DOZUKI

How to Take Great Photos

This guide demonstrates how to take proper guide pictures.

Written By: Dozuki System

INTRODUCTION

This guide demonstrates how to take proper guide pictures.

Great photos can turn a good how-to guide into an outstanding DIY tutorial. This guide shows you how to take excellent photos of your procedures. It helps you create an easy-to-follow guide for your readers.

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Step 1 — How to Take Great Photos

- Using a few real world examples, this guide walks through the steps to take great guide photos.

- Keep in mind, that while taking photos, you are not just relaying to your audience what you did; you are providing a clear, easy-to-follow procedure that anyone can repeat.

- Place your subject in the center of the frame. We are going to tie these shoelaces, so we centered the shot on the currently untied laces.

Step 2

- The first item to consider when taking pictures is the orientation of the object that you are working on in the guide.

- Our first image is not necessarily incorrect; the photo is well-lighted, free of clutter, and the action is right in the center of the frame. But consider this: If your guide text said to cross the right hand over the left, which would be which? Are you referencing the model's right hand or the reader's right hand?

- The second picture is taken from a side view. Now "left" and "right" are more obvious, but a reader may still be confused by the pictures. Also, this view may not be beneficial for showing all the necessary actions.

- The third photo shows a true first-person perspective, making the directions far easier for your audience to follow. This is what your readers see when they look down to tie their own shoe (with a foot inside the shoe, of course).

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Step 3

- Whenever possible, guide images should include hands. The hands should demonstrate the described actions in each step.

- Be sure not to cover up the action with your hands. Sometimes this will mean holding an item or tool differently than you normally would. It may feel awkward, but the resulting image will show the action much more clearly.

  ⓘ The second picture demonstrates correct hand placement. Why, you ask? You tell us: Is the first photo showing a bunny ear or loop-swoop-and-pull method?

Step 4

- When you have a camera mounted on a tripod, it is tempting to want to look through the viewfinder to take your pictures. As you will notice, though, this often leads to forearms dominating the foreground of your photos.

- Try to get level with the object that you are working on. This achieves a more natural-looking perspective. It may be necessary to squat down and reach awkwardly around the tripod.
  - ⓘ While this may not be the most comfortable position for taking photos, you will take better pictures.

Step 5

- Zoom in to take detailed shots of actions, especially when performing smaller or more intricate tasks. The first picture is adequate, but the second image is even better because you can see how the two laces are intertwined.

- Do not try to fit the entire subject in every picture that you take. When pulling the loop of one shoelace through the hole of the other, is it necessary to show what the heel looks like?

- That covers the basics of taking great guide pictures. There are, however, a few other issues that may arise when shooting photos, and they merit discussion.

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Step 6

- Both pictures shown in this step are of the same action. However, if we had not told you, would you be able to tell?

- Even though you probably never use a screwdriver by holding it like a pencil, doing so in your photos allows the reader to actually clearly see the procedure.

Step 7

- When you photograph objects with reflective surfaces, glare often finds creative ways of rearing its ugly head

  - ⓘ Not only does our monitor have a large glare in the top-right corner of the LCD, but the logo along the bottom of the display bezel is completely blown out by the light.

- By stepping back from our photo setup, we see that the light at the front-right and the table surface is causing the glare.

Step 8

- Glare occurs when too much light, off of the object in your picture, is reflected into your camera. Identify the source of light causing the glare and adjust or eliminate it.

  - ⬚ Remember to look through the camera's viewfinder periodically when adjusting the position of your lights. Glare will appear in different spots depending on the angle from which you are looking.

- Raising the right-front lamp eliminated the glare on the LCD, but we were still left with a blown out logo. This was caused by the reflection of our own white table.

- Unwanted reflections can be removed with the proper placement of a piece of poster board. Depending on your specific situation, you may use black or white. We set our black poster board on the table directly in front of the monitor, and . . .

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Step 9

- . . . voilà! The distracting glare on the LCD is gone. We can now read the logo at the bottom of the monitor.
  - ⓘ It is very difficult to remove every reflection when working with highly reflective materials such as shiny plastic. Do your best and be sure to keep plenty of even lighting on your subject for every shot.

- Now you know how to take great guide photos. Get out there and show the world how to do something!