



How To Take Decent Photographs of Real Estate

After doing some research, SA Hometraders has come up with some excellent tips on how to take professional photographs of property. You needn't be the next Annie Liebowitz or spend a fortune on photography classes. In fact, all you need is some guidance and a little common sense.

Operating your digital camera:

Exposure

When it comes to photographing interiors, lighting is often the biggest problem. First, turn on all the interior lights. If the images are still too dark then you need to compensate for this using the **manual exposure function** on your camera. Just keep playing with it and watch the changes to the image on your LCD.

If you are struggling with shadows in your images then there are a couple of options available:

- Use your fill flash
- Add supplementary interior lighting
- Use Photoshop's lighten shadows function
- Take several images at different exposures and composite them. Photoshop CS2 has an excellent high dynamic range composite function
- Wait for the exterior light to match the interior light (around dusk).

Some cameras have a remote flash option, which can also improve the lighting.

You should also play with your white balance function. Start in AUTO and then gradually adjust the setting while checking the image on your LCD.

Badly exposed interior:



Well exposed interior:



Lens

When you are photographing property, you are really interested in showing the space and size available, as well as the specific features. Ordinary lenses will only show part of a wall or part of a room. Investing in a camera with a wide-angle lens will make such a difference, as you will be able to photograph an entire room, emphasizing the space rather than the owner's potentially dodgy taste in furniture.

Bad interior picture:



The image above has not given the room any sense of space and the lack of lighting makes the room unappealing to the eye. A wide angle lens or a slightly altered composition may have done the room more justice. The sink is also an unusual, unattractive feature to highlight in the foreground.

Bad interior picture:



The image above gives some idea of the space, but the bad lighting makes the room appear dark and gloomy. Using a flash, or adding extra lighting would certainly improve the overall appeal. Using imaging software would also improve the shadow effect.

Good interior picture:



The image above gives a sense of the space and manages to highlight the kitchen and other areas of the house, as well as the high ceiling as a feature of the home. Switching on the interior lighting has improved the exposure.

Model

While there are plenty of cameras on the market, it is widely accepted that Canon is by far the best when it comes to picture quality and ease of use. One of the best features is the shoot and stitch function, which allows you to take a number of pictures and join them to present a horizontal view. This is excellent when you are taking a picture of a large exterior or garden.



How to take a good photo:

Staging

It's important to temporarily remove any distracting items from the scene. For instance, you don't want to see a lawnmower or bin in front of the house, an unmade bed, a mess in the lounge or unwashed dishes in the kitchen. The aim is to present a home that the person viewing the image can see themselves living in. Illusion is key.

A well staged interior:



Do you see how the room has been tidied, the fireplace is set up and the television is tuned to a sports channel? Light is also let in through the blinds. This gives the effect of an environment that buyers can imagine as their potential home.

A badly staged bedroom:



The bed is unmade and the lens has cut off part of the space, so that the focus seems to be on a bare wall. The second image is of the same room but has been staged, with the bed moved and neatly made, the lamps switched on, creating a welcoming and homely effect.

A well staged bedroom:



The bed is neatly made, the room is tidy and the image has managed to capture the view into the garden through the window. The soft lights create a romantic appeal.

Highlight positive areas

If there is a specific room in the house that is spacious or a newly renovated bathroom then you need to focus on this. The same applies to a beautiful garden or a specific feature of the house that gives it character. Try to stay away from areas that show a house in disrepair or tiny rooms that are dark and claustrophobic.

These are well taken images of features in a home:





Composition

Always ensure that the vertical and horizontal lines run perpendicular on your LCD. You need to check your composition and make small adjustments by shifting a few steps right or left, until you've got just the right frame for your image.

Badly composed exterior:



The house appears as if it is leaning sideways and the sky is different colours, possibly reflecting a failed attempt at Photoshopping the image. There are also shadows and the lawn is an unattractive green. The result is hardly appealing.

Well composed exterior:



Everything about this image is in proportion, as well as showing off the exterior of the home as a feature.

Timing

There is a trick in the photography world known as **magic hour**. This is essentially a 10 to 20 minute time frame just as the sun has set, when the sky gets a deep blue to match the exterior lighting. It is without a doubt the best time to take exterior photos, as it adds a certain allure and romance to the photos. If you want to present a property in its best light then this is the ideal photo to have in your collection.

Magic hour:



This image may have been doctored with imaging software, but the effect is definitely a success. The dark sky frames the house beautifully and the lighting creates a soft, romantic appeal. Who wouldn't want to live here?

Take a number of shots

Not only should you ensure that you take plenty of photos of the same scene, these shots should be taken from different angles. This way, when you have a look at the images later, you'll be able to choose which is the best one. The different angles also offer the opportunity to view an area of the property from a multitude of perspectives, which will create a somewhat realistic illusion of the true space.

Wide-angle shot:

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Do you see how the focus of this image is more on creating an illusion of the space than highlighting the owner's furniture? The light coming in from the windows also has the effect of brightening and creating space. The wide-angle lens allows you to view the entire room, rather than just from one angle or perspective.

The information contained herein is compiled courtesy of the Ken Rockwell and DigiCamHelp websites, while all images were retrieved while researching on Google.

For a free imaging software download from Google, please have a look at the following link:
<http://picasa.google.com/>