INDIA EARL

GUIDING WHAT TO WEAR

BEFORE YOU DIVE IN

If you're reading this right now, I'm sure it's happened to you.

You have a client show up to a shoot wearing something that basically makes you want to barf all over the photos afterwards. You've had a shoot or two where the photos could have been so crazy amazing, but your client's hot pink polo was a little distracting from basically everything else in every photo. No more cringing at the wrinkly t shirt with a big logo across it or the crazy patterned dress.

I created this guide to not only teach you how to guide your client's outfit choices so your pictures can rock that much more, but also to break down my thought process so you can take better photos in any location based solely on what you have your clients wear.

Knowing what to tell people to wear for photos is tough, but it doesn't have to be! After you get through this guide you'll be able to save yourself from a lot of headache editing poor outfit choices, and kicking yourself for not setting expectations in advance for clothing options.

Maybe you took a second to scroll through this guide really quick and saw how long it is, and you might be feeling overwhelmed. I promise you don't have to be. It's only so long because I'm explaining my process in detail so that you can understand it through and through, **helping you to shoot better photos because of it!**

I'll assure you right now I know nothing about fashion, I wear men's t shirts every day with socks and sandals, so don't panic if you feel like you don't know the first thing about fashion. **Don't overwhelm or stress yourself over it.** As time goes on, you'll be able to see what you do and don't like for photos and you can adjust your guide accordingly, it's really no big deal once you get the hang of it and understand it! Eventually you'll start to attract clients with a stye that is portrayed in your portfolio so you'll have to think about it less and less, woohoo!

One last thing to remember, this isn't gospel. **These aren't rules, they're only guidelines and what I've found to work best for me.** Maybe I'll say I don't encourage people to wear bright pink feather hats and you want your clients to wear that, that's a million percent fine! Do what works best for you, your style, and your clients! Each situation varies from locations, clients, and light. In the end, just go with what looks best, speaks most to your style, and makes your clients feel like a million bucks.

OK NOW LET'S LEARN SOME STUFF

RESOURCES

I've included a "What to Wear Guide" **layout template for you to work off of to create your own template to help save you time** at the end of this guide. You can apply this template layout for a site page or a pdf. I recommend creating your guide on your website to help save time editing it in the future and be able to easily send it to clients. I'll walk you through on how to do this so it's easy breezy!

The way I implement my What to Wear guide into my workflow is once a client books a session with me, **it automatically sends the guide link along with a small email template** so that it answers any questions they may have right off the bat, helping clients be less nervous for their sessions! I automate this by using a client organizing program called Honeybook (use code "INDIA" for 50% off your first year!).

To avoid being rude or offending my clients in any way, I always send my guide right off the bat once they hire me! This way, everyone's happy! Here is an example email template that sends along with the guide if you're struggling with how to send it over.

EMAIL I SEND ALONG WITH THE GUIDE :

"Hey there!

Here's a guide to help you choose outfits that will be perfect for photos so they can look the best they can! If you have any questions let me know, a lot of clients sometimes like to send over a quick phone snap of the outfits they're bringing to make sure they'll work or not, which I'm totally happy to help with! The guide should answer most of your questions though! If you feel completely lost and need anymore direction outside of the guide, here's a link to a Pinterest board I've created with a little inspo if you need it!

insert link to pinterest board if applies

Just remember to bring a few options of outfits and we can pick and choose outfits for you can change into throughout the shoot depending on the location's colors, the light, and weather. Can't wait for our shoot, it's gonna be sooo good! Let me know if you have any questions! So excited for our shoot!"

INTERPRETING MOOD THROUGH OUTFITS AND LOCATIONS

Although in the bigger picture this is an artistic decision and there are absolutely no right or wrong ways going about this, I'll explain my decision process for outfits and how location affects that process heavily. **Locations and outfits go hand in hand for me because they play a huge role in how I shoot, edit, and ultimately how the entire images' mood and focus is perceived by the viewer.**

When I'm choosing outfits, I am wanting them to compliment not only the client, but also the location's tones, colors, shapes and textures. I'll break these down, one by one along with examples explaining my thought process and hopefully it will help you be able to not only learn my process, **but help you understand how to dissect why you prefer certain outfit/location pairings.** This process of breaking things down bit by bit is something helpful that I do to help guide the way I approach several aspects of shoots, so try practicing it with other parts of shooting as well (light, gear selections, etc) on your own!

Before I get into this, I consider a **"simple outfit"** to be something quiet with minimal layers, little color variations, no patterns, minimal accessories, and doesn't draw much attention so the viewer's can better focus on the emotion and location. I consider a **"stand out"** outfit to be something louder with bolder colors, patterns, several layers, more accessories, and draws more attention and focus to the subject of the photo.

I'll break things down piece by piece followed by several photo examples so you can visually see all of this information and intention in action!

DON'T CONTROL THEM, GUIDE THEM

When I made my first guide on what to wear for clients, I made it wayyy to specific. So specific that I started to realize that all of my clients started showing up wearing basically the same outfits. Not only did it start to make a lot of my images blend together because outfits were so similar from one session to the next, but it was totally **taking out a lot of the client's personality out of the photos!**

Guides aren't meant to limit them, they're just meant to help them choose the best options out of what they would normally wear. Be sure to emphasize to your clients that they should wear whatever makes them feel most like themselves, because **the more they feel like themselves, the more comfortable they'll be** in the photos!

If wearing clown costumes is going to be what makes them feel the best, then let them wear clown costumes. It's all about making the clients happy in my opinion, whether that means they wear matching t shirts or bedazzled sneakers. For example in this photo, I would have never suggested for her to wear a bedazzled dress and him a big slouchy zip up hoodie with a chain, but it's what made them feel best and that made the photos turn out way better than if they would have worn something that I would have chosen for them, because their personalities showed through so much more this way!

Clients should wear what makes them feel the most confident and happy and THAT will always make for great photos no matter what! **Remember to not make your guide too specific** and give them the freedom to wear whatever they feel best in.

OPTIONS : YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND

I always have my couples bring options so that they don't show up to a shoot with just one outfit, because what happens if the outfit isn't that great? Then you're stuck with it and can't do anything about it.

Typically people will bring around 5 shirts each and 3 pairs of pants/bottoms so we can mix and match them to look best with each location and the light we have. I make sure to give these numbers as an example for my clients in the guide so that they don't show up with their entire closet smashed into a duffel bag, because that would waste a lot of time for me to go through. By having them bring a **handful of options to mix and match**, you'll have really good chances of them bringing an outfit that you'll love and will work great for the photos!

You might not always be able to do this depending on what kind of clients you're shooting for and what you're shooting, but since I only shoot couples I have more flexibility with it since they're usually down to change in cars on the side of the road. **Make sure they're comfortable with changing at whatever location you shoot at in advance**, and if they're not, suggest for them to send photos of their outfit in advance so you can help make sure they get the best photos possible!

I typically have the clients change for each different location we go to or change of scenery. Sometimes that's only a couple of outfits, sometimes its six outfits. **Ultimately, I leave it up to them**. I have lots of clients who love fashion and expressing themselves through it, making them wanting to switch up outfits pretty often which is totally fine. I just let them know that the more time they spend at the car changing, the less time we have shooting, so I can't guarantee I deliver as many photos as they're expecting if that's the case. That way, it's up to them, and everyone's happy!

CHOOSE COMFORT OVER LOOKS

Sometimes it's tempting for your clients to want to wear things that may look really cool or pretty in photos, but maybe aren't always the most comfortable or realistic option depending on the circumstances. **If they're not comfortable in their clothes, they're going to look pretty uncomfortable** in all of the photos.

I always explain this to my clients, that what they wear needs to not only be representative of who they are, but that they need to make sure they'll be super comfortable in! If it's snowing outside, don't let them wear heels and a skirt. If you're shooting on a sandy beach, it will probably look funny if they aren't barefoot. If they don't, not only will it look funny in the photos, but it is going to hinder what photos you'll be able to get.

Plus if they're not thinking about how tight their pants are while sitting or how their shoes have no tread while hiking around, they're going to be able to focus on each other and the experience and getting the best photos with you!

TONES + COLORS

DISTRACTIONS

For me, I'm always aiming to keep the focus on the clients faces, since my style is so heavily based on emotion and its what drives me the most. So if theres a lot going on in the rest of the frame that's distracting me from the emotion (whether that be on their faces or through their hands or what they're doing) I want to eliminate as much noise as I can, and a huge way to do that is using tools like strategic tone matching and color choice.

I do this through choosing outfits that are either compliment or stand out from the environment's tones and colors. Throughout this guide, you'll see how I do this with each aspect I break down. It varies from each location and what kind of light it's getting and what the clients brought as options for the shoot.

COLOR CHOICES

I typically recommend people lean towards neutrals, earthy tones, and metallics and to stay away from bright colors. This doesn't mean just creams and browns and grays. There are neutrals fo every single color! Instead of green, go for a soft forest green. Instead of red, go with a deep maroon. Instead of yellow, go for a mustard yellow and so on.

I love colors and think that if you only ever shot the same few colors you'd probably get a little visually bored and start to feel uninspired by clothing. There is so much inspiration to pull from colors to create more playful or interesting shots, so don't take that option away!

In my experience, bright fluorescent colors dont really inspire me since I typically shoot in earthy natural settings, and the end up becoming more of a distraction which is why I recommend to stay away from them.

SKIN TONES

I tell my clients to choose colors that are complimentary to their skin tones and that unless they have an olive skin tone or darker skin, to steer clear of reds, oranges, and pinks for the most part.

A lot of the time (and this totally depends on the light and how you're using it) the colors the subjects are wearing will reflect onto one another because the light is bouncing off of it. It intensifies those colors and makes it pretty tough for me to edit skin tones. I also use the Hue, Saturation, and Luminance sliders a lot when editing skin, so if someone is wearing a red dress rnd I desaturate red to help their skin, it's also going to pull that color from the dress making it look weird and gray, which make sit take a lot longer for me to correct that in editing.

COLOR MATCHING

As far as choosing colors go based on location, I'll usually try to color match the tones and colors of outfits with elements in the environment if possible to help them blend in, helping their faces (aka where a large portion of emotion comes from) stand out more. **I never want outfits to be the main focus of images unless I'm shooting something fashion based** (lookbooks, for a brand, etc), so making choices to help the clothing compliment the location is typically what I'm going for.

Throughout the examples provided in this guide, I'll point out what I color matched from the locations to the outfit choices so you can visually understand. Like this photo for example, I color matched her shorts to the burnt orange weeds and hazy mountains, while I color matched his shorts to the sand and rocks. **This way, the entire image has a feeling of togetherness and what they're wearing doesn't distract me from the epicness of the location or the emotion!**

Typically, if the location is really noisy, I'll choose really simple clothing options for my clients to wear to help the viewers eye hone in on what I'm focusing on, the emotion or the location. This photo is a great example of that. See how the location is full of textures, shapes, and contrasting tones? I purposely chose these simpler outfits so that they'll stand out rather than get lost in the photo. We will hop into textures and shapes next!

If the location is really simple as far as colors and tones go, I'll choose something that stands out a little more to add interest to the images and pull the viewer into the subjects, like choosing outfits that add contrast to the image. Confused? Don't be, just wait for the examples!

SHAPES + TEXTURES

These play a huge role in how I shoot with framing, posing, and of course outfit choices. Like I explained, I typically tend to lean more towards simplicity rather than lots of clutter and noise in images (which there's nothing wrong with, it's just an artistic choice!).

If there's lots of texture and shapes in the location and you choose a stand out outfit, you might get lost in all of the detail and lose the couple. If theres minimal texture and shapes and you choose a super simple outfit it may not draw the viewer in as much as it could. So if there are lots of different shapes and textures in a location, I'll opt for a simpler outfit to help the client stand out more. If the location has minimal texture or really big shapes to frame them within, I'll go with an outfit that stands out more.

Other times, you can combine simple with simple and loud textures with loud locations. Like colors, you can use complimentary textures and shapes through tools like patterns, materials, accessories, etc.
We will go over all of that next!

In this photo for example, there is a lot texture in the trees and shrubbery, but the patterns in her dress don't blend with the environment. Instead, they stand out, pulling more focus into them so they don't get lost in all of the shapes. Same goes for the texture in her tights and jacket.

USING PATTERNS

BASICS :

If the client brings pattern options, I typically only like having one piece of what the client is wearing to have a loud pattern just because if you have too many going on the image can feel a little too busy and distracting from their faces.

Combining patterns can be tricky, so I just make sure that the patterns in the clothing aren't fighting with the patterns in the location. If the patterns in either the location or the clothing are soft and subtle, I don't find it an issue to combine them. But if both locations have loud patterns I will opt for a simpler outfit with little to no pattern.

In the below examples, see how I use patterns and clothing that is more visually interesting to my advantage when the location is on the simpler side.

SPECIFICS :

Big chunky patterns are a no no. Unless I'm shooting fashion, I recommend clients stay away from big patterns since they can be super distracting especially from their faces. I love patterns, but typically only shoot them if they're subtle and not distracting from their heads!

Flannels are always a yes for me since my style is really earthy and I'm also obsessed with flannels, they're never really distracting to me either. I just make sure the color of the flannel is neutral!

ACCESSORIES + PROPS

Props. I know what you're thinking. The awful chalkboard photo or the oversized letter from a craft store representing their last name to hold. Yikes. But, props aren't always a bad thing!

Trust me, I know how much you want to facepalm yourself when they bring a stool or some stupid board with a cheesy quote on it. Discourage those and encourage cool props like motorcycles, their cat or dog (*pup steals the show, fine with it*), blankets, their truck, a campfire, flowers, or a picnic.

I always encourage accessories! I love when couples bring hats, sunglasses, scarves, jewelry, etc because it adds more interest to the outfits rather than being too plain. The only accessory I don't encourage is watches typically, since when couples hold each other's faces its a big circle that is super distracting.

MATERIALS

Anything that can show movement or catch wind is a yes. I love incorporating movement into my photos in any way that I can since it adds energy to images.

Be sure to remind your clients to iron their clothes so big huge wrinkles aren't distracting from their faces!

Explain that the stiffer the material, the less they'll be able to move, meaning they'll probably be a lot less comfortable!

If it's going to be cold, opt for warmer materials that hold in heat like flannel or wool. If it's going to be hot, opt for cooler materials that can breathe so clients don't have swack. Yuck.

LOGOS

If you're like me you've shot one too many clients showing up wearing a shirt that says "hurley" or "hollister" across it. Haha yeah, glad I'm past that stage now!

Logos can be done well and so so wrong, it honestly just depends on each shirt. Usually you can take one look at a shirt and tell whether or not it will look stupid in photos or not so that's how I go about logos on shirts.

I am a lover of graphic tees and band t-shirts though, so I typically encourage couples to bring a variety of shirts so that in case the shirts they bring with graphics on it won't look great in photos or be too loud, then I can just keep them in the other options! Hooray for options!

Like in the option on the right here, he's literally wearing a $4 Walmart t-shirt but it looked great with the location and vibe we were shooting. Plus it was his favorite shirt in the world. So don't be afraid of logos!

SHOES

I'm really not picky when it comes to shoes. I basically just tell girls that heels are 99% of the time going to be a bad idea unless they're really good at walking in them. Most of my shoots involve some hiking so heels just aren't realistic for my type of clients. Other than that, I just recommend they be sure to wear shoes that are comfortable and if we will be doing a lot of walking around, avoid super slippery shoes so they don't slip!

COMPLEMENTARY vs. MATCHING

Complimentary is good. Matching is bad. When people match, they tend to blend together too much, ending up looking like a big blob in photos.

Complimentary means the variety of colors, textures, accessories, patterns, and tones all sing together while there is still separation from each of the subjects and the background.

ABOVE ALL, MAKE THEM HAPPY

Remember, this should truly be all about them. Yes, you want to get the best photos possible for your portfolio, but in the end the photos are for them and nobody else.

Yes I know, sometimes couples want to bring cheesy props. Yes, sometimes they'll want photos that might make you cringe, but in the end **it's way more important to have happy clients.** If they want that cheesy pinterest photo you've had nightmares about doing, you bet your buckin' boots you're going to make that the best pinterest re-make photo ever with a smile on your face.

Do whatever you can to make the photos all about them. Having happy clients will be way more beneficial to your business than not taking a cheesy photo that will make them over the moon happy.

NOW,
ONTO
THE
EXAMPLES!

Alrighty, now I'm going to walk you through image examples from past shoots of mine that can help us visually understand everything you just learned!

It may start to feel repetitive, and you may start being able to call out what I'm going to say about each set of photos before you even read my notes. That's a good thing! That means you're getting it and you'll be able to recognize these elements when you go to shoot or pick and pull outfits on your own.

Although I do only shoot couples, that doesn't mean everything in here doesn't apply to you if you shoot more than couples. You can apply all of this to families, newborns, seniors, boudoir, etc. And yes, I know that I'm lucky to have such freakishly hot clients. That doesn't change how applicable any of this is though, even if you're dressing up cats and dogs for your shoots.

A good exercise you could you could do on your own is to go through a couple handfuls of your own images afterwards using this same process. Pick and pull apart elements between what your client is wearing and how it interacts with the environment, and what you could have done better. It will help you learn how to be more intentional going about your shoots from here on out!

First location has minimal colors, textures and shapes. Made up of lots of neutral tones with soft whites, grays, and tans.

Second location has lots of defined shapes, textures, and strong earthy tones.

I chose darker colors for their outfits to add contrast and pull the focus in more towards them, so they didn't blend in. A simple neutral outfit would have been fine, but I feel the darker colors and patterns add more interest to the image.

I color matched her beanie to the rocks and her jacket to the greenery. The rest was just combining neutrals so their outfits complimented one another.
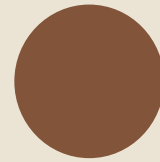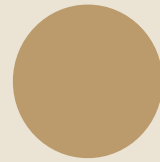
The outfits make sense for the location, they feel cozy and at home. For in home sessions, I think it would feel weird/unrealistic if they were more dressed up.

When shooting in harsh light whether indoors or outdoors I go for super neutral colors like black, ivory, and gray. This way there's less of a chance of funky colors being reflected onto their skin from the light.

The room had lots of shapes (furniture/window) and textures (wood/rug/light streaks) which is why I had them wear something really simple so they would stand out.

Color matched her to the light bedding and rug. Color matched him to the dark corners of the room and harsh shadows.
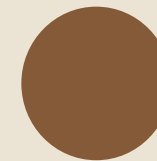
Here's an example of an outfit that both blends in and stands out through both color matching and choosing outfits that contrast with a pop of pattern.

The location was full of lots of texture between the rocky desert dirt, the patterns of sagebrush and the blue skies contrasting with the clouds. The patterns in her dress was sublte enough to not draw attention away from their faces. I went with no patterns for his outfit for balance.

There was minimal color, I color matched the weeds to his pants and the dirt to her dress so their outfits blended in seamlessly with the location.
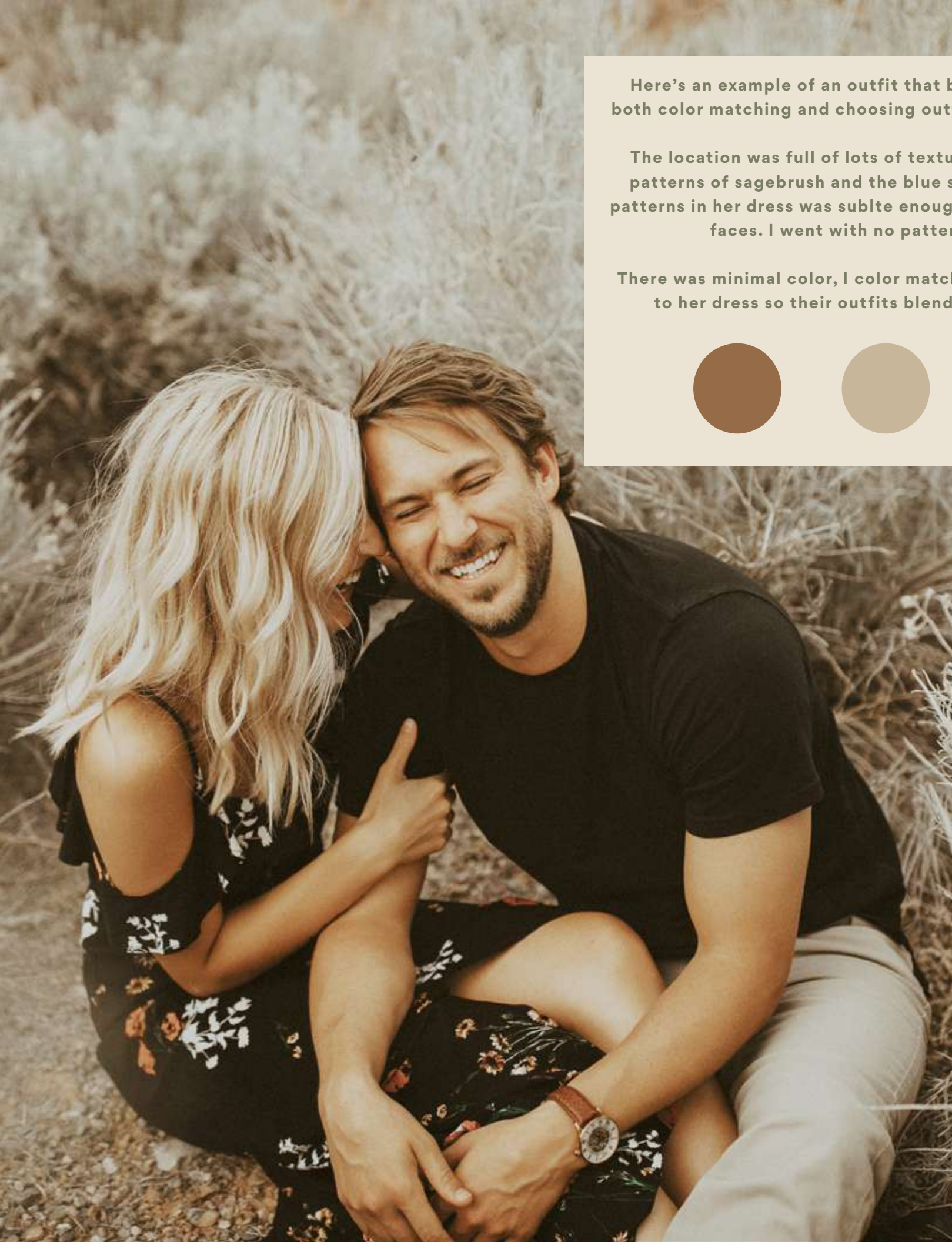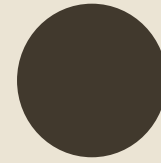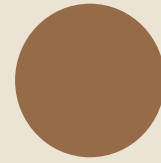
Here's an example of choosing colors that both blend and add contrast to an environment. Pink is the opposite of green, and the sky was turning pink as well since the sun had just set so it was a cool opportunity to incorporate a color that both compliments and contrasts the same location.

Like I said before, I typically don't recommend pink for people unless they have olive or darker toned skin. She was really excited about the dress though so I saved it for when the sun set so that light was softer (knowing that the sky would turn pink), that way it wouldn't reflect more pink onto their skin from the sun hitting it. It did make it harder to edit, but the photos were worth it!

The location obviously had tons of texture between the shrubs and trees and rocks, so we went for a simple outfit to help them stand out. If they were wearing any patterns the images would feel really busy to me.

I wanted them to stand out more so I didn't color match them, adding contrast to the images rather than them blending in.

Outfits make sense for the location. If she was wearing heels it would like kind of dumb to me, barefeet made sense.
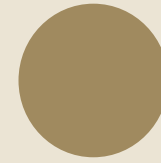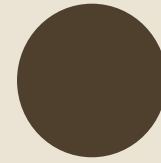
Although I can't take credit for these outfit choices since we got lucky in this scenario pulling off on the side of the road where the colors complimented their outfits perfectly, it's still a great example on how to train your eye with color matching as well as understanding good vs bad patterns.

Colors match the environment perfectly while still also standing out and creating contrast, drawing in the viewer's eye.

The pattern in her dress is sublte enought to not be distracting but strong enough to make the photo more interesting.

For these two, I made sure to choose simple outfits so that they would stand out against the background since there is SO much texture and shapes going on in the environment, as well as color matched their outfits to all the neutral tones to make it so they didn't distract from the location either, since this location was really important to them.
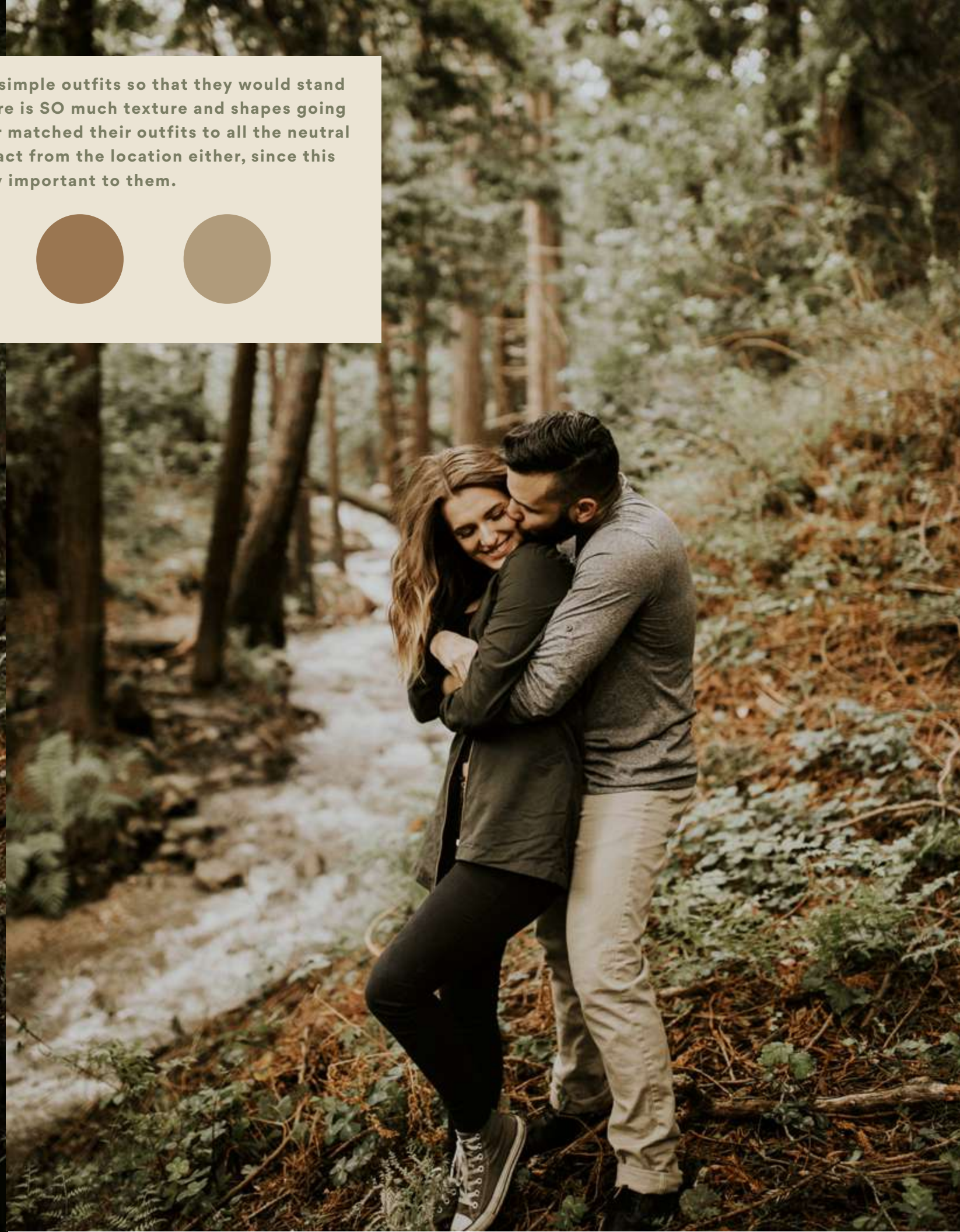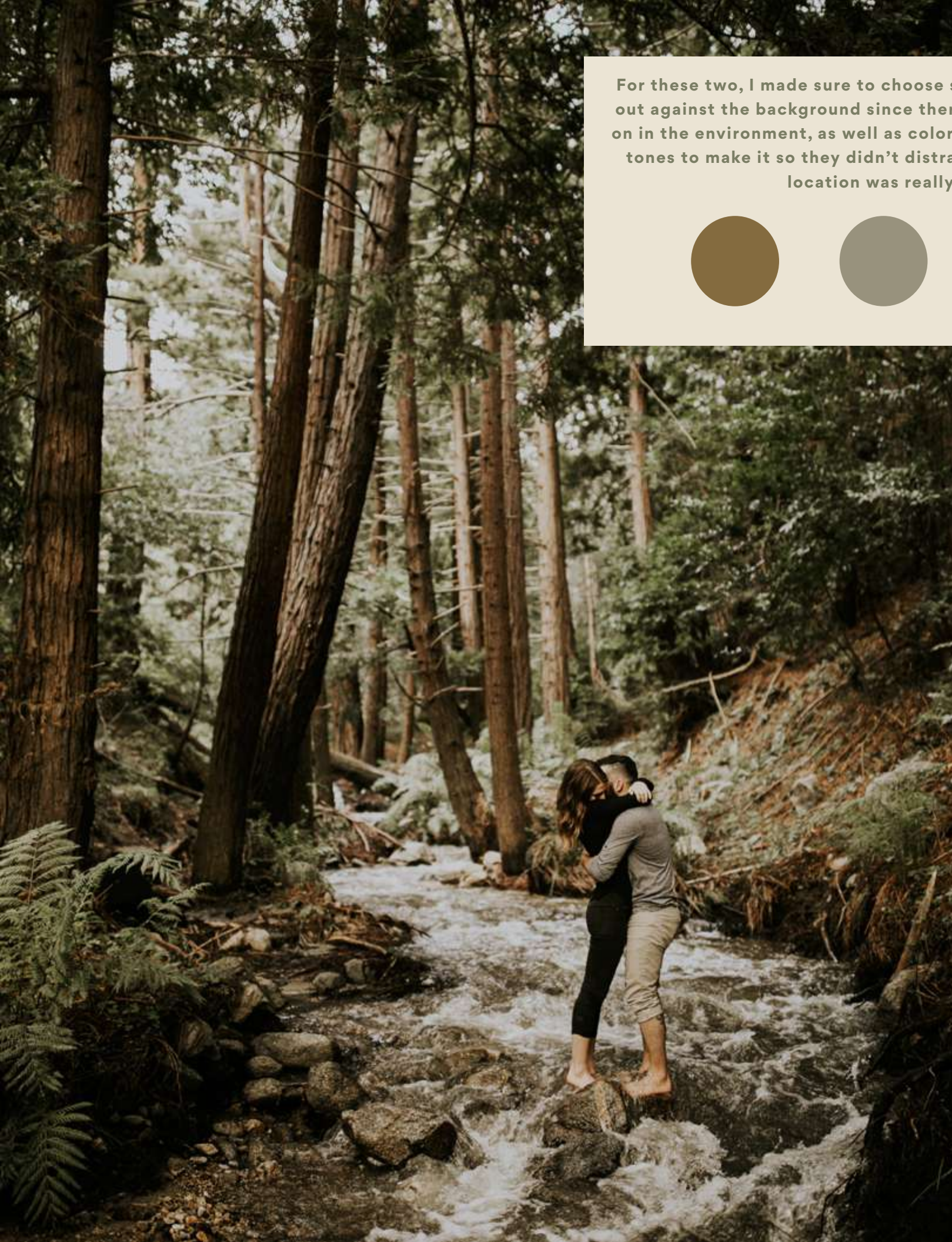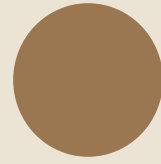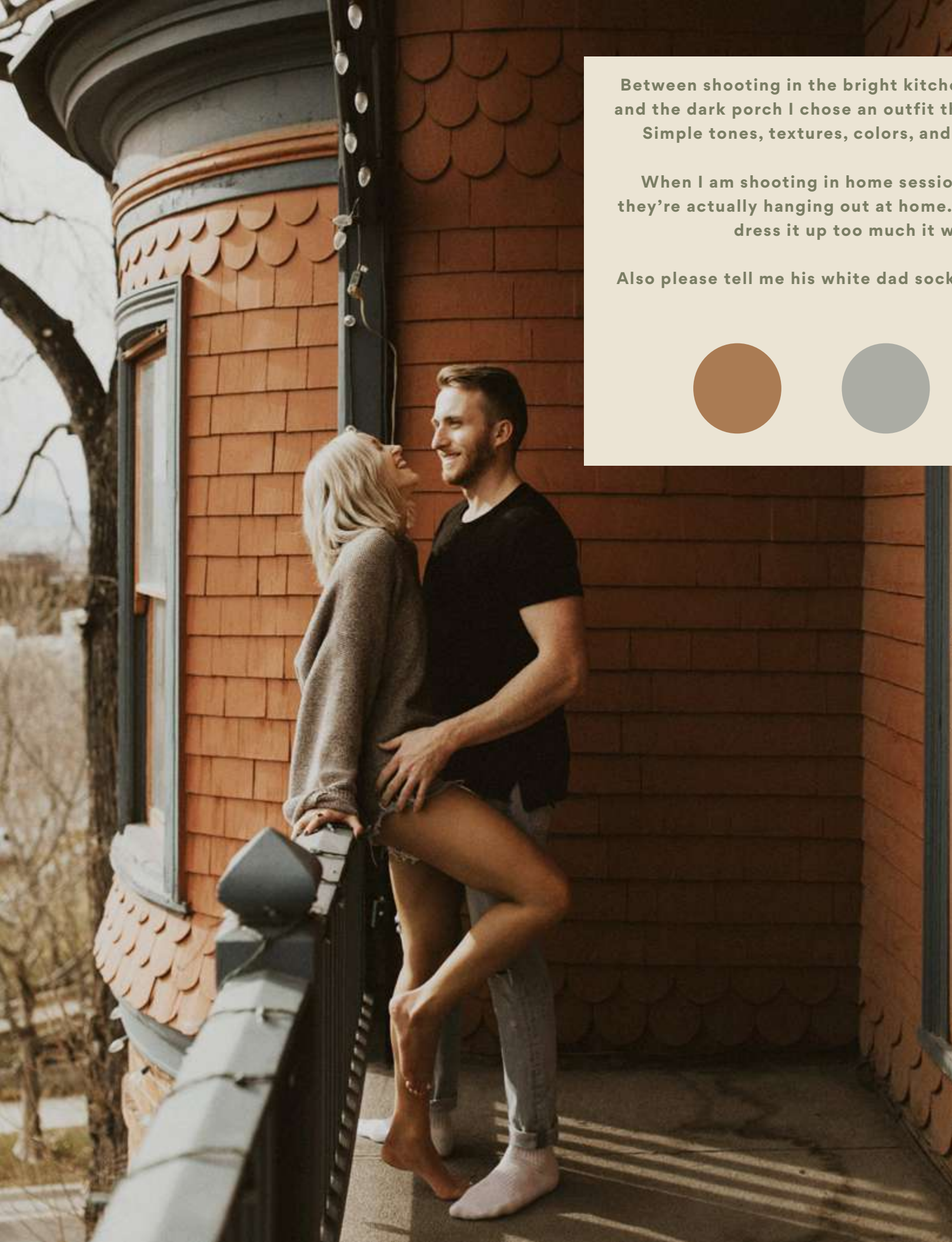
Between shooting in the bright kitchen, funky living room, simple bedroom, and the dark porch I chose an outfit that would look good for all these spots. Simple tones, textures, colors, and pieces that compliment each other.

When I am shooting in home sessions, I always make sure they look like they're actually hanging out at home. Barefoot, chill clothing options. If you dress it up too much it will look posed and forced.

Also please tell me his white dad socks make you as happy as they make me.
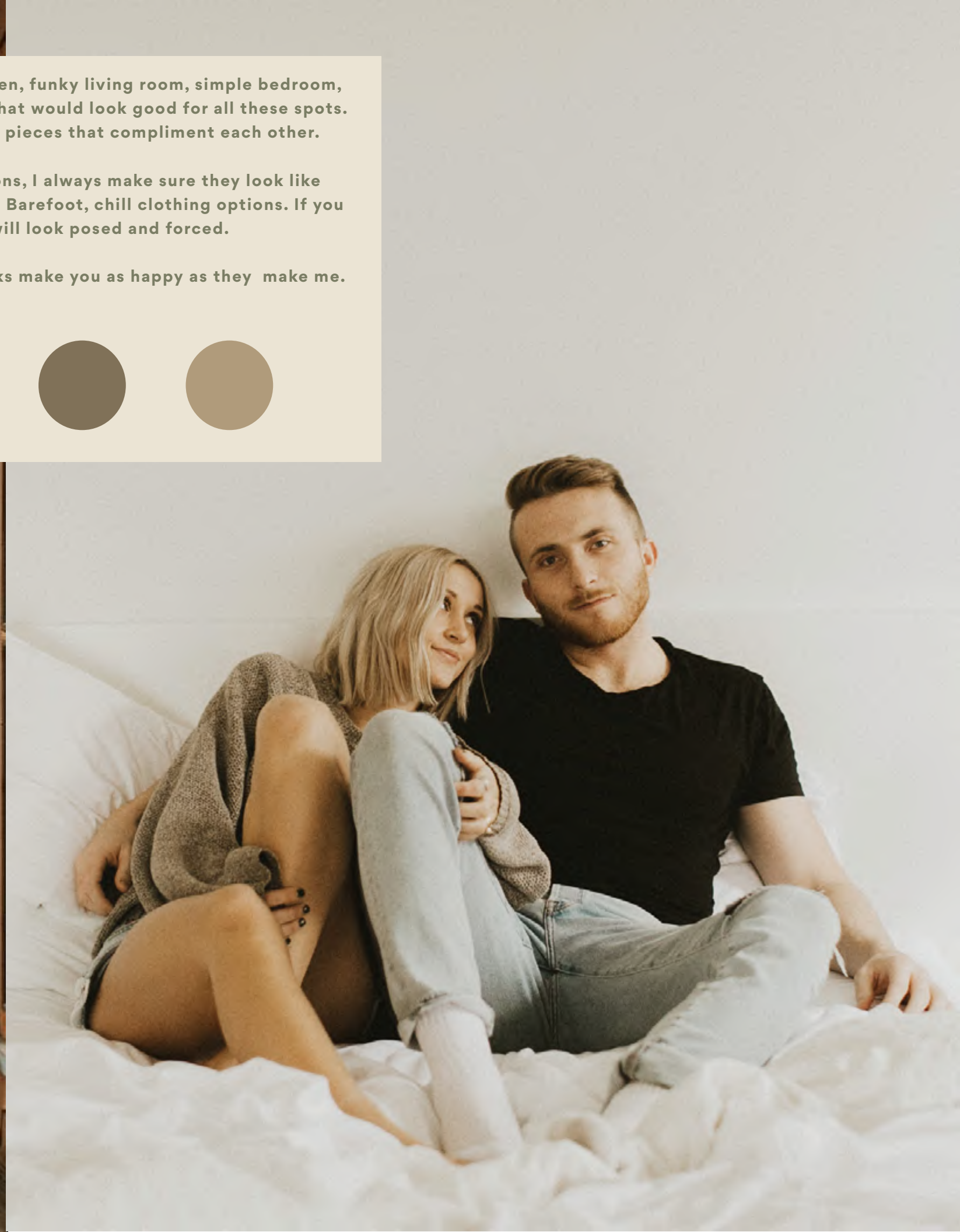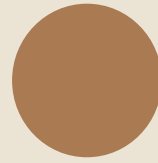
We chose to do only one outfit for this shoot since we were crunched on time. Both locations are really different but had a lot of the same properties to base outfit decision off of.

Lots of textures and shapes in both, while they both had dark tones such as the burnt orange wood and the dark forest green shadows. Simple outfits were perfect for both inside and outside.

I color matched his button up and shorts to the trees and weeds. I color matched her top to the light. I don't only color match to light, but also to create mini reflectors out of their shirts since we were shooting in bright midday sun as well as in their dark cabin. This way, her sweater helped to reflect light up onto their faces to counter balance funny shadows. I also made sure he had an extra shirt layer that was white so it would reflect more light indoors!
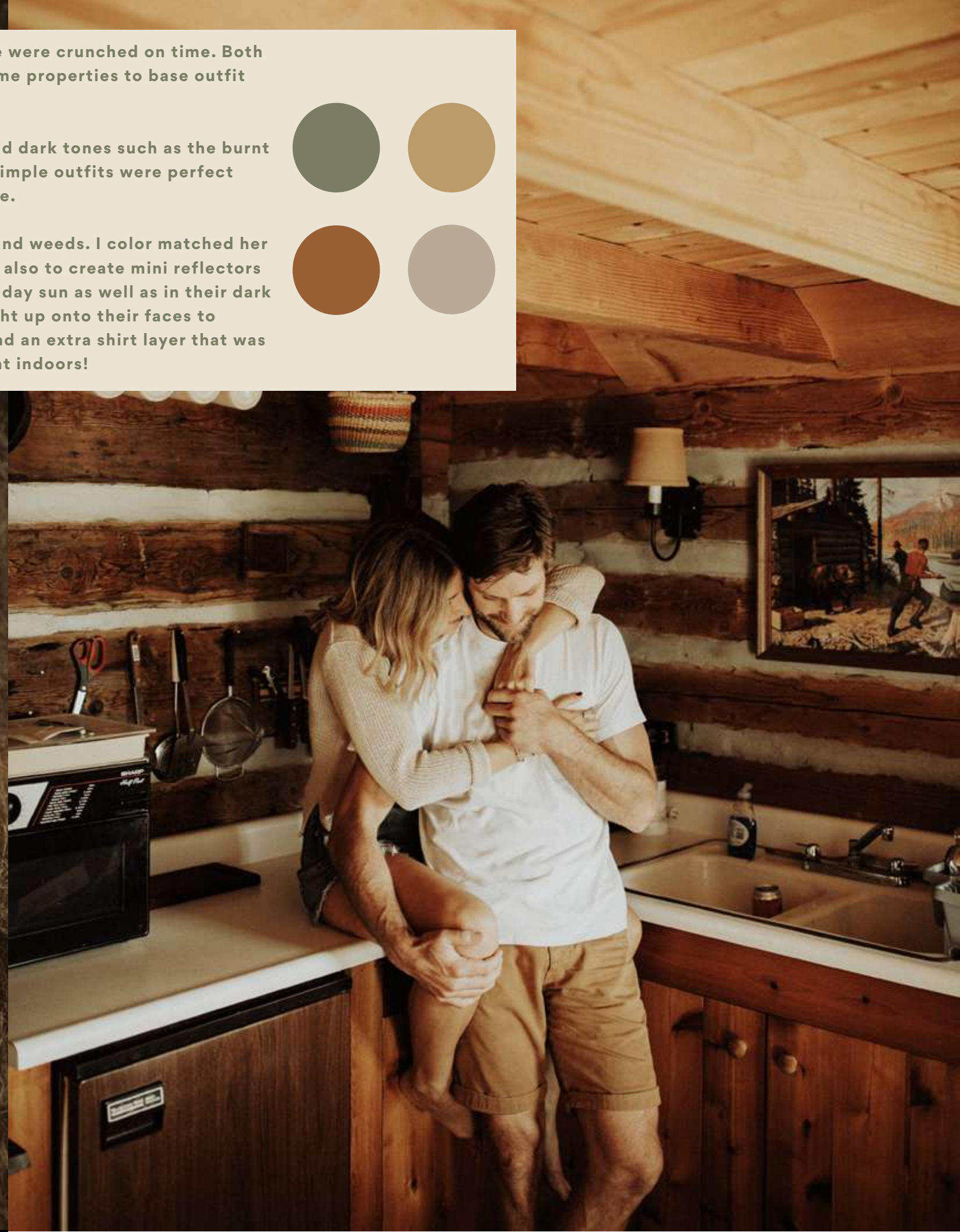
Oof, pattern gone wrong. She's basically becoming one of the bushes because I can barely tell where her body starts and ends with the crazy pattern and all the texture in the envrionment. I should have paired this dress with a more simple location.

Another pattern example! This pattern is sublte enough to not be too distracting. I made sure to not put him in a pattern though so that the viewers eyes wouldn't get too lost.

She did have another dress that was a solid cream but since it was fall time I was already editing so much red/orange/yellow that it didnt really matter to have her in red!

Also an example of a non-cheesy props. It was their anniversary shoot so she got a gorgeous bouquet of flowers. See, I told you. Props aren't always always a bad thing!
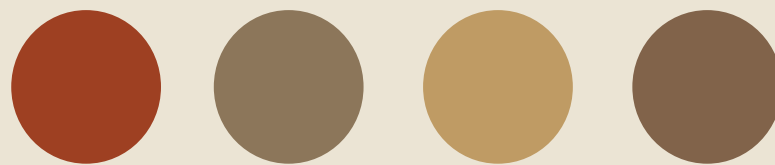
This is an example of having people wear what they feel most themselves in. For these two, it was chacos, dirty t-shirts they had been camping in, unwashed hair, and hats covered in desert dust. Because they were wearing what they're used to, they were able to be way more comfortable right off the bat and were able to move around really easily, compared to if she was in a dress or something.

Color matched them to the deep red and orange canyon walls, as well as the desert dirt. This way they complimented both the environment and one another.
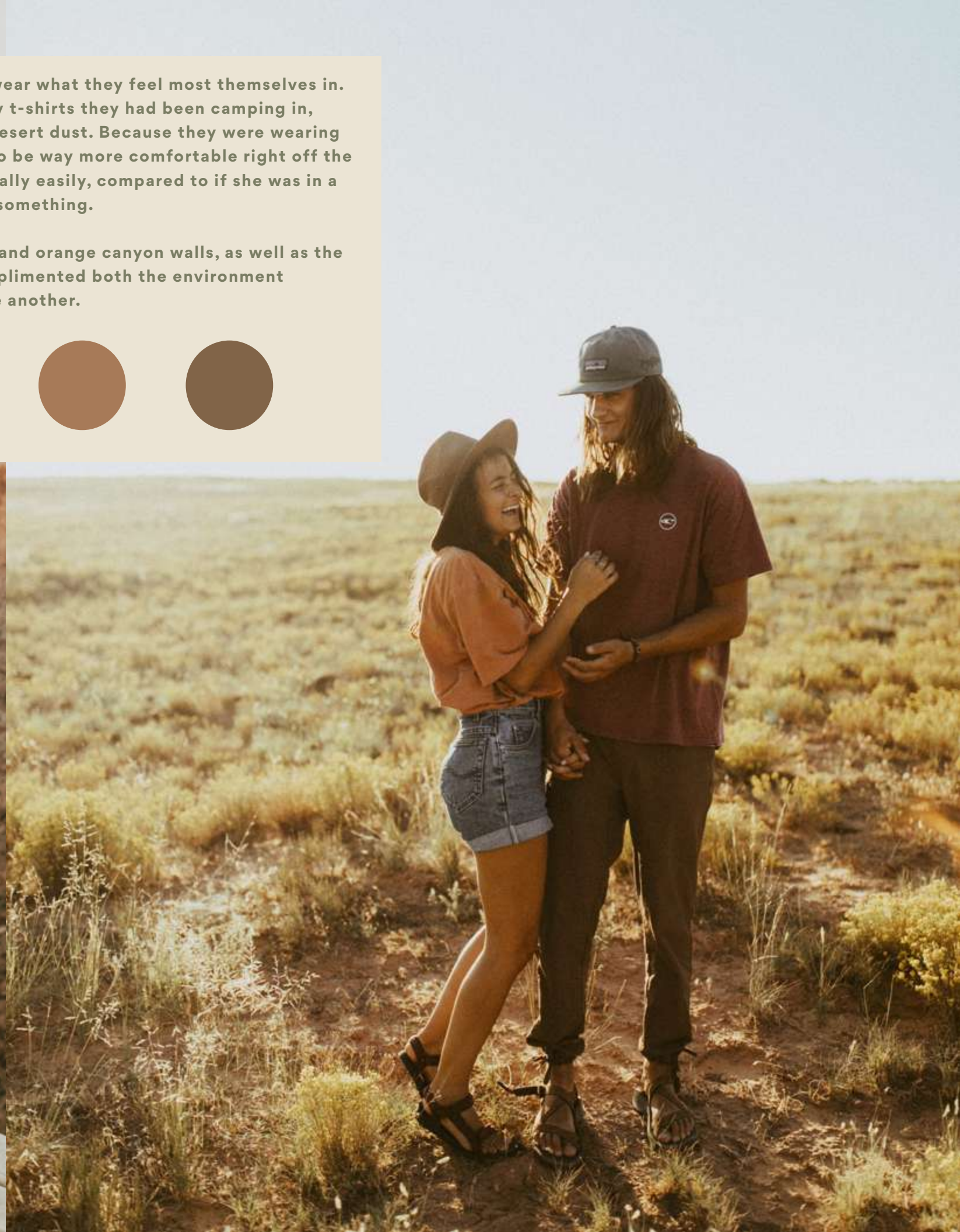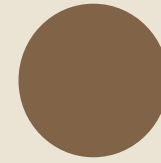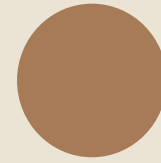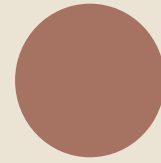
When you accidentally match. Whoops. They threw the shirts on and I looked at them both seperately (not standing with each other) while the other changed and didn't realize they were matching at first haha! Now I always make sure I look at the outfits side by side before shooting. Luckily we only took a few shots before realizing they were not only matching each other but also their sheets. I had her throw on a different shirt, he put on a different pair of pants, and boom badda boom the outfits looked a hundred times better!

This is an example of the exact same location, just 20 feet apart 20 minutes apart. One outfit has lots of contrast with a strong color choice and all black. The other is a softer quiter choice with all white and pops of pattern.

This just shows that there isn't just one right way of choosing an outfit for a location, you can go lots of different directions with it and the photos will still turn out great!

An example of how an outfit can be used in two different color palette and texture scenarios. Simple, neutral outfits with pops of texture are super versatile which is why a lot of the time I tend to choose them so that we can shoot longer and not have to worry about outfit changes.
Especially if you're on a time crunch!

If your client can only bring one outfit, I would recommend something along the lines of a couple of accessories, a simple patterned piece, and the rest neutral and simple.
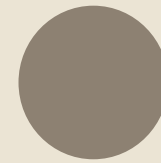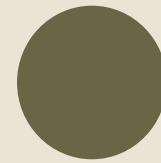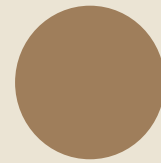
Hopefully you guessed it,
but what she is wearing doesnt really make
sense and it makes it look kind of funny. It
hindered the poses we could do since it was
so short and we had to rush shooting at this
location because she was freezing. Prime ex-
ample of choosing outfits that make sense for
the location and conditions!

This location was made up of lots of neutral colored fields with texture created by the light hitting the weeds and creating shadows. Color matched her to the light in the weeds and him to the field!

This is also the perfect example of why choosing materials that catch motion and are light when it's hot is a great idea. Both her dress and his shirt caught the wind in all of the shots making the photos have an extra oomph of energy. Plus, since they were in movable breathable material we were able to get a lot more shots of them without being constricted.
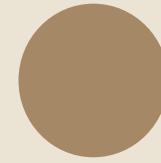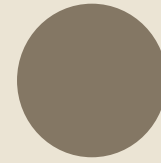
This is an example of how a loud pattern can totally screw up the focus of an image. When I look at these photos my eyes are so distracted by the hot pink aqua blue crazy flowers on her dress, that I don't really feel much of a connection with the image.

Small sublte patterns = Yay!
Big crazy loud patterns = Nay.

You guessed it, a color matching example!
Blue mountains, blue shirt. Green mountains, green shirt.

Simple outfits to compliment the amazing location, so that there is a perfect balance between the focus on them and the environment. The location was super important to them, so I wanted to make sure their outfits didn't steal the show. Also, the shirt she was wearing was awful with purple stripes so I had her switch me shirts. Gotta do what you gotta do!

They're matching and it turns them into a big blob especially against the bright sky and sea. It's not a huge deal, but I definitely could've had him wear another color of sweater that would have better balanced their outfits with the environment.
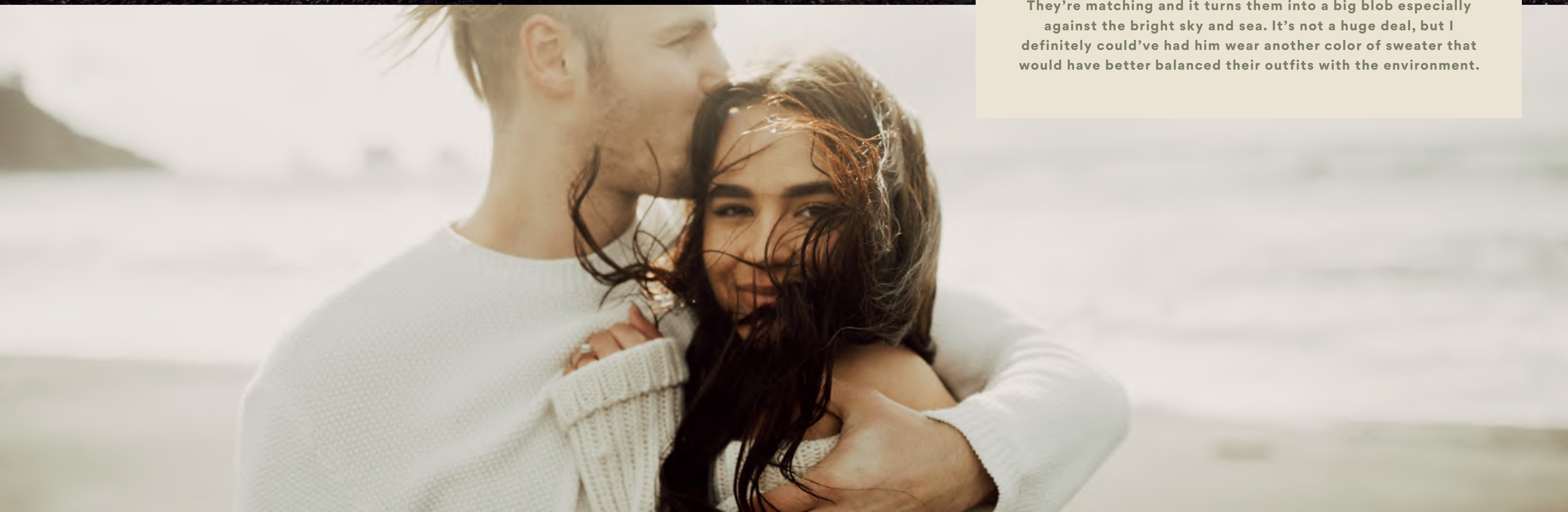
A couple more color matching examples! I'm sure you've got it down by now. Orange blanket, orange leaves. Green sweater, green pine trees. Purple shirt, purple mountains. Both are examples of complimentary outfits that pull the viewers focus in on the subjects while still making the locations look amazing.
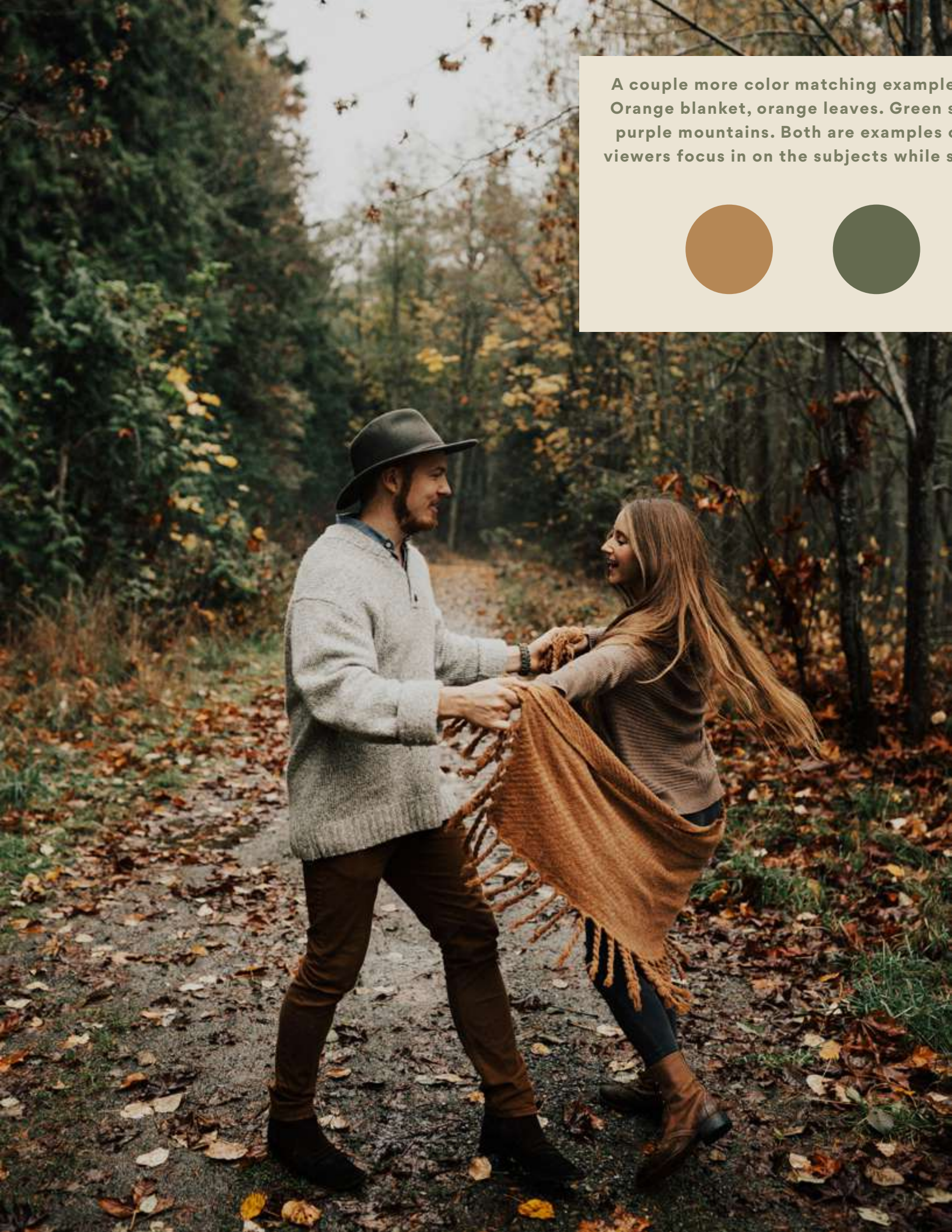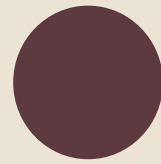
BREAK
THE
RULES.

RULES, SHMOOLS.

Like I said before, these are only guidelines I've learned from past experiences, but that doesn't mean if you don't follow them that your pictures are going to suck. Breaking boundaries others have set is how we learn and get creative and get outside our comfort zone, in any aspect of photography. Anyways, enough deep stuff. Here's some examples from when breaking the rules turned out to be the best thing.

Stripes on stripes, patterns on patterns, and it still looks good. Usually something I would try to avoid!

Matching in all white, crazy patterns with a crazy location, bright turquoise shoes and socks, and guess what? They look freakin awesome. Hooray for personality showing through their outfits. If they would have followed strict guidelines, there's no way they would have ended up wearing this. I'm so glad they did!

Pink with fair skin and a crazy pattern and it still doesn't distract me from the emotion of the image.

Sequins, boots in sand, a zipup hoodie and all black. Not what I would ever recommend for an outfit, but they felt most themselves in the photos and that's what makes the photos meaningful to the couple.

NOW
IT'S
YOUR
TURN.

DO A LITTLE HOMEWORK.

I recommend doing a little bit of homework now with your own galleries and use this same process of going through and recognizing how different elements of clothing and locations affected one another and the entire feel of an image. Does the photo feel a little off? Why? What outfit would have been better and why? What about this outfit worked and what didnt? What kind of location would that outfit worked better for? Go through 3 galleries and do this homework and it will help a ton when making your own guide as well as picking and choosing location and outfit combos to better your images.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I STILL FEEL LIKE MY CLIENTS MAY HAVE QUESTIONABLE TASTE, WHAT DO I DO?

In your email to them including the guide, include a link to a pinterest board you've created to help them visually see what you're talking about.

DO YOUR CLIENTS GET THEIR HAIR AND MAKEUP DONE?

Some do and some don't! I encourage them to basically do whatever is going to make them feel like Beyonce. Some people are confident with tangly hair and no makeup, and some feel super confident all glammed up. Whatever floats their boat!

DO YOU RECOMMEND STORES FOR YOUR CLIENTS TO SHOP AT?

No way. I get sick of shooting similar outfits all the time so I want them to shop wherever they want, if I always told people to shop at Urban Outfitters and Nordstroms then all my client's outfits through several galleries would start blending together.

DO YOU RENT FROM APPAREL VENDORS?

No, and I don't think any of my clients ever have either.

DO YOU BRING ALL OF THE OUTFITS EVERYWHERE WITH YOU?

Nope. I have my clients leave all the outfits in the car unless we are going on an extensive hike, then I'll maybe have them bring 1-2 extra outfits. I like to keep each location/scene limited to one outfit, so if we are hopping out of the car to shoot somewhere for 20 minutes (how I usually go about shoots) then I'll have them leave everything in the car so they don't have to think about it.

OKAY! PHEW that was a lot! Feeling like you're going to have to write a novel now about outfit guidelines? Don't worry, it's easy to lay it all out for your client so it's simple and easy to understand for them.

The following pages include guidelines on how to create your own What to Wear guide!

**JUST REMEMBER,
MAKE YOUR CLIENTS HAPPY.**

**IT'S ONE OF THE BEST THINGS YOU
COULD DO FOR YOUR BUSINESS.
PUT THEIR HAPPINESS FIRST.**

(even if that means they wear monkey suits)

LET'S
PUT
IT ALL
INTO
ACTION!

THE
HOW TO

The next page is the example layout template that I follow for my personal client What to Wear Guide. Although you can create a pdf, I recommend doing a hidden page on your website because it's easier to send, go in and edit, and to create on your owl without the help of a graphic designer, so you'll save time and money!

For my own guide, I went with the hidden published page on my website option. I personally prefer to keep mine private so there are no links leading to it anywhere other than sending it in an email. If you don't know how to create a hidden published page, google how to create one for the site builder system you use (ex : how to create a hidden page in Wordpress, Squarespace, etc). I use wordpress with a Flothemes template so it made it easy peasy to make it look great, plus you don't have to pay for any extra templates or editing programs to be able to create/edit it.

I also recommend getting Honeybook, a client organizing program, to better your workflow overall. In this case, you could set it to automate your guide to send to all of your clients who book portrait sessions so you don't have to stress about it at all. My code for 50% off your first year is "INDIA" and there's a free trial too, it's a business/sanity lifesaver!

Throwing together a pinterest board like I mentioned before to include in the email that you send the guide link with to better help your clients visually understand the vibe you're going for if they're still feeling lost. I offer to start a collaborative pinterest board so you can get a sense for their style and then guide them from there.

I'm also including access to my personal what to wear guide that I send out to all of my clients so you can use it to guide you and help with wording and writing it all out, since that can be the most time consuming part! If you shoot multiple types of portraits, like couples and families, you could also consider making separate guides for each so it is more applicable to each scenario.

To access my guide, **click here!**
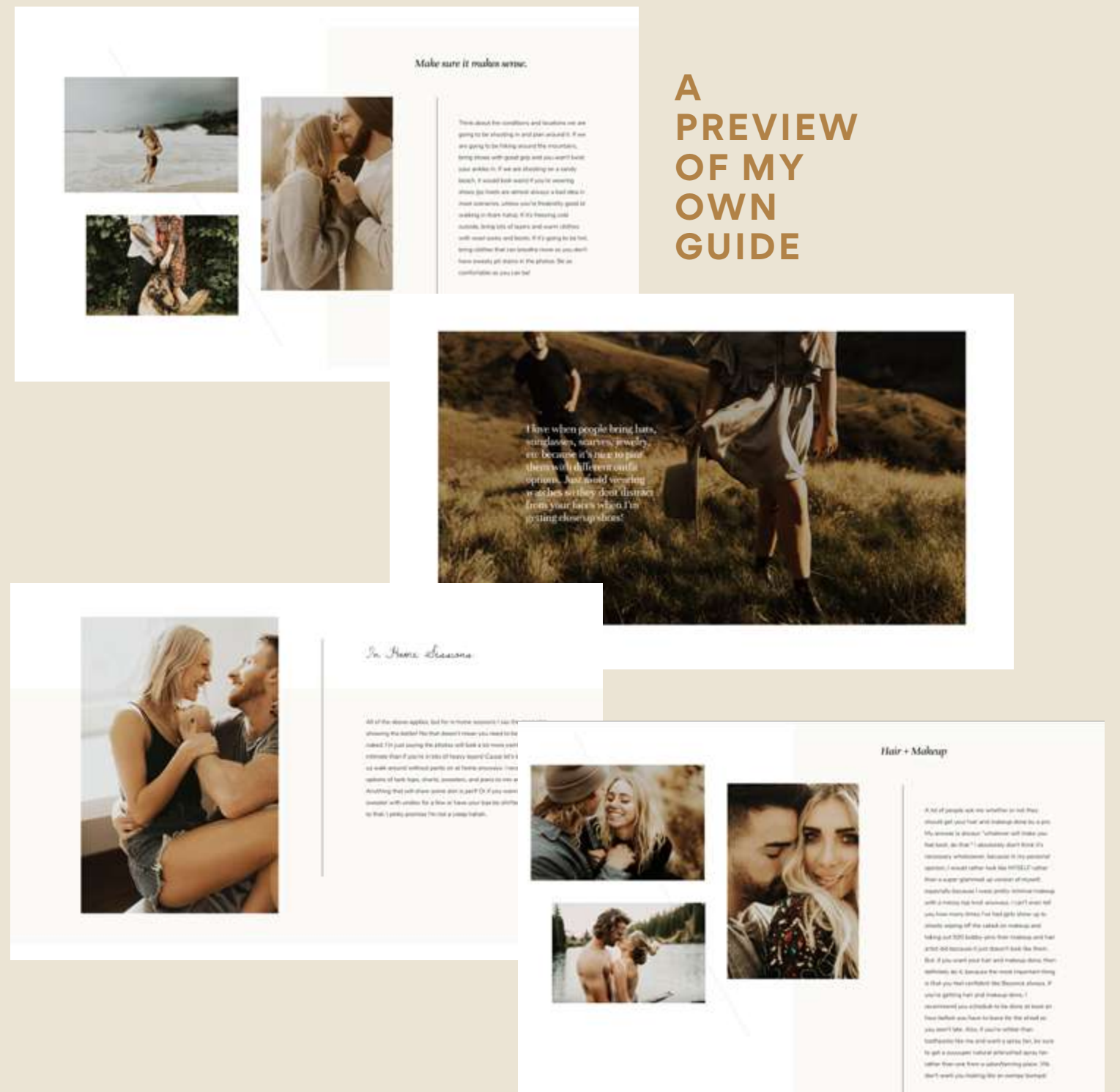
A PREVIEW OF MY OWN GUIDE

THE LAYOUT

Remember, you don't want to overwhelm them or go too in depth. Keep it simple, easy to understand, and to the point. Giving photo examples is one of the best ways you can help them understand, so I recommend going through some past galleries and pulling both good and bad examples!

Now, onto the layout flow. **Break it down by each subject,** kind of like the way I did in this guide. It will keep it organized and easier to navigate for your client. I have mine broken up into bite size sections, laid out in this fashion :

1. WHY IT MATTERS

This is where you should explain why they can't just wear any outfit, because sometimes certain outfits that look great in real life can be distracting in photos. Tell them why they should care and why the photos will turn out better from it.

2. OPTIONS

Tell them to bring a few options and give an example of how many outfits you'd like them to bring so they don't bring their entire closet with them. Also explain the changing situation as well so they know ahead of time.

3. PERSONALITY

Probably one of the most important parts! Be sure to give them creative freedom with their outfits and let them know that you want them to look like THEM.

4. LOGISTICS

Explain any logistics they should know in advance so they're comfortable and not hindered while shooting. This will change from each shoot to the next so keep it general and to the point.

5. MOVEMENT

Talk to them about how movement can create energy, as well as comfortable materials here.

6. COLORS

Let them know what kind of color palette you typically prefer, and what colors they should avoid to make sure the photos turn out great. Include photos!

THE LAYOUT

7. PATTERNS

Go over good and bad patterns, ones you encourage and ones you discourage. This would be great to show with both good and bad examples if you have them!

8. ACCESSORIES

Give examples of accessories that work well for photos that they can pair up with different outfits for each location.

9. PROPS

Make sure you explain that props can be done so so wrong, but they can be done right too! Give ideas so they can brainstorm any prop-like element to incorporate into the shoot to make it more meaningful to them.

10. SPECIFICS

I make sure to address any specific scenarios or questions I get often to be sure to answer any and all questions before they even have to ask. In my guide, I touch on both hair and makeup, what they should know about it, as well as in home sessions because I do a lot of them and there are slightly different guidelines I give for that shoot setting alone.

11. QUESTIONS

Be sure to let them know they can ask questions, create a pinterest board with you, send pictures of their outfits beforehand, and that you're there to help with anything you can to make this part of getting photos taken easy!

Well, there you have it! You can also reference to my own What to Wear Guide to help you get going and use as a more detailed template. You are now ready to create your own guide and make your photos that much better, and be able to provide more timeless images for your clients.

YOU'VE GOT THIS!