Dealing with the Fear of Photography

You have achieved a high level of expertise in woodworking. That's the good news. The bad news (more accurately "scary news") is that to take the next step of promoting what you've done, you need to step into an arena where you may be closer to a beginner than an expert.

Believe me, I understand. We all start as beginners, even in our chosen fields (except for me of course, who was born holding an SLR and asking if I could borrow some batteries). The thing to remember throughout this entire photography series is this:

> **Stick with me and by the time we are done,**
>
> **you'll be able to present your products in the best possible light**

Just trust me and I will get you through it. And, why wouldn't you trust me... after all, I'm not a relative!

From the first article, you probably recall that you need to think about why you are taking the picture and what is the biggest benefit of your product. That will provide the starting point for what you want to emphasize in your pictures.

Indoors Versus Outdoors

If your product is small enough to easily be moved, **take pictures outside in natural light.** If you want to see what happens by not doing this, scan the product shots at eBay or other online auction-type websites and see hotspots (glare) from flashes, poor color, and a host of other very easily correctable issues.

After positioning your item in a way that shows off its best feature, follow these tips:

➢ The best time to shoot is in mid–morning and mid–afternoon

➢ Have the sun strike your object at an angle (as opposed to directly above)

➢ If taking pictures from above, avoid glare from reflective surfaces and make sure your shadow does not fall on any part of the photograph

➢ Include at least a 20% buffer space around your photograph so when you need to crop it, you will not be limited to only certain

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- For small objects, fitting the entire object (plus the 20% buffer space) in the camera's viewfinder is generally not a problem. However, for larger objects you may need to physically distance yourself from the object and then use your camera's zoom feature. If you need to, use a ladder.

- If your item is relatively flat, you may want to prop up one side by placing a few books under it. Then photograph the object from a 90° perpendicular position.

- For most items, a solid color background is preferable over a pattern. Although any solid color could work, white or black are the popular choices.

- When photographing indoors, use natural sunlight as much as possible. The best situation is to shoot on a sunny day when natural sunlight can fill the room. Avoid having sunlight directly on your project.

- If you cannot use natural light (taking indoors pictures at night, for example), you will have to use some type of artificial light source (or multiple sources). To learn more about the do's and don'ts of flash photography, continue here.

Camera Settings & Techniques

- Focus your camera as perfectly as humanly possible. Out of focus images are difficult and time-consuming to correct

- Many point-and-shoot cameras cannot focus well at a close distance. Check your camera manual to see what the minimum focal distance is

- Should anything else be in the shot? I'm not just talking about the background. There are some situations which *depending upon your objective*, should include a human being.

> ➢ For example, if it would help to show your product being demonstrated or used, consider including a person in the image.

> ➢ You know how big your item is. However, if there is no frame of reference for the object, the viewer won't have any idea what size it is. For example, look at the miniature piano above.

It uses a strategically placed penny as the perfect frame of reference. On the other hand, can you tell whether these blocks are one inch tall or one foot tall?

What the Heck Is White Balance and Why Do You Need a It?

The most important reason for understanding white balance is because white balance is what makes colors in photographs as accurate as possible.

Modern day digital cameras produce outstanding quality images using an electronic brain to duplicate colors as accurately as possible. Like most electronic brains, it operates according to certain pre-programmed logic.

Although this is its strength, there are also inherent weaknesses which are always going to be there. Difficult lighting situations are always going to produce less-than-ideal colors **unless a human being compensates for these unique situations.**

How you compensate for it is by changing the setting on your camera's white balance. Have you ever noticed that some of your images have a blue, orange, yellow, or green tint (or cast) to them?

If you're like most people, you find this quite confusing because the scene looked quite normal to you when you took the picture. **To the naked eye,** all the colors were perfect. After the picture is taken however, the colors often look like someone put a colored transparency over them. For a full explanation of white balance and how you can use it to your advantage, click here.

Photographically yours,

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