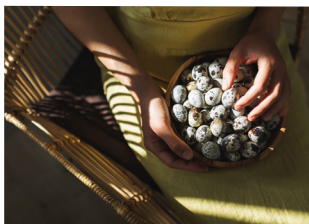
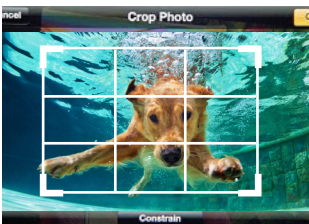
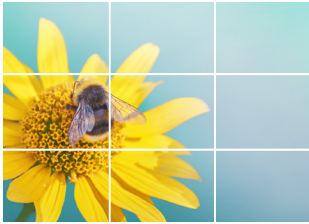


TIPS + TRICKS FOR INSTANTLY TAKING BETTER PHOTOS.





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1. USE GRIDLINES TO BALANCE YOUR SHOT.

One of the easiest and best ways to improve your mobile photos is to turn on the camera's gridlines. That superimposes a series of lines on the screen of your smartphone's camera that are based on the "rule of thirds" -- a photographic composition principle that says an image should be broken down into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, so you have nine parts in total.

According to this theory, if you place points of interest in these intersections or along the lines, your photo will be more balanced, level, and allow viewers to interact with it more naturally.



To switch the grid on ...

- iPhone: Go to "Settings," choose "Photos & Camera," and switch "Grid" on.
- Samsung Galaxy: Launch the Camera app, go to "Settings," scroll down and switch the "Grid Lines" option to "On."

2. CLEAN YOUR LENS.

A smartphone camera might be more convenient to carry around than a full-fledged photojournalist's camera, but it comes at the cost of protection.

Your phone is usually in your pocket or your bag when you're out of the house. All the while, the device's camera lens is collecting all kinds of dust and lint. Be sure to clean this lens with a soft handkerchief before taking a photo. You might not be able to tell just how dirty the lens was until you start editing your picture, and making sure the lens is crystal clear before taking a shot can keep you from starting from scratch.

3. SET YOUR PHONE'S LENS.

Today's phone cameras automatically focus on the foreground of your frame, but not every picture you take on your phone has an obvious subject. To adjust where you want your camera lens to focus, open your camera app and tap the screen where you want to sharpen the view.

If you're taking a photo of something in motion, for example, it can be difficult for your camera to follow this subject and refocus as needed. Tap the screen to correct your phone camera's focus just before snapping the picture to ensure the moving subject has as much focus as possible. A square or circular icon should then appear on your camera screen, shifting the focus of your shot to all of the content inside that icon.



4. FOCUS ON ONE SUBJECT.

Many of the best photos include just one, interesting subject. So when taking a picture, spend some extra time setting up the shot. Some professional photographers say that the subject shouldn't fill the entire frame, and that two-thirds of the photo should be negative space -- which helps the subject stand out even more.

But be sure you tap the screen of your smartphone to focus the camera on your subject -- that'll help to ensure that it's focused and the lighting is optimized where you want it to be.





5. EMBRACE NEGATIVE SPACE.

"Negative space" simply refers to the areas around and between the subjects of an image --and it can take a photo from "good" to "great."

When you include a lot of empty space in a photo, your subject will stand out more and evoke a stronger reaction from your viewer. And what does negative space look like? It's often a large expanse of open sky, water, an empty field, or a large wall, as in the example below.



6. PLAY WITH REFLECTIONS.

There's something so idyllic about seeing the sky reflected in a body of water. There's a reason why we love seeing that -- our eyes are drawn to reflections. So look for opportunities to play with them in photos.

There are plenty of out-of-the-box places to find reflections -- puddles, larger bodies of water, mirrors, sunglasses, drinking glasses, and metallic surfaces are just a few.





7. LOOK FOR SYMMETRY.

Symmetry can be defined as "a vague sense of harmonious and beautiful proportion and balance." And pictures that contain symmetry can be incredibly pleasing to the eye -- it's also one of the simplest and most compelling ways to compose a photo.

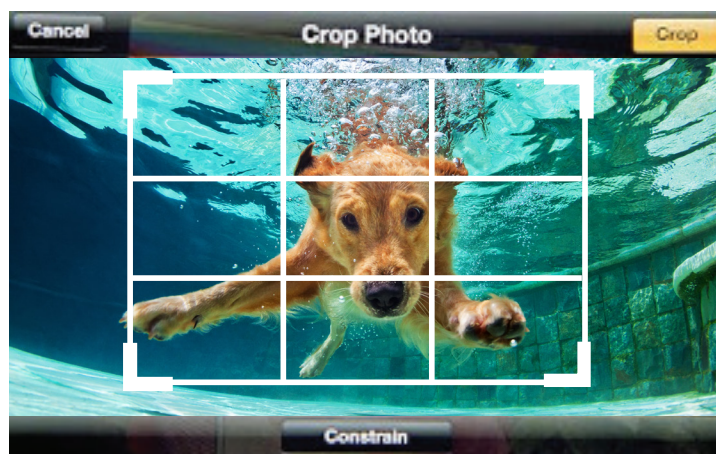
In photography, symmetry usually means creating an image that can be divided into two equal parts that are mirror images of each other. That's a bit different than reflections -- symmetry can be found "in the wild," as per the staircase picture, or you can set up your photo accordingly, like the one below. And remember -- use those gridlines from tip #1 to line everything up perfectly.



8. AVOID ZOOMING IN.

When you take a photo from a distance, it's tempting to zoom in on something specific you're trying to capture. But it's actually better not to zoom in -- doing so can make the photo appear grainy, blurry, or pixelated.

Instead, try to get closer to your subject -- unless it's a wild animal, in which case we would advise keeping your distance -- or take the photo from a default distance, and crop it later on. That way, you won't compromise quality, and it's easier to play around or optimize a larger image.



9. USE NATURAL LIGHT.

It's hard to find a great smartphone photo that was taken with a flash. Most of the time, they make a photo look overexposed, negatively altering colors and making human subjects look washed out.

Take advantage of the sources of natural light you can find, even after dark. This gives you a chance to play with shadows, like in the image below, or create a silhouette with other ambient sources of light, like traffic and surrounding buildings.



10. BE UNCONVENTIONAL.

Composition is a huge part of what makes a photo great, but so is the photo's subject. Some of the most delightful and remarkable photos come out of cool, unique ideas. Images are more effective than text at evoking emotion from your viewers -- that often means getting your photos to say something.

Try thinking outside of the box when it comes to what you're capturing -- your viewers could be pleasantly surprised by a cool or unexpected subject.

