

COMPLETE GUIDE TO TAKING BETTER PHOTOS

It's Time to Uplevel Your Social Media Photography for your Brand or
Business



THE ESSENTIALS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Lighting // Composition //
Storytelling // Editing

by Lana Pribic
www.lanapribic.ca | @lanapribic



LETS TALK ABOUT CAMERAS

I don't care what camera you're using, this guide will give you actionable tips and tricks that you can apply whether you're using an iPhone or a professional DSLR.

If you have a professional DSLR or mirrorless camera and you know how to use all the settings, then Bravo! If you just have the camera in your pocket (your phone) - not to worry. You can still take great images. The tips in this guide apply to any camera because the tips in here are all about lighting, composition, and storytelling. These are factors you can control no matter what you're shooting with.

MY PHONE...?

I believe that it is not the gear, but the photographer, that takes great images. Phones are great for business owners to shoot with because:

- Most people don't own DSLR cameras. They're expensive and complicated to use.
- Even if you do own a DSLR, it takes a lot of work to get DSLR images onto Instagram/social media. There's many steps involved in this. A phone photo is a one-stop shop solution.
- The cameras on our phones nowadays are actually pretty amazing - as long as you know how to use your lighting and composition.

The gear doesn't matter. What matters is how you photograph. How you see. This guide will give you solid tips and tricks to take better images - no matter what camera you're using.

THE 3 ESSENTIALS FOR NAILING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Now that we know it's not about the camera... What is it about?



There are 3 elements that I want you to pay attention when you are taking a photo.

They are:

1. **Consider your Lighting**
2. **Consider your Composition**
3. **Consider the Storytelling Factor**

That's it! It's not about ISO and Shutter Speeds and Strobes. As a business owner, you have more important things to do and learn about. These 3 elements are the essentials to photography that you need to nail down.

CONSIDER YOUR LIGHTING

Photography literally translates to
"drawing with light."

Light is the most important factor when
it comes to photography.

This guide will cover three lighting topics:

1. Soft light vs hard light
2. Lighting angles
3. How to light product photography

SOFT LIGHT VS. HARD LIGHT



SOFT LIGHT

MOOD

Warm, welcoming, flattering, calm.

DEFINING QUALITIES

Soft & minimal shadows, diffused lighting. Imagine a light bulb (hard light) and putting a lamp shade over it (soft light). Soft light is a light source that has been being diffused. Another example is the sun being diffused by the clouds on a cloudy day. Without the clouds, it would be hard light.

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT

If it's sunny, shoot in the shade or away from a window. Use a diffuser. Shoot on cloudy days or during golden hour if it's sunny. **Golden Hour** is the hour just before sunset and just after sunrise when the sun is low in the sky - creating warm soft light.

SOFT LIGHT IS:

IMAGE 1

Light that is consistent across the scene, like on cloudy days

IMAGE 2

Golden hour light that is diffused and low contrast

IMAGE 3

Light that is diffused through a curtain or diffuser. This image was actually taken on a very sunny day, but I used a diffuser to turn the hard light into soft light,

SOFT LIGHT VS. HARD LIGHT



HARD LIGHT



MOOD

Dramatic, gritty, intense, harsh, edgy.

DEFINING QUALITIES

High contrast. Intense shadows. Bright highlights.

Hard light comes from a single, directional light source. Think of this as a lightbulb with no lamp shade, or a cloudless sunny day. There is nothing to diffuse the light before it hits the subject.

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT

Shoot in direct sunlight (with caution - only do this if you are looking for a dramatic effect). Shoot in the mid afternoon. Use the sun to create dramatic effects. Use off camera and on camera flash.

HARD LIGHT IS:

IMAGE 1

Straight in the sunlight, casting hard shadows.

IMAGE 2

High contrast, because the light (sun) is not being diffused by anything.

IMAGE 3

Can be moody and dramatic because of the dark shadows and bright highlights.

LIGHTING ANGLES

Refers to where the light source is
in relation to the subject,

DIRECT LIGHT

Light source is directly on the
subject (behind the camera).
Less dramatic, straight forward.
Be careful of hard light.
Excellent for headshots.



SIDE LIGHT

Light source is lighting the
subject from one side.
Dramatic and moody feel.
More shadows.
Textures pop.
Be cautious of too much
contrast.



BACK LIGHT

Light source is lighting the
subject behind - you're shooting
into the light.
Artistic when done right
(imagine silhouettes).
Dramatic and mysterious.
Be careful of lens flare.

PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY



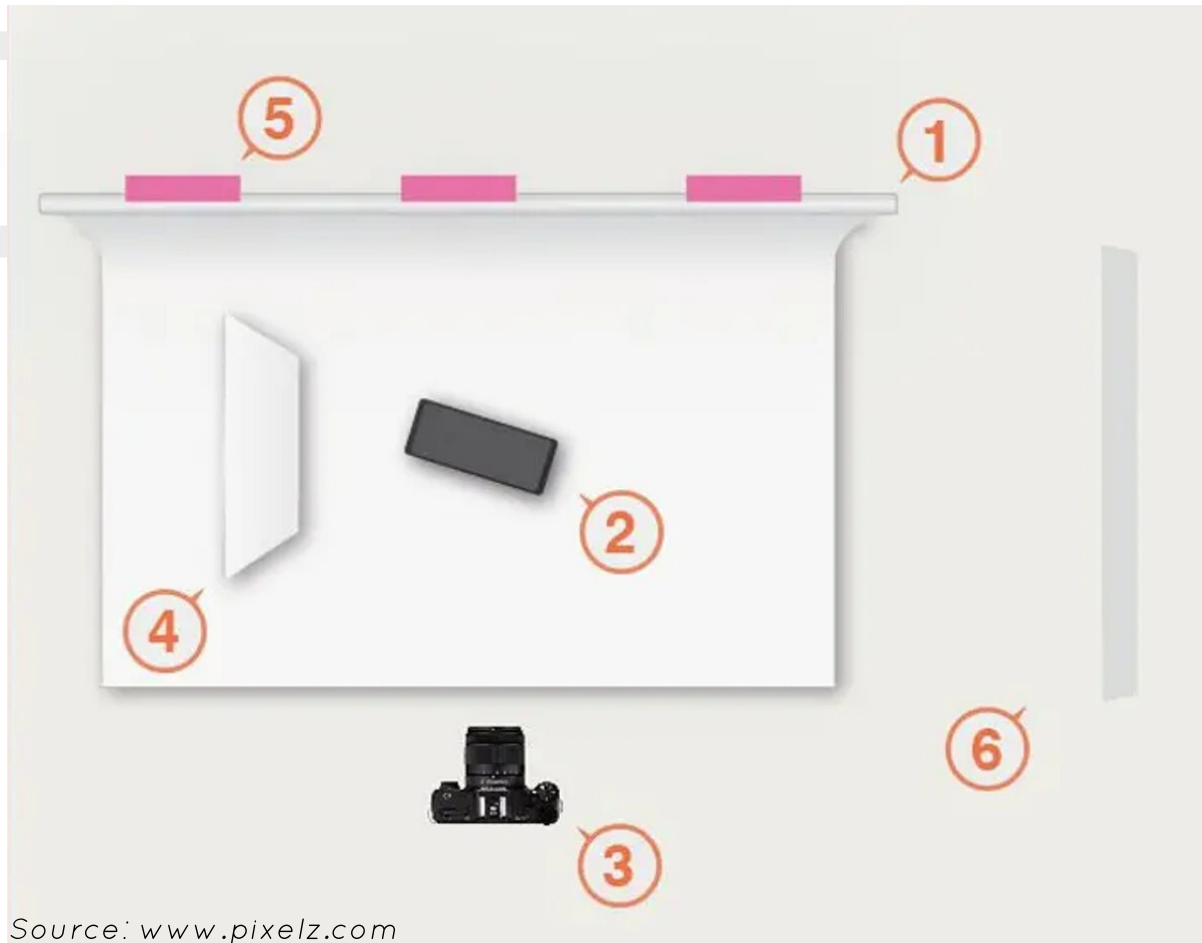
IT'S EASIER (AND CHEAPER) THAN YOU THINK!

All that you need to achieve high quality product photography shots are:

1. A piece of white paper (or any colour background you'd like)
2. The product you're shooting
3. Camera/phone. Consider a tripod.
4. Foamboard for "fill light"
5. Tape
6. Window (light source)

See the image on the next page for how to set up.

BOUNCE & SWEEP METHOD



FILL LIGHT / BOUNCE

The "bounce," your foam board, serves the purpose of reflecting light back onto the subject to reduce the shadows and increase the exposure for the part of the subject furthest from the window. This ensures an evenly lit subject for your product photos.



Source: www.pixelz.com

CONSIDER YOUR COMPOSITION

If light is the paint, composition is the way you use the paint. The brush strokes.

In photography, composition refers to the way in which all of the elements come together in an image. Here are some things to keep in mind when it comes to composing an image:

1. The rule of thirds vs centring
2. Filling the frame vs negative space
3. Perspective



THE RULE OF THIRDS



THE RULE

The rule of thirds involves breaking an image into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, resulting in nine equal boxes.

The rule states that it is most visually pleasing to look at an image where the subject is along one of the lines, or at their intersection.

As above, the boy (subject) is at the intersection of two lines.



CENTERING



BREAKING THE RULE

While the rule of thirds is visually appealing almost all of the time, you can also create stunning images while breaking this rule.

Subjects can also be placed in the center of the frame when appropriate.



OVERFILL THE FRAME VS NEGATIVE SPACE



OVERFILL THE FRAME

When styling a photo, overfilling the frame creates a feeling of stepping into a small part of an interesting scene. Allow props to spill over the edges and some of them to be cropped out.

NEGATIVE SPACE

Utilize negative space, the empty space that fills the subject, to create feelings of solitude, calm, serenity, cleanliness, and minimalism. It's a great way to get the viewers eye precisely on the subject.



PERSPECTIVE

Refers to where the camera is in relation to the subject,



STRAIGHT ON

The camera is facing the subject directly, often at eye level.

BIRDS EYE

Similar to straight on, but the camera is facing the subject straight on from above.



45 DEGREE ANGLE

The camera is in between straight on and bird's eye - facing the subject at a 45 degree angle.





CONSIDER YOUR STORYTELLING FACTOR

With so much competition on social media, it's important to have images that stand out. A photo without a story is not captivating.

While lighting and composition choices will contribute to the storytelling factor in a shot, there are other things to consider when it comes to the storytelling element in photography.

5 TIPS FOR TELLING A STORY

1

HUMAN ELEMENT

Humanize your photos by adding a human element. A photo of a landscape is beautiful, but if you place a person in that landscape all of the sudden it becomes a story. Or, capture hands preparing food as opposed to the final dish.

2

SET A SCENE

Photos that give the viewer a peek into an unfinished, mid-scene tell a story. Use small details to tell a story about whats going on in the scene, because the story is in the small details. Make it appear that the viewer of the photo is looking into a scene. A behind the scenes peek into your business, or candid, are an easy way to capture a scene without styling.

3

EVOKE EMOTION

People react to images with an emotional quality to them. Some to think about are: moody, joyful, playful, energetic, calm, serene, carefree. Think about the emotion you are trying to represent in your business, and how you relay this through photos. Think about how the props, environment, colour and composition lend to the emotion in an image.

4

CREATE DESIRE

Ask yourself: how should the product or service that I am selling be consumed or enjoyed? A photo of a latte vs. a photo of a latte with a cookie, newspaper and fireplace in the background are totally different images. Guess which one is going to make people crave your latte more?

5

USE PHOTOGRAPHY KNOWLEDGE

Use the tips in this guide to determine what type of lighting and composition is most appropriate to tell the story you are trying to tell.

FIND THE STORY







Happy shooting!

The best way to improve your photography skills is to go out and take as many photos as possible. Using these lighting, composition, and storytelling tips will take you far but you have to practice!