

HOW TO USE YOUR SMARTPHONE TO TAKE PICTURES OF or TO SCAN YOUR PHOTO PRINTS

It's tricky to get good results using your smartphone instead of a real scanner, but I know everybody is doing it. So here are a few tips to digitize those prints you'd like to send me for your next video slideshow...or just to preserve and share with family and friends.

If you pay close attention to your lighting and how you hold your phone, you can be successful.

Please note that if you want to make new or larger prints, you'll get better results with a real scanner and a tiff file format, not jpg, at 300ppi or more, depending on how large you want to print. The reasons are due to better lighting and no shape distortion.

You can shoot your prints in or out of albums and frames. Be aware you'll have to work harder with your lighting to avoid getting distracting reflections. Same for glossy prints.

TIP #1 - DON'T PUT YOUR FINGERS ALL OVER YOUR PHOTOS! Handle them by their edges. Fingerprints show up on glossy prints. Fingerprints on older prints can become highly visible and therefore show up on your "copy" (difficult to Photoshop away!)

TIP #2 – Dust or wipe your prints with a lint-free cloth before copying them so you don't photograph the dust

TIP #3 – You may want to save your photos in one specific folder so you can easily locate them when you're ready to use them

TIP #4 – Because it is hard to organize photos by title or order of appearance on a phone, consider opening the photos in your computer and giving them a number and a title

TIP #5 - You can also use any photo editing app to fix up your "copied" photo

DIGITAL FILE FORMAT GOAL = jpg (not bmp, gif, PDF)

AIM FOR PERFECTION

- In other words, re-take the photo if it doesn't look good enough
- Make sure your entire photo was copied

WHAT YOU WANT

- evenly lit image
- no reflections or shadows of the room, camera, or you
- no glare
- no slanted edges of the picture (no keystone)
- no distortions of people
- sharp image

PHYSICAL SET-UP SUMMARY

- a room with window light off to the side or in front of you, not behind you
- Use a table, desk, or countertop instead of the floor, for comfort
- Do prop the print against something stable or lay it flat instead of hand-holding it
- When using an app that detects edges and straightens and crops your photo automatically, make sure the item behind the photo is of a much darker or lighter color so that the app can successfully detect the real edges of your print
- Do set the camera on something solid instead of holding it in the air, such as a table, desk, box, book, pile of magazines, etc.
- Make sure the camera is as parallel to the print as possible

HOW TO LIGHT YOUR PHOTO PRINT

- Do it indoors in the daytime in a room lit with window light
- Do it on a sunny or cloudy day
- Don't do it at night with artificial light like a lamp
- Do it in indirect window light in the part of the room where the sun isn't hitting directly so that the light will be indirect, soft, and diffused
- Don't use a lamp or overhead light fixture as your main light source and if those lights are on, make sure you don't see them reflected in your print

HOW TO AVOID REFLECTIONS, SHADOWS, AND GLARE

Whatever is behind you and the phone camera is likely to appear on your new photo, especially if your original is glossy or behind glass or plastic

- Shoot with the window off to the side or in front of you
- no windows behind or above you
- no light fixtures or lamps turned on behind or above you
- no brightly colored objects behind or around you
- plain, neutral things behind and around you

FOR AN EVENLY LIT PHOTO

- If you notice the part of your print that is closer to the window is brighter than the rest of the photo, either use a reflector or move farther away from the window
- Try reflecting light onto the print from the side opposite your window by placing a white board or paper there. Move the reflector until you see your print lit better.

ABOUT PHOTOS BEHIND GLASS OR PLASTIC PAGES OR GLOSSY PRINTS

- It is difficult not to get some glare or reflections
- Use very diffused, soft, mellow, not too bright lighting
- Know that what you see on your phone's screen is what you'll get, so change your set-up in various ways until it looks better and then re-shoot

HOW TO AVOID SLANTED PICTURE EDGES OR DISTORTIONS OF PEOPLE

- Position the camera parallel to the print, not at an angle
- If you must slant the print to take the picture, slant your camera the same amount
- If you get distortions, try to fix them with photo editing apps

HOW TO IMPROVE IMAGE SHARPNESS

- Don't hold the print in your hand
- Don't hand-hold your photo in one hand and hand-hold your phone in the other hand
- Do make a specific effort to hold your camera perfectly still, especially when touching the shutter button
- Try holding your breath when touching the shutter button
- Don't push down hard on the shutter button, because that moves the camera!
- Don't jab at the shutter button, because that moves the camera!
- If you do hand hold the camera anyway, steady yourself with elbows on a table, arms or hands leaning on a wall, or similar steadiness
- Do whatever you can do to imitate a tripod's steadiness
- If you use a tripod, congratulations on your sharp image!

USING YOUR CAMERA APP (or a regular camera)

- Be sure to turn off the camera's flash so you won't get a bright white splotch on your photo
- The camera may have a higher resolution, which is good for making prints and enlargements
- After shooting as parallel as possible, crop to the print's edges and then edit the brightness and contrast
- If need be, you can also open and fix your photo in another photo editing app or on your computer

USING A SCANNER APP

- Be sure to explore and set all the settings before you start using the app
- Set it to take a jpg (not bmp, gif, PDF)
- Set it for its best and highest resolution (# of pixels)
- If the app has organization or titling capabilities, use them

ADVANTAGES OF A SCANNER APP

- You can capture the entire photo when it doesn't have the same height and width as your camera lens, and the app will automatically crop it
- You can straighten the sides of the photo in the app (perspective correction)
- Glare, reflections, and shadows are often fixed by the app

CHOOSING A SCANNER APP

- Try a free app like the ones on the next page.
- Paid apps can offer more features for organization but not necessarily better quality
- Not all apps work the same way so it's a good idea to have more than one
- Use another app when the first one doesn't do a good enough job

Continued on next page

Genius Scan App by The Grizzly Labs (free version)

- You take one shot of your print and immediately shoot each of its 4 corners by moving your phone or tablet over the 4 solid white circles presented to you
- Then wait while the app compiles those shots into the finished version
- Glare-free scans most of the time
- Because this app tries to remove glare automatically, try different lighting set-ups until you get it to work well
- Retake the photo if you see crooked edges, distortions, unwanted cropping, or glare.

PhotoScan App by Google (always free)

- lets you scan and save your favorite printed photos using your phone's camera
- automatic cropping and perspective correction based on edge detection
- straight, rectangular scans with perspective correction
- smart rotation, so your photos stay right-side-up no matter which way you scan them
- Glare-free scans most of the time
- Because this app tries to remove glare automatically, try different lighting set-ups until you get it to work well
- Retake the photo if you see crooked edges, distortions, unwanted cropping, or glare.

TurboScan App by Piksoft (free version)

- Be sure to turn off its flash
- automatic cropping and perspective correction based on edge detection
- Go through and choose appropriate setting options for photos (not documents)
- immediate lighter/darker editing feature
- helpful features such as titling and emailing to yourself
- Glare-free scans most of the time
- Because this app tries to remove glare automatically, try different lighting set-ups until you get it to work well
- Retake the photo if you see crooked edges, distortions, unwanted cropping, or glare.

