

TIPS FOR BETTER QUALITY PHOTOS

*“Photos attract attention,
help tell the story, and
leave a lasting impression.”*

Looking to improve the quality of photos on your professional materials?

Photos are an important piece of marketing. They attract attention, help tell the story, and leave a lasting impression. Having quality photos to work with is a necessity.

Read our expert tips on how to select and take photos that look great in print, enhance your brand’s message, and won’t break your budget.



Photos sourced from Stock.Adobe.com, Unsplash.com

Learn How to Spot a 'Good' Photo

By intentionally developing an eye for good photography, you'll be able to quickly select higher caliber photos that consistently work well for your professional needs.

- What elements determine whether a photo is 'technically good' or not?
- What makes a photo a believable part of your story?
- How do you know what kind of photos to look for based on your project needs?

There are **3 key principles of photography** that everyone can benefit from learning to use, whether you are taking your own photos or curating them from stock sites.

Subject – The focal point of an image is typically also its subject. In marketing photography this is often a person or a product you want to share the story of.

The subject is the most important thing in the photo. The other elements are used to draw focus to it. When selecting photos for promotional or fundraising use, aim for subjects and situations that appear authentic and real. Photos that appear staged or fake are typically off-putting.



Lighting – Lighting in photography refers to how the light source and its position relates to your subject. The position and intensity of the lighting can affect the quality and tone of the image.

When choosing images for print, it's typically better to pick ones with higher contrast and definition to preserve details. You can change the lighting of a photo to better align with the tone of your marketing pieces with editing.



This image is low in contrast; the lighting is low, making the colors appear more monotone. In print, the details will blend together and be harder to distinguish.



A better pick; this photo was taken with bright lighting, causing the colors and tones to have greater contrast, which will help details show up in print.

Composition – Where your subject sits in relation to the rest of the image can make a big difference in how it's viewed. Learning a few art school rules for composing layouts can help take your photo selection skills to the next level.

o **Rule of Thirds:**

Placing a subject in the left or right third of an image tends to create more interesting and well-composed images than placing a subject in the center.

If you place a 9-square grid over an image, you'll get a guideline for using the rule-of-thirds. Try aligning the horizon of a landscape image in the top or bottom third, and your subjects or other objects of interest along the vertical lines.



o **Framing:** Whether you are setting up a shot or cropping an image, think about how the other elements in the frame work around your subject.

By using the surroundings – such as the shape of a doorway or the branches of trees, or even people – you create a visual space for your subject to sit within that helps it stand out as the most important thing.

o **Leading Lines:** Similarly to framing, strategic placement of the naturally occurring lines within a photo can lead viewer's eyes towards – or away – from a subject.

Good examples of this are using the lines of a road, walls, buildings, or the horizon. Changing your angle changes the perspective of the lines, and how they direct the eye.



Other Factors to Consider

In addition to knowing how to spot a 'good' photo from a mediocre one, here are some other factors to think about to make sure the photos you take or select will work consistently in your professional applications.



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- o **Color Palette** – Decide if photos should align with brand colors. The colors of your photos can harmonize with the design color palette or introduce new colors to the piece.

For example, if your branding is all blues and greens, and your photo features a person wearing a bright red shirt, then the color photo will change the dynamic of the layout overall.

Oregon Energy Fund's 2023 Impact Report features a photo on the back cover that was selected in part because the person's yellow shirt is a near-match for the yellow in the OEF brand color palette, helping it look cohesive in the design. The green of her head covering is a complimentary color to the red tones, creating nice visual harmony.



Photo, design & printing © 2023, AnchorPointe Graphics

- o **Dimensions & Orientation** – When looking for a photo to fit a specific project – such as the cover of an 8.5x11” booklet or a 9x6” postcard – keep the dimensions and orientation of the area in mind.

If the photo you choose is vertical, for example, it may not work on a postcard with a horizontal layout, or vice versa.

The photo on the back of this appeal for Girl Scouts of Oregon and SW Washington was chosen for the subject's vertical orientation and the area of 'white space' above the subject's head, which creates a focal area for the call to action.

“...make sure the photos you take or select will work consistently in your professional applications..”



- o **Mood & Tone** – Consider the type of content you’ll be creating with your selected photos and the tone of the messaging. Photos enhance your pieces by invoking a specific feeling or depicting an experience that viewers can connect to.

Be sure to select photos that fit within your brand’s story and will strike the right moods and tones for your materials.

Your subject’s facial expressions and body language, as well as their surroundings, all impact the mood and tone of your images. Though, even in photos without people as the subject, the colors, vibrancy, and brightness of an image can tell viewers a lot about the mood you are trying to evoke.



“..we must be responsible for the images we choose to represent our brand..”



- o **Diversity in Representation** – As marketers, developers, and designers, we must be responsible for the images we choose to represent our brand, our organizations, and our target audiences.

Be sure to stay mindful of the overall perception your brand presents with its image selections. The larger your collection grows, the more patterns you’ll be able to identify, which will help you make adjustments towards better representation.

While selecting brand images, try to identify all of your customer / donor personas within the photos you choose. Your photo library becomes a kind of ‘scrapbook’ that - ideally - shows you an overview of your audience as a whole.

Use Reputable Sources for Stock Photos

Always go to a reliable source's website for stock and royalty-free photos for professional projects. This protects your organization from potential copyright violations or other complications.

It also ensures that the images will be suitable quality for professional printing. For print projects, it's important to source high resolution photos – at least 300 dpi – to avoid grainy or low-quality images printing on your materials. This is especially crucial if the images will be used for large format applications such as signs, banners, window graphics, or vehicle wraps.

Low-quality images have a negative impact on people's perception of your brand.

Here are 4 reputable source sites to check out that include a variety of subscription options and pricing tiers.



Stock.Adobe.com – Offers subscriptions for individuals, teams, and enterprises at different quantities of downloads per month, with options to purchase additional credits as-needed. (\$-\$\$\$)



iStock.com – Subscribe at one of 3 levels with a pre-set number of downloads per month, or purchase credit packs as-needed. (\$-\$\$\$)



Freepik.com – Offers 10 free downloads daily (attribution required), with options for low-cost subscriptions that offer unlimited downloads (no attribution required) per month. (\$)



Unsplash.com – Features a collection of free-for-use photos by a community of creators available for download, with an optional paid subscription to access premium Unsplash+ content. (\$)

Utilize Your Teams' Photography Skills

It's a common practice these days for teams to take photos with their phones – or personal cameras – for their organizations to use.

This can be a great way to get true to life photos that accurately represent your target audiences, those you serve, and your own organization.



The key to making this solution work is educating your team about image resolution settings and proper file sharing from their devices.

Here's what everyone taking and sending photos needs to know:

HIGH RESOLUTION - Make sure your device is set to take and save photos at the highest resolution setting (at least 300 dpi). This is required for printing, and looks better in general.

FILE SHARING - When sharing images, send the full-size (uncompressed) JPEG or HEIC image files to an email, or upload them to a file-sharing service such as DropBox, to avoid lowering the quality of your photos. Apple devices can use the AirDrop feature to share full-size files.

DON'T SEND WITH SOCIAL MEDIA - Never send your photos via social media. These sites automatically lower image resolutions in order to reduce file sizes during transfers.

Hire a Photographer (When Needed)



Photography © 2022, Bekah Taylor Photography & Project Lemonade
At their Inspire 2022 Event

Another good way to get high resolution photos for print and other professional use is to hire a photographer. Many organizations do this for events or other hallmark occasions, or to stage a photoshoot. **These shoots can yield a high number of usable images in a short timeframe.**

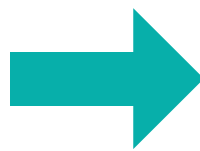
Even with professional photography, there may be times when you want to adjust or edit an image to fit your exact needs...

Know About These Photo Editing Tricks

There will likely be times when you find a photo and think, “If only it were wider/taller,” or “I wish that person’s shirt didn’t have another company’s logo on it.”

When you want to adjust a photo or change a small aspect of it to make it “picture perfect,” we turn to Photoshop’s powerful editing tools.

Maybe you want to change an item’s bright color to a more on-brand color to avoid adding another color to your design. Or remove a port-a-potty from the background of a beautiful landscape. Or even need there to be 3” more to a photo on the left side to make it work as a header image. **These are all real examples of photo edits that we have done for projects.**



The original photo (left) includes a bright traffic cone in the center of the frame; it’s distracting and pulls attention away from the musician. The edited photo (right) removes the traffic cone, changing the composition of the photo and putting more focus on the musician.

Take a look at this example of editing a photo from Albertina Kerr’s 2023 Impact Report. The original photo is of a client wearing red rain boots. The photo itself was high resolution with bright lighting and good contrast – a great choice for printing. But unfortunately, that red color really clashed with their harmonious color palette.

To make it absolutely perfect, we used our artists’ license to change the red boots to match the brand palette’s bright green hue. Now the photo is aligned with the of the rest of the layout, and isn’t a visual distraction that takes away from the message.



Photo © Albertina Kerr

Generative AI Tools

In recent years, there have been big developments in the world of Generative AI, and Photoshop has integrated a few editing tools that are powered by this technology.

The simplest and (possibly) most helpful is the new Photoshop AI-assisted tool called **'Generative Expansion'**. This feature allows us to do the opposite of cropping by expanding the image size horizontally or vertically, using Generative AI to 'build' the rest of the image.

Original Photo (Sourced on Stock.Adobe.com)



“(AI) makes the prospect of using Photoshop to correct or enhance a photo less time-consuming and more cost-effective.”

Expanded with Generative AI in Photoshop



Expanding photos with Generative AI doesn't work 100% of the time, and oftentimes the result does require some expert Photoshopping to finish the job. But it makes the prospect of using Photoshop to correct or enhance a photo less time-consuming and more cost-effective.

More ways that Photoshop editing can help improve your photos include removing unwanted items or people, removing undesirable logos, words, or other markings from clothing and surroundings, or adjusting the color palette of a photo to better suit your branded materials.

Keep Them All Organized

Rather than taking or sourcing new photos for each project, start building up your own library of mindfully curated images. Every photo you download should be catalogued in a way that makes them accessible for future use.

Consistency is king when it comes to designing for your brand.

Using quality images in multiple places and in a variety of creative ways to keep them fresh will help build that recognition and familiarity. With each new addition, you'll have a bigger picture of your brand's personality and style. And soon your team will have a collection of high resolution, on-brand photos to choose from.

Happy Printing!

Reach out to us at 503-619-3000 or email us at info@anchorpointgraphics.com.

Visit us at www.AnchorPointeGraphics.com.