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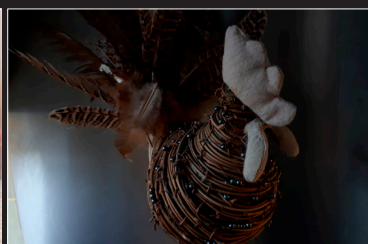
Seven key tips for taking great photos with your mobile

All of us have used our phones to take photos—whether of our family, of a sunset, or of interesting sights along a walk or hike. But, sadly, they don't always turn out great. That's probably because many of us aren't familiar with our phone's capabilities, or how to enhance a photo without overdoing it.

by Cindy-Lou Dale

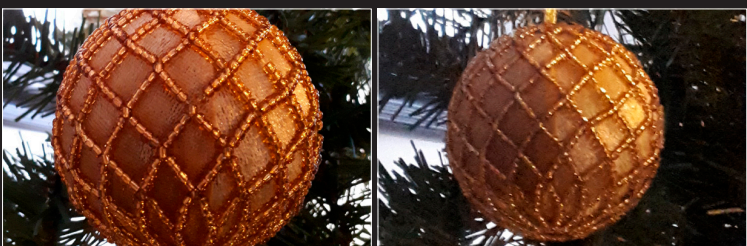


Here is an example of focus. The first image demonstrates focus on the back left side of a flask of designer gin; in the second image I shifted focus to the front and the bottle of olive oil. To hone in on an object and blur everything else, touch the object on your screen. In the second image, I also brightened it.



Manual Exposure: To focus on the chicken I tapped its image on-screen. Simultaneously a small sun icon appears which I swipe up to lighten the image.

1. **Focus on the fun:** If you're taking a picture of scenery or something large, you don't necessarily need to hone in on an object and focus on it, but if you are featuring let's say a chocolate bar but you want to show where you are in the background, you need to focus on the object and have everything else somewhat blurred in the background. All that needs doing is to touch the object on your screen that you want to focus on, the rest will become blurry and what you touch will come to life and be what your eye is drawn to.
2. **Zoom it:** What I advise against is digital zooming. This is what happens when you pinch or swipe to zoom—the phone simply enlarges and crops the output from the sensor before the photo is captured, degrading the image quality.
3. **Keep it clean:** There's no point trying to take great photos if the glass of the lens is dirty. It will block light from entering the camera's sensor and leave smudges, blurs or dust spots on your images. A clean lens will ensure you get sharp, clear images. So be sure to wipe your lens before taking the shot-of-your-life. Otherwise, no one will believe that you really spotted a troll in Norway.
4. **Adjust exposure manually:** When you tap on the subject to focus on it, the camera will also use the focus point to set the exposure in the shot. Exposure simply refers to how bright or dark the image is. Allowing the camera to set exposure on the focus point isn't always ideal. For example, if the subject is in a dark area of the frame, it could lead to the overall image being over-exposed. Most smartphones have a manual exposure tool which, when focused by tapping the screen, a small sun icon appears that simply needs swiping up or down to adjust the exposure slider.
5. **Forget flash:** Just don't do it! Don't use flash under any circumstances. It turns the prettiest locations into hostile environments, even little old ladies become scary monsters and it ruins the quality of the image.
6. **Keep still:** If you want perfect stability, it is possible to get a tripod attachment to slot your smartphone into. You'll probably look a bit silly bringing a tripod out to use with your phone, but it will allow you to achieve some fantastic shots. Tripods are especially useful if your smartphone camera doesn't include blur-reducing optical image stabilization (OIS), or if there's a manual mode that supports long-exposure photography. However, if you'd rather not go the tripod route, a key method for reducing blur is knowing how to hold a smartphone camera in a stable way. Holding your arms outstretched or far from your body could result in camera shake. Moving your elbows into the sides of your body can give a bit of extra stability where needed, as can physically resting the smartphone on a stable object. Be sure to shoot the picture with a screen tap and not the volume button as this will cause camera shake and use the self-timer. Speaking of volume buttons, some phones allow you to use the volume button on your headphones as a remote control for your camera.
7. **Editing:** This is probably the most important part in enhancing your pictures, so they really stand out and look crystal clear. The funny thing is it's probably the easiest part to do, but it took me a while to find the right (free) App and software. Firstly, you'll need to download the App called Aviary. When you've taken your photograph touch the App and it will bring up all your photos. From there, tap the picture you want to edit and enhance, then tap further enhancers like "scenery," "food," or "portrait" if you are featuring a person and want to soften their features. But be careful; avoid over-processing. Always focus on taking a great shot rather than trying to fix later with an App.



Instead of zooming in on the Xmas decoration, I got real close—keeping the quality of the image. The second photo demonstrates zooming in. You can't help but notice the poor picture quality.



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