

PHOTOS

LIGHTING

Pay attention to the sources of light when taking your photo

- In general, try not to shoot pointed directly at a source of light
- Taking a photo near a window during the day can be a great source of natural light
- Tap your phone screen to adjust exposure; make sure the photo is not too dark or too bright
- Take notice of distracting shadows caused by direct light sources
- Use interesting light sources to your advantage
 - Outdoors, aim for “golden hour” as opposed to high noon with direct, overhead sunlight
- Make note of when to use or not use HDR mode with this helpful [Lifehacker guide](#)

COMPOSITION

Keep in mind where the photo will be used

- Horizontal (landscape) photos are preferred in many cases (UDaily, website)
- A square crop may be needed for a social media post
- Vertical (portrait) photos may be needed for an Instagram story, for example

In your phone’s settings, turn on grid lines to help better compose your photo

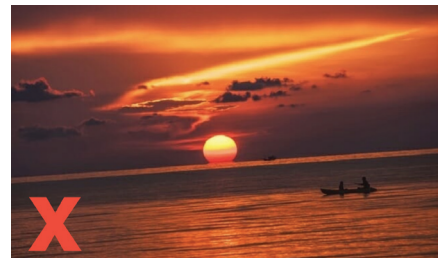
- Use these grid lines to level the horizon of your photo
- Don’t allow the eye to be drawn to the crooked horizon instead of your great image!

Keep the “rule of thirds” theory in mind, to create a natural balance to your photo

- In general, if you were to split your image into thirds, the focus of your photo should fall along where those grid lines meet

Pay attention to natural lines, unique angles and opportunities to “frame” your subject, in order to create visual interest.

Experiment with different perspectives; crouch down or climb higher for a new view.



BEST PRACTICES

BLURRING THE BACKGROUND

Blurring the background adds interest to your photo

- Try shooting in Portrait Mode if you have it
 - Not sure if you do? Check [here](#) for Android, or [here](#) for iPhone
- When shooting, get closer to your subject, and tap your finger on the screen to set the focus point. The closer you are, the blurrier the background will be
- You can also override the phone's autofocus, and tap the background to blur the foreground instead

In general, keep the background in mind whether it is blurred or not

- Try to create distance between your subject and the background
- Try to remove any distracting elements in the background that take the eye's focus away from the subject

EDITING IMAGES

Use your phone's built in editing options, or download a third-party app, to enhance your photos

- Use cropping tools to re-crop the image, or adjust crooked horizons
- Adjust the exposure as needed, if you can do so without reducing the photo quality
- Correct any color shifts; stay away from dramatic or distracting filters

REMINDERS

- Take more photos than you need! You can delete the bad ones later and submit only your best shots
- Prevent camera shake to try and get the sharpest photos
- Use your volume buttons (on the phone or on your headphones) as a shutter button
- Don't forget the Timer function! This can help reduce motion blur, if you are able to set the camera down, focus the image, and start the timer

VIDEOS

(For recording video on your phone and/or Zoom)

Choosing the right spot to film in your home

- Find an area in your home with a neutral background
- Make sure there is nothing identifiable or distracting in the background
- Avoid using an area right up against a wall; ideally you would want an area where there is a good distance between you and your background
- Find an area that has good lighting
- The best lighting should come from in front of you and/or on the sides of you.

Setting up your position in the camera

- Try to set yourself in the frame so you are eye level with your camera
- Set yourself up in a medium shot, which would frame you from around your chest area up to a little above your head.
- Make sure your eyes are in upper third region of frame
- If you were to cut the video frame into thirds, your eyes should be in the upper third region (see example at right).
- Make sure your head isn't out of frame



During the actual recording

- Smile :)
- Use mannerisms you would typically use in person