

## How to photograph your artwork and space

You may know how fabulous your artwork or your arts, culture or heritage space is—but others may not. Photos can help you convey this.

Great photos connect the viewer to your passion, so make the most of them!

### To produce the best photos possible, consider these tips

(And once you go through the tips, there's a link at the end of the document to some fabulous sample photos for inspiration.)

- Whether you're using a camera or smartphone, the first thing to do is **clean your lens** with lens tissue and lens-cleaning solution. After all, for how many months has the phone been in and out of your pocket with nary a thought to the lint, which longs to cling?
- The **Grid setting** is a useful tool. Whether shooting 2D or 3D work, the grid is helpful to prevent skewing, to align the camera/phone to vertical and horizontal lines, and as an aid in composition.
  - On both iPhones and androids, go to Settings, scroll down to Camera, and then enable the grid.
  - On DSLRs, go to Custom Settings Menu and choose Shooting/Display, and then scroll down to Viewfinder Grid Display and click it on.
- To prevent distortion in the images of your artwork, **move your camera/phone back** from it and zoom in or crop later. Distortion is most noticeable at the edges of 2D art.
- Generally, people know that it's necessary to focus when using a point-and-shoot camera and a DSLR. It is also important to **set the focus** when using a phone.
  - Your photos will be sharper if you tap the screen on the object in the scene you consider most important.
  - Note that when you tap the screen on iPhone and android, a sunlight symbol appears.
    - On iPhone, by pressing on the screen and sliding your finger up, you will make the image brighter; sliding the finger down makes it darker.
    - On android, sliding your finger to the right makes it brighter and to the left darker.
- For greater sharpness, **use a tripod** or some other way to steady the device.

- Phone tripod mount adapters (available for about \$15) are useful when photographing artwork indoors, with artificial lighting or when natural light is dim.
- Remote shutters (also inexpensive) are more convenient than a self-timer. They operate with Bluetooth on phones.
- Once the phone/camera is steady, **use the self-timer or remote shutter or voice command** (see below), to avoid introducing blur from tapping the screen or pushing the shutter button.

The following suggestions are device-dependent; you may not be able to make the changes with some phones.

- Android phone cameras allow **voice commands**. It's a good idea to turn this on: Camera Settings, Shooting Methods, Voice Commands.
  - When this is enabled, you merely say, "Shoot," rather than tapping the shutter, which may blur the image. This is a good alternative to a self-timer, even when on a tripod.
- If using window light, set **WB (white balance) to daylight** if possible; otherwise use auto.
- Set to the **lowest ISO** if possible; otherwise use auto.
- Set to the **highest resolution**: Settings, App Settings, Camera Settings.
- **Avoid using flash**. The effect is often harsh, creates unwanted reflections and may spoil the atmosphere.

## ***Quality of light***

### **Hard light**

- Whenever possible, avoid taking portraits in bright sunlight. Sunlight can cause overly bright, washed-out skin tones and deep, dark shadows that lack detail—not to mention the squinting that occurs. That's why photographers seek shade on sunny days, or use the sun to backlight their subjects.
- The sun is the prototype of hard light. Any bulb in a metal, cone-shaped reflector is considered a hard light. Spotlights and flashes on cameras or phones deliver hard light. When directed at a subject, they create very distinct shadows and high contrast between the highlights and shadows.
- Hard light can be used to photograph artworks, but it needs to be diffused or balanced with other softer lights or reflectors.

### **Soft light**

- If we consider the sun as the prototype of hard light, clouds may be considered the prototype for soft light. Clouds diffuse the light from the sun. Photographs lit by clouds will generally have less delineated shadows and softer tones, with more detail in both highlights and shadows.

- To achieve soft light, you can diffuse hard light with a white sheet or bounce light off a wall, ceiling or reflector.
- “Soft boxes” are often used to light products and artwork. For jewellery and highly reflective metal, a “light tent” is often used, which surrounds the object with white. Here is a link to make your own tent:
  - [crafts.tutsplus.com/make-and-use-a-light-tent-to-take-great-photos-of-your-craft--cms-21256t](https://crafts.tutsplus.com/make-and-use-a-light-tent-to-take-great-photos-of-your-craft--cms-21256t)

### **Choosing the lighting**

- Usually, the more reflective the product, the softer the light required. The kinds of products that require very soft light are items such as glossy pottery, most jewellery and highly reflective metal work. Items that are not as reflective may be photographed with harder light: unglazed pottery, textured fabrics, rough stone.
- By the way, it is more difficult to work with hard light due to the obviousness of the shadows and the tendency toward higher contrast and undesirable reflections.

### *Shooting 2D: paintings, drawings, etc.*

- If the artwork is hanging on the wall, bring the camera/phone up to the artwork and position the tripod so that the lens is at the height of the artwork’s centre. Move the tripod back to shooting position.
- When using artificial light, place lights at 45° on both sides of the artwork at equal distances. Drawings often need to have lighting on both sides, because they don’t lie flat, whereas paintings can sometimes be lit from one side only. One light source will emphasize the 3D effect of impasto in a painting.
- If using natural light (no direct sun), the artwork could be hung on the wall of a shed or placed on the floor near an open door or window. The light from the open door or window can be shaped by blocking some of the light or by reflecting some of the light back toward the artwork from the opposite side with a white card.
- When using a phone and shooting straight down, a square grid or a pair of overlapping crosses will indicate when you are square to the piece. (See the grid tip above.)

### *Shooting 3D: pottery, jewellery, metal, wood, etc.*

- Choosing the background: Generally white, grey or black backgrounds are chosen so as not to distract from the artwork itself. However, you may decide that the atmosphere of your location is important also. Give thought to your choice of context for your piece, while highlighting its artistic merit: for example, an in-focus close-up of a coffee mug, with warm tones of the studio out of focus in the background.
- Positioning the lights: One main shadow is desirable. Secondary shadows are fine if not too attention-grabbing. Two or more equally strong shadows can be distracting. Shadows coming slightly forward toward the viewer tend to “ground” the object and

separate the top edge from the background. The softer the shadow, the less distracting it is.

### ***Considerations when shooting your location***

- Generally, for outdoor photos of your location, shooting before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m. allows for more interesting and inviting light than noon-day sun. But the surrounding features—river, trees, mountains, roads, other houses, as well as the weather—will also influence when, or if, you choose to shoot.

### **Photographing the interior**

- Declutter.
- It's a good idea to first take a wide-angle photo to show your workspace/studio/gallery. Generally, this will be shot in landscape orientation.
- With the camera/phone on a tripod at about waist height, consider also placing yourself in the scene. What could be more inviting than a smiling face surrounded by engaging artworks? Use the self-timer or the remote trigger, regardless of whether you choose to be in the photos or not.
- Use a combination of natural and artificial light. If possible, choose an overcast day. Soft light coming in the windows lights up the room without harsh shadows. Having a few household lights on adds warmth. Try it both ways with and without interior lights on.
- An hour or so before sunset is worth a try, too. This will emphasize the warmth of the interior and contrast with the blue outside.
- If you have too much contrast, between the brightness of the windows and the shadows in the room, turn on HDR (high dynamic range). When this is enabled in your camera or phone settings, it takes three different exposures and combines them into one image. The result will dramatically reduce the contrast. Try with and without HDR turned on and see which you prefer.

### ***Editing, renaming and resizing photos***

- For resizing, the pixel dimensions are the most important consideration. Aim for 1,800 px or greater on the longest size.
- It is likely that if you are using a camera to take your photos, you're familiar with using your computer app to make editing adjustments and know how to rename and resize your photos.
- A good idea for adjusting, renaming and resizing photos from the phone is as follows:
  - Connect the phone to the computer with the USB cord. Find the phone icon in This PC, Computer or My Computer; double click, open Camera and then look for DCIM (digital camera image). Upload the images, and then proceed as above.
- However, if you can't use your computer, here are further suggestions:

- Often the in-phone app will be sufficient for adjusting the brightness, contrast and colour.
- For more control, if you don't have Lightroom or Photoshop, try Snapseed; it works with both iPhones and androids and it's free. If you have an older phone, it's possible to download earlier versions of the app, which may work with it.

### Resizing photos

- In order to resize your photo before submitting, here are a couple of suggestions:
  - On android, go to Gallery, tap on photo you want to send, tap the pencil at the bottom left, tap the three vertical dots on bottom right, and then click Resize.
  - On iPhone, it would take more words than all that has been written above, so here is a link to how to resize your photos:
    - [www.howtogeek.com/726913/how-to-resize-or-reduce-photo-size-on-iphone-and-ipad](http://www.howtogeek.com/726913/how-to-resize-or-reduce-photo-size-on-iphone-and-ipad)
- As mentioned above, choose around 1,800 px or greater on the long side.

### Renaming photos

- On android, go to Gallery, tap on the photo you want to rename, tap on the three vertical dots on the lower right, tap Details and then Edit. You will see the Details heading at the top; below that you'll see the numerical indication of the date ending in .jpeg; tap on it and move the blue cursor to just before the dot (as in .jpeg). Use the 'x' backspace until all the numbers have gone, then type in the new name.
- On iPhone, go to Photos, tap on the photo, tap on the bottom left up arrow, and then scroll all the way down to Save to Files and tap. The image will come up; tap on the name. You can then rename the photo.
  - When you want to send the image, bear in mind the renamed image is in the Files folder, not the Photos folder.

### Sample photos

- Click the following link to see some fabulous sample photos for inspiration. (Note: View these images online only, rather than downloading them.)
  - [www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/kkl9i1g52utp8j6n2ac37/h?rlkey=6w17tsxgaveau3y8zqn7qu5x2&dl=0](http://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/kkl9i1g52utp8j6n2ac37/h?rlkey=6w17tsxgaveau3y8zqn7qu5x2&dl=0)

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*Tips provided by J. Addington.*