

# INSIGHTS AT THEIR LEVEL – A PET’S POINT OF VIEW

By Kent DuFault



Photograph by Jay Wennington

<https://unsplash.com/photos/CdK2eYhWfQ0>

One of the biggest problems with much of the pet photography being produced today is looking down on them.

I’m not saying that one should never take a shot like this, but if you’re doing it, you should have a compelling reason for it.



Photograph by Kent DuFault

I took this portrait of my cat Oliver. Obviously, I'm looking down on him. Here is why I was compelled to create this downward-looking portrait.

The mirror provided symmetry to the composition. The mirror also offered a unique viewpoint of Oliver as a viewer can see him from both sides.

I always wear Converse tennis shoes, which he loves to scratch on, so it ties me to him emotionally in this photo. Plus, I liked the color scheme.

**Critical Thought:** It is typically not the best angle to shoot **down** on your pets unless you have valid reasons to do so.





Photograph by Bonnie Kittle

[https://unsplash.com/photos/MUcxe\\_wDurE](https://unsplash.com/photos/MUcxe_wDurE)

This fabulous image would have been missed had the photographer not got down to the floor in front of her pets.



#### Assignment:

Create a portfolio of images of your pets while **only** lying down on the floor with your camera.



Photograph by Eddie Galaxy

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/black-and-white-short-coated-dogs-3628100/>

When you get down low to the floor or to the ground, your pets are going to wonder what you're up to as they don't regularly see you doing that.

That action alone can generate photo opportunities as their curiosity takes over.

**Don't forget to look up.**



#### Assignment:

Get down on the floor or ground and photograph your pets while looking up. Try something unique by staging a situation. It will be fun for you on many different levels, as most people never look up at their pets.



Photograph by Kent DuFault

Getting down to your pet's level doesn't always mean you have to be on the floor. It means you want to **be at eye level**.

In this shot, my two cats Oliver and Ramona were lying on a bed. It would have been easy to simply look down at them and take the picture.

However, by lowering the camera down closer to the level of the bed, I was able to capture their hugging posture.



#### Assignment:

Create a portfolio of at least twenty images (that you're proud of) where the camera was placed eye-level to the pets that you were photographing. Search for exciting activity and body language. Try different lenses and angles.





Photograph by Bonnie Kittle

<https://unsplash.com/photos/QmRZECnQ-DU>

*I would categorize this photo as a near miss.*

This photo presents an interesting situation as the puppy appears to be very bored. The addition of the human feet sort of creates a story element.

However, the two aspects of this situation are not tied together very well.



### Assignment:

Find a pet to photograph. Put the pet on a leash and have several family members or friends stand around it. Start taking pictures. Give the story a moment to develop. I would say at least ten minutes. Constantly change your angle but keep the camera low. Wait for a dramatic peak action moment to establish itself because it will. The question is, will you be ready?



Photograph by Bonnie Kittle

<https://unsplash.com/photos/BDhkyg07ioc>

This photograph is a nice variation of the previous one in terms of human engagement. Perhaps it will inspire you to add ideas to the prior assignment!





Photograph by Henda Watani

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/close-up-of-cat-320014/>

This kitten photo makes excellent use of an eye-level viewpoint while also incorporating the indoor environment as part of the composition and story.

Anytime you can depict a pet involved in some activity – even something as simple as peeking out from behind a curtain – it rapidly ramps up the interest level for viewers.



#### Assignment:

Photograph your pets at their level while also including surrounding structures as part of the composition and story. Use this kitten photo as your example to get started. Anywhere around a window is an excellent place to start with this assignment.





Photograph by Kent DuFault

One day, my cat Ramona decided that our kitchen chairs were the perfect scratching post. Luckily for us, these were inexpensive chairs.

I captured this portrait of her sitting on the scarred chair, looking at me defiantly.

I love this photograph because it captures a unique aspect of her life intermingled with ours. We have three other cats. None of them scratch the chairs; only Ramona does this. This moment is singularly hers.



#### Assignment:

For each pet in your household, list five things that make them unique to the home. Make a plan, and then capture the perfect pictures of your pets doing their thing. You will likely find this challenging as pets often figure out what you're up to and run away before you can get the picture. This is another area where I find a smartphone camera to be an incredible tool.



Photograph by Bruce Galpin

[https://unsplash.com/photos/h7oZAHnS9\\_E](https://unsplash.com/photos/h7oZAHnS9_E)

When you want to accentuate your pet's activity, getting low can create drama where it probably doesn't exist.

This leaping pug is no more than a foot above this shallow puddle on the ground. However, the low camera angle makes it look like she is sailing over a lake like Superdog.



#### Assignment:

Photograph your pets in active situations with the camera as close to the ground or floor as you can get it. Use your knowledge of fast-moving subjects to capture nice sharp pictures.





Photograph by Snapwire

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-gray-cat-looking-up-against-black-background-730896/>

**Critical Thought:** A low camera angle combined with even a tiny bit of planning can result in a professional portrait of your pets, even with a smartphone camera. **Don't forget about the beauty of a profile picture.** Many photographers seem to ignore the profile when photographing their pets (myself included).

You could create a professional-looking profile portrait of your pet with a few simple steps.

- 1 Play with your pet near a bright window with indirect light (no direct sunshine).
- 2 Paint a large board or piece of cardboard black and lean it up against a chair behind your pet's profile when facing the window.
- 3 Have a helper gain your pet's interest with a toy or food.

- 4 Get your camera to eye level and start shooting!



#### Assignment:

Give the above steps a try and see if you can create professional-looking profile portraits!

**Before I let you go, let's discuss an essential and crucial aspect of getting the camera low for pet photography.**



Photograph by Lucy M

<https://unsplash.com/photos/KNMbRh5IT8>

*Background clutter can be a problem.*

You aren't looking at the cute bunny when cords and a TV hog the show.





Photograph by Justin Joseph

<https://unsplash.com/photos/oV7-0wr7v6U>

This problem isn't any easier outdoors. A slight change of camera position would have eliminated the tree from behind the pet's head.



Photograph by Tamas Tuzes-Katai

<https://unsplash.com/photos/fLj1a73qCB0>

The careful placement of the pet has created an excellent background that accentuates the body and face of this gorgeous rabbit without any distractions.



#### Assignment:

Create a portfolio of 10 images of your pets where you specifically select the background based upon lighting, non-interference, and storytelling.