the classic photographer holding their camera for example), but I would encourage you to think beyond what might be expected.

Consider other parts of your workflow or creative process - what tools go into them? If you're a painter, do you have books of famous artists or movements that inspire you? How can we convey a little bit of that process in your images?

Another thing to consider is what products you sell (or want to sell more of). Have you revamped your albums recently? Let's bring a few to your session and show them off! Are you getting ready to release a new line of handmade jewelry? Wear a few pieces for your pictures.

For full-scale branding sessions we can really get into your creative process (how you prepare flowers for an arrangement or style invitations for a wedding), which is a great way to bring your audience into your workflow and help them feel more connected to your work. For shorter sessions or mini sessions, I recommend 2-3 smaller props (your camera, computer, books, tools of the trade, etc) that illustrate how you work and help people get to know you as a person.



## *Prop Suggestions*

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While there are virtually limitless options for branding props, here's a list of some go-tos that work across a variety of industries.

Laptop  
Notebook and pen  
Coffee or wine  
Flowers or flower arrangement  
Camera, light meter, film  
Pretty books (clothbound, coffee table, sample albums, etc)  
Paper goods (invitations, paper samples, etc)  
Artwork (smaller canvases or painting, framed fine art prints)  
Paint brushes, paint, palette  
Makeup brushes and makeup  
Post cards, printed photographs, meaningful keepsakes  
Hats and accessories



*I love these images of Petal Atelier's Keegan with all the blooms she was about to arrange for an editorial shoot. She picked each variety with intention and it's such a beautiful depiction of the beginning of her process.*



Wardrobe



## *What to Wear*

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The most common concern for anyone leading up to a portrait session (branding or otherwise) is what in the world to wear! I'm no different when I find myself on the other side of the lens and am truly one of the most indecisive people when it comes to picking out clothes!

**My biggest piece of advice is this: wear outfits you love and feel absolutely beautiful in.**

Confidence is probably the most important thing to bring with you to your session - and yes, even the most camera shy individual can feel great being photographed if they feel awesome in what they're wearing. If you feel insecure during our session, you're likely to feel insecure when you see your pictures. This has nothing to do with clothing size or weight (something I obviously can't change as a photographer), but far more to do with feeling really great about yourself.

Be sure to pick pieces that make you feel great about your body - not just pieces that look nice on a model. It can be tempting to get a dress that is amazing, but that you also know is in a cut that won't be flattering. For example, after years and years of trying, I finally just had to accept that cinched-waist dresses are a no-go for me! No matter how much I loved a cinched-waist dress on the hanger, I almost never liked it when I put it on.

When it comes to your brand, choose outfits that support your brand's overall color scheme and style. Does your work lean towards the neutral? Then stick with whites and beiges for your outfits. Is your work bright and vibrant? Then find colors and patterns that excite you! Don't be afraid to mix patterns or textures either. If you're feeling stuck or work in a field where a color palette does really apply to your work, then you can't go wrong with a neutral or pastel color palette.







*Anna's outfit is so simple, yet makes just the right impact! It complemented our surroundings and gave a nod to her fun and colorful style.*

## Where to Shop

There are so many places to look when it comes to finding the perfect outfits for your branding session - sometimes it can be daunting! You have a specific vision for what we want our pictures to look like, and it can feel impossible to get all the right pieces to make that vision a reality.

Below I've compiled some of my favorite brands to help get your search started! Several of these stores offer free shipping (and free returns!) so you can purchase several options, see what fits best and return the unused items. In any case, be sure to allow as much time as possible to decide on outfits! You don't want to order the perfect dress less than a week before your session only for it to arrive late or not fit as expected. Give yourself time to weigh different options and be indecisive so that come session day, you know what you want to wear. Feel free to pass along your outfit ideas to me if you need a second opinion!

Anthropologie  
ASOS  
H&M  
Zara  
Madewell  
Modcloth  
Rent the Runway  
LOFT  
Sezane  
J. Crew  
Free People  
Nordstrom  
Shopbop

You can also shop from **Amazon storefront** where I've saved some outfit ideas.



## *A Few More Things to Consider*

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I know, I could go on for a while about what to wear, but I tend to err on the side of too much information on this topic because it is the one I'm asked about most often by clients!

So, here's a list of other details to consider when choosing outfits:

- What is the color of the session location? If we're shooting in a lush tree or garden setting, then it's not going to be a good idea to wear green because you'll likely blend right in or clash! My only exception to this rule is with neutral tones (creams, whites, tans, etc) at a beach or pasture setting since neutrals are more likely to complement each other.
- Personally, I tend to lean towards more muted or pastel colors for sessions since they're often a timeless choice. However, I'm not immune to a vibrant dress or wonderfully patterned outfit! Again, just be sure to consider our location and what makes sense for your brand's aesthetic. Mixing patterns can be really well-done, but it can also look busy or confusing if you're not careful.
- It's also important to think about your website and social media's aesthetic when it comes to your outfits! You don't want these images to clash with the images you're already sharing online - you want your brand's aesthetic to be cohesive. For example, I aim for pastel tones in my photography, so when it came to my own branding photos, I opted for neutral-toned and white outfits so they would seamlessly flow with the work I was already sharing.







## Final Tips

Rent, don't buy! If you're looking for a killer dress, but don't want to break the bank, Rent the Runway is a great option.

Always bring a few different options. A spill or last-minute mind change can happen, so bring an extra outfit just in case.

Layer up. It's not only helpful if the weather is a little cooler than expected, but a nice jacket or cardigan can provide an easy "second" outfit to add a little diversity to your pictures.

It's up to you if you want your images to feel more formal or relaxed. Both routes are good ones and can often be tailored to fit our session location well.



A photograph of a bride's hair and bouquet. The bride has long, light brown hair with blonde highlights, styled in a low ponytail with a dark hair tie. She is holding a large, round bouquet of white hydrangea flowers with green leaves. The background is a bright, out-of-focus white wall. The text "Hair & Makeup" is written in a white, cursive font across the center of the image.

# *Hair & Makeup*



## *Beauty*

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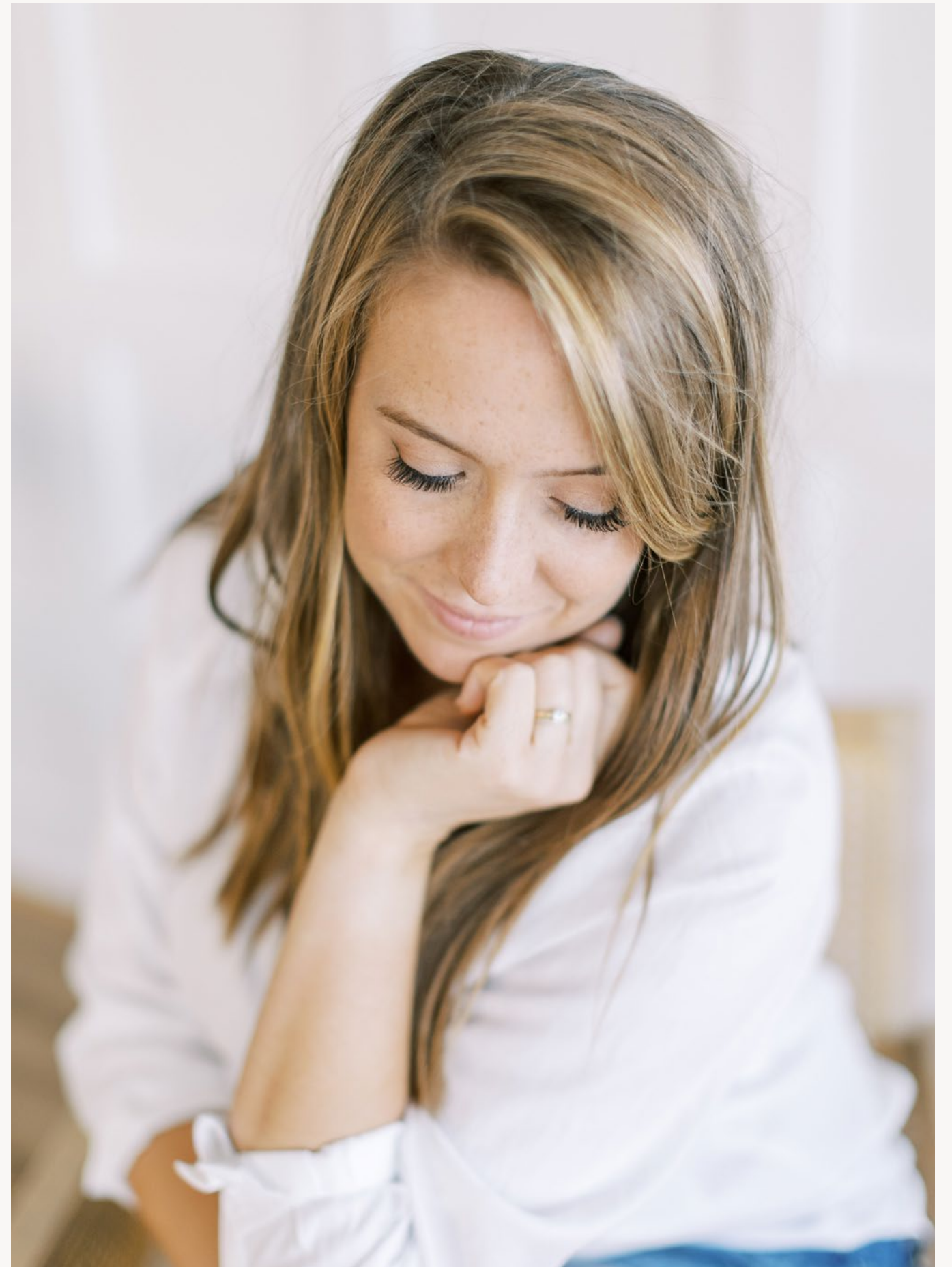
I'm a firm believer that beauty goes deep below the surface, but I won't deny that a little makeup and hair styling can go a long way for your branding session! I mentioned before that confidence is key for getting great pictures and many women feel their best when their skin looks flawless and their hair isn't frizzy!

For that reason alone I 100% recommend having your hair and makeup professionally done for your session. I include it in branding mini sessions because it is so wonderful! You want to feel your absolute best and love sharing these pictures - you don't want insecurity to get in the way of sharing beautiful pictures of your beautiful face!

When it comes to hair and makeup, you know what suits you best. Hair down or hair pulled back. A signature red lip or a clean simple look. Go for styles that make you feel beautiful and draw out the natural features you're most fond of.

Personally, I don't wear a lot of makeup so when it came to my own branding session, I opted for a simpler, cleaner look. I wanted to look a little more "polished" than I do day-to-day but I didn't want anything too heavy. I loved how my makeup turned out and it definitely made me (someone who has specifically chosen a career *behind* the camera) feel great in front of it.

I also recommend getting a manicure before your session. Opt for a neutral nail color unless you're known for colorful nails. If scheduling one is tricky, then stick on nails are a surprisingly great and very affordable alternative! I recommend Kiss imPRESS - they have lots of great colors and are easy to apply.



*I love my freckles and didn't want layers of makeup to hide them so I opted for a simpler makeup style. Also, false lashes are the way to go*



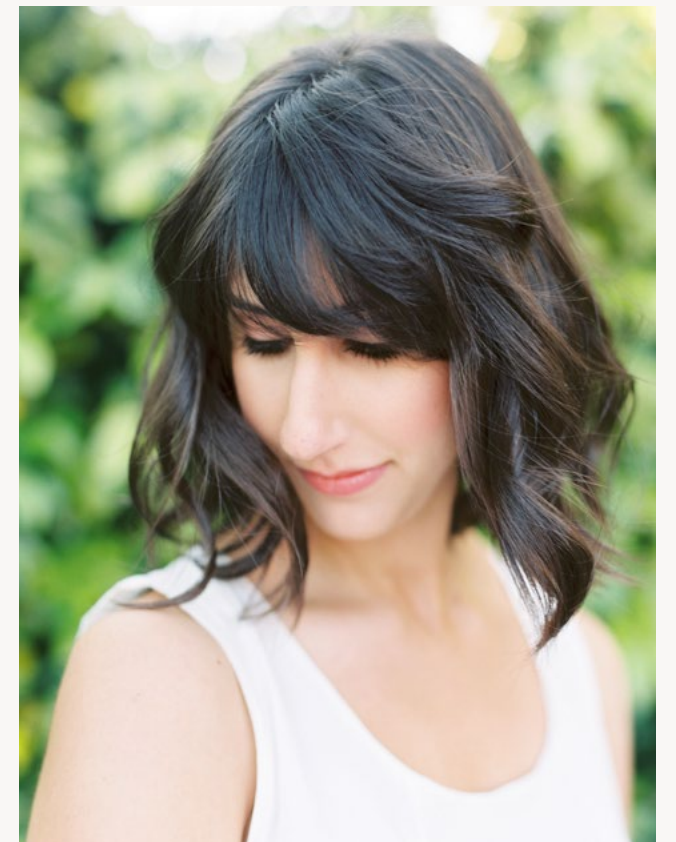
# Hair

Arrive to your hair appointment with hair washed and dried in the last 24 hours.

Send your stylist inspiration images and get their advice on any other way you can prep your hair to be styled.

If you frequently wear hair accessories, be sure to choose a style that allows you to wear them if you'd like.

Tell your stylist about challenges you have with your hair (like how it doesn't hold a curl well).



# Makeup

Arrive to your makeup appointment with a freshly washed, makeup free and moisturized face.

Send inspiration images to your makeup artist and convey what about a look is appealing.

Consider all the details that go into your look - lip color, eye liner style, contouring, etc.

False lashes are nearly always worth the extra expense!









## *In Closing*

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If you're reading this it's because you've already entrusted me to create images that embody and reflect your brand and the business you've worked hard to build! Thank you - it is such a privilege to be in my position. My goal with this guide is to provide answers to common questions, but also to equip you to make the most of your time in front of my camera.

I've owned my company for more than 10 years now, and it was only recently that I got in front of the camera for my own branding session. It's something I wish I had done years ago! It's such a helpful exercise to revisit the core of your business and see how images can help convey that to the world. And it takes a certain degree of vulnerability to get yourself in front of the camera so that your audience and ideal customer can get to know you. But boy am I grateful to have images that are on-brand for me in this season so that my potential clients can know me a little better.

Thank you for trusting me with capturing something so important for your business. Your branding session is going to be *\*amazing\** and I am so looking forward to getting to know you and the heart behind your work!



