

Smartphone Photography Tips

1. Keep your lens clean

A simple but important point: As we tend to keep our phone in our jeans pockets or handbags, give your lens a quick wipe before you shoot. It is a lint and dust magnet in there!

2. Know when the shutter clicks

If the shutter lags, you'll need to account for that. Some phones have a surprising delay after you press the shutter release. And if the shutter release is on a touchscreen (as it is on the Apple iPhone), the shutter probably trips after you lift your finger, not when you press down. Either way, hold the camera steady while the picture is being exposed. And don't jab at the screen, or the shake will blur your photo.

3. Set your resolution high

It goes without saying that the higher the resolution of your photo, the better quality it is. When taking images with a smartphone camera, try to go as close as possible to the subject rather than zooming in when you take a shot. You will get better-resolution photos cropped, than zoomed in. For distant pictures of sunsets or buildings, leave the zoom where it is and focus on filling the frame with a backdrop that illustrates what you're trying to get across about that fascinating landmark or natural wonder.

4. Adjust the exposure setting

If a scene is too dim, increase the exposure to allow more light into the sensor; if the scene is too bright, decrease the exposure.

Here's how:

- Android: Tap the sun icon and adjust the slider between -2 and +2.
- iPhone: Tap and hold on a particular area of the image until a yellow square appears, then tap the sun icon at its right and drag the slider until the image brightness is to your liking.
- Windows Phone: Tap Settings in camera mode and select Brightness.
- BlackBerry 10: You can pick different preset exposure levels, such as Action or Night

5. Override the defaults

Smartphones can be pretty good when it comes to choosing settings, but not always. Metering can sometimes be pretty shoddy indoors and in cloudy conditions, which is where overriding some of the settings can come in handy.

If you think the white balance is off, change it. If the photo is underexposed, use the sliders found in most camera applications to boost it. If you'd prefer grain to blur, up the ISO used by the camera manually. Don't forget about the flash either, which is sometimes necessary.

If center-weighted metering isn't providing the right results, you might also consider switching to spot-metering, which some cameras allow you to do. Center-weighted looks at the entire image and meters according to what it sees, with a preference on the center of the frame. When shooting subjects off-center, it can be a good idea to switch to spot metering so the area around the 'spot' you select is exposed perfectly.

6. Burst mode

Smartphones aren't ideal for action shots, as you often can't get close enough to, say, a sports game. But if you want to capture someone in motion, turning on burst mode means your phone can shoot from 10 frames per second to around 20 frames per second, increasing your likelihood of getting clear shots of the scene. Hold down the shutter button to start burst-mode shooting (as in the iPhone and Samsung Galaxy, for example), or check in the camera settings if you need to switch to this mode.

If your phone's camera doesn't support burst mode, download an app such as Burst Mode (iOS). Full-featured camera apps such as Camera+ (Windows, iOS, Android) also include it as a setting.

7. Panorama

Most phones have a panorama mode. Even if yours don't, you can download an app to take or stitch your 180-degree photos like [Photosynth](#) (iOS) and [Autostitch Panorama Pro](#) (Android). They are great for taking landscape photos, provided you can keep your hand steady enough to grab a well-stitched shot.

8. HDR mode

HDR is a great mode for taking photos of stationary objects, as long as you have steady hands. What HDR (high dynamic range) mode does, is ensure that the lighting and shadows in the photo are evenly exposed. This is particularly useful for photos with high contrast. HDR mode takes two or more pictures of varying exposures almost simultaneously, then combines the best and brightest bits of both into one photo.

On most smartphones, this is something you can and should enable when the scene you're photographing has widely varying contrast. The difference in photos can be vast, especially on Samsung smartphones where the HDR mode is particularly effective. You need to keep the camera super-steady, otherwise your photo will come out blurred.

HDR mode shouldn't be used all the time, though. As it has to take two photos and combine them, trying to photograph a fast-moving subject in HDR mode can lead to nasty ghosting and other unwanted effects. Using HDR mode in darker conditions can also introduce blur, simply from the combination of two images with slow shutter speeds.

9. Use the whole sensor

Some phones always default to a 16:9 image capture ratio even if the sensor itself is not 16:9. Check to see what your sensor actually is. You won't have to do anything if you have a smartphone with a 16:9 sensor like the Galaxy S5 or HTC One M8, but if you don't, switching back to standard 4:3 can be beneficial.

Shooting in 4:3 on a 4:3 sensor not only gives you access to the full resolution of the camera, but it still allows you to crop down to 16:9 after the fact with more pixels to play with. Didn't frame the shot perfectly the first time? If you were shooting in 4:3 and using the whole sensor, you might be able to get a better photo out of your shot.

10. Photo editing apps

Sometimes there is only so much we can control when taking a photo. A lot of the enhancement has to come from the use of photo-editing apps after the photos are taken. Some apps like Camera+ and Camera FV-5(Android) come coupled with a photo editor.

Photoshop Express (iOS, Android) and Pixlr Express (iOS, Android) perform editing functions like crop, straighten, rotate, flip and removing red eye.

11. Use post-processing filters

For casual smartphone photographers, those retro, black-and-white, Windmere, Islandia, and other filters can really add character to a photo. Most Android smartphones come with a great selection of filters, but if you're running a bit short, try Pixlr (formerly Pixlr Express) for a larger selection.

*Note: Reference to specific apps or phones is not an endorsement of any particular product.