

Capturing the Art of Your Craft

You just completed another wooden work of art. So, are you ready to take the next step? Funny thing about next steps... it reminds me of the unofficial slogan of the Illinois Highway Department:

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there!"

This article is the first in a series that will not only help you decide *where you want to go*, but will provide dozens of tips on the best way to get there. Whatever you decide to do with your project, chances are pretty good it will involve taking pictures.

Having turned a hobby into a profession myself, I can understand how important it is to not only take high-quality photographs, but to not spend half the day doing so. The goal of this article series is to provide everything you need photographically, to present your creations in the best possible light (in this case, a pun **was** intended).

So why should you believe what I have to say? My name is Robert Bezman and I have been a professional photographer for more than 12 years. For the past 5 years, I have also had a thriving [website](#) whose focus has been providing Digital Photography Tips to beginning photographers.

I understand that photography "is not your thing." That's a good thing, because if it were, you wouldn't be bringing your wooden creations to the world.



Remember... **you never want to take a mediocre photograph of a fantastic product.**

Recall all the product photos you have seen in your lifetime. It doesn't matter whether it's a \$.99 sundae from McDonald's or a \$70,000 Lexis. The photograph NEVER MAKES THE PRODUCT LOOK WORSE!

So whether you need photographs in order to enter a craft show, print literature, or post on a website/blog; we will show you how to take the highest quality photographs possible, ***regardless of your photography equipment.***



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When taking photographs, there are 4 key areas to consider:

1. **Equipment**
2. **Lighting**
3. **Techniques**
4. **General Tips & Advice**

Here are some tips for each of the 4 key areas above:

Equipment

Let's address any possible concern you may have regarding spending a fortune on photography equipment...

You don't have to! (Clear enough?)

If you have a point-and-shoot camera, that will work. If you have a digital SLR - so much the better. You don't need to spend a fortune on equipment to capture great photos. **It is far more important to know what to do with the equipment you do have.**

In addition to a camera, I strongly recommend a tripod. The price range of tripods is huge. They can start from \$15 and go all the way up to \$700 for a top-of-the-line professional model. But here are the important points to keep in mind about [tripods](#):

- For a point-and-shoot camera, a tabletop tripod (\$15 - \$25) should support the typical point-and-shoot camera.
- You can pick up a standard-sized tripod for between \$25 and \$40. This will be fine for point-and-shoot cameras; however, I would not risk a full-size digital SLR on an inexpensive full-size tripod... but that's me.
- A tabletop tripod does not give the flexibility of shooting positions that a full-size tripod does. But if most of your products are less than the size of a carton of eggs, you might be able to get away with one - at least to start with.



Lighting

- The best possible lighting is found using natural light - outdoors, on a bright but overcast day (yes - **overcast**, not sunny).
- Avoid photographing your products from head-on 90°- directly in front. You will lose depth perception and therefore produce an image which is very one-dimensional and flat.
- If possible, avoid using your flash. There are numerous reasons, which we will cover in future articles.

Techniques

Let's say you have your jewelry box sitting in front of you. (If it's not yours, give it back.) How do you determine what angle to shoot from? For most products, a three-dimensional perspective is preferable to a two-dimensional one.

Creating a three-dimensional view is a matter of lighting and shooting angle. Although it sounds complicated, in reality it is quite simple.

Before you determine which shooting angle to use, ask yourself these 3 questions:

1. What is the primary function and benefit that your product provides?
2. Is there one element/aspect of your product which is the most important (or makes it unique)?
3. The most important question (and typically the most overlooked because it is so "obvious") is: What is your *specific objective* for taking the photograph?

If the main objective for taking pictures is to sell your product, you want to emphasize the greatest selling features in your photograph. And who determines those? (That was a trick question.)

The answer is ***your customer***. Using the jewelry box example, let's assume that your market research has determined the one aspect of your product that most customers positively comment about, is the latch. Also let's assume that what **you like best** about your product is the unique finish of the wood.



Taking pictures which emphasize the finish of the wood while ignoring the latch would be a mistake. Not a photographic mistake, because you could certainly create stunning pictures of the jewelry box emphasizing the finish of the wood. But it would be a marketing mistake since it does not support your main objective for taking photos (in this case - to help sell your product).

General Tips & Advice

- Camera setting: Use the highest resolution (largest file size) that your camera allows. The higher the resolution, the more pixels will be used for your photo. This results in a "higher density of pixels in your image file" so the full spectrum of available colors can be captured.

That was just the tip of the photographic iceberg. By the completion of this article series, you will be able to produce higher quality photos with a \$125 point-and-shoot digital camera than most people can with a \$3000 digital SLR. How?

Because you will know what to do and they won't!

Photographically yours,

Robert Bezman

Robert Bezman,

Professional Photographer and [Webmaster](#)

[Simple Ways to Turn Snapshots into Masterpieces](#)

