

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO

# DIY Product Photography

Product Photography Tips for  
Ecommerce Entrepreneurs



A high-impact guide written for entrepreneurs by entrepreneurs.



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## Chapter 1

# Why Product Photography is Important

## An Introduction to Product Photography

We live in a visual world. A customer walks into a brick and mortar store because they like what they see from outside. Similarly, when customers land on your store page, their attention gravitates to your images first and, if they like what they see, they keep on browsing and, hopefully, make a

purchase. That is why product photography is essential to the success of any ecommerce operation.

The purpose of this guide is to teach you how to create product images that turn your customers into loyal followers.

Quality product images are a key driver of store engagement, conversion and retention, and overall customer lifetime value. This guide will walk you through the entire process of producing images that help you grow your store.

When you are through, you will know:

- What kind of images to produce for both your product page and social media.
- What kind of equipment you need, even if you are on a budget.
- How to use background and lighting to take professional photos.
- How to retouch your images to drive more engagement.
- How to build a killer visually driven product page and optimize it for maximum conversion.

**Eye-tracking** studies show that store visitors are first engaged by visual elements, which makes them more likely to stick around and explore the site. The quality of your images will define this first interaction, the perceived value of your products, and your brand's image. First impressions can make or break an ecommerce store and your product photos are at the helm of that interaction. This guide will help you understand what makes an image engaging and walk you through producing photos that boost the lifetime value of your customers.

We offer all the photography tricks and tools you will ever need to take great product photos that help you turn your customers into loyal promoters of your store.

There are a few key decision points along the way of a successful photo shoot, and, if you keep them in check, you will consistently get images that keep your customers coming back. If you want photos that bring results and sustainable growth, this is the Guide for you.

## Images are a Key Element of Your Branding

**Branding** should be intertwined in everything you do, from your store design to your social media taglines. Your branding speaks to your target audience, and successful brands understand its importance in crafting relationships with customers. You form relationships with customers by using your brand voice and personality to resonate with buyers. And images are a key element of that voice and personality.

Think **Roar Cordials**, a brand that keeps it upbeat with pictures of fresh ingredients and bright colors that communicate the vivacious personality of it and its target audience. When your image resonates with that of your followers, it adds value to their lives, and they become loyal promoters of your products. Good branding promotes trust and appeal, making your products more desirable and ultimately translating to higher retention and conversions.

When done well, branding goes beyond trust and builds up an emotional connection with your buyers. Think how Apple turned people into die-hard fans that own every device the company's made by promoting their philosophy more than their products.

The images you use across your ecommerce ecosystem radiate your brand's identity. And the elements that define them define your brand. Some of these elements are:

- **Color palette**
- **Saturation**
- **Focal length**
- Shadows
- **Composition**
- Location and context

Your images enrich your content and speak to your target audience. If you see a white polar bear on a red background with nothing else, you will immediately think Coca-Cola. Though it may look simple, that level of brand recognition has been years in the making with images of those same colors and main characters all over every kind of physical and virtual experience.

*“When I photograph our products I am not just trying to show the item, I am trying to create a mood and a feeling that I want people to experience when they see and use our handcrafted goods. There is so much competition in online sales, and unless you can compete by having the lowest prices around you really have to find other ways to make your products stand apart from the rest. In a brick and mortar store a very specific mood is created through the lighting, music, decor, etc. Ideally, the mood you create would be something that resonates with and attracts your potential customers. With an online store a picture is worth a thousand words because it’s the only way the customer can experience not only the product but also that mood you want to evoke.”*

- Loran Polder ([OldWorldKitchen.com](http://OldWorldKitchen.com))



Source: [Old World Kitchen](http://OldWorldKitchen.com)

## Photography is a Crucial Part of any Creative Strategy

Images grab and hold consumer attention, forming their first impressions, so make sure they are unique and resonating. The internet is flooded

with visual content, but only a handful of it actually improves non-verbal communication and influences consumer emotions. That is the difference between generic photos and photography that tells a story with your product, setting, and color themes.

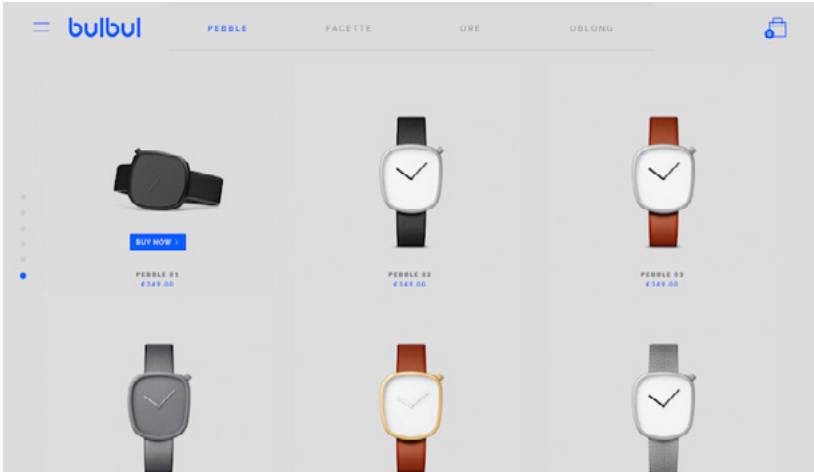
Your strategy relies on images to improve understanding, increase engagement, and inspire consumers to take action. To do that, you have to create timeless, emotional, and dynamic images that create a favorable perception and ultimately drive sales. Your images have to tell a story and convey your value proposition in a visual voice that resonates with your audience. Creativity can be something as simple as the lighting you use to take your photos or as grand as doing a photoshoot on the beach with the whitest sand. Either one can help you get a competitive edge.

## Stats and Facts on the Importance of Images

People form their **first impression** within a mere 50 milliseconds. That's less than half a glance! And making that impression count rests on the quality of your images.

A great example of slick and enticing product photography is **Bulbul Watches**. Their images are utterly simple but uniform and in tune with the brand's minimalistic designs. The occasional context photo adds the appeal of an active and infinitely cool lifestyle every millennial dreams about. Bulbul passes the 50 milliseconds test with flying colors and makes visitors not only stick around but engage with their website too.





Source: *Bulbul*

More than half of online shoppers think that **product photos are more important** than product information, reviews, and ratings. Your images are like windows into your store, and the more representative they are, the more buyers trust you and the momentum they build to wards completing a purchase. Take **Dropbottle**, for example. They sell water bottles, but their photos make their products look distinct and unique. Their photos are engaging and upbeat and in line with the store's mission to make hydrating delicious.



Source: *Dropbottle*

On the other side of the spectrum are sellers that do not put enough effort into their product photos and, in return, enjoy very poor conversion rates.

Think a **poorly lit and unedited eBay photo on a bad background** of an otherwise stylish and expensive pair of sunglasses. You may like the product, but the poor image immediately brings down its perceived value and makes you think of looking for other sellers.



## Product Photography Enhances All Buyer Interactions

Your product images serve as your ambassadors, not only on your product page but across your store and beyond on your on- and offline marketing channels. They help you nurture your buyers along their decision-making journey and, naturally, do a better job at that if they look better.

From grabbing attention with a social media post to an email with casual in-context images, and from physical flyers and banners to product pages that convert, your images do a lot of the legwork.

On social media pages, you can be more creative with your photography but you still have to adhere to high-quality standards. When your customers land on a collection page, you are showcasing your entire product line with

images doing most of the talking. Your photos build trust at each touchpoint and transform that trust into higher conversion and retention rates.

Your **marketing channels**, like blog posts, emails, social media posts, and your product pages, enjoy higher click-through rates when they contain visuals. Imagine what would those places be like without images. If you're flashing back to 1997, you're probably already seeing it. Good photography brings life to all corners of your ecommerce efforts and makes customers want to come back.

Don't forget offline marketing like promotional events and pop-up shops. When you are bringing your ecommerce store into the physical world for an event, you will need flyers and banners that make an impact. While the images you use for digital promotion on small screens have to focus on the product, when you are printing images for your pop-up shop flyers and banners you can use multiple visual techniques for grabbing attention and telling a story.



## Chapter 2

# Photography Basics: Understanding the Terms and Techniques

**Organizing a product photo shoot can be pretty overwhelming the first time around.** But the more you practice, the more things will go smoothly, and soon you will not even think about it but just set up lights and backdrop, shoot, edit, and upload. But before you reach this level of ease, let's take a look at how to conduct a successful shoot.

## Product Photography Basics

If you do your own photo shoots and you are on a budget, you can still get good results by following these guidelines:

### Camera

You don't have to buy a fancy camera with a range of lenses to take good product images. If you have one, great! But if you don't, start with what you have and scale your equipment as your store grows. You can take very professional and polished photos even with some of the latest smartphones.

### Neutral Background

Choosing your background is vital because it will help you enormously in post-processing. You can invest in a white sweep, which is a backdrop that transitions seamlessly from the vertical to the horizontal plane. More simply, a wall that curves down into the floor. The idea here is to avoid the sharp edges of a corner where light bounces around. A brightly lit curve makes it difficult for the camera to capture depth and contours in the background. If that makes sense for your products and you'll be using it often. Or, if you are on a budget, you can buy some craft paper or a poster board and mount it over a table. As long as your **backdrop** is white or light in color, you can get great results.



Source: [Pixc](#)

## Lights

Lighting is essential to really define your images. Use natural light, if possible. Placing a table next to a large window with your sweep attached to the wall usually works well. This gives you a good amount of light with a soft shadow. If the shadow is too sharp, you can place a screen on the inside to soften it.

Avoid direct sunlight, though. Just like strong **backlight**, it's too harsh and can create unsightly dark shadows. If you have to use artificial lights, two identical softbox setups can usually do the job, using one as your **key light** and the other as fill to soften any shadows.

## Stabilization, Focus, and Consistency

Do not underestimate the importance of a tripod to minimize blur and keep the angle consistent across multiple products.



Source: [Pixc](#)

For those of you who are a bit more advanced and if your camera allows, set the lens to a small aperture, aka a high  $f$ /stop, and set a slow shutter speed. The higher the  $f$ /stop setting, the smaller the aperture. This will give you a wide depth of field that brings your entire product into focus to give it a

crisp look. But your camera always needs to be well-fixed on your tripod or you will get blurry images.



aperture f/2.8



aperture f/11

Source: [Pixc](#)

## Post-processing

Retouching is essential for polished professional photos to create a uniform look across your store. Often the lighting or the background are not perfect, and editing can go far in making up for that. Post-processing can be as simple as background removal or as complex as **color correction**, mannequin removal, and shadow additions which together create a more realistic look.

## Understanding Natural vs. Artificial Light

If there is one single defining factor in photography, it is **light**. If you understand the basic physics of light - how it travels, how angles work, and how to manage reflections - you will be able to get great product photos. Let's take a look at the two main sources of light and how to make the best use of them.

### Natural Light

Natural light is the photographer's unicorn. It brings beautiful results, but it is often elusive and inconsistent to harness. When using natural light

indoors, you should aim to shoot when the day is at its brightest so you have the most options to manipulate the light.



Source: [Pinterest](#)

The golden hour, in particular, the time shortly before sunset or after sunrise, can give you good, soft lighting. You should employ **reflectors** and **diffusers** to manipulate natural light for optimum results. Be aware that you also may have to move your subject as the sun moves and lighting changes.

## Studio Light

**Artificial lighting** gives you significantly more control over the process, especially if you are shooting multiple products over several hours, which results in a reassuringly predictable consistency. However, studio lighting can be expensive and comes with a learning curve to master it to full efficiency. There are many different types of artificial lights, and you should be careful when investing in one. If you are just starting out, a set of two softbox lights for about \$50 can usually work well.





Source: [White Room Studio](#)

Where it gets tricky is mastering the angling and defusing techniques that make for great studio photography. **Defusing** is used to soften the light by placing paper over the light source using light tents or softboxes. The other big element that affects your lighting is your backdrop, which for product photography is usually plain white or off-white. When you are shooting in a studio, you have to manipulate all these elements to set your scene for best results.

## Creating Your Studio Setup

### Lighting

The most important part of your setup (and the most difficult to master) is your lighting. If you are using natural lighting, set up your sweep or your shooting table next to a large window. Cover the window with a white sheet if you need to soften the light. Have a reflector handy too. It can be plasterboard or any kind of white screen. Use the screen on the inside to reflect some light back if the shadows are too sharp.



Source: [Pixc](#)

With artificial lights, you ideally need three softboxes (though two will also do). In the scenario with three, they function as your key light, your backlight, and your fill light. Your goal is to manipulate these lights by changing their angle and defusing them so you get evenly distributed soft shadows or no shadows at all. Your fill light is meant to soften the shadows from the key light, and your backlight gives your product depth and dimension.

The same principles apply for the scenario with the two softboxes, only here you have one less light to play with. One is your key light and the other is a backlight and fill at the same time. If you don't have diffusers, you can use thin white craft paper to dull the harshness of the lights and get well-distributed soft shadows.

## Backdrop

The other big part of your photography setup is your backdrop. For large objects like furniture or clothes on a mannequin, you will need a stand-mounted sweep. For smaller products, you can use a shooting table. Your backdrop should by-default be white because white reflects some of the light back and gives you an even, well-lit image. This, in turn, helps you greatly in post-processing, especially when you are removing the background.



Source: [Pixc](#)

## Setting Up the Product

You need a stable shooting surface to place your product. For large products, that will be the ground over your sweep. For small products, you can use a shooting table or any other table you can mount or improvise a sweep on. You can have the table against a wall and tape the sweep on the wall, or you can build an improvised sweep stand by attaching two vertical planks to one side of any table.

Remember, your background should be white. And tweak your lights until you get them evenly distributed with little to show shadows. You can also move or turn your product around to see how shadow work before you fix it in position. Use tape, glue dots, fishing line or other help materials to fix your product in the right position.

## Mastering Photography Angles

**Camera angles** refer to the angle of the camera relative to the product.

### Camera Shots and Angles



Source: [Pinterest](#)

**Eye-Level** - This is the most neutral shot and shows products the way we expect to see them in real life. It's also the most common view we are all used to in most casual photography.

**High Angle** - Here the camera is angled down towards the product and shows the item from above.

**Low Angle** - This angle shows the product from below giving it a dominant, imposing impression.

**Bird's Eye** - This angle shows the product directly from above. It can be a good complementing shot to show a certain feature or add dramatic effect.

**Slanted** - This is when the camera is tilted to one side and the product is at an angle. This can create a dramatic effect or a sense of action, think running shoes.

## What Kind and How Many Photos Should You Take

The rule of thumb here is to give your customers as many relevant perspectives as possible, showcasing your product's features, uses, and intended environment.

### Take Enough Photos to Show the Product From All Angles

Your feature image should be at an eye-level angle with a frontal view of your product. Your supporting images, on average a dozen, depending on the type of product, features, and uses, should give the consumer every relevant perspective.



Source: [Incase](#)

Consumers love 360 views of products because they can see the product better, zoom in for detail and picture themselves wearing or using it.

360 views simply give shoppers more visual information and keep them engaged longer.

To see a demonstration of a 360 view, [click here](#).

## **Use Product Photos to Sell the Quality of the Product**

Take photos of product details that show the quality of your product's finer elements. If you are selling garments with an inspiring print, take a close up photo of it. Zoom into the fabric so the consumer can appreciate its quality. Take pictures while stretching the fabric to show durability.

## **Showcase the Most Important Features**

If you are selling lightweight meditation pillows for travelers, take a photo of someone holding one with just two fingers. Show the pillows folded for packing and unfolded for use. Emphasize the comfort of the pillow by showing them in use by people meditating with them on hard surfaces.

## **Use Product Photos to Answer Questions More Effectively Than Product Descriptions**

Show your product in the context of a complementing object that helps explain it, like a laptop that could go inside a multifunction bag. Display the product being used or in its intended environment. If you are selling VR glasses that link with drone cameras, take a picture of a drone flying over the user while in nature. This kind of imagery packs a lengthy description into just one glance.

## **Your Rainy Day Photography Toolbox**

You can never be over-prepared for a photoshoot. So, let's see what you should always have on you to be ready for any situation.



Source: [Pixc](#)

### **Batteries and Chargers**

Make sure you have spare batteries and chargers for all the electronic equipment you are using. There is nothing worse than realizing your camera is out of juice or your mouse's batteries are drained, and you can't edit your images.

### **Bluetack**

Glue dots' big brother can come in handy if you have to fix bigger objects in place.

### **Clamps**

You can never have enough clamps handy. Use them to hold your backdrop, reflector or your DIY lights.

### **Clothespins**

Clothespins can help you collect some the loose garment around a model or mannequin for a better fit, which makes your product look better.

### **Compressed Gas Dusters**

Sometimes, though, sanitizing wipes can leave an unsightly smear or stain on the product, especially on a patent leather or plastic handbag. An alternative to clearing off excess dust and dirt is to use a compressed gas duster can. It blows away the grime without damaging the product.

## Fishing Wire

Fishing line is vital when you are photographing jewelry or other items that can't stand up on their own. You can hang earrings on it or suspend other small items and then remove the line in post-processing.



Source: [Pixc](#)

## Glue Dots

Glue dots can save the day when you are working with small objects and can be a great invisible alternative to tape. They keep things fixed and are easy to remove.

## Iron

Always keep an iron around and make sure your clothes are wrinkle-free. Your photo shoot may take hours, and you may have to reshoot products you have already piled in the corner. A handy iron can save you a lot of time and frustration. Alternatively, a garment steamer will also do the trick.

## Pencil and Paper

It may seem outdated, but the good old pencil and paper can save you a lot of time when you need jolt down your shoot setup, camera angle, or simply a reminder to buy new batteries.



### **Safety Pins**

Safety pins are the clothing photographer's best friend and can be used to make small adjustments for a better fit and a better-looking product.

### **Sanitizing Wipes**

Your products may have accumulated dust or have a drop of coffee on them, and a sanitizing wipe can do a quick polish.

### **Scissors**

In every photography shoot, you are most likely going to need to do some cutting – be it paper or fishing line – so keep some pocket scissors in your toolbox. A pocket knife will also do the trick and save you some frustration.

### **Tape**

Tape is probably the most important item in your photo shoot rescue box. Keep as many types as possible and, at the very least, have one strong, one clear, and one double-sided kind. Tape can quite literally save the party.

### **Wooden Hangers and Non-Damaging Hooks**

Spare hangers will help you stay organized and keep your clothes in good shape in case you have to reshoot. You can also place your products on them if the need arises. You will also need some hooks to hang those on, of course. Non-damaging hooks let you shoot anywhere without worrying about the walls.

## **Quick Overview of Key Photography Terms**

**Aperture** - The size in the opening of the lens that is measured in f/stops. Small f/stop is a wide opening and large f/stop is a narrow opening. A narrow opening brings a smaller portion of the image into focus while a wide opening brings more of the image into focus.

**Aspect Ratio** - The ratio of the height and width of the image.

**Bokeh** - The orbs created by lights out of focus.

**Burst Mode** - Machine gun mode, or, your camera snapping photos as long as you hold the button.

**Depth of Field** - Defines how much of the image is in focus.

**Digital vs Optical Zoom** - Used to describe your camera zooming capability, digital zoom is achieved through software and optical through your camera hardware. Optical is always better.

**Exposure** - How light or dark an image is.

**Exposure Compensation** - A way to tell your camera that you want to adjust the exposure.

**Focus** - Things that are in focus appear sharp and things out of focus appear blurry.

**Flash Sync** - Flash sync decides when the flash fires. You can adjust that for creative effects.

**Histogram** - A chart that shows how many light and dark pixels are in a photo.

**Hot Shoe** - The slot on top of the camera for adding accessories.

**ISO** - Reflects how sensitive the camera is to light. Low ISO means not very sensitive. High ISO means very sensitive and can be used for taking photos at low light, like at night.

**Long Exposure** - Means the image has been exposed for a long time.

**Manual** - Allows you to set the exposure instead of the camera deciding automatically.

**Metering** - A light meter built into your camera helps you when running your camera in manual mode.

**Noise** - Noise is the grains or flakes that make an image imperfect.

**RAW** - A file type that gives you more control over editing.

**Rule of Thirds** - A composition rule suggesting dividing the image into three parts both vertically and horizontally. You can then use this grid to place your object somewhere other than the center for interesting results.

**Shutter Speed** - How long the shutter stays open. The shutter is the part of the camera that opens and closes to let light in.

**Shutter Release** - The button you press to take a photo.

**Time Lapse-** A video created from several photos of the same thing taken at different times.

**Viewfinder** - The hole you look through to take a photo.

**White Balance** - Cameras cannot automatically adjust to different light sources like our eyes. Setting the white balance will make white objects appear white in the photo, rather than yellowed or grayed.



## Chapter 3

# Basic or Product-Only Photography

Throughout this guide, we're going to focus on two main types of product photography: **product-only** and **in-context**. These two subsections of product photography make up the vast majority of product images you see on websites and social media.

Traditional, clean-cut product-only photos need a white or very light background, streamlined lighting, and a standardized shadow, if any. They are meant to show your product and its features as clearly as possible so your

customers can focus and make a decision. These kinds of photos are best as the feature images on your product page because they do a great job of describing your product at a glance.



Source: [Biko Jewelry](#)

White background shots are the ecommerce gold standard. They promote consistency, give your site a uniform look, and let the viewer focus solely on the product.

And of course, you have your basic product shots that require a relatively simple setup that you can even **improvise if you are starting out**. All you need is a decent camera (even a newer smartphone can do the trick if properly stabilized), a white background, and either natural or artificial light.

Basic product shots are good for most products, but if you are selling clothes and want quality images, you should really use a mannequin. It makes a huge difference and you'll likely feel that in your conversion rate. Model shots are great and make your brand and social media posts stand out, so if you can fit them in your budget and it makes sense for your brand, do it. Generally, though, they are reserved for higher-end clothing brands or high-volume sellers.

Use a mannequin when shooting clothes for best results. Mannequins are far less expensive than models, and you can set them up quickly in your in-house studio. Mannequins also showcase product features and help customers get an idea of how clothes look when worn. Not only are these shoots great to show how clothes look, the photos come out even better if

you remove the mannequin in post-processing. This can be easily done even in bulk on [Pixc](#), a photo editing service that handles your retouching and returns your images within 24 hours.

Corrine Anestopoulos has a few product photography tricks of her own. The founder of Toronto-based jewelry brand Biko works hard to ensure she's emphasizing her brand's "modern nostalgia" quality. Featuring a clean white background, each piece of jewelry pops off the page, but not without some work.

First Anestopoulos explains, is that while she has access to digital SLR cameras, she still relies on her iPhone camera first. The controls are simple and easily adjustable. For that clean white background, she starts with a table-top studio near a window letting in natural light. All of her studio lights are turned off to eliminate the warm yellow incandescent light. Since starting, Anestopoulos has also invested in some affordable lighting kits picked up at a local camera shop. She explained what she was doing and they were able to recommend the right lights for the job.

"The difficult part about shooting jewelry is that you're in every shot" Anestopoulos explains, referring to the tiny reflection capturing on shiny surfaces. That's where the photo editing work comes in. After capturing the piece from various angles, Anestopoulos relies on Adobe Photoshop to make the final touches. First step, "make the whites whiter. I select the background and turn up the brightness." Afterwards, she makes sure there are no glaring self-portraits of herself reflected in the jewelry.

The images are ready for her shop, [ilovebiko.com](#). Anestopoulos points out however that white-background product photography isn't simply about creating clear images for customers, it's also essential for media too. Often times, newspapers, magazines and blogs have their own distinct look and layout. Having white-background product images on hand means Anestopoulos can quickly get her products to writers and influencers who are looking to publish.

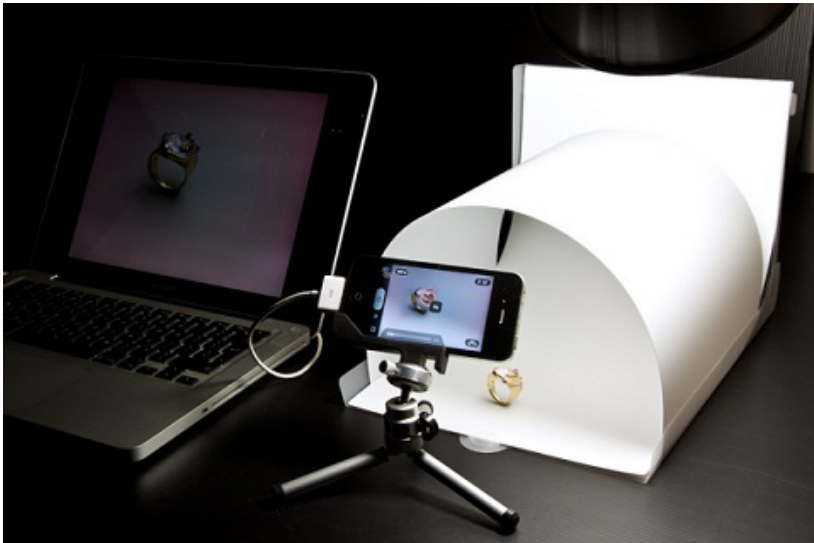
## What You Need

Let's take a look at what kind of equipment you need to take great product-only photos, both if you are on a string-shoe budget and when you can invest a little more in your shoots.

### How to Do It With \$25

#### Smartphone

One thing that you cannot do without when on your product shoot is your camera. Although your camera is necessary it is not the defining factor for the quality of your images. You can take good photos even with a later version of your iPhone or Samsung smartphone. Some smartphones have better cameras than some point-and-shoot, stand-alone cameras. Point is, you don't have to invest in a top of the line camera if your budget doesn't allow it.



Source: [Beadingem](#)

## Stable Surface

For large items, you can use the floor, while for smaller products, a shooting table or any table that you can mount a backdrop or a lightbox on works well.

## Craft Paper

Ideally, if you don't want to invest in lights or lightboxes, all you need is some craft paper you can use as a sweep. As long as you place your shooting table near a window with plenty of natural light you can get good results. You can also use thin sheets of paper over the window to diffuse some of the light if it is too harsh.

## How to Do It With \$500

### Camera

But, if your operation allows it and you do get a DSLR camera, you can make your shoots much more efficient. Manually setting the camera for the shoot can get your image closer to your desired final look and can save you a lot of time in post-processing. While a good camera makes a difference and can save you time, you would rarely need anything more powerful than **Canon EOS 70D** or **Nikon D3200**. Keep in mind that the quality of your images rests mostly on your lighting, background, and post-processing.

### Tripod

For consistent and blur-free images (especially if you photograph multiple products on a frequent basis), you need to stabilize your camera. For the occasional photo shoot, you can get away with mounting your camera on a pile of books or a stool. But if you want to make your life easier, a tripod is a must-have tool. Tripods tend to get better and more stable the more you pay for them, but for product shoots in your in-house studio on a regular day with no earthquakes, almost any brand under \$60 will do the trick. If you are shooting with your smartphone, a mount like **Joby** works well.





Source: [Pixc](#)

## Lightbox

The lightbox aka *light tent* is a great way to get the effect of studio lights when you are shooting small objects. It's essentially a box-shaped tent with translucent sides that serves as a light diffuser, removing sharp shadows and distributing light evenly around your product.



Source: [Foldio3](#)

## Fill Light

**Fill light** (or just fill) is used to reduce shadows and balance the dynamic range of illumination perceived by your camera.

## Lights

Your lights define the quality of your final image and understanding how they work is vital. Natural light is the simplest solution to your light needs and also the least expensive. You can use a range of DIY tricks to manipulate it like covering the window with a white sheet or using a reflecting screen to distribute the shadows more evenly.



Source: [Picx](#)

Artificial lights are your other choice, but they take some budgeting and getting even more familiar with the laws of physics. Ideally, you need three lights: one on each side and one above and slightly behind your product. Place your side lights closer to the front and lower to the ground to avoid sharp shadows near the bottom of your product. Your top light gives your product more dimension and depth. Aim for the best balance between the lights so you get evenly distributed soft shadows.

## Backdrop

White or light-colored background is essential for quality product photography. The white reflects some light back on the product, softening shadows and giving you a well-lit image. For best results, use a **sweep**, which is a backdrop that transitions seamlessly from the vertical to the horizontal plane. More simply, a wall that curves down into the floor. The idea here is to avoid the sharp edges of a corner where light bounces around. A brightly lit curve makes it difficult for the camera to capture depth and contours in the background. If you are shooting furniture or other large products you will need a large sweep with a stand. If you are shooting smaller product, settle for a shooting table with a mounted sweep.

## Mannequin for Clothing Shots

Mannequins can help you show how clothes look when worn, what the product's dimensions are, and the parts of the products that would otherwise not be seen. It's a great way to give your store a professional look and make it easier for customers to visualize themselves wearing your products. You can then remove the mannequin in post-processing, producing a ghost mannequin effect like in the picture below.



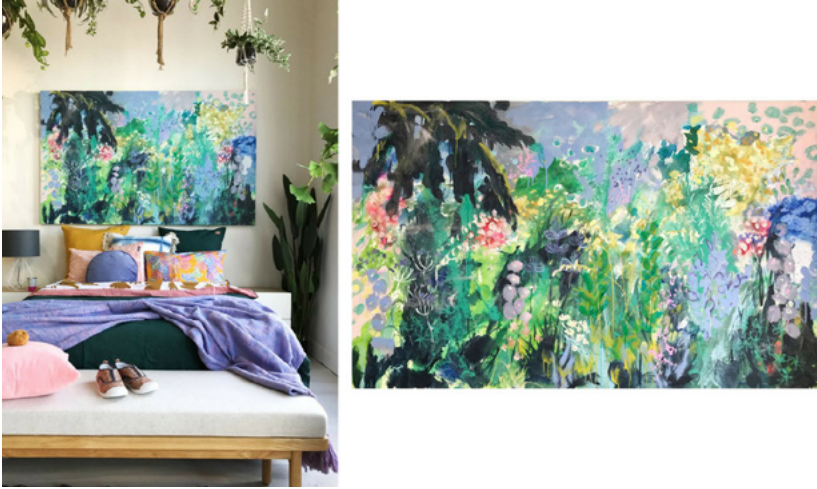
Source: [Pixc](#)



## Chapter 4

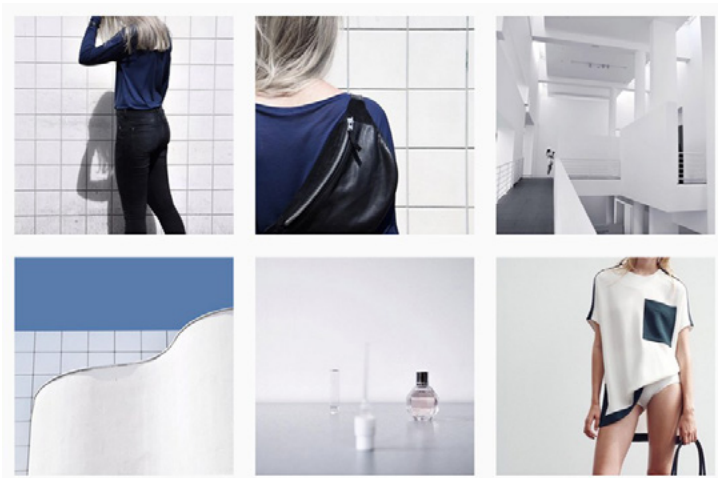
# In-Context and Lifestyle Photography

**In-context images, on the other hand, show your product being used or in the context of other objects or its intended environment.** They are better at telling a story and creating an emotional link with buyers. Not only can they speak directly to your target audience, they can also be more inspiring and can even promote complementary products. While they are not the best choice for your featured image on your product page, they work very well as additional images nurturing the buyer to make a decision.



Source: *Jumbled*

In-context images also work well in blog posts, social media, and other marketing content, where they are good at engaging people and raising awareness about your products and brand. When it comes to luxury brands and high fashion, in-context images take the shape of professional model shots.



Source: *Blue is in Fashion This Year*

Model shots can add value to your brand by creating appeal and promoting a lifestyle that buyers can both relate to and associate with your product.

They can:

- Boost your brand's image
- Show how the product fits
- Demonstrate scale
- Give context and explain features

Model shots can be a powerful tool across your marketing channels to boost conversion and give your brand a human face.

But they can also be expensive and time-consuming because you have to hire a model, a photographer, find locations, and organize the logistics of the shoot. Whether employing model shots is a good idea ultimately depends on the type of product you're selling and your budget.

Now, let's take a look at some of the basic product shooting techniques that every online store can use.

Corrine Anestopoulos has been running the Biko jewelry brand since 2005. When She joined Shopify in 2011, she also decided it was time to invest in her product photography. While her website photography would showcase the product by itself, she would also shoot annual campaigns on a set with models, to elevate her business to the next level.

“It was a huge learning curve” Anestopoulos explains, “I hired a makeup artist, stylist, photographer and creative director.” Over time, Anestopoulos took on the creative direction herself as she began to learn the ropes and understand how to articulate the vision each year. Anestopoulos admits her campaign shoots are a large expense but each year her business continues to grow and strengthen. She credits the annual professional photo shoot as critical aspect of communicate a strong, professional brand, something beyond simply a hobby or side-hustle. Reflecting on her investment, “I wouldn't be in business if I didn't invest in product photography.”

## What You Need

The equipment you need here is the same as for product-only shots. However, if you are shooting outdoors you can often get away without lights setup.

## How to Do It With \$25

### Smartphone

Get your smartphone, ask a friend to sport your products if they are wearable, and find cool urban or nature locations near you. Mind your natural light. For best results plan to shoot early in the morning or late in the afternoon when the sun hits objects under a smaller angle.



Source: [Sid Verma](#)

You can do in-context shoots in your office, in your home, or outdoors. Shoot in the context of a shoe closet, bring in some props like fall leaves to set the

mood or rocks when staging a shoot for hiking boots. When you are on a budget you have to compensate with creativity and innovative approaches.

## How to Do It With \$500

### Camera

Almost any Canon or Nikon camera with a 50mm lens will do a good job. **Plan to spend \$300-400 on a camera.** If you are shooting mostly in nature or out of studio buy extra batteries and memory cards.

### Tripod

There is a world of tripods out there so pick one that is sturdy and compact at the same time. Don't spend more than \$60. If you are shooting mostly in-studio, weight is not an issue but if you are taking your shoots out in nature or around town, keeping your equipment light is a good idea.

### Lights

The same equipment and rules apply to using artificial lighting for in-context photos as in basic product shoots. Keep in mind that here the composition is usually more complex with more objects in the frame and getting the lights right can be slightly trickier. You can get a basic set of lights for around \$50.

### Diffusers

It is always a good idea to have set of diffusers handy for any kind of product shots. They give you another lever to modify lighting and smooth over the hard shadows. You can get a set of small diffusers for about \$20.





## Chapter 5

# Photo Editing Basics

**After you take your photos, it's time to polish them and make them look professional.** Post-processing can mean many things including background removal, color correction, and adding shadows. In most cases, background removal is a must to make your product and store look professional and trustworthy. If you shoot your clothes on a mannequin, removing it is also a good idea. The rest of the constellation of editing features – like color correction, color variation, and shadow manipulation – are optional but can mean the difference between a mediocre and a great looking product page.

## Photo Editing Software

### Photoshop [↗](#)

Photoshop is the industry standard when it comes to photo editing. One of the pioneers of photo retouching, it is still an industry leader with regular updates and countless books written about its features. No matter how much you use it, there is always a trick or two to learn, so here is a tutorial on [how to get the ghost mannequin effect](#) we mentioned in Chapter 3.

### Pixlr [↗](#)

Pixlr is a free, online photo editing tool that has a lot of the same functionality of Photoshop without the cost.

### Canva [↗](#)

Canva is a user-friendly, free online editor that is mainly suited for designing marketing materials.

### Pixc [↗](#)

Pixc is an online photo editing tool designed with ecommerce in mind. It handles all your photo editing needs and is well-suited to retouching images in bulk for online retailers. You can customize each order to your requirements and then save your preferences into a template for super easy future retouching. You submit your images and get them back within 24 hours and can try it out with a [free trial](#).



Source: [Pixc](#)

## Lightroom [➤ www.bitly/he658](http://www.bitly/he658)

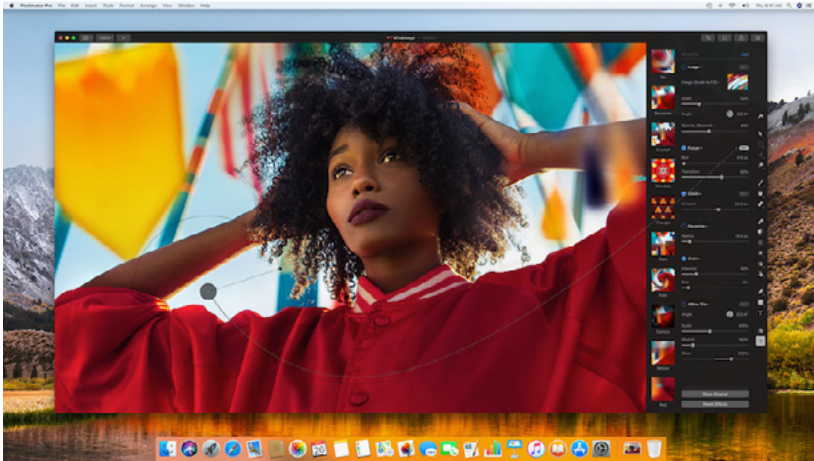
Adobe Lightroom is geared towards the professionals who deal with images in bulk and has a more streamlined interface. It also has cleaner and more focused dashboard than Photoshop and but costs less at only \$9.99 a month.

## GIMP [➤](#)

GIMP nearly matches Photoshop's muscle, and, as an open-source product, is also free. If you are looking for wide range of photo manipulations, then this application is for you. [Learn More](#)

## Pixelmator [➤](#)

This more user-friendly alternative to GIMP and Photoshop features all the basic tools but in a much easier to understand interface. It costs \$29.99 for Mac and \$4.99 for iPad.



Source: [Pixelmator](#)

## Instagram [➤](#)

The widely popular photo-sharing social platform boasts a few simple tools and filters to make your images stand out. In your Instagram settings, there's a switch to "Save Original Photos", make sure it's on. Now, switch your phone to airplane mode so that you have no internet connection. Now you can use

Instagram to edit your photo. When you're done, post the photo like you would any other time. The difference here is that you don't have an internet connection so the post will fail. When you get that fail message, click the X and dismiss it. You can turn your internet connection back on now. You'll find a hi-resolution version of your edited image in your Photos app. And of course, Instagram is also a great place for promoting your ecommerce store. Instagram now even integrates with Shopify so your customers can buy directly from this social media giant.

### **VSCO** [↗](#)

A free photo editing app that lets you edit images directly on your phone, VSCO has a range of presets and filters that are quick and easy to use. VSCO is particularly great for your context product images because it can give them interesting twists - for example, a vintage or warm overtone.

### **Fotor** [↗](#)

This free, easy-to-use app that boosts all of the basic tools, frames, visual effects plus a few advanced features including RAW compatibility and the tilt-shift effect.

### **Snapseed** [↗](#)

Snapseed is one of the most powerful, fully featured mobile apps that is also free. You can use tools like spot repair, adjustment brush, quick transform and lots of cool filters.

### **Aviary Photo Editor** [↗](#)

Aviary is free, super simple, and intuitive to use and boasts all the basic photo editing features you can expect to have on your phone.

### **Filterstorm Neue** [↗](#)

This mobile photo editing app is built for the pros and offers powerful features including watermarks, IPTC tag data, and RAW image processing. It even works with professional tools like curves, levels, and channels.



Source:

## Editing Out the Background

One of the most important aspects of retouching your product photos is removing their backgrounds. Images with a pure white background have become an industry standard across the product pages of successful ecommerce stores and major online marketplaces.

### Why It's So Important

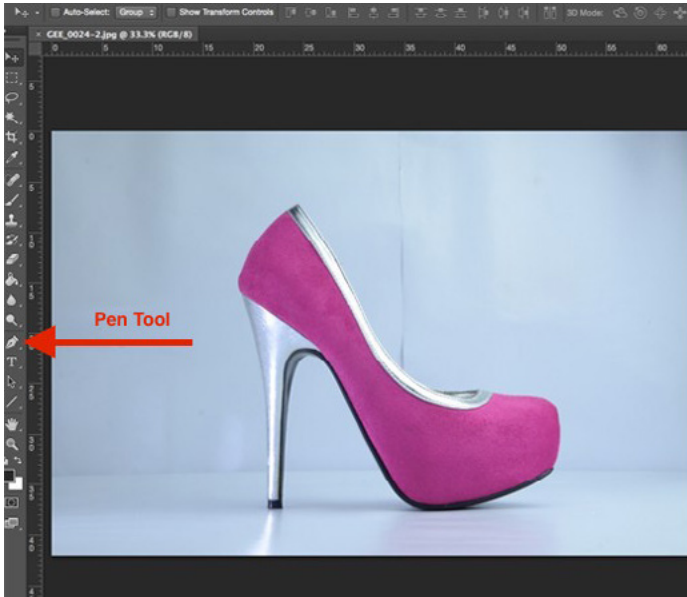
Background removal is important because it creates a uniform look across all the products in your store and gives you a polished and professional appeal. You get beautiful, clutter-free images that let your customers focus on the product and its features. The professional look promotes brand trust and long-term loyalty and ultimately improves your conversion rate.

### How to Remove Backgrounds With the Photoshop Pen Tool

It is easier to remove backgrounds that contrast with the color of your product than similar or multicolor backgrounds. Which is why it is so important to take photos on white background. Let's take a look at the few simple steps on how to remove your image background in Photoshop, one of the most popular places to edit.

## 1. Locate the Pen Tool

Upload your image to Photoshop and locate the **Pen Tool** in the left vertical toolbar in the dashboard. You can also select it with the keyboard shortcut: “P”.



Source: [Pixc](#)

## 2. Select Anchor Points

The Pen Tool works using **anchor points** that when linked together form a **path**. The goal is to select the path only around your product so that you can then delete everything outside of it. You create anchors every time you click on the image, so work your way around your product creating anchor points at each key bend. If you need to adjust an anchor point, you can hold *Alt* and *Command* and drag it to the right position.



Source: [Pixc](#)

### 3. Curve the Path

If you need to curve the path, *press and hold when you click on your last anchor and pull away*. **Bezier handles** will appear that will allow you to curve the line between the last two anchors.

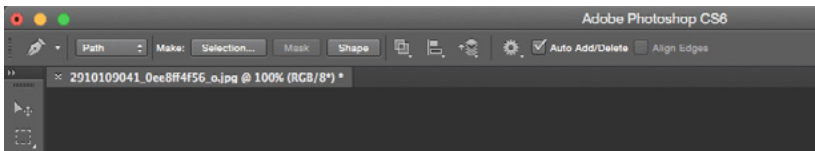


Source: [Pixc](#)

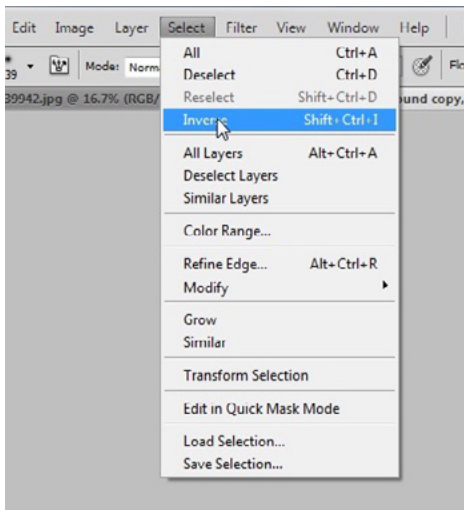
Once you've defined your anchor points, the hard part is over!

#### 4. Delete the Background

To delete the background, select the Pen Tool again. Then click on the *Selection* option in the path palette at the top, and press *OK*. Your product will be now selected. Next, you have to invert your selection. Click on the *Select* menu on top and choose the *Inverse* option. Your selection will be inverted to the background and when you press *Control/Command + X*, your background will be deleted.



Source: [Pixc](#)



Source: [MCP Actions](#)





Source: *Pixc*

Voila!



Source: *Pixc*

## Color Correction

Color correction brings out the true colors of your product. The lighting or the background of a shoot are often imperfect, and color correction can help smooth things over. The white balance of your camera can be off, leaving you with slight tints of yellow or blue over your image. And even if your shoot was perfect, different cameras capture colors differently, and you might want to do slight adjustments to keep the final products consistent.

Luckily, there is more than one Photoshop tool you can use for color correction. For this example, we will use the **Curves** tool.

### 1. Create a New Gray Layer

First, create a new layer. Go to the *Edit* menu and select *Fill*, then fill your layers with 50% gray and set the layer *Blending* mode to *Difference*.

### 2. Create a Threshold Adjustment Layer

Then, create a **Threshold Adjustment Layer** and set the threshold level to 10. Your image will become almost completely white with some black spots. These black spots are the parts of the image that are the closest to 50% gray and you will use them to get a better color correction.

### 3. Drop a Sample Point

Select the **Eyedropper** tool, hold down the *Shift* key, and click to drop a sample point over one of the black spots.

### 4. Create a Curves Adjustment Layer

Delete the 50% gray and Thresholds layers and add a **Curves Adjustment Layer**. Select the middle (gray) **Eyedropper** tool, zoom in on the sample target, and click only once to balance the color via that gray spot.



Source: [Meetupstatic](#)

## Stock Photography Resources

Ecommerce stores never run short of reasons they need good stock photos. Unless you have a professional photographer on staff hired just to shoot them, you need stock photos for website backgrounds or to otherwise make your product photos or content stand out.



Source: [Nicole De Khors](#)

Here is a list of great stock photo resources.

### **Burst** [↗](#)

Powered by Shopify, Burst features thousands of royalty-free photos specifically for ecommerce entrepreneurs. Burst photographers also work to highlight popular products in attractive settings, designed specifically to give ecommerce entrepreneurs a head start with their product and advertising images.

### **Visualhunt** [↗](#)

This site aggregates photos from a range of online sources and makes them easy to find. It also gives you access to public domain images from [Flickr](#), and you can embed directly from the website. Visualhunt is easy to navigate and offers great tools including a good tagging system, extensive meta details, and a color palette for product images.

### **Adobe Stock** [↗](#)

Adobe Stock is a massive database filled with the highest quality stock images you'll find. It's beautifully integrated with Adobe Creative Cloud and lets you try out images before you purchase them. It is paid (unlike most sites on this list), but it does offer a 10-image free trial.

### **Stocksnap.io** [↗](#)

This is a simple-to-use site created by [Snappa](#) that boasts tons of professional images free from any copyright restrictions.

### **Death to the Stock Photo** [↗](#)

This site is a home for artsy stock photos that have an authentic feel. It hosts art collection and photojournalism-type photos that set the site apart from other stock image repositories. Death to the Stock Photo offers both free and premium images.

### **New Old Stock (Vintage)** [↗](#)

Looking for a vintage look? This site sources vintage photos from the around the world that are free from copyright restrictions.

## Stock Up [↗](#)

Stock Up sources images from 33 websites both in the public domain and with **CC0 licenses**. The site is one of the largest stock photo aggregators and offers more than 20,000 images.

## Pexels [↗](#)

Pexels offers high-quality CC0-licensed images and is one of the best stock photo websites. It is easier to navigate than most with good tagging and filtering.

## Unsplash [↗](#)

Unsplash has grown exceedingly popular due its clutter-free design and super easy navigation. It hosts a wide range of stock images in well-curated categories.

## Pixabay [↗](#)

Pixabay offers more than a million free stock images, so look no further for your background and creative needs.

## StockPhotos.io [↗](#)

Here you can find countless copyright-free images conveniently grouped in very detailed categories.

And if these are not enough, [here is our full list of 40 stock photo sites](#) where you can get free CC0-licensed photos.



## Chapter 6

# Saving Your Images

**When it comes to choosing file types and dimensions for your images, keep in mind quality, page load times, zooming capability, and marketplace requirements, especially if you are selling on multiple platforms. Let's take a look at the optimum dimensions for photos and how to choose your file type while keeping mobile in mind for improved user experience.**

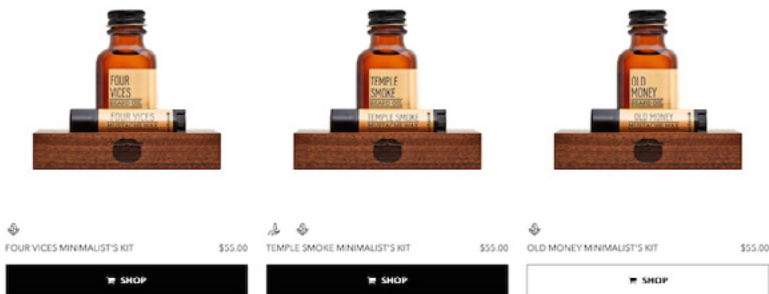
## Choosing the Right Dimensions

It's vital to strike a balance between images that are large enough so users can zoom in and those that are an optimum size so they don't take up too much space and slow down your page load times. On Shopify, you can [upload images](#) of up to 4472 x 4472 pixels with a file size of up to 20 MB.

But the platform typically recommends using 2048 x 2048 pixels for square product photos. These are high resolution images that give your store a professional and well-rounded look with great zoom capabilities. Keep in mind that for zoom functionality to work your images have to be more than 800 x 800 pixels.

Similarly, [Amazon](#) and [Etsy](#), have a 1000 x 1000 pixels image requirement to enable zooming.

To maintain a uniform look along your product line and on your collection pages, you should keep the width and height aspect ratio of all your feature images the same, say square. Your feature image is the first image of a product that will appear across your store – on your home page, cart page, checkout page, and a variety of collection pages. Keep all your thumbnails, too, the same size and shape to convey a polished store look. Keep in mind, many of your customers will be browsing on mobile too and square images are easier to reposition for smaller screens.



Source: [Beardbrand](#)

## Choosing the Right Format

Let's take a look at the file formats most widely used in product photography and what they each bring to the table. They are listed here by how commonly they are used in product photography.

## 1. JPG

JPG is the most common digital image file format out there. It is widely supported and boasts a small file size with a good color range. Its **compression** allows you to strike a balance between file size and image quality. Shopify recommends JPG, in particular, because it can deliver images with a relatively small size and good quality, which works well for product photos.

## 2. PNG

PNG was created to improve the GIF format by removing its 256 color limitation. It's widely accepted, lossless (reduces file size without reducing quality) and supports transparency (say for transparent backgrounds). The downsides are that PNG file sizes can be large because of the lossless compression and the format is not as universally compatible as JPG.

## 3. GIF

GIF offers small file size by compressing and reducing images to 256 colors. Although it has been widely replaced by PNG, it is still used for animation as it's the only format that both supports it and is universally recognized by browsers.

## 4. TIFF

TIFF is a lossless compression format that is widely supported by a range of editing and web applications. It offers high quality resolution, and multiple images and pages can be conveniently saved in a single file. However, the file size tends to be large.

## 5. BMP

BMP is commonly used in the Windows ecosystem. It supports data compression, **alpha channels** (used in Photoshop to store additional information that you can use to manipulate parts of the image, like add transparent backgrounds), and almost universal compatibility. Uncompressed, it offers perfect images but file sizes can be very large as well.

Overall, JPG is certainly the most convenient when it comes to combining smaller size with decent quality. While PNG offers a higher quality lossless



compression, it does so at the heavy cost of a larger file size. GIF is useful if you are offering 360 degree shots and want lightweight files. BMP and TIFF, by comparison, can offer great quality, but file sizes are usually rather heavy and impractical.



Source: [Jaelynn Castillo](#)

## Sizing Images for Mobile

Shopify automatically resizes your images to fit smaller screens, but certain images can sometimes require manual editing. Keep in mind that desktop and mobile screens are not only different size but have opposite orientation. And while Shopify tries to accommodate that with gentle **cropping**, it will be best if your images are square and your product is vertically and horizontally centered.

Also, images with **overly large resolutions**, of say Shopify's maximum of 4000 x 4000 pixels, can come out blurry when resized for mobile. So reducing your image to a more manageable size and shape that keeps mobile in mind can help your store look better across all devices. Keep in mind that **large files also slow down your site's loading time**. And in ecommerce, and especially in mobile, every second matters, so optimizing your images should be a priority.

So, while lossless compression can give you the highest quality image, it often creates large files that take forever to upload (especially in bulk), and can slow down your page loading times, causing visitors to abandon your store. This is especially true on mobile where internet speeds can be slower and waiting for an image to finally appear frustrates shoppers.

While Shopify's responsive designs and algorithms are good at resizing and displaying your images across devices, giving them a hand with thoughtful file sizes can mean an even smoother shopping experience.



## Chapter 7

# Creating Your Photography Style Guide

**Keep your store looking sharp and professional by standardizing your image dimension, style, and product positioning.** A consistent look makes your ecommerce operation look trustworthy and boosts customer loyalty, which in turn maximizes consumer engagement and lifetime value.

A photography template also helps you save a lot of time. When you have the process down to every detail, you don't have to think about each step. Having your template documented (as opposed to just in your head) helps

you delegate to other team members as you grow your operation, leaving you to more important matters. It is vital to add structure to every process related to your online store in order to scale successfully and minimize errors.

### Moodstates



#### Morning

Morning is full of potential, thoughtful connection and quiet repose.

**light:** cool natural  
**color:** neutral, but not flat  
**composition:** depth of field



#### Afternoon

The warm embrace of the sun fuels moments of sharing as well as delightful scenes of whimsy and fun.

**light:** warm natural  
**color:** dynamic in color  
**composition:** active



#### Evening

Into the mystery of the night, anything is possible; the cool electric frisk propel you into discovery.

**light:** bright, artificial  
**color:** vibrant and rich  
**composition:** tight crops

Source: [Slideshare](#)

Go a step further beyond creating a template and teach your team basic photography techniques, including lighting, background, and the importance of a tripod. Share editing tips and online tools to remove backgrounds or bulk resize your product photos. Record every aspect of your process including angles, distances, and lights. This streamlined approach along with an optimized image template will help you automate your photo production and save you a lot of time while getting great images.

## How a Style Guide Enforces Branding

A style guide with templates and detailed instruction for every aspect of both a photo shoot and post processing is a key layer in your branding. Images are vital visual elements of your branding strategy because they stand out and take up a lot of the space on your site and social media. That is why top brands are exceedingly conscious about their photos color uniformity and composition, creating an instantly recognizable brand images. Think Coca-Cola and the color red.

In ecommerce, it is even more important to enhance your branding with images because you are mostly communicating to your customers using digital means. And those channels – including website, social media, and

email – are proven to work better when enriched with images. So the best way to support those key channels and improve their efficiency is by creating a photography style guide that keeps your branding consistent. Consider streamlining the following aspects of your image:

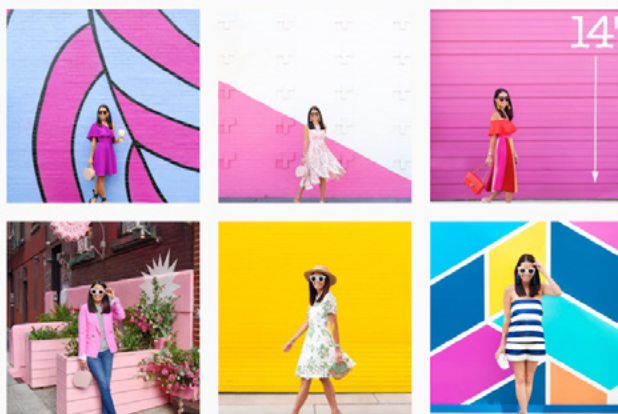
## Key Product Photography Preferences

### Color Palette

Your color palette is one of the most recognizable aspects of your brand identity. And when you extend it to your photos, often viewers will recognize your brand even if your product is not in the image. Your palette should consist of complementing colors and similar hues. For example, if you use a light, pastel color palette you should aim to reflect that consistently in your images, not jump around to using heavy, muted tones instead.

### Saturation

Your color saturation can dictate the emotions your brand wants to evoke. More saturated “screaming” colors can evoke passion and are more suited for a younger audience, while a more muted color palette is more thoughtful for mature audiences.



Source: [RClayton](#)

## Focal Length

This is a more technical component, but it is still important because it affects composition and how much of your image is in focus. Your focal length determines whether you have your images clear with everything in focus or some things out of focus, such as a blurry background.

Shadows are another stylistic choice that you should keep uniform depending on the purpose of the images. Product page photos are usually clean-cut with no shadows while social media images can be more realistic and offer more character if you include shadows.



Source: [Pixc](#)

## Composition

The composition is a major element defined by your brand identity. Your brand can offer a product-focused, minimalistic look with a lot of negative space. Or you can choose a more crowded approach where your images feature multiple products and speak in more lively voice. Your product positioning within the image is also at play here.

## Location and Context

You want your customers to associate your product with a certain lifestyle or emotion, and you can create that link with your in-context images.

## Mix of Photos

Your overall photography strategy is usually a combination of styles, including clean-cut feature images, close-ups, and lifestyle shots. How much you use of each also defines your brand.

## Content

The content of your images should be in line with your overall content and marketing strategy and offer resonating photos of models from the right age groups and subcultures you are targeting.



Source: [Topshop](#)

## Consistency

It is vital to use the same filters, shadows, and retouching techniques in post-processing for a consistent style. Consistent retouching to vintage, glossy, or analog look adds yet another layer to your branding.

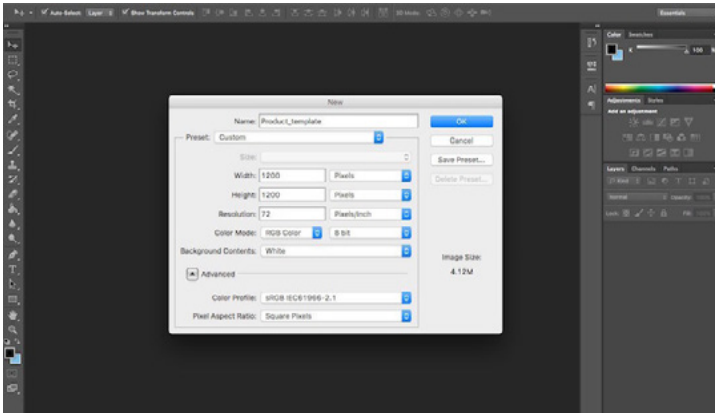
## Your Technical Style Guide

Not only does your photography style guide involve similar angles, composition and content, but should also be incorporate more technical post-production work. Introducing photo editing consistency can be tricky,

which is why a template is important. Let's see how to create a **product image template in Photoshop**.

## 1. Create Your File

Go into Photoshop and create a file with the desired aspect ratio. Adjust the finer details, including color mode to **RGB 8-bit**, set the resolution to at least 72 pixels/inch, and set the background to white or transparent.

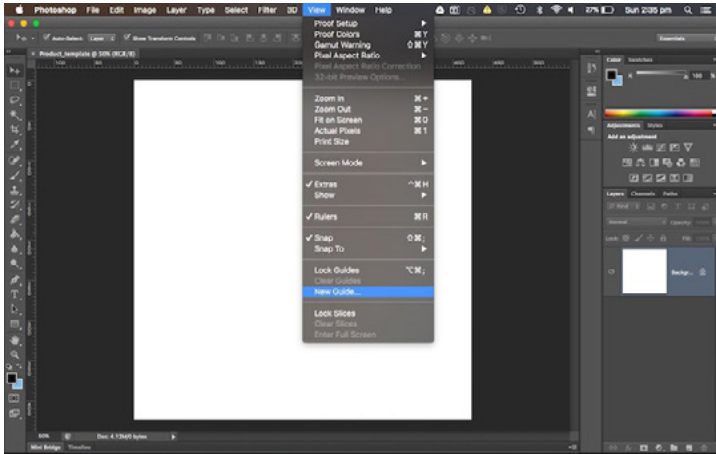


Source: [A Better Lemonade Stand](#)

## 2. Create a Guide

From the top menu, click on *View* and then select *New Guide*.

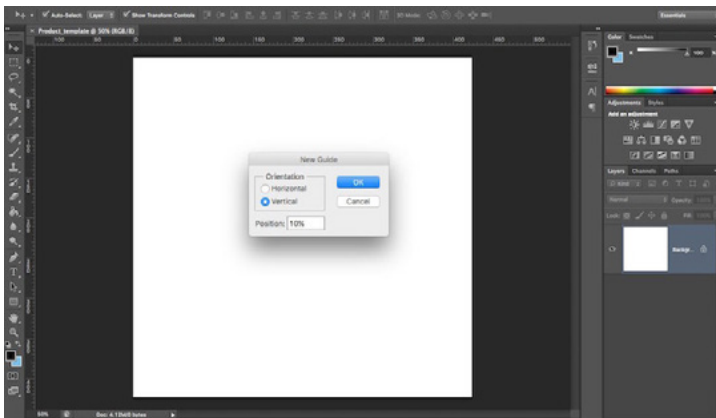




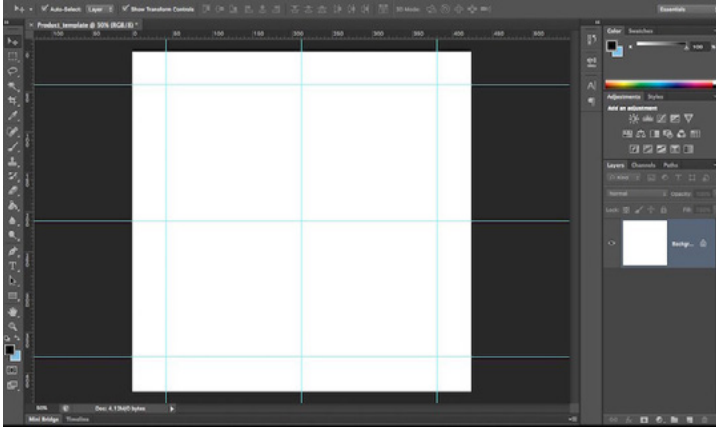
Source: [A Better Lemonade Stand](#)

### 3. Create Vertical and Horizontal Guidelines

Create three types of vertical and horizontal guides, with positions at 10%, 90%, and 50%. This will give you a grid of three vertical and horizontal lines dividing your working area. Depending on your product size and shape, you can adjust the grid to meet your needs.



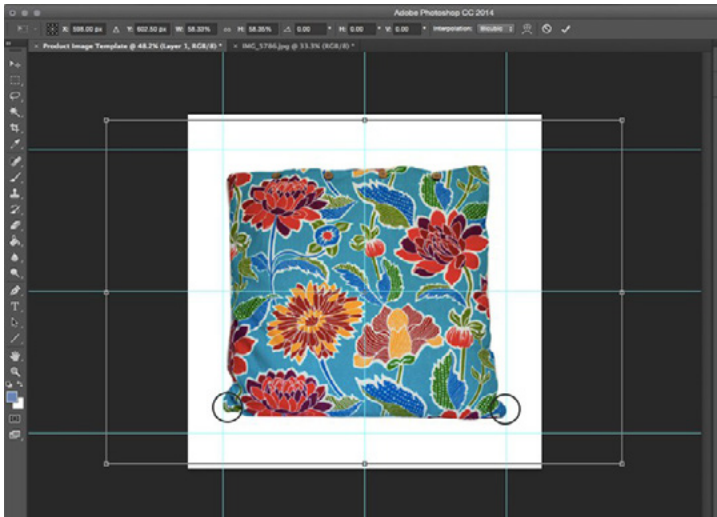
Source: [A Better Lemonade Stand](#)



Source: [A Better Lemonade Stand](#)

#### 4. Center Your Product

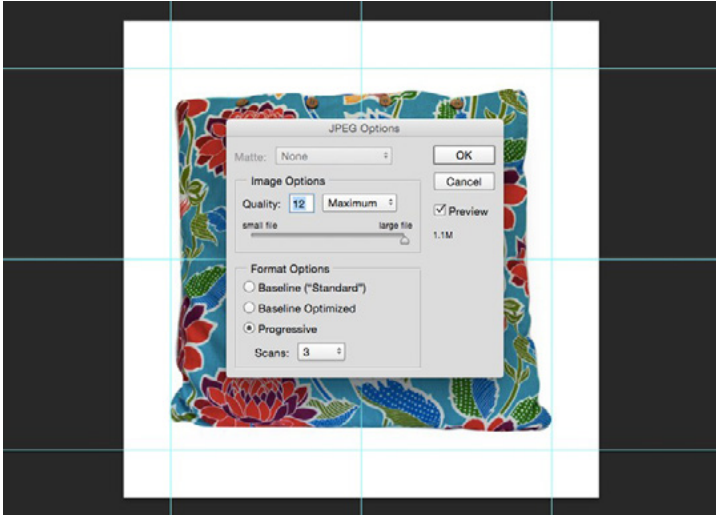
Now, place your edited image over the template and use the guides to properly center your product both vertically and horizontally. The template will give you consistent scale so your products images have a uniform look.



Source: [Pixc](#)

## 5. Save Your File as a Template

Save your template file as a Photoshop document (.PSD) and run all your edited images through the guides to ensure consistent positioning before you upload them to your store.



Source: [Pixc](#)

## Product Photography Brief

To harness the power of good photos you have to understand how they are made. Do a few product shoots yourself, even with your smartphone, to start understanding lights, backgrounds, and retouching. Come up with creative ways of how to use in-context photos and test their effectiveness on social media. Learn which equipment - cameras, tripods, and **lightboxes** - has easy tricks that make you look like a pro.

Get your hands dirty, and create your in-house studio. Compare **natural lighting** with **artificial lighting** setups. Find out what retouching options you have, how to quickly edit images in bulk and how to have a uniform look across your store. Take as many photos as possible, save them and revisit them to compare your progress. Save your images with **SEO-optimized** names to give your site a nudge in the right direction.

Once you have the process down, create a template to keep your images consistent and save time. That way you can delegate this task to anyone from your team as you grow and your inventory increases and diversifies. Always think ahead of the curve about how to improve your process so you stand out from the competition. Get into product groups - shoes, jewelry, furniture - and learn the specifics of photographing them. This may include appropriate backgrounds, mannequins, and setups that bring the best out of every kind of product.



## Chapter 8

# Optimizing Your Images for SEO and Conversions

**If you make your store respond even just 1% faster, you will make your customers happier and boost your conversion rate.** And for a high volume store, especially, improving loading times by just a hair can mean thousands of dollars of otherwise lost revenue. While you can optimize the performance of just about every aspect of your site, one of your heaviest hitters are your images. Optimizing your images is not only a good idea,

compared to other elements on your site, it gives you the most bang for your buck.

One of the reasons Shopify favors JPG files is because their compression allows for just the right balance between quality and size. And that balance allows you to speed up your site, boost conversion, and increase consumer loyalty. According to this [test from Google](#), every 2 second delay can drop your engagement and affect your revenue by over 4%.

Images are on just about every page of your store, and if you don't cut the extra pixels out, they can slow down navigation and make people leave your site. So if you want to offer your customers a great experience and boost consumer lifetime value, put the extra work in optimizing your images. Let's take look at a few simple techniques that can speed up your store.

## Minifying

**Minifying** means to use a compression algorithm or an app like [Minifier](#) to reduce the size of an image by sacrificing a minimum of the quality. Usually, the change is hardly visible with the naked eye, and the benefits from a speedier site are many, including better conversion rates, engagement, and improved consumer trust. Lucky for you, Shopify does this automatically for its merchants, so you only have to worry about it if your store is hosted on another platform.



Source: [Minifier](#)

## Naming Your Images Correctly

Your images can be a great source of organic traffic to your store if you invest the time to name them descriptively. Describe what is in the photo in the most informative and clear way you can. Think keywords. The auto generated letter-and-number names from your camera do not serve any SEO purpose. Instead, use the image name to tell Google what's in it and what your page is about so you can boost your ranking. Also, use hyphens to separate words in the file name instead of spaces to improve its readability by algorithms.

## Edit the Image Alt Text in the Shopify Dashboard

The **alt text** of your image is there primarily for accessibility purposes. Screen readers read this text aloud to your users who have trouble navigating the web in a conventional way, such as those with visual impairments. Moreover, if for whatever reason your image cannot be loaded, the alt text will be displayed instead.

But the alt text also has a huge role in your page's SEO. Google uses it to understand what the image contains. Knowing this, offer information in your alt text that will attract people searching for key terms related to your product. Providing more context to your image in the form of product descriptions further helps search engines understand what is on the page and rank it accordingly. Unlike in the product title, there is no need to use hyphens in alt text.

As an example, let's say you run a company like [Dinosaurs Designs](#) and are selling the plates in the image below, which you have called the "Foliage Homewares" plates:



Source: [Dinosaur Designs](#)

The default image title is “calum-lewis-387612”. While this is useful in identifying the photographer, it will not help you with SEO. Another title idea could be “dinosaur-designs-foilage-homeware-leaf-sculptures-and-dishes”. The alt text for the image might read, “Blue and white Foliage Homeware plates with brown and brick colored Leaf Sculptures and Dishes”.

Notice how we tried to incorporate the main keyword “Foliage Homeware” in both the title and alt text and included extra keywords (like the name of our company) and descriptive text (like leaf sculptures and dishes) wherever possible.

## A/B Test Your Images

Your images can always be better, nudging your customers ever so slightly more persuasively to make a purchase. Unilever have [inspired the whole of ecommerce](#) with their mobile-ready hero images that have improved how they convey product information, like variant and size, by pulling them from the label on a standalone vertical bar. Essentially, they improved



image composition and clarity, which in turn improved the user experience, especially on mobile.



Mobile ready hero image (Cambridge Standard)



Conventional packshot

Source: [Unilever](#)

What you can learn from their extensive testing is that you can do the same. You don't have to make radical changes across your store but rather take baby steps to optimizing each little step. Like increase the space your product takes up in the frame, tweak the shot angle, or have your discounted items with a pink background. The best way is to tweak, observe, and then tweak some more. You can use tools like [Google Optimize](#) or [Optimizely](#) to evaluate your data after each change and make better performance decisions from there.



## Chapter 9

# Social Media

**On social media, you have a lot more freedom with the creativity and composition of your image.** But this doesn't mean you can get sloppy. Your quality standards should stay the same or get even better. You don't have to stick to white backgrounds and perfectly centered products, but rather show your products in their intended environment, demonstrate how to use them, or share some photos that promote a lifestyle you want your customers to associate with.

Get creative, but keep quality in mind and adhere to the principles of post-processing, including color correction and cropping. Nothing ruins a brand image more than an out of focus, poorly lit lifestyle photo with dulled colors. Social media is about personality. It's more casual, but you should still use all your muscle to stand out and promote your brand.

## Why Product Photography Needs to be Tailored to Each Platform

The **social media world is growing ever more complex**, with more people populating the big platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, and tech-savvy groups like millennials splitting their social circle into different channels. Your goal is to find the right mix of channels that best corresponds to your target audience so you can optimize your aim and budget. It's also to learn how to segment within platforms using groups, hashtags, or the targeting functionality of paid ads.

Focus is key so that you can execute quality campaigns and reach the hearts of your customers instead of just scratching the surface of a broad, uninterested audience. For example, Facebook is maturing and late adopters of older generations are becoming regular users while millennials are still going strong. Some millennials have migrated to Snapchat, where you will also find younger consumers, teenagers in particular. Your product will ultimately define which consumer group you are after and from there, you can tailor your visual content to grab their attention.

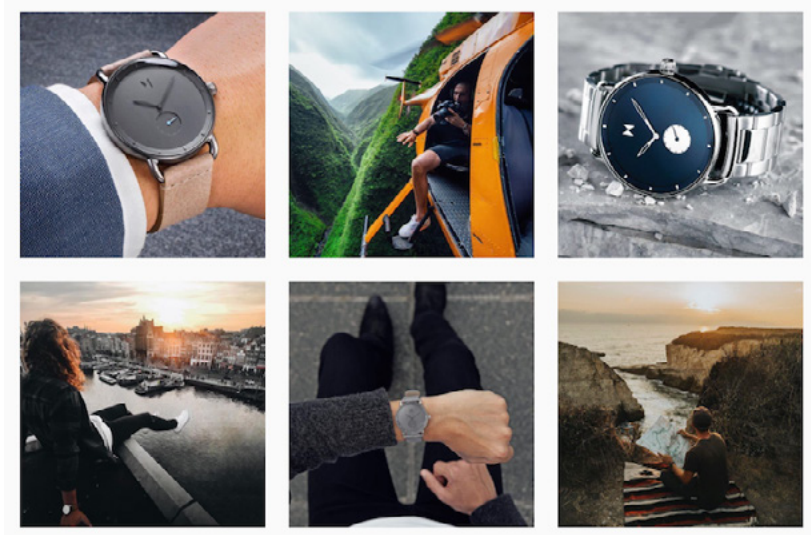
It's vital to have a thought-through strategy for each channel just like you have for your product pages. Keep your branding visual elements uniform, but adjust their intensity and context according to the platform and audience. On Facebook, you have to keep in mind a more mature audience while on Snapchat, you can get away with slightly more “screaming” images.

Employ **A/B testing** to find what images work best so you don't under- or over-do it. You can use a tool like **Optimizely** to test just about anything. Once you settle on a strategy for each platform, outline it with detailed guidelines in your Photography Template so you can easily delegate as you grow. You are also ensuring consistency and optimized workflow, which can save you a lot of time.

Create guidelines about color, composition, and the lifestyle settings for your images. Test and pinpoint the optimum frequency and timing for each platform. Choose the right format including still images, 360-degree shots, or video. Outline your filters or editing specifications so your images stand as a uniform whole. Let's take a look at some individual platforms and what works best for them.

## Instagram

Instagram has come a long way from a niche hipster mobile app to one of the most popular social media sites in the world. It is the most image-focused platform out there, and since its acquisition by Facebook in 2012, it has introduced a range of commercial features. Most recently, it has introduced a Buying functionality and a **powerful integration with Shopify stores**. So know that brands can not only use it to raise awareness, but can also have a more direct approach to increase sales directly from the app.



Source: [MVMT Watches](#)

### Tell a Story

Instagram allows you to use your images to tell stories using a series of photos. You can make your brand feel more human and really engage your audience with more casual and uncut images.

### Style Over Quality

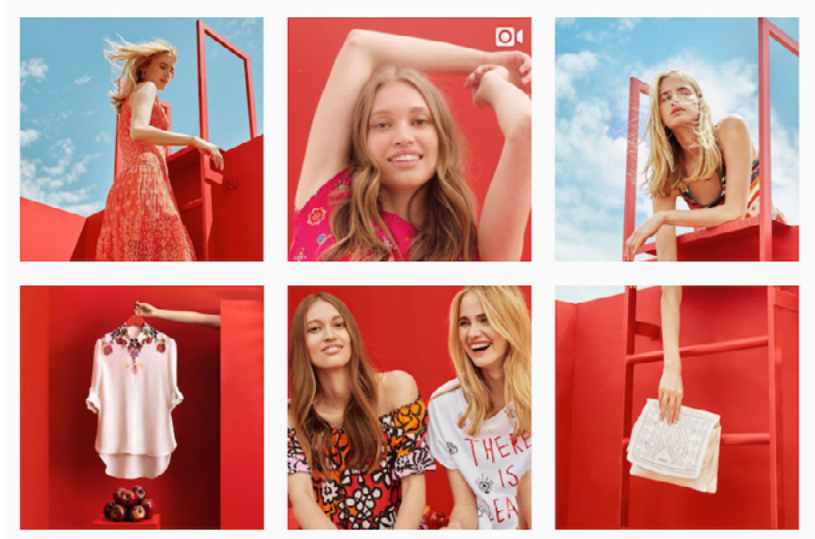
Instagram loves fashion and lifestyle pictures that don't necessarily have to be highly art directed. As long as you show your brand's true personality in a unbiased and eye-catching way, your images will do well on the platform.

## Consistency

You can certainly sacrifice some quality for character here, depending on your product and brand image, but try to keep it generally consistent. Use filters, camera angles, colors and lifestyle images that are in line with your brand's core image for maximum impact.

## Minimalism

Instagram loves simplicity. Simple, color-saturated images that evoke a feeling work better than complicated compositions. Minimalist still life, where your product is not the center of attention but casually dropped in, work well.



Source: [Desigual](#)

## Collages

Use close-ups and fragments of the whole picture to puzzle together collages to engage your audience. The Instagram crowd loves those as well as colors, bright and untamed, that run through your images telling a story of their own. Use the **Rule of Thirds**, a photography technique that splits the images

into nine segments, for collages or individual images to produce interesting and engaging results.

Instagram is powerful and is about to get even more so as consumers grow comfortable with buying directly from the site. So keep your photos sharp and tell your story.

## Facebook

Facebook is where millennials and slightly older generations live, and the social media giant is constantly evolving to accommodate their visual and video needs. This includes helping brands to reach them more effectively with visual content – Facebook retargeting is one of the most powerful tools for marketers out there.

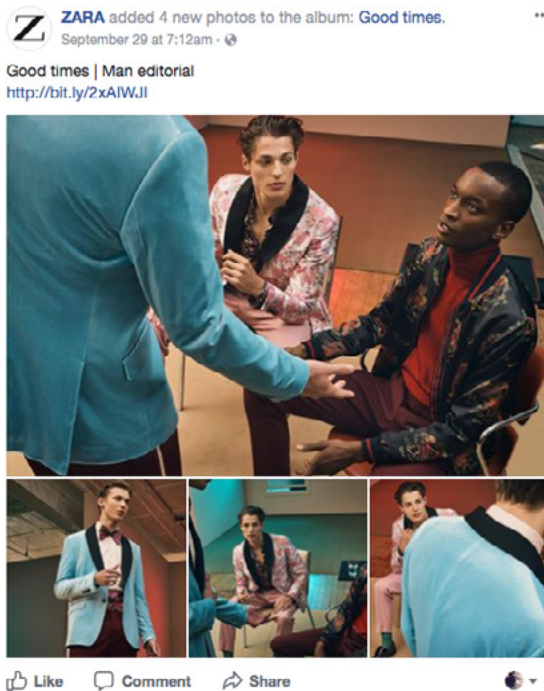
### Facebook Retargeting

**Retargeting** (or **remarketing**) is using the data your store generates about your customers to better advertise to them somewhere else, in this case, on Facebook. Say, a customer visits your store and sees a pair of glasses they like. They want to buy them but their phone rings, and they get distracted and close the page. A few days later they see a photo of the same glasses in their feed with a Buy button. That's retargeting.

This type of highly individualized approach gives wings to your visual content. You can use this technique to remind, upsell, and cross-sell any of your products. You can employ traditional static ads with a single engaging image or dynamic ads with a carousel of product images generated based on the user's engagement with your store. It's a powerful marketing and conversion tool. Now, let's take a look at what kind of images Facebook likes.

### Impact is Key

There is a lot of noise on Facebook, and people tend to scroll through their feeds quite speedily, so keep your images simple and impactful. You can keep them casual, but some stylizing can add consistency and help your brand be recognized quicker.



Source: [Zara](#)

## Try New Formats

The social network often introduces new features and types of visual content, like the Carousel ads that accommodate 360-degree photography. New formats can be more engaging and give your brand a boost so keep an eye out and experiment.

## Stay Ahead of Trends

Facebook has over 2 billion users and is constantly evolving with image styles, like GIFs, **Boomerangs**, **Cinemagraphs**, and videos coming in and out of fashion. Stay ahead of the curve and adjust your visual content accordingly.

## Keep Your Images Sharp

Keep in mind that your images have to look good both on desktop and mobile so size them accordingly.

## Lifestyle Photography

Facebook allows you to highlight your products in lifestyle images, show how much they cost, and lead the viewer to your store. This is a great way to engage users and help them associate your product with events and places.

## Snapchat

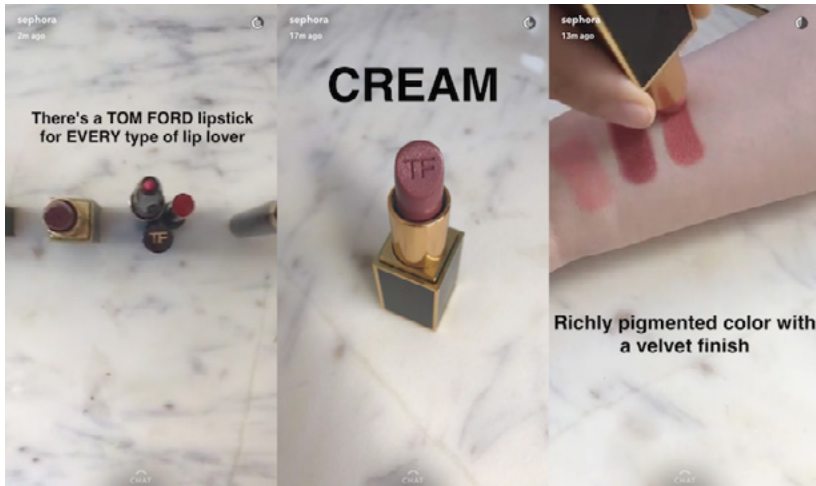
Snapchat is the social network where teens hang out, and many leading brands have gone to meet them there with lively content. The key here is to keep it raw and tell visual stories that resonate. Young people prefer more screaming, bright, and crowded photos packed with text, emojis, and symbols.

Snapchat is the most casual of all social media platforms, and corporate stiffness does not fare well with its users. Brief and catchy content is the key to unlocking the power of this social network. You can still use popular social media approaches like influencers and storytelling, but you have to make them snappier.

You can create **sponsored lenses** on Snapchat that a user can apply to their snaps and share with their network. Some of the most popular lenses have included Taco Bell's Cinco de Mayo's filter that turned a user's head into a giant taco and Gatorade's Super Bowl release of the Gatorade shower lens that went viral.

And with more than 173 million daily users, Snapchat has passed its days as a underdog and is being creatively adopted as a key marketing channel to reach younger generations by leading brands.





Source: [AdEspresso](#)

## Pinterest

Pinterest caters to a more mature audience and, for the most part, to stand out you have to put some work into quality images and informative content that offers the user value or insight into your brand. Well-polished images of mostly lifestyle and in-context products work well with some clean-cut photos of popular items mixed in.

Pinterest **demands a more polished look** because it is populated by a middle-age, largely female crowd with considerable disposable income. Users often search for products or follow brands on the social network in order to gather information prior to making a purchase. That makes Pinterest very effective in generating traffic to brand websites with 5% of social media referral traffic.

If you want your Pins to stand out and look their best, you have to invest some time in sizing them correctly. Pins are **vertically oriented** similar to smartphone screens, so styling your photos to be most appealing in that format is key for maximizing their impact. The Pinterest users love simple easy to digest content that is inspiring and in an infographic-type format so aim to offer powerful images.

## Manage Social Media Posts and Ads With Kit

When it comes to multi-channel social media campaigns with different sets of images, segmenting, and scheduling, juggling them can take a massive chunk of your time. That is where **Kit** comes in, Shopify's free intuitive proactive virtual employee. With a few simple text messages, Kit will build and publish posts and ads to social media, giving you more time to do other important work for your business. Shopify has recently released **Ping**, the best place to work with Kit, which offers previews and editing of your ads right in your conversation.

Within Ping, Kit will learn and remember your preferences to be more intuitive with every interaction. Kit stays on top of shopping trends and gives you insight into its recommendations for timely ads, giving you context and make better-targeted decisions in your overall marketing strategy.



## Chapter 10

# Product Specific Photography Tips

**Once you get the basics of photography down, you can take your images to the next level by understanding key details about each product group.** Dig deeper to learn techniques that best showcase key features, highlight qualities, and even answer questions with your images. Your customers will appreciate the finer details, and your conversion and retention rates will benefit. Let's take a look at key product categories and what you need to know to make them look awesome in pictures.

## Fashion

The average ecommerce fashion shoot does not involve (or need) world class models and expensive locations. With small budgets, short deadlines, and piles of garments to shoot, ecommerce fashion gurus are often forced to be creative and improvise. Even then, however, fashion shoots, even if you shoot them yourself, are probably the most cost- and labor-intensive parts of promoting a product. You still have to hire models, rent a studio or scout for locations, and organize the logistics. The key is to stay organized, get your lighting right, and perform stellar post-processing.

Make a plan and decide on a style. Do you want your fashion shot in a clean-cut and traditional way, or do you want them kooky and unique? Look for inspiration in famous photographers or brands you admire. Get creative with location. Try to use natural lighting in gritty urban backgrounds or nature features.



Source: [Burst](#)

Whatever you choose, don't forget that the product still has to take center stage. Don't lose sight of your concept, explore different angles instead, and take a few backstage photos for your social media channels.

## Jewelry

Shooting **jewelry can be intimidating for beginners** because the items are so small, shiny, and difficult to fix in place. But keep in mind that the setup is much less labor-intensive than larger items, and once you get it right, it gets even easier. Unless you are a pro, start by photographing your jewelry using natural light. Flashes and studio lights can reflect from shiny surfaces and be very difficult to get right. Set up your shooting table near a large window and use a sheet of white paper to soften the light if it is too harsh.



Source: [Pixc](#)

Shoot on white background to avoid altering the color of the piece. Use a mannequin bust to prop your necklaces, or make one from a piece of cardboard. You can also use glue dots to fix small items like rings in place and fishing line to hang earrings and the like. Set your camera to a small aperture to get the entire product in focus. And don't forget to remove the background and any props and wires you may have used in post-processing.



Source: [Pixc](#)

## Shoes

Shoes come in all sizes and shapes, **so shooting them can be fun** because you can be creative and let your imagination run the show. Shoe photos can benefit greatly from a model, so if you have choice, snap a few shots in context so you give your store more appeal. Footwear is about details, so shoot from as many angles as possible and if you can, take some 360-degree shots. Offer detailed shots of the leather or the fabric of the shoelaces; customers will appreciate those.



**MIU MIU**  
Buckled patent-leather pumps  
\$750



**OFF-WHITE**  
For Walking printed leather  
ankle boots  
\$1,190  
RUNWAY



**AQUAZZURA**  
Quant leopard-print calf hair  
ankle boots  
\$1,150



Source: [Net-a-Porter](#)

For product page shots, use a white background and the same setup for all models to maintain uniformity. Keep the cropping consistent to make your store look neat and tidy and keep customers focused on the product. And don't forget to remove the background! Use the right lighting to avoid shadows. Although they can be removed in retouching, it is much easier if your shots are clean. Take a few context shots to create lifestyle associations for your customers to remember.

## Cosmetics

Cosmetics love white backgrounds and evenly distributed light that create little to no shadows. It is much easier to use natural light on a shooting table near a large window, but if you settle for studio lights, two softboxes can work well. Cosmetic packages can be extremely shiny, so be mindful of how the light falls on them. Make sure the names and labels are clear and in focus because consumers are often trying to read them to find out size, ingredients, or other info.

Get some in-context shots to create visual appeal and an emotional connection between the viewer and your brand. If you are selling sunscreen, take a few shot of your product on a beach chair by the water or over a towel hanging off a palm tree. Context photos are also great for your social media campaigns.

## Accessories

Accessory photography follows a lot of the same rules of jewelry shoots. Keep in mind lighting, avoid reflection from shiny objects, and minimize shadows. For your product page, having a feature image with a white background is a must. But what really sets top brands apart in their accessories images is cool, enticing in-context shots. So if your budget allows it, hire a model and snap a few shots that promote the lifestyle you want your products to represent. Most of your frame will be close-ups, but you can still radiate luxury, casual, or hipster vibes by manipulating the background or the model's makeup and attitude.

## Furniture

Furniture is bulky, so selling and buying it usually involves a lot of hassle for everyone involved. Before you shoot, make sure you give your pieces a good polish, especially if you are selling used furniture. Ideally, **you will need a stand mounted sweep** with a white background, but you can also improvise with large enough craft paper that you tape to a wall. Again, mind your lighting and use diffusers and reflectors to soften shadows.





Source: [Pixc](#)

Shoot from as many angles as possible. Furniture is usually expensive, and customers want to know exactly what they are buying. Take your photos with the smallest aperture possible so you get a wide depth of field and your entire product in focus. Don't style your product; keep it neat and showcase features and details. If you are selling used furniture, don't cover up damages. Instead, take a clear photo of them. Remove the background in post-processing for a polished final look.

## Sportswear

Sportswear (and clothing, in general) can be tricky because you have to use a mannequin and then remove it in post-processing. The mannequin is important because it gives the garments the necessary bulk and a more natural look that helps your customers picture themselves wearing them. Don't be afraid to use props or tools to make your garments fit the mannequin better. Use safety pins, laundry clips, and tape to make adjustments, and make sure to iron out any wrinkles.



Source: [Pixc](#)

Once you are done with your mannequin shot, edit it out to create the **ghost mannequin effect**. You will end up with neat product photos on a clear, white background that customers love. You can also use a **flat lay** arrangement for certain garments if you are just starting out or shoot them on a hanger against a white wall. Alternatively, you can hire a model. If your budget allows it, you definitely should use the model for some in-context snaps running in the park or at other lifestyle setups. Lifestyle and environmental images are very important with sportswear as you want to your buyers to associate with the active lifestyle the garments are meant for.

## Books

Photographing books is a bit different because, generally, you want them to take up the entire frame. As always, lighting is important and natural lighting will make your job easier. If you are shooting a single book, you need the front and back covers as well as the copyright page if it is a rare or first edition. Use a light-colored background, and never use the flash. In post-processing, you will most likely just need to do some cropping and color correction.

If you are taking pictures of multiple books together, the same basic rules apply. Take photos from different angles, and you can get creative with the arrangement. For clean-cut shots for your product page, use white background that you can later edit out but also do some in-context shots,

like on a bookshelf, on grass, or in bed. Do not underestimate the power of post-processing to fix imperfect backgrounds, lighting, and colors.

## Health and Food

For packaged health goods, you need a neat looking feature image for your product page and some creative lifestyle shots to complement it and enhance your social media. The same basic rules apply to lighting, background, and post-processing. Food, in particular, can be a lot of fun to shoot.



Historic Royal Palaces Collection



HT Tea Blends



Specialty & Seasonal Teas



Individually Wrapped Tea Sachets



Tagalongs



Premium Teabags

Source: [Harney & Sons](#)

Food is all about context and art direction. Of course, you need the right light, preferably natural, but you have creative freedom on the background. You can use different table tops, kitchen counters, tablecloths, and napkins to add texture to the image. Take pictures from as many angles as possible, always minding your light source.

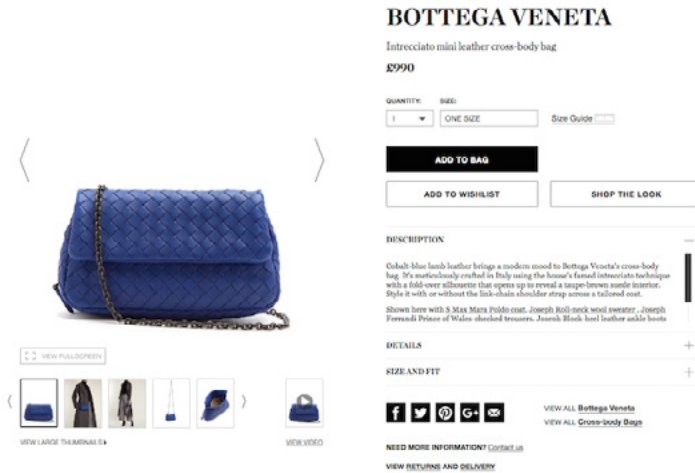
Use dishes that are fresh and have just been made, and adjust the composition if it doesn't feel right. Honor accidents by leaving crumbs on the table or even take a bite before your last takes as an experiment. Involve a fork, a salt shaker, a drink that complements the dish, or any other tabletop items that make the composition more enticing.



## Chapter 11

# Make Photography the Central Focus of Your Product Page

**Your product page is one of the most important sales tools in your store. It has the task of convincing consumers to make that last step and buy.** It has to be clear and easy to navigate, be informative and polished enough to promote trust, and enhance the shopping experience. You have to do everything you can to make your product page easy to find and able to convert, once your customers land on it. Let's take a look at what you can do to make your product page stand out.



Source: [MatchesFashion](#)

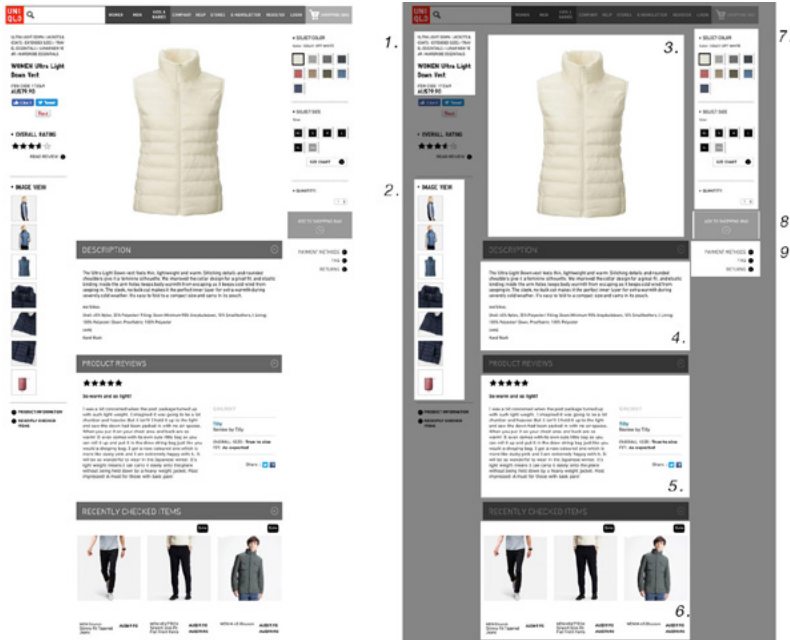
## Key Product Page Components

Most product pages have more or less the same components, but the truly successful pages that convert at the highest rates have really worked out the details and leave nothing to chance.

They boast a product title and overview that are clear, concise, and offer no ambiguities. Their descriptions stand out with unique catchy language that is memorable and relatable, and they clearly state how it meets your need. And they take a tip from the newspaper's handbook and place the most important information just above the fold.

What first grabs the visitors' attention is the polished and professional images that show all possible angles and features. The product photos are the key drivers of engagement, so you have to keep them crisp with clear, white backgrounds.

Your fully optimized product page also needs easy-to-use customization options, social proof of your product's quality by means of reviews or ratings, similar product suggestions to keep visitors engaged, a buying button that stands out, and access to additional info on shipping and delivery.



Source: [Uniqlo](https://www.uniqlo.com)

Here’s the shortlist:

- 1 Title and Overview
- 2 Gallery of Product Photos
- 3 Feature Image
- 4 Unique Description
- 5 Reviews and Ratings
- 6 Similar Product Suggestions
- 7 Customization Options
- 8 A “Buy Button” that Stands Out
- 9 Links to More Info

## Optimize Your Product Copy

Your product copy speaks to both customers and search engines, so you have to make it informative and keep SEO in mind. While optimized page

copy brings in the organic traffic, your photos, text, and site structure help convert that traffic into customers. Don't forget to boost your SEO with your optimized image **metadata** and alt text to help search engines better find and rank your page. Identify the keywords for your product and include them also in Header (H1) tags and subtitles. You can also add videos to your product page to enrich your customer experience.

Your page copy should clearly state what your product is and why your visitors should buy it. If you are selling drones that let your customers take pictures from bird's eye view, emphasize that unusual offering with images and detailed descriptions. Your content should easily explain your unique value proposition or why your product is the best choice. Say, for example, because it has the highest resolution camera and the longest battery life or because it integrates with VR sets.

Keep in mind to clearly display your payment options and your return policies to avoid customers navigating away in search of answers. Have a link to your FAQ page for quick reference to specific questions. If you are offering free shipping, make sure it's clearly stated in a place that your customers won't miss it. Shipping costs are a leading factor in cart abandonment.

## Employ Apps and Plugins

Go a step further and employ in-store apps like **Facebook Chat** to casually engage your customers and answer their questions. You can also use a chatbot like **Gobot** to employ surveys, social media buttons, and email capture.

Do not let customers navigate away disappointed if an item is out of stock. Employ back in stock email capture apps like **Back in Stock** instead. You can use this app to even track conversion for customers who have requested back in stock notifications. Create a sense of urgency with apps like **Hurryfy**, alerting users that a deal expires in a certain amount of time or how many people have bought the item. Further engage your customers with timely pop-ups that can answer questions or offer similar products.

You can also use apps and plugins on your product pages to capture emails, or offer sign-up-to-win content or discount codes. One of the most important places where pop-ups can boost your conversion is addressing cart abandonment. A timely pop-up with a discount or another incentive

can bring customers back and reduce abandonment rate. You can also use a Facebook Messenger chatbot like [Scout](#) to entice customers back. Alternatively, you can integrate with [Mailchimp](#) to send abandoned cart emails and offer incentives.

## Create Impactful Product Images

Your site copy is there to support your images. Your product photos cast the first impression on a visitor and either keep them engaged or scare them away. Quality, consistent images are your best brand advocates and evoke trust in consumers. To achieve them, take the time to execute a successful photo shoot. Mind your lighting, shoot on white background, remove the background, and retouch in post-processing. Show your product from all relevant angles and offer lifestyle shots to boost association. Try to answer any possible question your customers might have with your images.

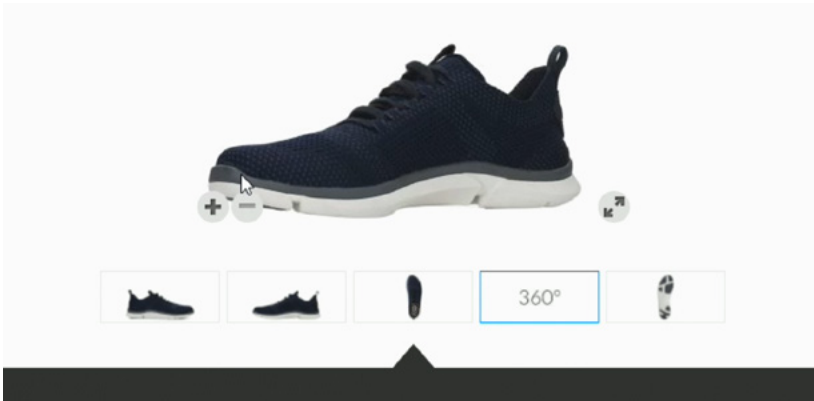
## Gain a Competitive Edge With a 360 View of Your Product

360-degree photography started with extreme sports enthusiasts and explorers but has long found a home in ecommerce. And the brands that use it stand out. 360 product photography involves shooting your products while they rotate on a platform so you can give your customer a full view from every angle with the use of a [Shopify-compatible 360 product viewer](#), like Imajize.

The technology behind a 360 view has several advantages which statistically boost conversion rates, reduce returns, and attract more attention to your store. Unlike video, a 360 view of your product offers unprecedented levels of interaction. This allows your shoppers to actively engage with your product while experiencing a near 100% accurate understanding of your product. It's easy to learn 360-degree product photography, and there are some great [beginner's guides to 360 product photography](#). You can also outsource 360 shoots to a professional 360 photography studio if you don't have an in-house studio. But if you design 3D models of your product, then you can export a sequence of 360 degree images straight out of your



CAD software. Exporting images from CAD also lets you create **beautifully realistic 360 degree product animations**.



Source: [Krakenservices](#)

## Keep a Uniform Look

Consistency across your store promotes trust and increases your retention rate and consumer lifetime value. Keep the same product scale using templates and always remove your background in posts processing. Use the same aspect ratio across your site to make your product and collection pages easy to scan and navigate. A good rule of thumb is to keep your images square so they can look good both on desktop and mobile.



Tango Sterling Silver Earrings  
\$ 75.00



Mini Friendship Wrap in Sterling Silver  
\$ 235.00



Mini Betsy in Sterling Silver Special Edition  
\$ 240.00

Source: [Lizzy James](#)

## Optimize Your Images

You can always make your product images better both on the front- and back-end. Strike the balance between optimum quality and size so your site can respond fast and you do not lose customers. Dimensions should be at least 1000 pixels so your zoom works well and no more than 2000 pixels to keep your site fast to load. Typically ecommerce platforms will automatically resize images to thumbnail, collections, and display sizes and will use the full images for the zoom capability when someone clicks or hovers over your main product photo. But giving them a hand with thoughtful sizing can make your site run even smoother.

To find images and other corners of your site that might need to be optimized, run your site through [Google PageSpeed Insight](#). One of the key back-end tricks to boost site speed is to use CSS for your background instead of an image as well as for image borders and buttons. Employ analytics to compare your conversion and load times across devices, and see if you can make adjustments that benefit the user experience. Use [Chrome DevTools](#) or an alternative to see for yourself how quickly your page loads and if there is anything that bothers the eye. Images play even a bigger part on mobile, so if they are not loading fast enough, customers tend to navigate away.

# Glossary

**360-Degree Photography** - Also known as virtual reality photography, 360-degree photography is an interactive image format that offers a 360-degree panoramic view. In the context of product photos, it stitches many photos together into a short animation in which the product does a full rotation. It can also let the viewer spin the product using a mouse, allowing the consumer to see the item from all angles.

**A/B Testing** - A/B testing, also known as split testing, is comparing two versions of an image, ad or website by presenting them to a similar audience in the same time frame and observing which one performs better.

**Alpha Channels** - 32-bit images **contain four channels**. Three RGB 8-bit channels for red, green, and blue, and one 8-bit alpha channel reserved to store transparency information. Alpha channels are used in post-processing when combining digital images. For example, when you make the background of an image transparent and then insert background from a different image.

**Alt Text** - An attribute of a digital image that describes what the image contains. It's purpose is to describe the image to users with accessibility issues and to appear on the web page if the image fails to load. Also, search engines use Alt text to better understand what an image and web page are about and rank it accordingly.

**Artificial Lighting** - A combination of usually electric light fixtures used to deliver aesthetic effects in a photography or video recording studio.

**Backdrop** - A cloth or paper surface hung behind an object as a background or setting during a photo shoot.

**Backlight** - A light that illuminates the object of the photo shoot from behind.

**Boomerang Images** - Images stitched together from many photos into a mini-animation similar to GIF animations.

**Branding** - The promotion of your product or company using distinctive design and graphic elements.

**CCO license** - A **license** that dedicates a work to the public domain waiving all copyrights and related rights.

**Cinemagraphs** - Still images in which a minor repeated animation occurs, usually published as a GIF.

**Color Correction** - The altering of the overall color theme of an image using photo editing software like Photoshop. It is measured on a scale known as color temperature.

**Color Palette** - The range of colors that an image format can use. For example, a GIF's color palette is 256 colors.

**Composition** - The way an image and the objects in it are arranged or composed.

**Compression** - For image file formats, compression means encoding the file in such way that the file is smaller in size. Compression can be lossless, where the image quality stays the same and the reduction in the file size is minimal, or lossy, where the image quality is degraded and the file size is reduced significantly

**Conversion** - The act of converting a website visitor into a paying or subscribing customer.

**Cropping** - Cutting out the edges of an image for stylistic purposes.

**Cascading Style Sheet (CSS)** - A web page written in HTML that defines the look of the graphic and text elements on a website. You can set the background color, font size, font color, button sizes, etc.

**Curves Adjustment Layer (Photoshop)** - Curves is Photoshop's most powerful tool to adjust tones like brightness and contrast. Adjustment Layers are tools used to change an image without permanently altering its pixels.

You can make a change with an Adjustment Layer and later delete the layer and restore the original image.

**Diffuser** - A device or fixture that helps distribute the light from a light source evenly, reducing its harshness and hard shadows.

**Digital Single-Lens Reflex (DSLR) Camera** - A kind of camera that combines the optics of a single-lens camera with a digital imaging sensor, as opposed to photographic film.

**Fill Light** - Any supplementary light in a photography setup that is used to soften shadows.

**Eyedropper (Photoshop)** - A tool used to sample colors from an image. Once you take a sample, you can further use the color.

**Eye-tracking** - A technology for monitoring eye movements as a way to see how people interact with web pages or online documents.

**Flat Lay** - A way of photographing objects on a flat surface without props.

**Focal Length** - The distance between the object of focus and the center of the lens.

**Key Light** - The main source of light in a photography or film setup.

**Lightbox** - A box-shaped tent with side walls made of translucent fabric or plastic that help to evenly distribute the light around the object of photography.

**Marketing Channels** - A way you reach your customers with your product or service. In ecommerce, these can be your online store, social media, blog posts, email, etc.

**Metadata** - A set of information fields used to describe your web page or image. These fields can include title, description, keywords, and alt text.

**Minify (Minification)** - A term used by programmers for removing all the unnecessary data from a page's code or a file without altering its functionality or quality.

**Natural Lighting** - The light from the sun. In product photography, it refers to harnessing or manipulating daylight to take photos indoors.

**Pen Tool (Photoshop)** - A tool that creates vector paths that can define complex shapes that are very scalable. The paths can be transformed into selections of pixels that can be copied or deleted.

**Post-processing** - Editing or retouching images after a photo shoot to add effects, filters, or remove imperfections.

**Reflector** - A flat screen made of cloth or paper (usually white or another light color) that is used to reflect light around an object to soften shadows.

**Remarketing/Retargeting** - A marketing strategy that uses data gathered about your store visitors to define them and advertise to them in a more personalized way.

**Retention Rate** - The percentage of your customers who are continuing to purchase products from your store within a certain time frame.

**RGB (Red, Green, and Blue)** - A system for representing colors on a computer screen. Red, green and blue can be combined in varying degrees to obtain any color on the visible spectrum.

**Rule of Thirds** - A composition rule suggesting dividing the image into three (or nine) parts both vertically and horizontally. You can then use this grid to place your object somewhere other than the center for interesting results.

**Saturation** - The intensity or density of the colors used. For example, cobalt blue is more saturated than sky blue.

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** - A set of prescribed practices for how to create online content that ranks better in online search results. SEO helps bring free organic traffic to your site and is widely used by brands and websites.

**Threshold Adjustment Layer (Photoshop)** - Through the Threshold dialog, you can adjust the amount of black and white in an image. Adjustment Layers are tools used to change an image without permanently altering its pixels. You can make a change with an Adjustment Layer and later delete the layer and restore the original image.



## Chapter 13

# Conclusion and Product Photography Checklist

**Your product images define your brand voice and create the ever more important in ecommerce first impression.** From social media to your product page, photos serve as brand ambassadors shaping the consumer experience by offering key information at a glance. Images grab and hold attention more than any other element of your product page or

marketing channels. So investing in product photography in order to make these key touch points more effective in communicating quality and consistency is vital.

Optimization is important for every aspect of your operation – from logistics and customer service to store design and user experience. Introducing structure and consistency to your product photography makes for a smooth visual journey and creates a seamless user experience. A polished look and a friction-free user experience lead to trust and consumer loyalty, which ultimately increase your retention rate and consumer lifetime value.

Your product photography doesn't have to cost a lot in order to achieve results that will delight your customers and optimize your conversion. You can use almost any camera as long as you pay close attention to your lighting and background and take your time to understand post-processing. The key is to understand your product category, keep a consistent theme, and optimize your images to look great on all devices. Make your images engaging, informative, and consistent so you can better convert and retain customers for years to come.

## Your Product Photography Checklist

As you work towards developing your own product photography strategy, use this checklist to guide you through the planning stages. Everything from equipment to shot angles is included to remind you of everything you should take into consideration.

[Download the Checklist](#)



## About the Author

### Holly Cardew



Holly Cardew is the Founder of Pixc, a platform to help ecommerce stores edit and optimize their product photos so they can increase their sales. Pixc turns average product images into beautiful ones by editing and removing the background within 24 hours.

Starting out as a teenager, selling on eBay and creating her own online marketplace, Holly has a background in ecommerce, online marketing, graphic design and building distributed teams.

She also has experience building and running Shopify stores and growing a large social media following. In 2016, Holly was included on the Retail and eCommerce Forbes 30 under 30 list. Holly splits her time between San Francisco, Brisbane and Sydney. When Holly is not working, she loves travelling, exploring new places, beautiful design, typography and coming up with with new solutions to existing problems.

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