

How to Create Better Images

Photos give your audience a sense of who you are and what you do. They are also a fast way to signal to viewers that you are a trustworthy and valuable source of information. Studies have shown that it takes people 0.05 seconds to form an opinion about the credibility of a website mainly based on its visuals. The same principle applies to visual marketing materials, including social media and video where photography plays a central role. **This guide will help you identify and create better, higher-quality images for more impactful and engaging marketing.**

Characteristics of Higher Quality Photos

- Not cluttered or confusing
- Tell a story—clearly show what’s going on
- Convey a feeling
- Authentic and novel
- Pleasing composition, flattering to subjects
- Crisp focus, bright, colorful
- Not pixelated or stretched out

Practical tips for creating better images with your phone or with any camera

1) TELL THE STORY

- Represent a variety of perspectives by varying your shots: audience seats, behind the scenes, overall scene views, closeups, and so on.
- Make the nature of an event or portrait very clear by frequently including easily recognizable or symbolic backgrounds, body poses, and facial expressions.
- Watch for emotional highs, special moments, and obvious facial expressions for authentic photos.

2) LOOK, THINK, AND BE PATIENT

LOOK

Look around, what is visually interesting to you? What colors, expressions, angles might be nice to include in your shot?

THINK

- What aspects do you want to emphasize? What messages do you want to communicate?
- Have a loose idea of the picture you’re going for.
- Assess the factors involved in creating this image (timing, lighting, composition, background).

BE PATIENT

- Take as many photos as you need. Look at them before moving on and take more or try new options if needed.
- Wait for the right moment. Avoid “spray and pray”. Remember that on phones, the image is captured when your finger is removed from button.

3) PHOTOGRAPHY IS DRAWING WITH LIGHT

- Ask yourself "Where is the light coming from?"
- Generally speaking, shoot portraits where light is the most even and flat. Avoid direct light which causes harsh shadows.
- Outdoor light is best for portraits. Get in the shade on a sunny day. On overcast days, light is naturally even.
- Indoors, light from a window on one side of your subject is best. Avoid backlighting and overhead lights.
- Avoid flash. Use only as last resort as it is unflattering.

4) PAY ATTENTION TO THE FRAME

- Use the entire frame: move in closer than you think you need to be. Don't leave a lot of "blank" space in a shot.
- Moving slightly can make a big difference in your shot.
- Don't be afraid to crop people and things off frame. It can add a professional look.
- Become aware of the frame edges. Avoid awkward intrusions and clutter near the edges.

5) COMPOSE YOUR SHOT

- Rule of Thirds: Turn on grid lines on your camera phone and place important parts of image at intersections and lines to create a more pleasing effect. Avoid placing subject in the middle.
- Focus guides viewers' eyes. Set your focus on the important part of image.

Technical Tips

TO PREVENT BLUR

- Keep camera stable. Use two hands or prop it up on a hard surface, especially indoors and in low light.
- Focus by tapping the screen.
- Digital zoom on phone cameras creates blurry images. Physically move in, or use the 2x "lens" (newer iPhones only). If you must use digital zoom, avoid zooming all the way in.

FOR BRIGHTER PHOTOS

- Adjust the exposure (brightness) if needed by swiping after tapping for focus.
- When taking several photos of the same scene or where there is a lot of movement, lock the exposure/focus. It will give you more consistent shots.
 - Press and hold area where you wish to focus and swipe up or down to make image brighter or darker.

GENERAL RESOLUTION TIPS

- Set Picture size to at least 3000px on long side or 8MP. iPhone 5 and above and most other phones default to this.
- General DSLR Camera Setting: auto mode with flash turned off. ISO 400 outside, 1000 inside. If image is blurry, raise ISO to 2000 max.

- Beware of "Mergers". For example, objects in the background "sprouting" from people's heads.
- Experiment for different effects and emotional tone in your shots. Try different angles, tilt camera, horizontal and vertical orientations, objects in foreground.

The Last Mile: Using Photos Effectively

- Always resize proportionally or crop—never stretch out photo on one side.
- If the photo looks pixelated or fuzzy, don't use it or request a higher resolution version.
- Avoid crops that appear accidental.
- If photos are appearing at a small size, choose less detailed photos. They will be less confusing to viewers.
- Be gentle with photo editing tools and filters. Try to get it right while taking photo.
- Images that are 3000px and up on the long side (a.k.a. high resolution) are suitable for both digital and print usage around letter size.