

Preparing for your
newborn session



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PHOTOGRAPHY



Congratulations **YOU DID IT!**

Bringing new life into this world is HARD.

But here you are! Whether you're a postpartum mom reading this with a baby tucked in her arms, an expecting parent, a new dad wondering if you'll ever sleep again, adoptive parents marveling that your miracle is ACTUALLY here, IVF parents, first-time parents, or tenth time over parents...I am so proud of you!

Having the honor of documenting your newest family member for the first time isn't something that I'll ever take for granted!

Over the next few pages, I'll help get you ready for our session, along with walking you through my process so you can relax and enjoy this magical time in your life!



WHEN TO BOOK YOUR SESSION

The last thing I wanted to do when my babies were a few days old was leave the house, so I like to give new parents at least a week to acclimate to life with their baby.

Newborns' heaviest sleep weeks are before the two-week mark, so I've found the sweet spot for recovered moms and a sleepy baby is between 7-15 days.

Sometimes schedules (both mine and yours!) make that nine-day window tough to catch, but don't worry!

I've worked with babies of all ages, both younger than 1 week and older than 2 weeks. There is no "wrong age" to photograph a baby. Your baby is in good hands with me!



WHY 9:30 AM?

When in the womb, most pregnant women are active during the morning/afternoon and move less in the evening before falling asleep at night.

The rocking motion during her active times is what lulls baby to sleep, and usually, when she lays down, that's when baby is most active and kicking!

During the first few weeks, baby will have a backward sleep schedule, which will make for sleepless nights for parents but usually helps for a nice sleepy newborn session for me!

Starting at 9:30 am is a good time to catch your newborn's deepest sleep and allow travel time along with time to do any hair/outfit/makeup prep for yourself!



WHAT IF BABY DOESN'T SLEEP?

If you get to the session, and baby is ready to rock and roll...please don't stress! Newborns can have awake periods of up to two hours so we'll spend this time capturing some awake shots!

There is no such thing as a "bad" baby.

My heart breaks anytime I have parents tell me that previous sessions with older children resulted in a crying baby, an upset photographer, and stressed-out parents.

Over the next few pages, I'll walk you through my method that you may have heard about, I call it unsoothing as opposed to trying to soothe a newborn to sleep.

Don't be worried about the term, this method is gentle and baby-led for sleep, and has worked for every session I've done!

WHILE YOU'RE AT HOME



One part to my unsoothing method is having a baby who is ready to sleep. If you want to start the process before you leave, you can do your best to create an environment where your baby is NOT sleeping.

Some ways to keep baby awake:

- Feed baby 2 hours before the session start time
- After feeding, don't actively try to get baby to sleep—let them be awake!
- If baby is fussing, you can soothe them—we don't want a crying baby!
- This is a great window of time to give baby a bath! Not only will it keep baby awake, but it will fluff up greasy hair and clean off any grimy folds newborns can get around their necks!
- Letting baby kick unswaddled in a warm room is a great way for them to wear themselves out!

BUT: if any of this is stressing *you* or *baby* out, please just let baby snooze and we'll still have an amazing session!



WHAT TO WEAR - *Moms*

If you're a mom who has just given birth in the last few weeks, finding something that fits can be a challenge. My goal is to show you how beautiful you truly are - even if you don't feel it.

I highly suggest loose, flowy, and textured!

Whether it's a maternity gown you love, a favorite comfy sweater, or a color you feel beautiful in--bring it! Maternity jeans/leggings work well, the focus will be on you + baby.

Feel free to bring a curling iron, hairspray, and dry shampoo! I do family shots at the end of the session so you'll have plenty of time to get camera ready while I'm photographing baby only!

Please be mindful of your nails, as your hands will be photographed. Chipped polish, dirty or ragged nails may cause a delay in receiving your final images due to extensive editing.

WHAT TO WEAR - *Dads*

In the spirit of keeping this session stress free, I highly recommend dads go simple with their clothes. Snug t-shirts are the way to go, excessive fabric from dress shirts and collars can hinder posing tiny babies in their dad's arms.

Don't worry about any "dad bods", because first and foremost all bodies are good bodies, and secondly, the focus is mainly going to be elbow and up with a heavy dose of cuteness happening in your arms!

Like with mom, please be mindful of dirty or ragged nails! Filing and scrubbing them will keep the editing time down for me!





WHAT TO WEAR - *Siblings*

For family photos to stand the test of time and not look dated, pick classic pieces from your children's closets or head to target and buy clothes that match your family's personalities and complement each others' color choices.

Everyone wearing the same color/shade can look too matchy-matchy, don't hesitate to email me with outfit ideas in the days before your shoot! If you need help or inspiration, I can send suggestions.

Again - avoid collars, clothing that is too large and skirts and dresses that are too short without bloomers.

And same with mom and dads...please make sure your children's nails are clean, trimmed and have no chipped nail polish!

BRINGING ITEMS FROM HOME DO'S AND DON'TS

I love incorporating personal items and family heirlooms into sessions! But not all items are actually appropriately sized for tiny babies!

DO: *bring a special receiving blanket or newborn-sized knitted blanket. Bonus points if it has a pretty matching headband!*



DON'T: *bring "newborn sized" crocheted hats from big chain department stores. Spoiler alert: **they aren't newborn sized.***



BRINGING ITEMS FROM HOME DO'S AND DON'TS

DO: *bring a special prop to the session! I'll do my best to use it, but be mindful extra posing may cut into other poses that you may want me to do!*



DON'T: *bring cheap diaper covers or props you find online! If there's any specific themed prop you're interested in, let me know and I'll check to see if I already have something we can use, OR point you in the right direction to buy something that photographs well!*



BRINGING ITEMS FROM HOME DO'S AND DON'TS

DO: *bring a helper if you need to!
Grandparents are welcome, along with
nannies and babysitters!*



DO: *bring a bottle if you've done any bottle
feeding. One bottle of pumped milk or
formula could make a huge difference in
baby's sleepiness if a full belly is what will
help them stay in a deep sleep!*

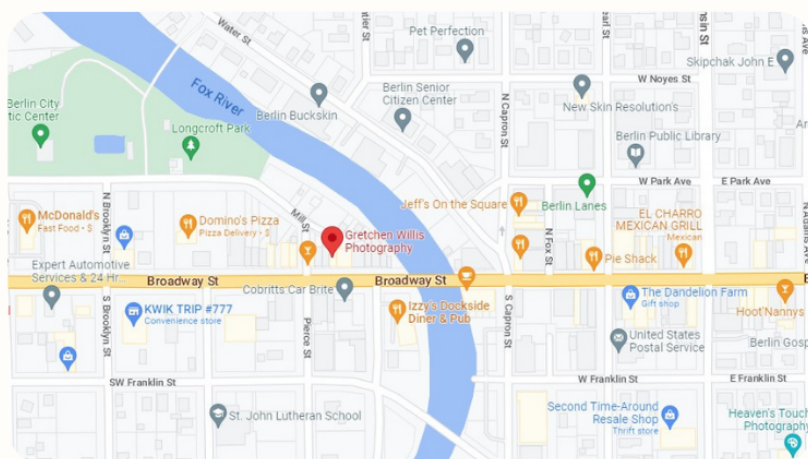
DON'T: *stress if you haven't bottle fed
baby and prefer to stick with
breastfeeding! You're doing great!*



MEETING UP!

If you're coming from out of town, my studio is in Berlin WI, which is 30 minutes west of Oshkosh, or 10 miles north of Green Lake.

203 Broadway St.



If you're local and familiar with the area, I'm located downtown right next door to Eskimo Comfort, kitty-corner from Kwik Trip.

If you have any trouble at all please reach out to via text (608)-566-9070



ARRIVING TO THE STUDIO

When you first arrive at my studio, get comfortable in the waiting area! This space stays cool for two reasons:

- First to keep baby awake while eating! A warm room while cuddling and getting a belly filled is a good way to have a baby fall asleep before they've eaten enough to stay sleeping!
- Secondly, the newborn area of the studio will be HOT - 80-85°, so this room will be a place for adults and older siblings to stay comfortable.

Before feeding baby, please have baby only in their diaper! Feel free to swaddle them with a blanket while they eat if needed!

We provide bottled water for anyone who needs it during the session, but due to allergies, we don't keep snacks in the studio! Feel free to bring anything you need! There are several restaurants nearby my studio that do carryout...and my studio is one block from an ice cream shop and bakery!



GETTING SET UP

While you're feeding baby, I'll start pulling set ups to use for your little one's session! If there are any images of mine that you love, ***please*** pull out your phone and show me! We can recreate them or just get an idea of the style you love!

If at any point I pull out a prop, hat, headband or color that you aren't 100% in love with, let me know! This entire shoot is about what you love and will have to remember this time in your life forever!

An easy way to share images with me that you love is through Pinterest. Before your session, pin images to an inspo board and invite me to the board using my email address.
gw@gretchenwillis.com



DURING THE SESSION

Once we're done setting up and baby has a full belly, it's time to step into the warm and cozy area of the studio!

If baby is awake and happy, I'll be sure to document the many expressions that newborns make. Remember, babies can be awake for up to *two hours*, so instead of trying to soothe your baby to sleep (essentially giving them a nap to give them *more energy!*), we'll spend however long it takes **unsoothing** your newborn.

If unsoothing lasts over an hour, I may have you feed baby one last time when they start to get sleepy - this will ensure a full tummy while I photograph them over the next two hours.



DURING THE SESSION

After baby falls asleep, either right away or after some unsoothing, I'll have about 90 minutes to get through all of the baby-only shots.

I typically do 3 - 5 different backdrop colors on the posing bag, two prop shots and macro (close up details of fingers, toes, face, etc.) before we finish with family photos*

While I'm used to the room's heat, and unclothed newborns prefer warmer temperatures, I understand that not all adults enjoy spending up to two hours in a hot room! Feel free to watch from the waiting area while you enjoy a cool bottle of water!

**because I am still doing portfolio-building, I will do my best to get you a good variety of backdrops and props but please be aware I cannot promise a set number.*



FAMILY PORTRAITS

I leave family portraits for the end for a few very important reasons:

- First and most importantly, babies tend to sleep easier when wrapped or being held - both of which happens during family photos. If we "waste" this sleepy time at the beginning, baby is getting energy saved up for a potential long awake time. This could take a 2-3 hour session closer to a 5 hour session.
- I like older siblings to have a chance to get comfortable with me and in my studio. Hopefully you chose me as your photographer for truly happy looking kids - this only happens if they're feeling safe and trust me!
- This gives time for parents to change and get ready to have their photos taken!

THINK ABOUT WHAT STYLE *YOU* WANT FOR YOUR FAMILY SHOTS

Do you want a posed shot in the newborn studio, or a more lifestyle feel on the couch in the waiting room? Both are styles I love, but given the time constraints of a newborn's sleep cycle, it's important to choose one that fits your family's vibe!





THANK-YOU.

I have the very best job in the world.

And what I've found throughout the last 10 years of photographing families and children is that it's not just about taking pretty photos of pretty little babies.

It's about being there for new parents, and making this one day a relaxing one - not adding to your stress, but giving you a break to sit back and really marvel at this little life you've been chosen to be the parent of.

I hope the memories during the shoot are as beautiful as the photos you'll have as heirloom images for decades to come.

If you have any questions before, during or after your session with me, please don't hesitate to ask!