



# A Guide to Better Photography

## *Three Tips to Improve Your Digital Photography Skills*

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With the latest advances in digital photography, we all think that we can take product shots like the pros. But can we? With all of the apps available to make our photography look better, why do we even need a professional photographer to take photos of our products for brochures? And the answer is because photography is more than just placing your product on a table and shooting it. It requires skill in composition, lighting, and knowing how to tell a story with your photo. And professional photographers know how to do just that.

However, there are times due to budget or time constraints, you may need to take a 'quick and dirty' shot of something to fulfill a marketing tactic. For example, at a trade show, shooting the winners of a contest you've put on, or just an interesting photo for social media platforms like Instagram.

To that end, here are a few tips that will help you become a better photographer whether you are just a weekend amateur or need to professionally shoot your company's products.

## Tip #1: Composition

A simple definition of composition is the act of composing the product you are shooting in the viewfinder. It's really a visual process of organizing several elements into a balanced and pleasing arrangement. It's also a way to convey a message about your product.

The composition of a photo is very subjective so there really is no right or wrong way to arrange your products. However, there are a few simple rules of composition that may help you to create an aesthetically pleasing arrangement.

**Keep it simple.** Avoid cluttering the set with non-essential accessories. If you are shooting a product include only the product and a few accessories.

The **rule of thirds** is one of the most well-known principles of photography. Any budding photographer will understand this basic rule. Just imagine your image broken down into thirds both horizontally and vertically so that you have nine parts. When you are viewing your product or subject matter in the viewfinder of your camera,

these imaginary lines will help you position the elements in your photo. You should place any point of interest along the intersected lines to bring balance to your photo. Your subject matter doesn't necessarily always have to be dead center in your viewfinder. Mix it up by changing the angle of your camera or offsetting your product.

Look for sight lines. For example, if you plan to add text over a colored background on the left side of the image, place the person looking to the left on the right third of the composition.

Fill the frame with interest. Put your product in context with the appropriate environment. For example, you may want to shoot your laboratory product in an actual laboratory setting to show how it works.

Backgrounds are always a sore subject. Should you use white or should you use a colored background? Should you make the shot more dramatic by using colored gels to subdue the lighting? Should you rent a studio backdrop or just find some colored cloth? All of these decisions will depend upon what you are shooting

and what message you are trying to convey.

## Tip #2: Lighting

Lighting is the most important aspect of photography. It determines whether or not your photo is playful, serious, dramatic, or just plain boring. Again, there are no right or wrong ways to light a product; however, there are a few basics rules.

Photos taken in diffuse light will appear softer and have fewer shadows. Harsh, direct light increases the number of shadows and adds drama to your shot. When doing a photo shoot of your product, you will most likely want lighting that shows the product in a clean, crisp manner. You probably will not be using natural light.

Product photography in a studio requires specialized studio lighting. You may need to light your subject from above as well as at the sides depending upon what aspects of your product you want to emphasize.

## Tip #3: Exposure

The definition of exposure, in its simplest terms, occurs when the digital camera's sensor is

exposed to light. When a photograph is taken, the light is reflected from the subject or elements of the composed shot and its surroundings and is transmitted by the camera's lens through an open shutter to the sensor for a set length of time. This literally means that the sensor has been exposed.

But, exposure also refers to the photographer's control of the final appearance of the images that are taken. To properly expose a photo you must allow the correct amount of light in, which will result in perfect tones and colors of your final photo.

A light meter is typically used to determine the amount of light that is striking your subject and it provides shutter speeds and aperture settings for proper exposure. With a manual camera, the photographer has control of these settings.

Automatic exposure cameras don't require these adjustments but there may be times when the photographer may want to override these automatic

settings. With digital cameras, it is easy to shoot a photo with different exposure settings. You can view the digital shot directly on a computer and work with your photographer to make any changes in composition, lighting, or exposure that are necessary to create the story you want to tell.

I hope these tips have been beneficial to you whether you shoot your products in-house or if you use professional photographers. The more you know, the better you can communicate with a professional photographer. Good, high-quality photographs are a key element to selling your products.

## Special Offer

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