



# FINDING YOUR LIGHT WITH MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY

AGNES & DORA

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# INTRO



**YOU CAN DO THIS!**

## **TAKING GREAT PHOTOS IS WITHIN YOUR REACH! YOU CAN DO THIS!**

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Photography comes easily to some people, but everyone can learn to take good photos. Like any skill, photography takes time and practice. Don't be afraid to start from where you are. I've been taking photos for over ten years and I still learn new things every day. During this course I'm going to break down my process for shooting flat lays and fashion photos. Step by step, we'll get you on your way to becoming a more skilled photographer.

## **FOCUS ON YOUR OWN WORK**

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There are a lot of great photographers out there who have their process down. Take inspiration from whoever you want, but don't let their skills (or follower count) bring you down. If you find yourself getting discouraged because you're not in the same place as another rep, stop and remind yourself that it doesn't matter what other people are doing! Focus on your own journey, set personal goals, and celebrate your successes.

## **ALWAYS BE LOOKING FORWARD**

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When I'm happy with a shoot I celebrate with a smoothie. When I wish a shoot had gone better I drag myself to the nearest coffee shop and buy a mope-ucchino. Whatever happens today, remember that there's always a new tomorrow. Today's failures are tomorrow's successes.

I like projects that are a little outside my skill set. Doing something new is fun and challenging, but learning new skills on the job means those projects don't always come together how I envisioned them. That's ok! The important thing is that I keep trying new things.

I want you to keep in mind that photography is a process. Your work and effort is inherently valuable. It's important to recognize that even if today didn't go great, it was good practice, and that practice prepared you for your next project!

## **DON'T BE AFRAID TO REACH OUT**

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If you like a photographer's work and want to know more about their technique, don't be afraid to reach out! People are nice, most people like to give back, so go ahead send an email to someone who you think is doing a great job. Ask questions! Make observations! Hit send! You never know what will happen.

## **YOU'RE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK!**

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The last thing I have to say is this: The difference between a bad and good photo is usually not that much. Maybe a little more care when framing. Some more knowledge of light. A dash of editing experience. This course is all about getting you going in the right direction. I'm excited to be on this journey together!

## **THE MOST & BASIC OF BASICS**



### **WHAT DOES A GOOD PHOTO DO?**

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At its most basic, a good Agnes and Dora photo accurately describes a product. It's not too bright or too dark, it's not blurry and it doesn't suffer from dramatic changes in product color because of editing or filters.

## **WHAT ARE THE TECHNICAL ELEMENTS THAT MAKE UP A GOOD PHOTO**

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A good photo is in focus and sharp.

A good photo isn't too bright or too dark.

A good photo has accurate color.

## **GREAT IMAGES**

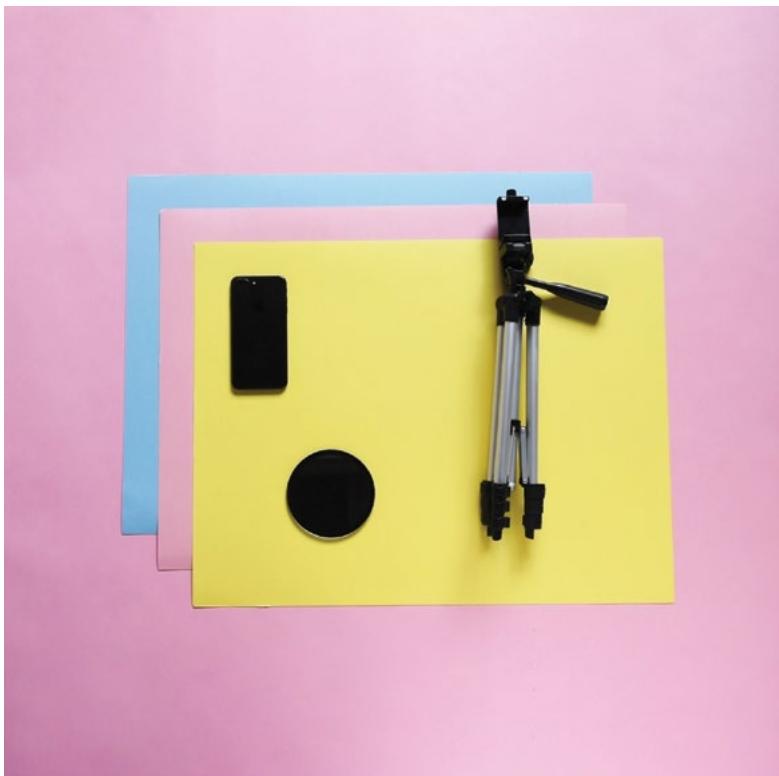
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A great photo is more than just clear and accurate! A great photo inspires. A great photo turns a potential customer into an Agnes & Dora buyer, because they're so excited to have the product you photographed in their hands.

So how do we inspire people with our photos? By telling a story! By pairing a sunny top with an ocean-colored background and some sunglasses, you've transformed a simple photo of a shirt to a story about going to the beach. Pair a kid's shirt & skirt combo with a matching adult skirt and shirt combo and suddenly you're telling a story of a mother & daughter date.

The secret is to merely suggest the story. A beach story or a night on the town doesn't need every accessory and detail that you can think of, just a few. The viewer fills in the details in their head.





## INTRO

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In this series every photo we show was made on a phone. We do that because we want to show that you can make great images on phones. Remember, it's the photographer, not the gear, that makes a great photo. Don't worry about having the most expensive and nice gear. Get stuff that works for you, or work with what you already have! In this section we're going to go over easy-to-find materials that we'll use to make our photos. These products are our suggestions, not requirements.

## TRIPOD & REMOTE

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If you're taking a lot of photos of yourself, and you need to do it alone, you can't go wrong with a tripod & remote. Tripods come in many shapes & sizes. I myself have a smartphone attachment that screws onto my professional tripod. For most uses, you don't need a \$200 tripod when-- a \$20 tripod can fit the bill just as well.

There are two kinds of tripods we commonly see. Tripods with a telescoping neck and tripods with telescoping legs. We don't recommend the tripods that have telescoping necks, with a phone they tend to be top heavy and tip over. Instead, use a tripod with legs that telescope to make a wide, more sturdy base.

When properly set up, this style of tripod is much sturdier and less likely to become top heavy and tip over.



THE TRIPOD ON THE LEFT HAS A NARROW BASE. WHEN A PHONE IS PLACED ON TOP THEY CAN EASILY BE KNOCKED OVER.  
THE TRIPOD ON THE RIGHT IS MUCH MORE STURDY.

## COLORED PAPER

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Having a few different pieces of colored paper for flat lays can be the key to an interesting background. To get something big enough you might have to go to a paper store where they have roll paper. We found different colors of matboard for around \$10 a sheet. Check your local craft, paper or office supply store. Amazon also has large paper. If you want something a little more durable, fabric from a fabric store, or even a bed sheet, can also make a background interesting.

When weighing your backdrop options, make sure to buy a material that has a matte finish. A surface that's too shiny can result in distracting bright spots in your final images.

Remember, you're going to want paper that's at least three feet on the long edge. Big sheets will ensure you have enough space to make larger flat lays.



## STUFF FOR REFLECTORS

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In this class I'll use things like gold & silver foil, mirrors and plain white foamcore as reflective surfaces. Once you get to the Fill Light section, you'll see why.



TO FILL IN THE SHADOWS OF OUR FLAT LAYS, WE'LL USE THINGS LIKE A WHITE POSTER BOARD, GOLD & SILVER FOIL AND EVEN MIRRORS.





## INTRO

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In this lesson we'll learn how to think about light and how to light clothing. We'll also discuss why you should only use natural light to light your flat lays.

# NATURAL LIGHT VS. ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

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## WHY IS NATURAL LIGHT PREFERABLE?

There are two ways you can light a photo:

1. Artificial light (like a camera flash, studio lights, or the overhead lights in your home).
2. The sun.

This course focuses solely on using the sun, or natural light, as our light source.

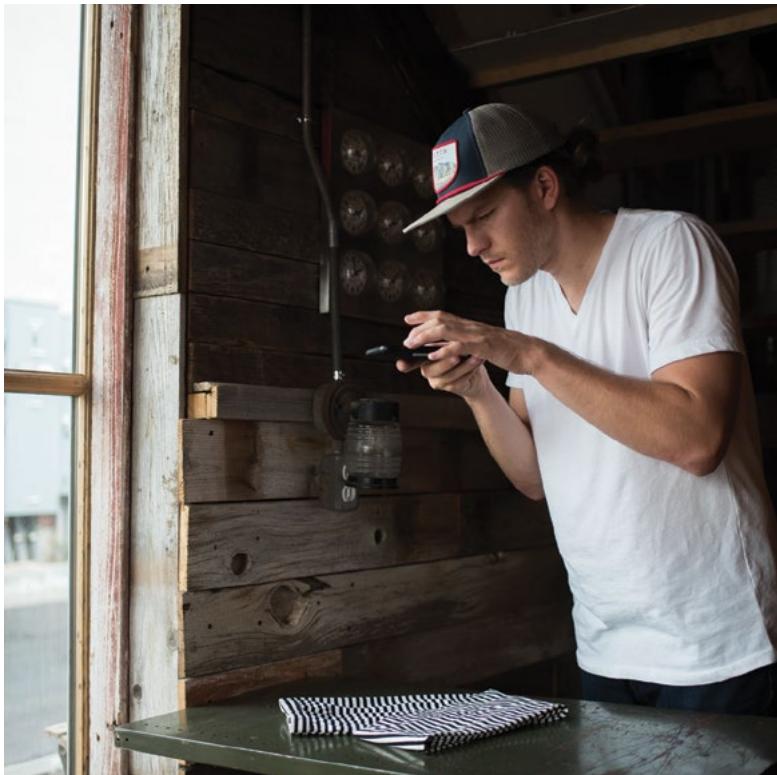
We're going to use natural light for a few reasons.

Reason number one is that you can't really get a flash or light kit to work with a phone. So using a professional lighting kit for artificial lighting isn't an option.

Reason number two: this course is about minimal equipment! I want you to be able to work with what you have and not think you have to spend thousands on professional camera gear, so let's keep it simple.

Reason number three: It is incredibly easy to make natural light look good! (In fact, this whole training course was lit with natural light). Lots of photographers produce stunning work using only natural light.

So that's why we're only using the sun (or natural light) in this course.



USING THE SOFT, NATURAL LIGHT FROM A WINDOW TO TAKE A QUICK PHOTO OF SOME LEGGINGS.

DON'T FORGET TO TURN OFF YOUR LIGHTS!

You've probably heard it before, but I'm going to say it again: don't leave your overhead lights on when shooting with natural light! If you take a photo that mixes overhead light with natural light, your photo will be tinted yellow or blue.

Here's why that happens: overhead lights have a yellow cast, and natural light has a blue cast. Your camera can balance that to make the whites look white and line all the other colors up (a feature called white balance).

However, your camera can only balance one cast of light at a time. If both casts of light are mixed (which happens when you leave overhead lights on), your camera has to choose which color to balance. If your camera balances the yellows, the photo will look too blue. If it balances the blues, the photo will look yellow. No matter what, your photo will be slightly tinted. There's no amount of editing that will fix this. (Not even in apps like Snapseed, VSCO or Lightroom.)

SO REMEMBER: If you leave your lights on, it will ensure that the color will never look quite right. Don't shoot any photos with your room lights on. It's always worth it to do the job the right way first.



The leggings on the top left were lit with only natural light from a window. The leggings on the top right were lit with both window light and room lights. Those leggings have a strong, undesirable yellow tint to them. This is because the blue light of the window and the yellow light of the room lights are mixing. The leggings on the bottom left were lit with only room lights, they have spooky shadows and the photo is grainy because room lights aren't bright enough to produce a high quality image from a cell phone camera. The leggings on the bottom right are the same photo, but we attempted to white balance them. The color still looks unnatural. The moral of these four photos is this: Use natural light.

## **SOFT AND HARD LIGHT**

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### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

When planning out a product photo, one of the first things to consider is quality of light. There are two basic kinds of light: soft (or indirect) light, and hard (or direct) light.

To understand what hard light is, think of a bright, cloudless, sunny day. On a day like this, the light from the sun shines directly onto everything. The shadows, cast by the light, are dark and sharp. This is because the light is direct and unobstructed. This is hard light.

To get a feel for soft light, consider an overcast day. When the sun has to travel through clouds to reach objects, the light is less direct. The clouds diffuse the light, which results in much softer shadows. This is soft light.

On the left there are some Agnes & Dora products, photographed in both soft & hard light. The light shining on the clothes on the lefthand column is indirect, soft light. The edges of the shadows are a little blurry. The tones are all even and pretty gradual. There aren't any shadows with distinct edges cast by the light.

The righthand column features the same clothes, but with hard, direct light being cast on them. The lines that the shadows cast have a hard edge. Things look much more stark. The shadows are much more dark and dramatic.

Most light in your workspace is probably soft light. This is because the sun may only directly shine through your window for a few hours of the day. My studio has a window that points to the west, so I don't get any direct light until around 2pm. Up until then it's all indirect, soft light.



## WHICH KIND OF LIGHT SHOULD I USE?

Soft light is great for making products look smooth and natural. Most product photos you see are shot with soft light. Soft light tends to highlight products well, since the shadows are minimal and non-obtrusive, letting viewers focus on the product itself. Soft light is lovely and inoffensive.

Hard light adds sharp drama to your image. It's more distinct than soft light. You have to shield your eyes when thinking about harsh light. The shadows cast by harsh light catch the eye. Harsh light feels like the light in a desert, or at high noon.

Hard light is used less in product photography, and we'll mostly focus on making images with soft light in this course, but it can still be useful. Because hard light casts deep shadows, it can make a product photo feel sharper and more distinct.

So what kind of light should you use for your images? In the end, it's up to you to decide what's best for your product. Consider how the lighting will make your viewer feel and make those choices based on the tone you want to set.

If you're looking for a quick rule of thumb: go for the soft light. It's generally easier to work with and is less risky. I'm always up for experimenting, but on days when you just want to take a quick photo to post, stick with the soft light.



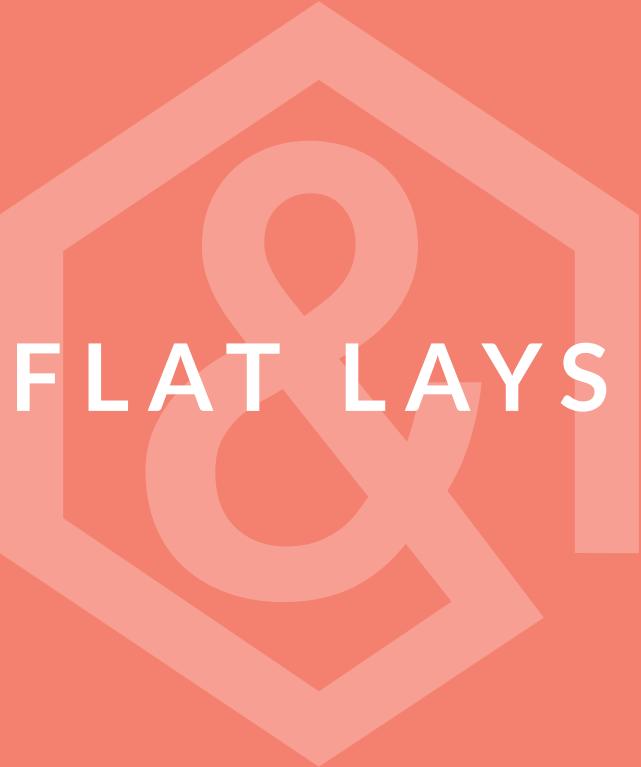
SOFTLIGHT PHOTOS

## CONCLUSION

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So that's your intro to thinking about light. We've looked at examples of hard and soft light and talked about some common pitfalls (mixing light sources!)

Next up: we're going to use what we've learned in this lesson to take some flat lays!



# FLAT LAYS

## INTRO TO FLAT LAYS

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### WHAT ARE THEY FOR?

In their most basic form, flat lays are pictures that have one or more products laid out in an aesthetically pleasing way. They're useful because you don't need a model—just a few fun items, a good background and some imagination!

When done well, flat lays tell a story. Each item in the flat lay reinforces the story of the flat lay. A picnic flat lay might have a basket, summer dress, polaroid camera, sunglasses, and a neatly folded blanket. A camping flat lay might have boots, a pocket knife, a Field Notes notebook, and a vintage camera. A beach flat lay would have flip flops, a brightly colored towel, a swimsuit and a beach ball.



FLATLAYS

## WHAT DO THEY DO WELL?

Flat lays are a simple, memorable way to build a narrative around your product. Potential customers might not be very inspired by a maxi skirt on its own, but pair that skirt with the right things and suddenly your viewer isn't thinking about the skirt anymore, they're thinking about how fun it would be to own that skirt and go on a coffee date with friends. A great flat lay sells inspiration and aspiration. They're thinking: "I'll wear this shirt and go camping and take more photos on film."

## SETTING UP A BASIC FLAT LAY

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Now that we know what a flat lay is best at, let's start making ours.

### DIRECTION OF LIGHT

The direction your light is coming from might not be something you think about much, but it's very important. See the three flat lays to the right? The left hand products look good, the right hand product look a little off. Why is that?

It's because the light is coming from below on the products from the right. When comes from below, things look strange and unfamiliar. (This is why telling a scary campfire story is more effective when you shine a flashlight from below—it distorts the storyteller's face!) So when setting up your flat lay, make sure the top of your product is closest to your light source.



THREE EXAMPLES OF PRODUCTS LIT FROM THE TOP OF THE GARMENT AND THE BOTTOM OF THE GARMENT. MAKE SURE TO ALWAYS HAVE THE TOP OF YOUR PRODUCT CLOSEST TO YOUR LIGHT SOURCE.

## PRODUCTION VALUE

For flat lays, a little production value goes a long way. What I mean by “production value” is simply making sure that everything in your photo is just right. Check that your product isn’t too wrinkly, hide those product tags and do a last minute check to make sure there’s nothing you don’t want in your image.

## IT'S TIME TO TAKE SOME PICTURES

When framing your flat lay, try to position your phone directly over the subjects of your photo. Flat lays tend to look better and more professional when coming from straight above.

Before we start shooting, let's go over one simple trick with iPhone and Android phones: Manually controlling how bright or dark a photo is.

### IPHONE

On your iPhone, open the camera app and press and hold anywhere on the screen. The yellow focus box will shrink twice and your phone will now say “AE/AF LOCK” on top. You've now unlocked manual exposure with your iPhone. Drag your finger up on the screen to brighten the image and drag down to darken it. A little yellow sun will appear next to the yellow box and you brighten and darken your screen.

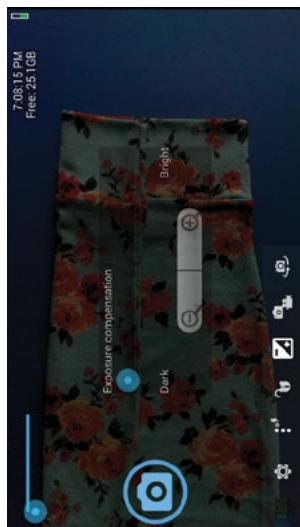
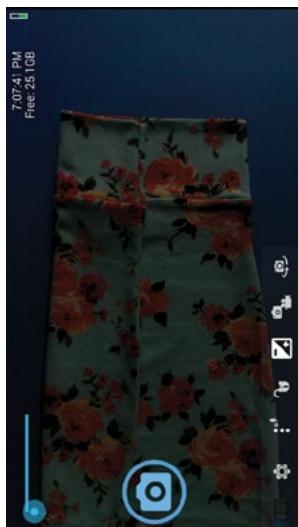
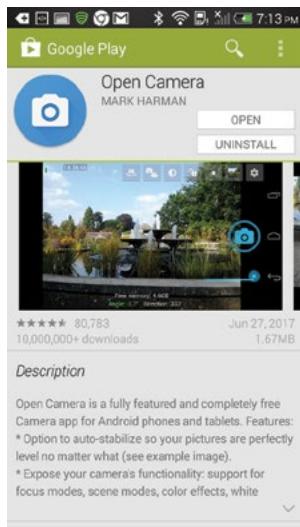
(This action also locks focus, so if you move your phone

after hitting that button, you may need to refocus on your subject. Simply do this by pressing on the part of your image that you want to be in focus until it says “AE/AF LOCK” again.)



## ANDROID

Download an app called Open Camera. Tap the box with a plus and minus sign on it. A menu that says “Exposure Compensation” will open. Brighten and darken your image with that slider.





BUILD THAT FLAT LAY!

## FLAT LAY TUTORIAL

Flat lays are easier to set up on a surface that's waist level. I like to organize my flat lay on a stiff board on a table. Once my flat lay is ready for shooting, I have the option of moving it closer to my window, or even putting it on the ground in front of a doorway, depending on what light source I'm using.

Today I'm shooting my flat lay in using this window. Another great option is placing it in front of a doorway that leads outside.

Most of the work in flat lays is actually building and arranging the flat lay. Taking the photo is pretty simple. I'm going to adjust my exposure to make sure that my photo isn't too bright or too dark, and I'm ready to shoot!

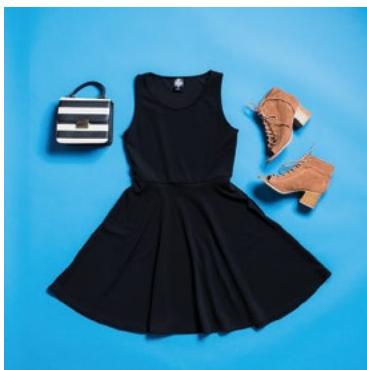
## **ADVANCED FLAT LAY STYLING**

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### BASIC FLAT LAY LAYOUT

Flat lays are all about layers and experimenting. When setting up my own flat lays, I often take photos as I go. I'll start with a basic item, take a photo, add something else, take a photo, and so on. This process allows me to scroll through images later to see what works and what doesn't.

As a rule of thumb, aim for about 3-5 objects in your layout. Don't feel like you need to feature everything you own in a flat lay— too much can crowd the image and distract from your core product. Minimal layouts can attract customers just as well as layouts with lots of things!



## BACKGROUNDS:

Mix up those backgrounds! Lots of high end brands are turning to simple ideas like colored backdrops to make their products stand out. You can find a pretty good selection of colored paper at paper stores or hobby & craft stores.

Buy just one color and have that be your signature shade or multiple colors that go together and mix it up. There's no wrong solution!

In a few of these photos we even laid one piece of colored paper over another. It's a simple idea, but can really make an image pop.



## ADDING ACCESSORIES

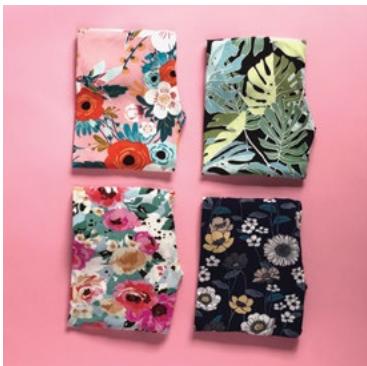
I'm gonna say it again: tell stories! When thinking about how to design your flat lay, ask yourself, "What's the story of this outfit?" Weekend wear? Evening affair? Day at the fair? Fighting a bear? How old is the person who is wearing it? What's their favorite Starbucks drink? Build a narrative in your head around the person and tell yourself a story about their day. This is your inspiration.



THE TOP LEFT OUTFIT IS THE BEAR FIGHTING ENSEMBLE.

## FLATLAYS WITH MULTIPLES

Not all flat lays need to be outfits! Customers respond just as well to a variety of the same product. If you've got four of the same top in different colors, why not style them with each other?

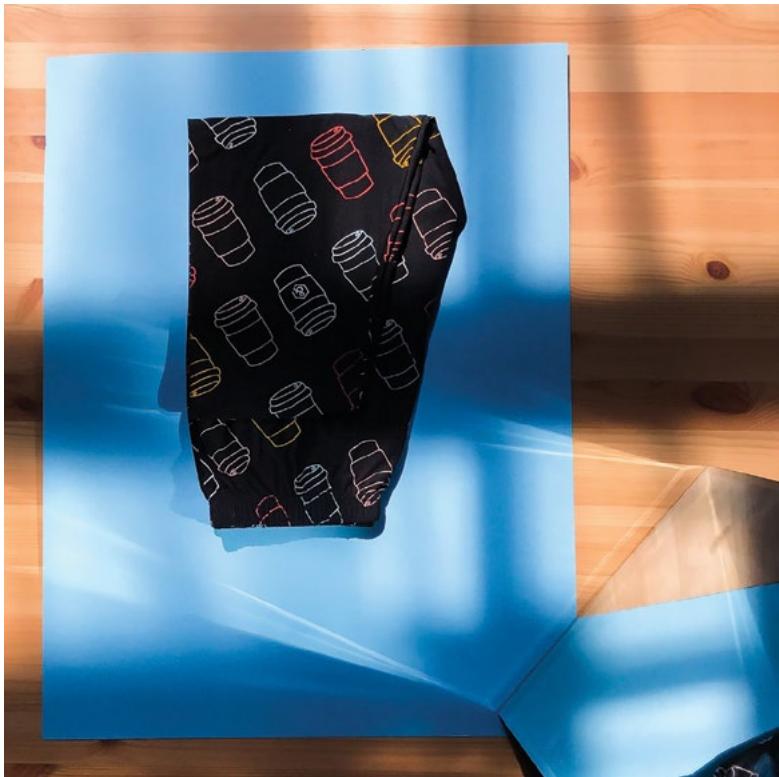


## BREATHING ROOM

Some flat lays look good as tight crops. Some benefit from a larger border of space around the outside. If things are too close together, the flat lay can feel overcrowded. Leave breathing room between your products, and at the edge of your frame. Of course, experiment with spacing to find your own sweet spot. There's no one right way to do it.







## ADVANCED LIGHT (OPTIONAL)

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This section is only for the hardcore photography lovers. Honestly, we weren't sure if we should include it, because we didn't want to distract from the core ideas of this curriculum. But I think it's so fun that I didn't want to leave it out. That being said, if none of this stuff appeals to you, don't stress about it. This section is for the people who are excited about photography and want to learn a little more. It's not required reading.

## SHOWING TEXTURE

First, we're going to talk a little about texture.

A great way to bring out your product is by showing its texture. Why do we think about texture? Texture gives your product depth and makes it look real. And defining texture is easy peasy: it's all in the angle of your light source!

The shirts in this example were both lit with light coming from the top of the garment, light coming from a 45 degree angle, light coming from the right and finally, light being cast from directly above the shirts. In the first three photos texture is illustrated because the angle of light caused the folds and wrinkles to cast shadows. There's no texture when the light is hitting the product from directly above because the folds and creases of the product aren't casting any shadows. If your product is lit from the side, the folds and creases cast shadows, giving the product more apparent texture.

We perceive texture in terms of light and dark because texture is basically how much shadow your object is casting on itself. Texture reminds people of the physical experience of an object. Roughly translated, this means seeing texture makes people want to reach out and touch the product.

By lighting at an angle, you can incorporate dramatic texture into a flat lay that you want to be visually striking.



## FILL LIGHT



What if you don't like how deep the shadows are in your photos? You can lessen those deep shadows using something we call fill light!

What is fill light? Fill light is when you use a "reflector" to reflect light to an area on your product that's in shadow. If you've ever seen behind the scenes photos where someone is holding up a big white disk, then you've seen fill light in action!

A reflector can be anything. Most people use white foam core or poster board as a reflector. (Anything that's large and white will work.) When photographing people some

photographers use silver and gold reflectors. You can even use a mirror to reflect tons of light onto your subject.

In the photo above, I'm using a white reflector to add some fill light onto the shadows of my subject. The board is a matte texture, so it's reflective but not as reflective as it could be (more on really reflective surfaces later in this lesson). Adding fill light is simple. Just place your reflector side farthest away from your light source. The closer a reflector is to the subject, the more light it will bounce back onto those shadows.

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These eight photos were all shot in soft light. The products on the left all had fill light reflected onto them. The products on the right were all shot with just natural light, with no added fill light.

That's the most basic form of fill light. Fill light from a white card is a great way to lighten up shadows without drastically changing the image.



If you want to add a little more shine to your images, you can add fill light from gold or silver foil. The fill light a silver reflector casts onto my product is a lot more noticeable. Same with a gold reflector. Silver and gold light have a similar effect. They can make your products look chic and shimmery.



Want yet another option for fill light? Try a mirror. By definition, mirrors are super reflective, so when you use a mirror for fill light, it's going to look almost like there's another light source.



Like we talked about earlier, moving your mirror closer and farther from your object adjusts the strength of the light impacting your product.



## HARD LIGHT

Now that we've talked about fill light with nice, diffused light, let's switch gears and go the opposite way. That's right, hard light.

Hard light is great for making bold imagery. If you like the intensity of your direct light, but you're finding that your light is a little too intense you can easily tone it down in one of two ways. The first way is by diffusing some of our incoming light with a piece of sheer fabric. Hang your sheer fabric over a window with direct light shining through it. The light will still be strong, but not as hard.

The second way is to fall back to our new friend: Fill light! Hard light is also a great time to flex your fill light muscles. Bring out that white foam core or maybe even a mirror.



HARD LIGHT WITH WITHOUT FILL AND WITH FILL LIGHT.



HARD LIGHT WITH WITHOUT FILL AND WITH FILL LIGHT.



SIMPLE BACKGROUNDS!



# STYLED SHOOTS



## INTRO

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Styled shoots! What are they! How do you do them! How do you find locations! We'll answer all those questions and more in this section.

## LOCATION

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### WHAT MAKES A GOOD LOCATION?

When I'm taking portraits, the first thing I look for is a clean background. What do I mean by that? I mean that I want to find a background that is simple and not distracting. If you're trying to take a photo of a skirt, you don't want your surroundings to be competing for attention with your product. Sometimes finding a location is all about keeping it simple.

Like we talked about in the flat lay section, every shoot should tell a story. Try to find a location that fits in with the story you want to tell. A kids' pool in your backyard, a bright mural downtown and a trailhead all tell different stories.

People tend to overthink locations. A good location can be as simple as a floral wallpaper or a well-lit coffee shop.



## HOW DO YOU FIND GOOD LOCATIONS?

Congrats! You have a new hobby: location hunting! As a portrait and fashion photographer, I'm always on the lookout for interesting spots to shoot. And when I do find locations that I think are interesting, I make a note of it so I can come back.

Everyone has their own preference for locations. I like spots that are a mixture of nature & civilization, like a building with overgrown foliage. Some people are drawn to bright graffiti or murals. There are great locations to shoot no matter where you live. Sit on a stoop, lounge in an Ikea, hang out in a greenhouse, ham it up in a petting zoo, get cute in the produce section, have a staring contest with your oldest kid, etc etc. If you're having trouble finding good spots near you, Instagram location tags are a great resource.

One more thing about locations. Some people stress about finding the perfect location, but don't think much about good light. I think you should reverse that. If you find a great spot to shoot, make sure you pay attention to when the light looks best there. Focus on good light and almost any location will be great.



# LIGHT

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## LOOKING FOR LIGHT

I try to shoot at times of day when the sun isn't directly shining on my location. Sometimes this means shooting in the morning, before the sun is hitting western-facing walls. Sometimes this means shooting in the evening when your eastern-facing walls aren't in direct sunlight. If you've got cloud cover, you might not have to worry about direct sun killing your vibe.



TWO PHOTOS OF THE SAME LOCATION. ONE SHOT AT NOON ON A SUNNY DAY, THE OTHER SHOT AT 7:30 PM ON A RAINING EVENING.

## USING THAT FUN SUNSET LIGHT!

Photographers call it “golden hour.” A half hour before the sun sets, there are really pleasing, deep orange tones in the light. Once the sun has set, you get a little more time with really nice, diffused light before it’s too dark. Golden hour light is some of the most lovely light in the whole day, and it looks really good on people.



## HOW TO THINK OF YOUR STYLED SHOOTS

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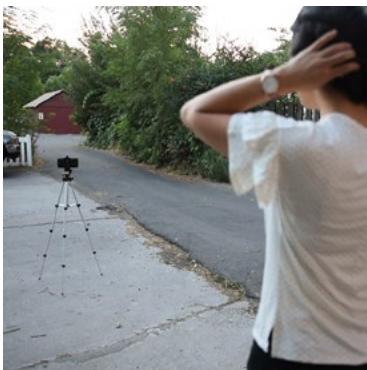
### A QUICK SHOOT STRATEGY

Taking a product photo doesn't need to be a huge production or take up your entire weekend. It can be informal, unplanned and take just a little time out of your day. Since you take your phone with you everywhere, with just a few extra materials on hand you're ready for a spontaneous shoot whenever you have time. Some Agnes and Dora reps keep a few dresses with them, along with their tripod, in the back of their car. This makes it easy to stop by a cute location and take a couple quick photos without too much hassle.

If you don't have any spare time during your regular week and you'd rather do an hour-long photo shoot on the weekend, you can get plenty of great content in that time. When shooting, make sure you try as many ideas as you can— different angles, crops, and poses should be your friends. If you do a little research and planning beforehand, you'll have lots of great material to post!

If you have an idea, don't be afraid to try it. Use your sense of humor. Try ideas you've seen online. Experiment!





## FRAMING YOUR SHOT

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### FRAMING YOUR PHOTOS

Sometimes making a good photo is learning how to simplify your frame. What does simplify mean? If you have distracting elements on the periphery of your shot, but the center is clean, look at the image and determine what's distracting. Crop in and cut out all that distracting stuff. When in doubt, crop it out.

When I'm taking a photo of a person, I focus on where their head is in the frame. So when you think about framing your shot, start by thinking about where your subject's head will be in the photo.

When you're in front of patterns that are consistent (bricks, wood, etc), the lines crossing behind your body look good. If you're posing in a location that is a solid surface, but has a line that intersects your head, it tends to not look as good.



## LEARNING HOW TO FRAME YOUR SHOT.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR. HOW TO STAND OUT.

Framing your shot is about being mindful of what you want to show in the photo. If you want to focus on a specific detail or feature of a piece of clothing, hone in on that by taking a photo of just that detail. If you want to show a cool environment, you'll want a wider shot with room for all of it. If you like your shoes or the way a dress falls over your knees, take a picture facing straight down!

A lot of photography is experimentation. Once you've got your safe shots, it's time to branch out.



TOP RIGHT PHOTO BY @AGNESANDDORAUNDERTHESUN



TOP LEFT, MIDDLE LEFT, AND BOTTOM RIGHT  
PHOTOS BY @AGNESANDDORAUNDERTHESUN

## TAKING THE PHOTO

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### HOW TO USE JUST A TRIPOD & REMOTE/TIMER

If you can't corral someone to shoot for you, don't think all is lost. There are a number of good tripod & remote options that are made specifically for mobile phones.

To take your own photo with a tripod & remote, first identify where you want to be positioned in the photo. Next, set up your phone so that everything looks right. Set your timer (or remote) and get in that frame. This is where a remote comes in handy, because they make it easier switch poses and take a bunch of different shots.

If you don't have a remote that connects to your phone, you can always use a camera app with a timer function.





**EDITING**

## INTRO

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In this lesson we're going to talk about my editing philosophy and best practices. In the next lesson I'll take you through some live edits with images you saw earlier in this course.

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

You should think of editing as polishing your car, not applying a whole new paint job. What this means is that you want to take as good a photo as possible and then do any last touch ups in post. If you took a bad photo, all editing is going to do is leave you with an edited bad photo.

### FILTERS

If you're shooting products that require color accuracy, be really careful with any filter you use. A lot of popular apps provide filters that apply pretty radical color changes. If your image is meant to be entertaining or artistic, some color changes are fine! If you're shooting something where color accuracy is important, a filter that makes radical changes to the color of your product is bad. Your product photos need to have accurate color.

Think of filters like a shortcut. They exist to give us an easy way to get from a maybe dull image to a less dull image. The problem is, sometimes those shortcuts don't take us where we want to go. If I'm shooting a piece of

artwork that is vibrant and dynamic and then apply a filter that turns it into a 19th century gold rush photograph, I'm not doing the image justice.

Again, you should look at editing your image as polishing your car, not applying a new paint job. Editing should bring out the best in a photo.

## MANUAL EDITING

Editing is all about the subtle combination of ingredients. Think of editing like a recipe. When I edit I'll adjust things like brightness, highlights, shadows, contrast, warmth, tint and sharpness. All of these are tools to make a great image. Some photos need more brightness, others need more contrast. What every image needs varies, just like every recipe.

The main thing I want to impress is that editing is all about the way you combine those things. Because every photo is different, every set of edits is a little different.

Editing has its limits! If your photo is way too dark, you probably won't be able to save it (or it won't look as good as it would have if it had been correctly lit). This is why it's so important to take the best photo possible before the editing process starts.

To edit my mobile photos, I use software called Lightroom. There are lots of photo editing apps out there, so you should use the one you're most comfortable with.

When I edit, the first thing I look at is brightness, or how well-lit the entire photo is. Brightness affects the whole image, and the more you adjust brightness, the lighter the

entire photo becomes.

Next are highlights. If a few parts of a photo are too bright, try adjusting the highlights. This feature only affects the brightest parts of your image, not the middle tones or dark tones.

Shadows are the same thing as highlights, but in reverse. Adjusting shadows will only affect the darkest parts of your image and not the midtones or highlights.

Next comes contrast. Contrast makes your darks darker and your brights brighter. Adjusting contrast can make a photo feel sharper and more distinct.

Warmth. Do you want your photo to feel sunny or cool? Upping the warmth will add warmer color (oranges, reds, yellows), and pulling it back will add cooler color (greens, blues, purples).

Tint. Do you prefer a green cast, neutral cast or magenta cast?

If the white balance on your image is off, the warmth and tint are easy ways to address those problems.

Be careful with warmth and tint. If you change the color in your image too much, it will seem like the product is different color than it is. So if color accuracy is really important, only make slight changes with those two settings.

The last thing I usually do is clarity. Clarity adds some sharpness to your photos. It adds that last little bit of shine to an image. It's not the most obvious change, but it subtly creates a more professional-looking photo.

## EDITING ANNA WITH SHOES

When I open up a photo to edit, the first thing I do is crop an image. In this case, I'm going to post this photo to Instagram, so I want a square crop. After opening up a photo in Lightroom, tap the Crop panel at the bottom of the screen.

Now I'm going to tap the Light panel at the bottom of the screen. My first option is exposure. I thought this photo was a little dark, so I raised the exposure. Be careful not to overdo it on exposure! If you brighten a photo too much, you can lose detail in the highlights.

Next is contrast. I want this photo to be a little more bold, so I'm adding contrast.

Because I don't want to lose detail on Anna's dress, I'm actually lowering the highlights a little. That way I still have a bright photo with a lot of contrast, but the highlights on her face and shirt aren't lost.

Now comes the shadows. I like the green foliage that's above her head in shadow, so I'm raising the shadow slider a lot to help bring out those leaves that are in the darkness.

The Whites and Blacks sliders are both set to how I want them for this photo, so I'm not going to change them.

The next thing we can do is change the color of our image. The Color panel is right next to the Light panel.

I'm going to warm up my photo a slight amount. Remember, editing is all about the subtle combination of ingredi

ents! It can be really easy to overdo your edits. Push too far to the left or right on the Temperature slider and you'll have a fully blue or yellow photo. Small adjustments make a big difference!

Adjusting Tint is the next step. I moved my slider to the magenta side because I thought it counteracted the green plants well.

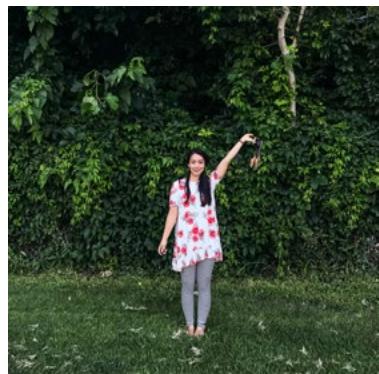
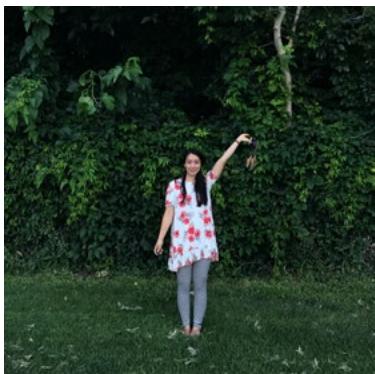
Saturation makes all the colors in a photo more punchy and saturated.

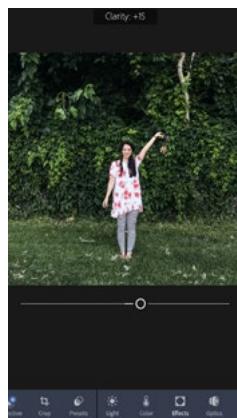
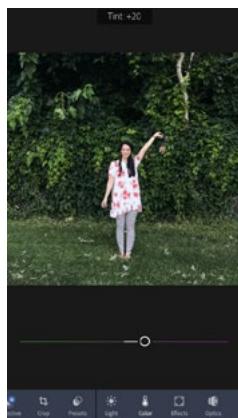
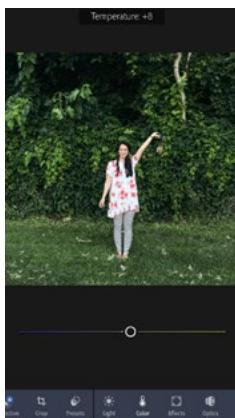
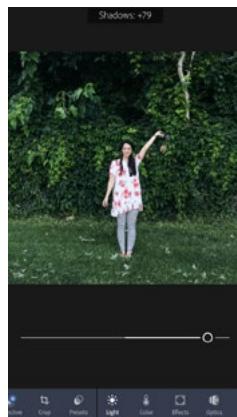
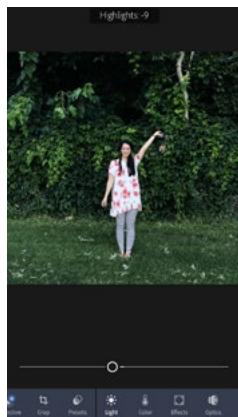
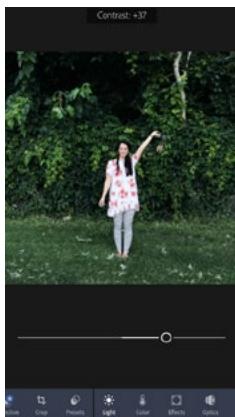
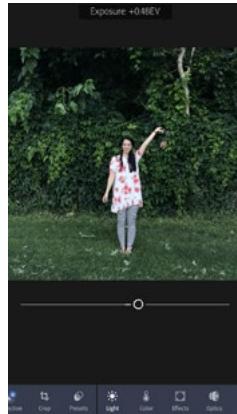
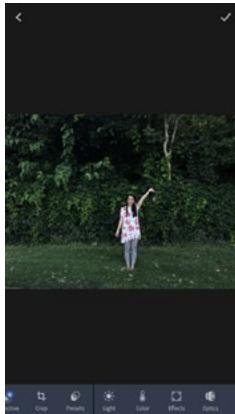
Vibrance looks at your photo and takes only the muted colors and makes them more saturated.

I'm going to skip Vibrance and Saturation because I think this photo has enough color.

The last thing I do is tap the Effects panel and increase my Clarity a little. Clarity has a sharpening effect and adds a professional subtlety to any image.

Now compare the two!





## EDITING LEGGINGS ON PINK

For this photo of leggings on pink I want to keep the vibrant colors and try to even out the tones on my pink paper.

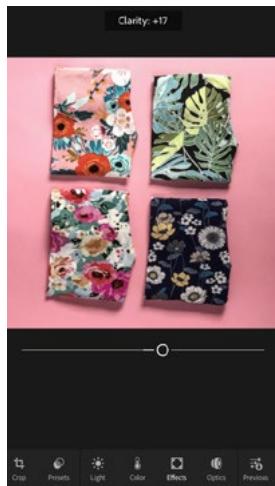
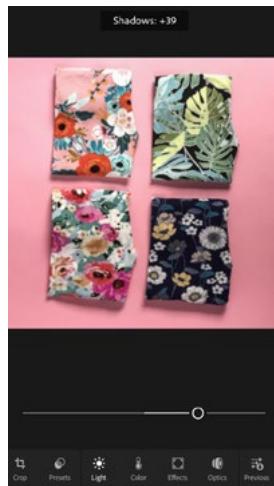
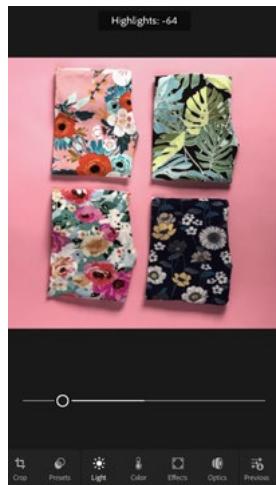
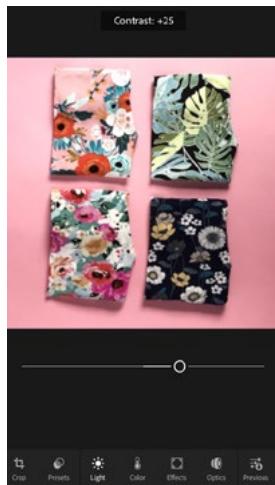
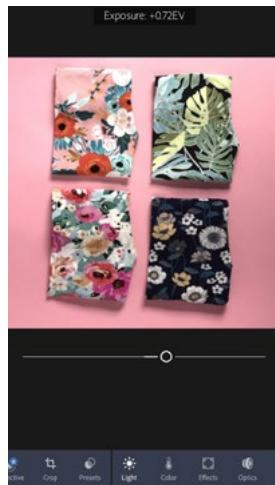
This photo needs to be brightened a little, so I'm going to add some brightness to it. By raising the contrast I'm making my image more dramatic.

Next I'll lower my highlights. I'm lowering my highlights on this photo because the pink paper gets a little too bright at the top for my liking. By just adjusting the highlights, I can make those highlights a little darker without making my entire image darker.

I'm also using the shadows slider to decrease my shadows a little. This will also help even out my pink paper, because it gets a little dark in the bottom right corner.

For this photo I don't want to change anything on the Color panel, because that could change how my product actually looks. The last thing I'll do is add some clarity.







WRAP UP

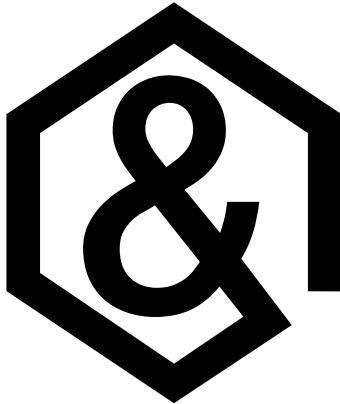
## WRAP UP

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Photography is a journey. Those might have been possibly the most cheesy words I've ever written, but they're still true. No one ever woke up a professional photographer without waking up an amateur photographer. Yo-Yo Ma is the best cellist in the world because he practices every day. Wayne Gretzky is a great hockey player and a bad photographer because the dude spent all his time on the ice and not shooting flat lays. What I'm trying to say is: put in a little work every day and pretty soon you're gonna be surprised at what you create.

You got this.

- Trevor Christensen



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