GET STARTED
Taking Great
PHOTOS

GOOD
PHOTOGRAPHY
— *Makes* —
GREAT
ADS

We understand the importance of photography in design. With over 30 years of experience creating print and digital advertising for over 8,000 campaigns and clients, one element stands out in every successful campaign: imagery.

Photography is more than a visual — it's a message. Personalized imagery helps an ad stand out in a crowded mailbox or on a cluttered digital screen.

This guide will give you the knowledge you need to capture the photos that tell your story in a unique and memorable way.

You don't need to be a professional! With a basic understanding of both the technical and artistic sides, anyone can take a great photo.

Let's get started.

30 Years of Experience

Over **8.7 Billion** Digital Impressions

Nearly **4 Billion** Pieces of Direct Mail

Over **8,000** Campaigns & Clients

All **50** States

6 Republican Presidential Candidates

61 Sitting or Former U.S. Senators

30 Current or Former Governors

217 Sitting and Former U.S. Congressmen

23 State Legislative Takeovers

Image QUALITY

IMAGE RESOLUTION

Different mediums require different image resolutions for clarity and sharpness.

An image with 640x480 pixels works fine for web or email. But for print, you need high-resolution images to avoid pixelation and blurriness. A high-quality 8" x 10" print requires at least 3000x2400 pixels.

PRO TIP

Always shoot at the highest resolution. You can scale down a high-res image — but you can't upscale a low-res image without losing clarity.

HOW TO CHECK RESOLUTION

File size and pixel dimensions matter more than how the image looks on your screen. Modern displays often exceed 200 PPI (pixels per inch), so don't rely on screen clarity alone.

A small file size (e.g., 126 KB) usually means insufficient quality for print.

CAMERA
Settings

DEDICATED CAMERAS

Whether you own or borrow a digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera like a Canon EOS or a point-and-shoot digital camera like a Nikon Coolpix, set your camera to the largest possible image size and highest quality setting.

SMARTPHONES

Modern phones typically default to high-resolution settings, but double-check in your camera settings. Look for resolution specs like 4032x3024 or similar.

FILE FORMAT NOTE

You may see file formats like HEIF or HEIC on your phone. Those image formats will need to be converted to JPEG or PNG for compatibility.

PRO TIP

Enable gridlines to help with alignment and composition.

The
SHOOT

TRIPODS

Use a tripod or stabilize your camera/phone on a steady surface to reduce blur from hand shake.

TIME OF DAY

Shoot early or late in the day for the most flattering natural light. Avoid the harsh midday sun.

SHADE

If you must shoot midday, use "open shade" from buildings or trees. It avoids harsh shadows and squinting.

VIEWPOINT

Change your angle — shoot from above, below, or at ground level. Move closer or farther back rather than zooming.

PEOPLE

- Stand the subject away from the background to reduce distractions.

- Capture multiple expressions (serious, light-hearted, candid).

- Show personality and likability.

- Focus on the eyes — use tap-to-focus if shooting with a smartphone.

- Watch for that sparkle in your subject's eyes. Known as catchlight, this is when the camera catches a glint or spark in one's eyes, adding life and warmth to the photo.

PRO TIP

The most important thing when photographing people is to **show personality and likability**, no matter the setting.

The
SCENERY

SETTING

Use local landmarks that are easily recognizable and reflect the community, like historic buildings, neighborhood parks, farms, and signs.

FRAMING

Compose wide shots that include the subject and the landscape. Natural elements like trees, fences, or architectural lines can add context and visual interest.

CLUTTER CHECK

Scan the background for distracting objects, brand logos, or anything off-message.

PRO TIP

While we can add backgrounds in editing, wide contextual shots with visible sky offer more layout flexibility for text placement.

Quick Reference CHECKLIST

PEOPLE

- ☑ Use your camera or phone's highest resolution setting.

- ☑ Enable gridlines for better composition.

- ☑ Use a tripod or stable surface.

- ☑ Schedule shoots just before or after sunrise or sunset for the most flattering natural light.

- ☑ Focus on personality and likability.

- ☑ Reduce distractions in the background.

- ☑ Use scenic, recognizable locations.

- ☑ Capture a variety of expressions and angles.

- ☑ Convert HEIF or HEIC images to JPEG or PNG if needed.

- ☑ Watch for clutter and brand conflicts in the background.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- ☒ Shooting with dirty lenses.

- ☒ Ignoring distracting elements in the background.

- ☒ Over-editing images (e.g., excessive filters or contrast).

- ☒ Forgetting to focus on the eyes in portraits.

- ☒ Centering everything without intent.

MAJORITY STRATEGIES

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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