REBECCA HOLMES

PHOTO & FILM

STAND OUT *images*

How to take better DIY photos for your business

Who am I and what do I know?

I'm a brand and family photographer and film-maker, Mum of three girls, recovering photo-avoider and regular gin sampler.

I create out-of-the-ordinary photography for big-hearted folk. Photography that shines a light on what's amazing about who you are and what you do!

I also teach photography to both amateurs and professionals, mentor both photographers and other business owners...

And I've run a business since I was 19!

I understand first hand...

Keeping up with the need for images in your business can be HARD.

It's one thing having something to say (content), it's another having the right image to put with it, on your website, on Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter etc.

But I also get it's really IMPORTANT.

Posts with photos are STILL much more likely to be seen and read on ALL major platforms.

Why? Because our brains process images MUCH quicker than words.

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Why is knowing how to take good photos important for a business?

As a brand photographer and film-maker, I can (and do!) provide you with stunning imagery and film to really help your business stand out.

But as much as I'd love to - I can't be there all the time to capture images for your business.

And nor would I want to - candid, less-polished imagery has an essential place in your feed - ensuring you remain relatable and up to date.

So I want to help my clients to mix what I do with high quality DIY imagery.

But all my photos look like crap Bec…

Are your photos...

Non-existent?
Grainy
Out of focus
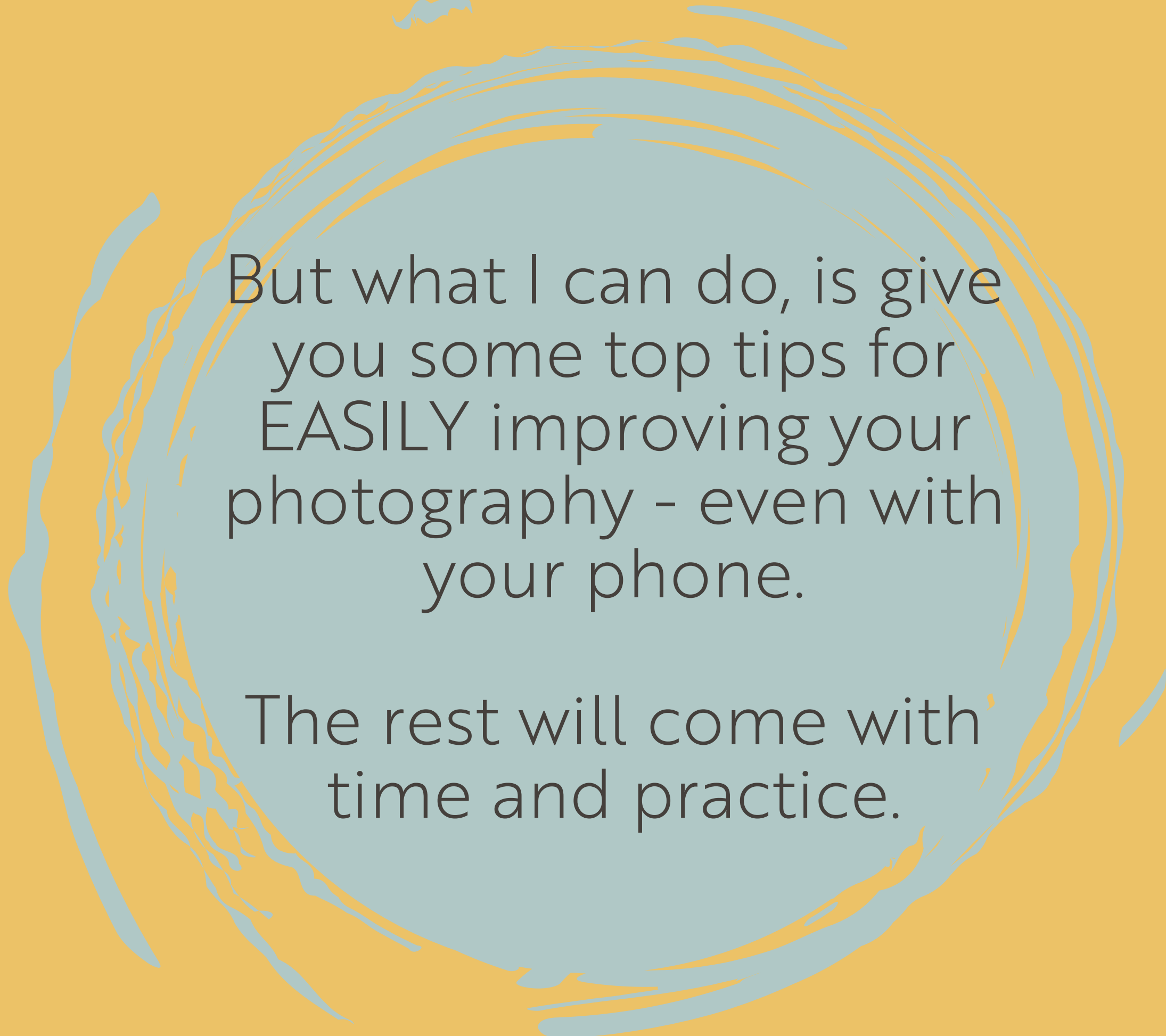A funny colour?
BORING!
Not-post-worthy?

Let's fix that...

⚠ Disclaimer

I can't make you an amazing photographer overnight.

I picked up my first camera when I was 6 years old and took my first professional photograph at age 19.

That's a LOT of years of practice.

You WILL need to practice. No camera or top model phone can replace practice.

But what I can do, is give you some top tips for EASILY improving your photography - even with your phone.

The rest will come with time and practice.

But first... Some phone photography mechanics!

- Two hands not just one
- Clean your lens - it's probably gross
- Use HDR mode!
- Keep your camera straight up and down as much as possible to avoid distortions.
- Use your gridlines!
- Flash is horrible on phones - don't use unless you absolutely have to!!!
- Indoor lights are nearly as bad
- USE your portrait mode! (though be careful of your hair!)
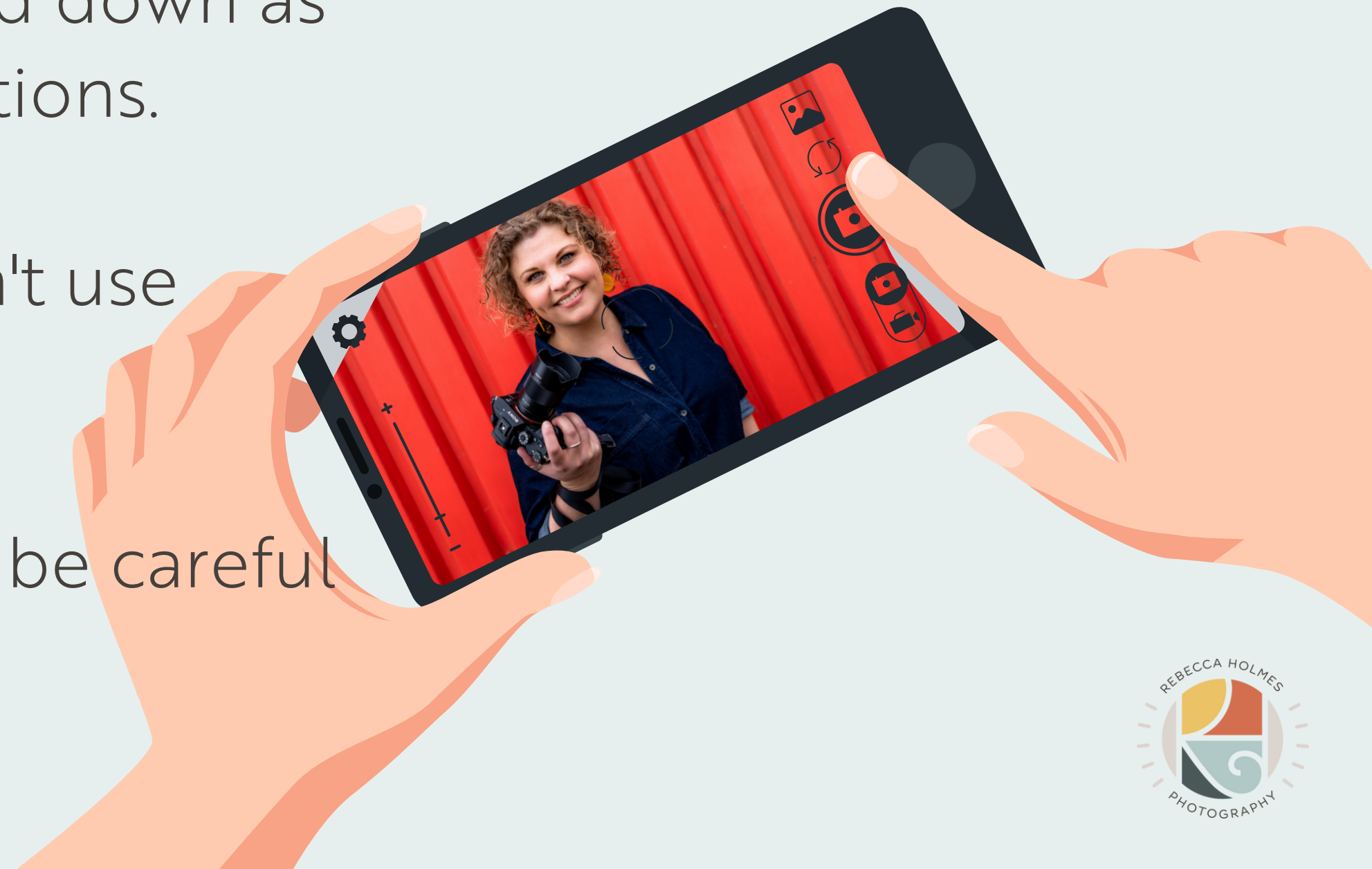
More phone photography RULES...

- Natural light is 100% easier to make look good so go near a window, or go outside
- KEEP STILL
- Get a phone tripod - they're cheap but invaluable
- Keep horizons and lines straight! (I don't like feeling seasick)
- Crop or move yourself - only zoom if you absolutely have to
- If it's going to end up square - take it square IN your phone

Photographs are 2D representations of 4D things - the more you can make your photograph look and feel 4D, the better.

The best photos make you feel something!

1. Intention

Set a clear intention for your photograph. What do you want it to do for you? What do you need it to show?

Don't just 'spray and pray', be clear, and upfront about what you want to take, and why.

Make your product look and feel 4D - useable, something to be touched/used

- Your product itself - from all angles and vantage points
- The product IN USE
- The product in relation to its size
- The product in real-life scenarios - being used - in action
- Photos where the product is the centre of attention, and photos where the product enhances the main action
- Before and after photographs
- Packaging photographs
- How you created the product - the steps involved
- Create a scene that evokes an emotion by adding things alongside the product, for example; a tea brand - the tea, crumbs of cake on a plate, hands warming on the mug, a blanket underneath, flowers in the background

You are photographing YOU as a service and person, not as a product

- What are your business values - can you photograph those?
- What are your content pillars? Photograph photos that represent each of those.
- Photographs with your customers - you interacting with them, and of them succeeding on their own.
- Photographs of your work in action (e.g. someone's website with new photos on it, or their marketing if you were a marketer)
- Photograph your process - brainstorming, researching, 'thinking'
- Photograph your other interests, things that make you YOU - hobbies, places you like to go, things you like to eat
- You, you and more you! Use every expression to show different facets of you - not all photos need to be smiling!
- Where do you work? Capture a street view.

ideas for services

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2. Learn to 'read' light

The word 'photography' literally means 'drawing with light'.

Think about;

- The type of light
- The direction of light
- The quality of light
- How could the light be improved?
- What is the light doing to the subject?
- Could more interesting lighting make my photo better?

Types of light

- Natural light
- The sun!
- Can be outdoors or indoors
- Artificial light
- Electric lights – roof lights, lamps, car lights, torches
- Flash
- Phone or other screens

How does the type of light affect the FEEL and look of the picture?
What type of light is right for your brand?

Quality of light

- Hard light; Has very defined edges and strong shadows. It usually comes from a small light source.
- Soft light; Has not very defined edges, the shadows aren't sharp. It usually comes from a large light source.

How does the quality of the light affect the picture? How does the quality of light affect the subject?

Images pexels
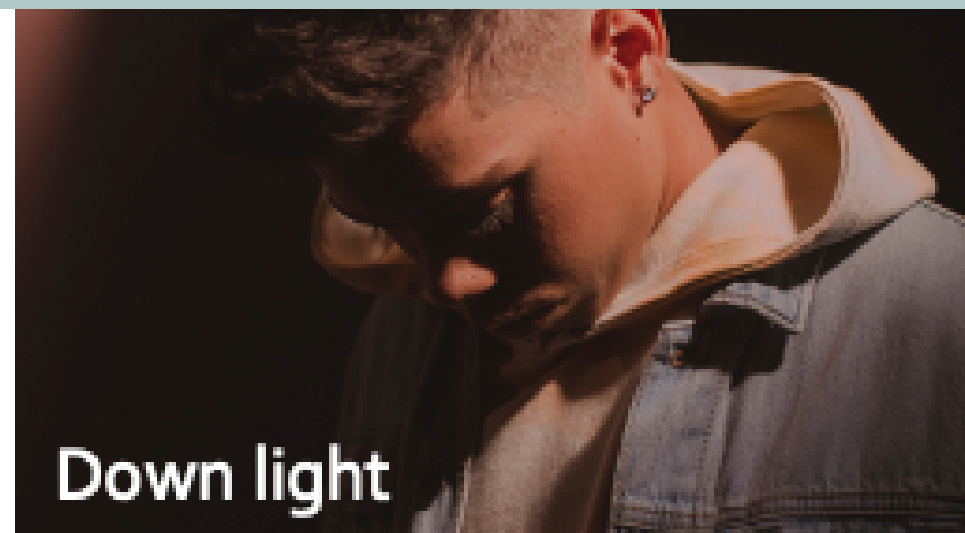
Direction of light

- Where is the light coming from and going to?
- How does the direction of light affect your photograph?

For example, uplight can look ghostly, backlight is usually dramatic, side light can age (but also add character) and front light can make you look younger!

Side light

Down light

Back light

Front light

Up light

If you practice nothing else, practice understanding and 'reading' light... It will make the biggest difference to your photographs.

Look for light everywhere and analyse it!

3. Tell a story with your photo

- Telling a story in a photograph adds depth and interest, it keeps the viewer looking at the image longer.
- I can also tell a story of your brand, for example, this photograph doesn't just show a 'pretty' cafe table, it shows that cafe in action - a conversation, enjoyment, comfort, warmth
- How? Make a plan!! Figure out what story you want to tell, then what you could put into an image to create it.

4. Remove distractions

Use the four-corners rule! (thanks Dad!)

Before you take the picture look at all four corners - is everything in the photograph NECESSARY? Can things be removed? Can you move the camera so that the superfluous isn't seen?

Focus

5.

Make sure you tell the camera where to focus - no matter the camera you're using!

Your eyes are ALWAYS better than the auto function.

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6. Get a buddy!

Find a business friend and take photographs of each other.

Be open to criticism, and to change how you're doing things to give the person what they're after.

This is perfect for getting LOTS of photographs of yourself 'doing' things.

7. Laugh, play, have fun

Ditch the posed look and make the photographs more natural.

Interact with others in the photograph.

Our 'insta-smiles' are NEVER our best smiles.

If you're working with a buddy, don't be afraid to CALL THEM OUT when they put on their 'insta-smile'.

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8. Add humour

People respond to humour!

- Funny face
- A blooper
- A 'look what happened when we were making this product' photo
- Anything that show's you're totally HUMAN and therefore not perfect

9. Learn some composition techniques

- Composition = the way you compose your image
- The elements you choose to include/not include in your image
- Helps achieve your purpose/aim – can create balance, calm, tension, a journey, a story
- Techniques – titled 'rules' but are really more 'guides'
- They are ways you can compose your image to make it more interesting or to articulate your point better
- Used by photographers ALL the time to create eye-catching photographs
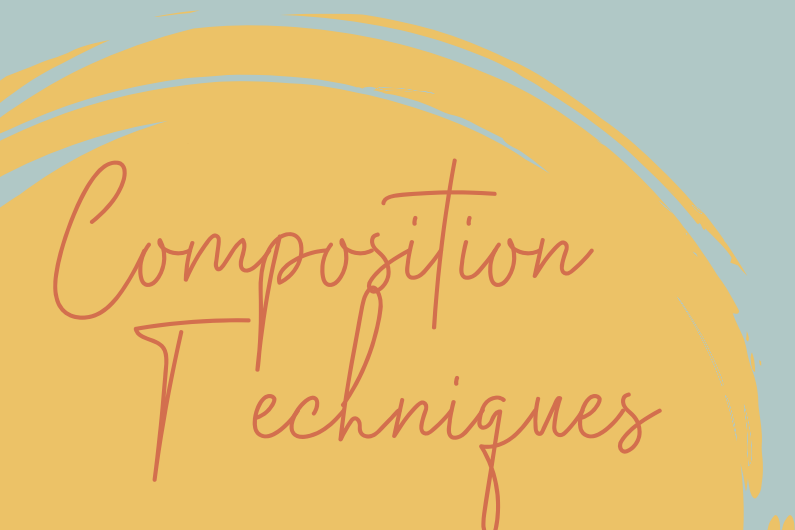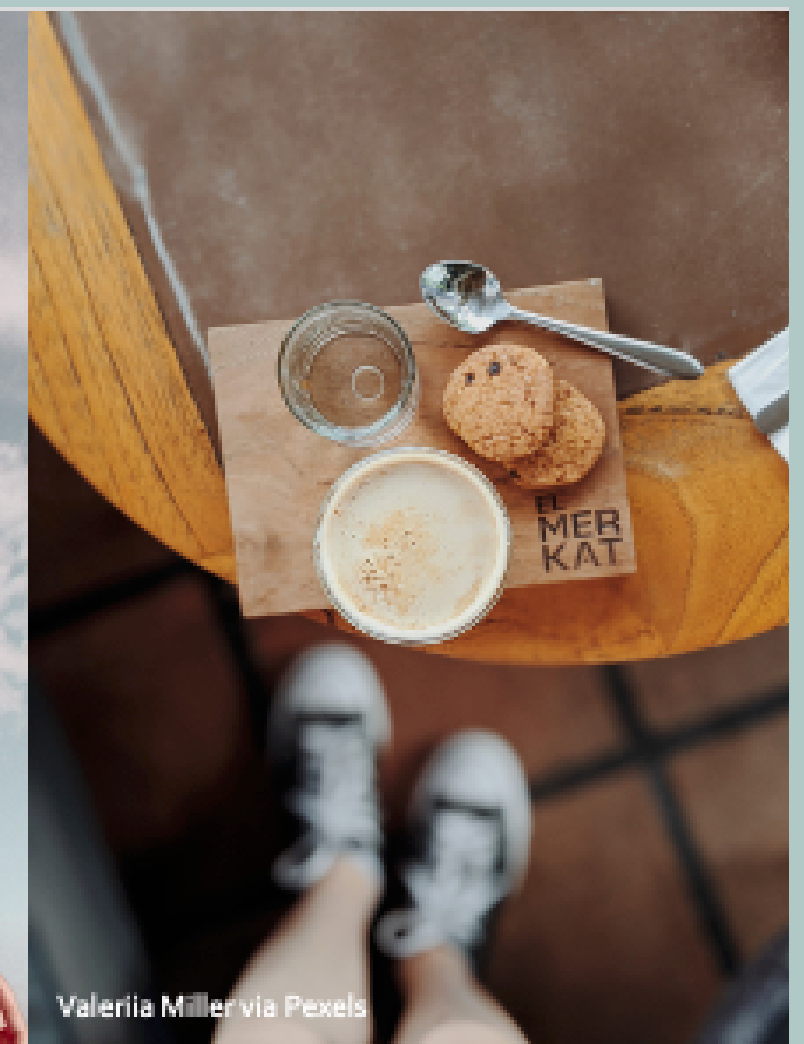- Here are just a few…

Rule of thirds

- Divide your picture into thirds with two horizontal and two vertical lines
- Place the important parts of your image along those lines
- Or even better, place the important parts where the lines intersect
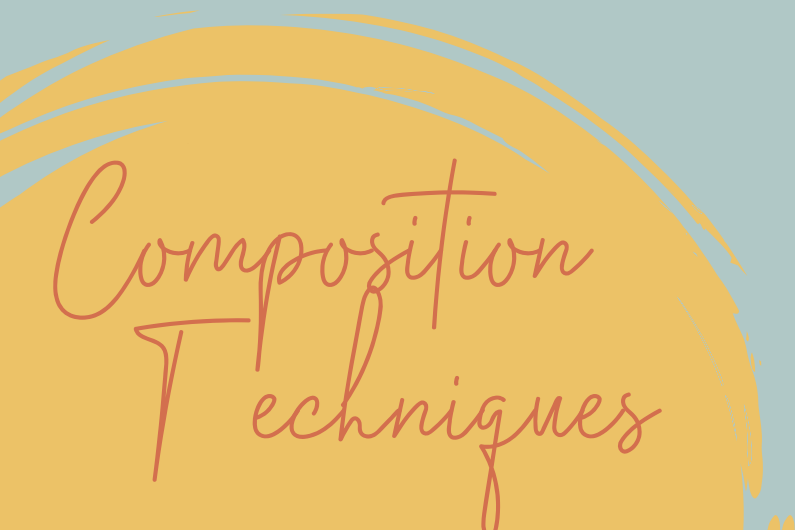- Use the grid lines on your phone!

Composition Techniques
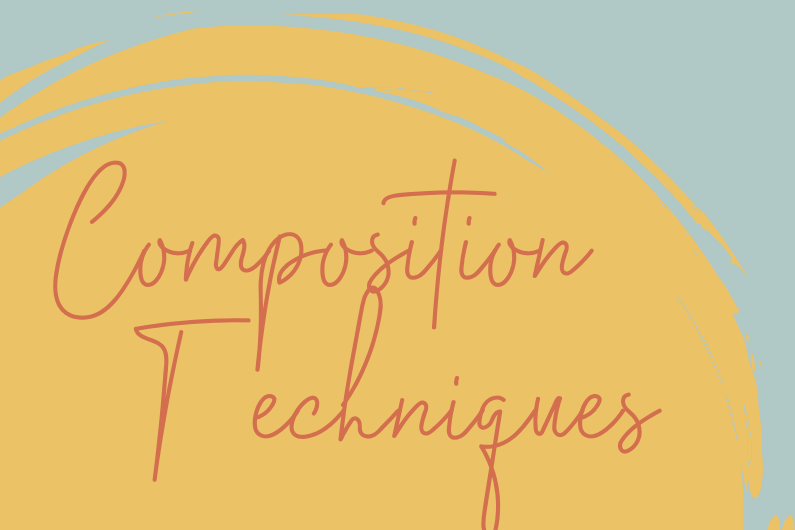
Perspective Shift

- Change the angle at which you're taking the photograph
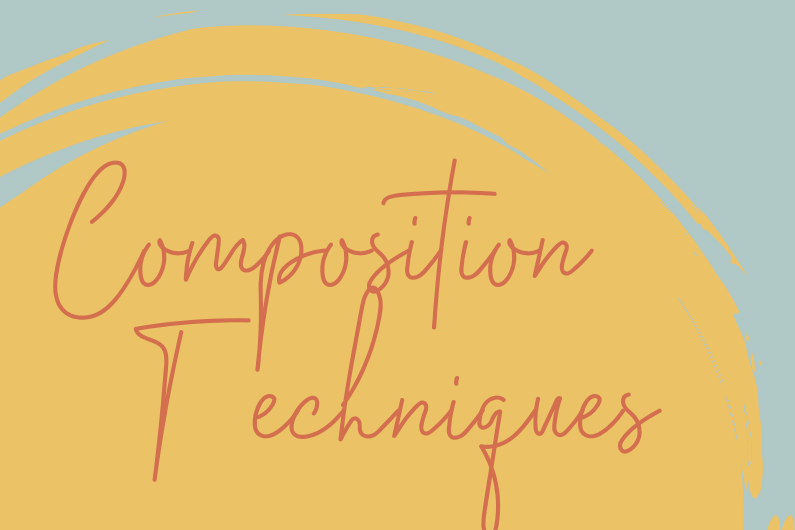- This can affect the mood of the picture significantly and is a great way to show an emotion

Reignnel via Pexels

Valeriia Miller via Pexels

Thiago Matos via Pexels

Alex Andrews via Pexels

Composition Techniques

Framing

- Place the important parts of your image within a frame
- The frame can be made of anything – buildings, clouds, trees, objects


Composition Techniques

Rule of Odds

- Seen as more pleasing to the eye to have three, or odd numbers than even
- The theory is that with two, there is competition for which to look at
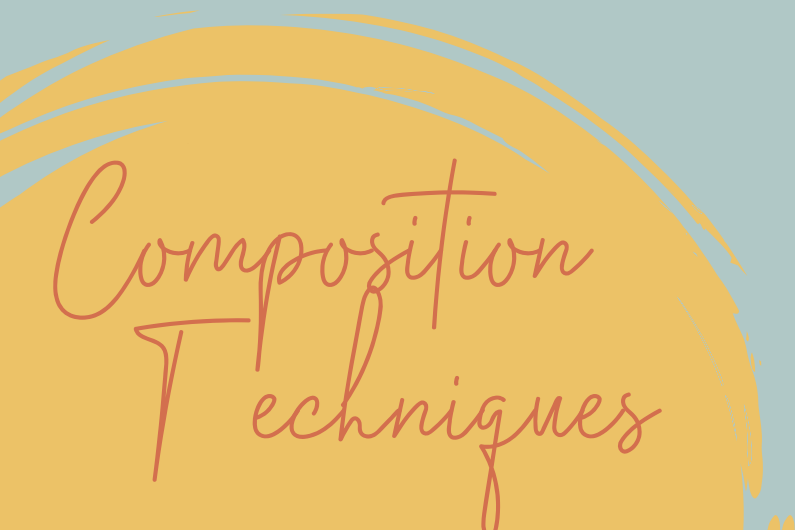- Three is also a very balanced look – similar to a triangle

Photo by Simon Berger from Pexels

Photo by Christina Morillo from Pexels

Composition Techniques

Fill the frame

- Leaving little or no space around the subject
- Great for focusing the viewers eye on details or emotions

Composition Techniques
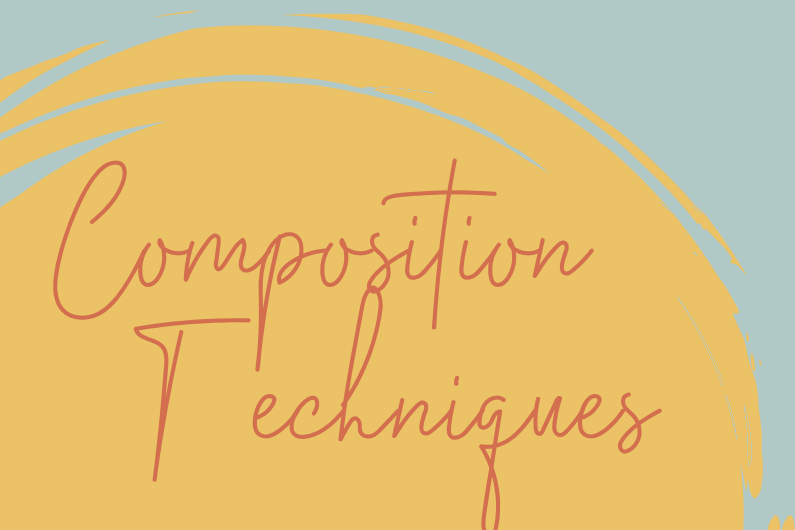
Simplicity and negative space

- The use of plain, uncluttered space to enhance an image
- Can create a sense of calm, of grandeur
- Gives the eye somewhere to rest

Elle Hughes via Pexels

Cottonbro via Pexels

Composition Techniques
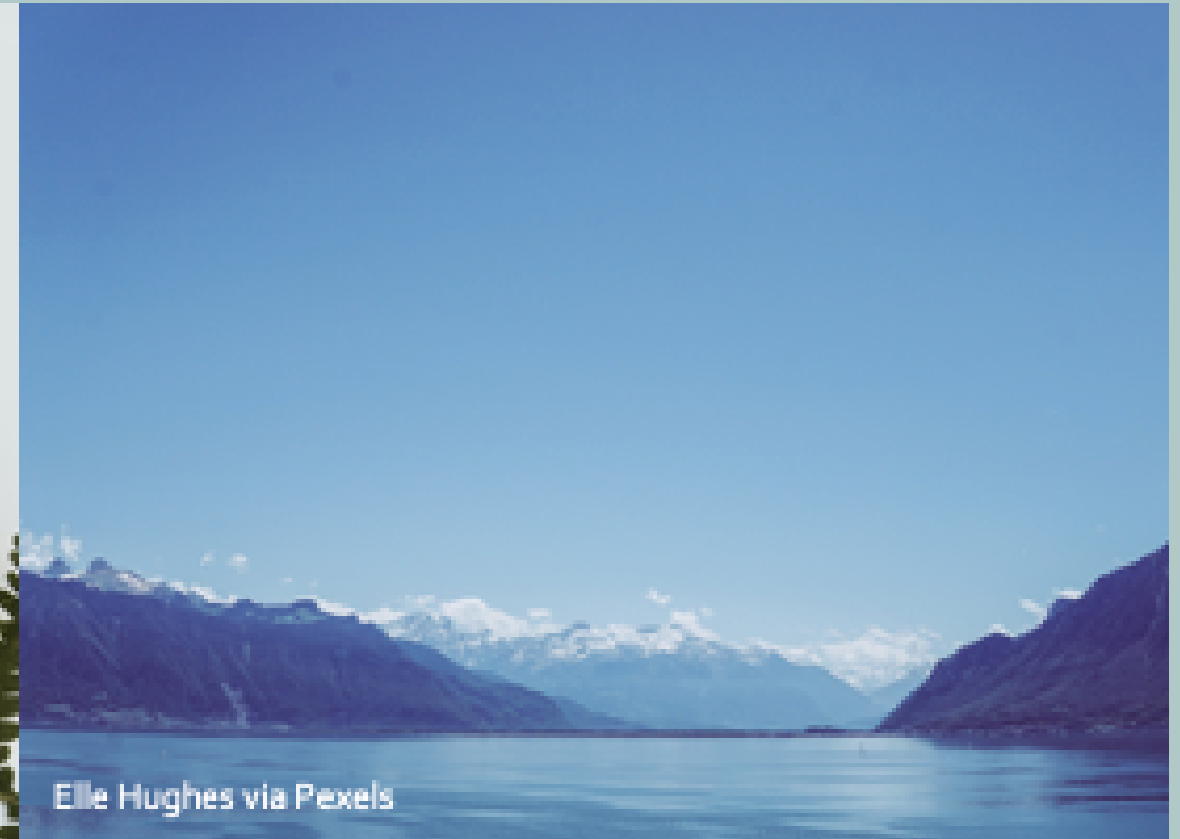
10. Set it up, then photograph it from all angles

Once you've setup a photograph, take it from all angles – move your body around, move the camera up and down – try new perspectives to get interesting photographs.

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11.

One or many?

Be conscious about whether you're photographing one thing - or layers of things. Both are correct, and appropriate for different subjects, but being deliberate about it is important.

Photo by **Stijn Dijkstra** from **Pexels**

Photo by **Misael Garcia** from **Pexels**

Photo by **Artem Podrez** from **Pexels**

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Better selfies/portraits

- Face a window! Or towards the light source (sun, indoor lights etc.).
- Use a phone tripod, so you're hands-free
- Watch your background - is there a plant coming out of your head? (see left)
- Use portrait mode (unless you have curly hair)
- Move yourself until you have little bits of light in your eyes (called catch lights)
- Put your camera slightly above eye level
- What's closest to the camera will appear the biggest... So make sure it's not your hands or any part of your body you don't like.

12. Incorporate your brand colours

Get a collection of items that are symbolic of your brand. Both in colour and in the values they represent. Use these in your photographs!

HINT: Wallpaper samples are great as makeshift backdrops, as are blankets and different styles of flooring

13. Capture details

Don't underestimate the joy of the details - your favourite pen, a piece of equipment, the way someone touches their glasses, or runs their fingers through their hair... All are details that SO often we miss!

14. Be candid!

Posing is overrated.

Yes, really.

Be candid, approachable, relatable... You! You'll get much better results, more easily.

15. Practice in the mirror

Don't be afraid to practice how to stand/move in the mirror BEFORE you meet with a friend to take photographs of each other.

A word on editing

Edit your photos but don't go over the top!

Simply brightening, raising contrast a bit to add depth, fixing squint horizons, and cropping are plenty.

Watch 'sharpening' - get it right in camera instead.

Be REALLY careful with filters. They are a short-term solution to a longer-term problem with having your face seen AS IT IS! They are totally inauthentic. (see my previous talk)

Recommended editing app - Snapseed

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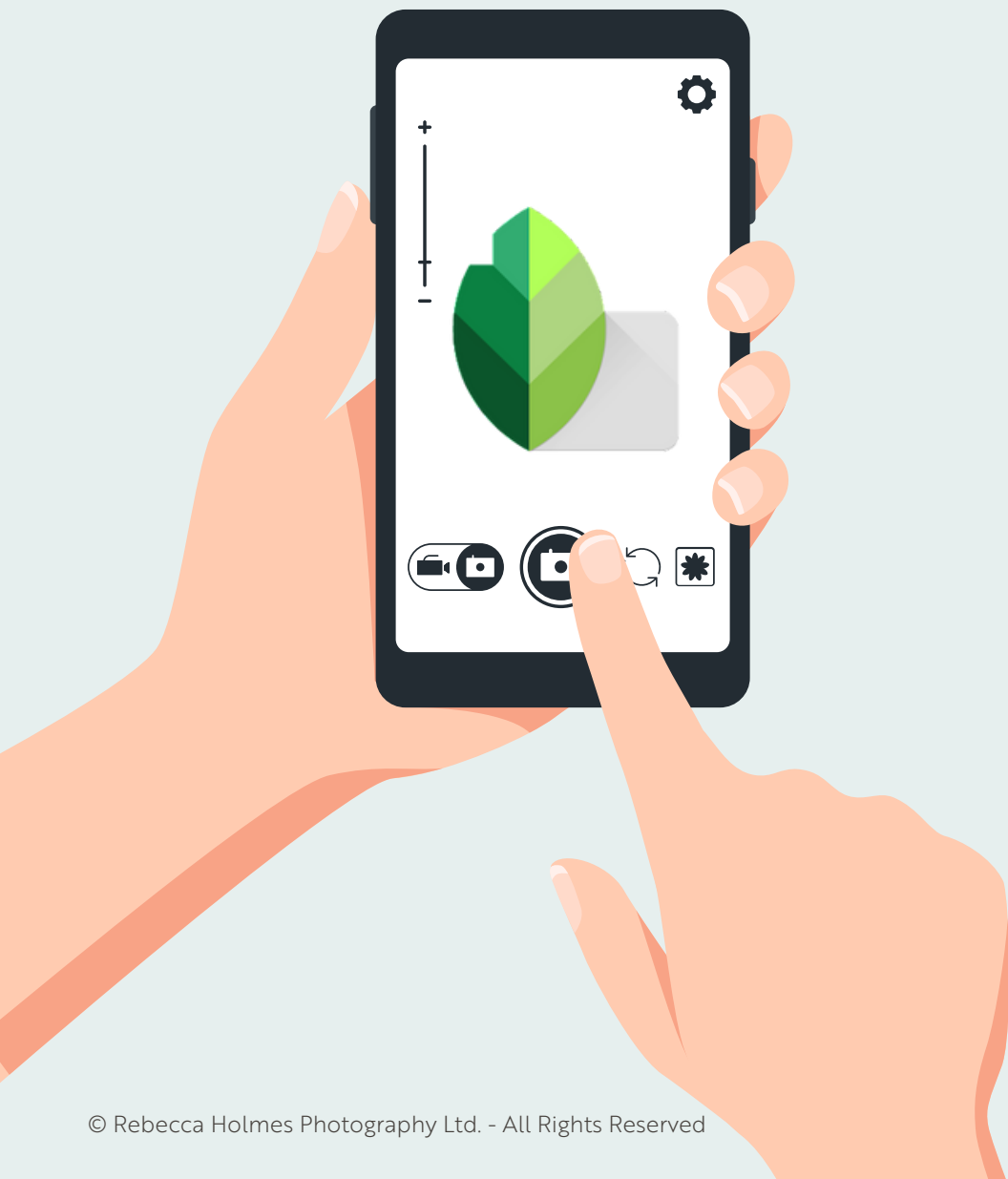
As one of my mentors would say - "Don't polish a turd!"
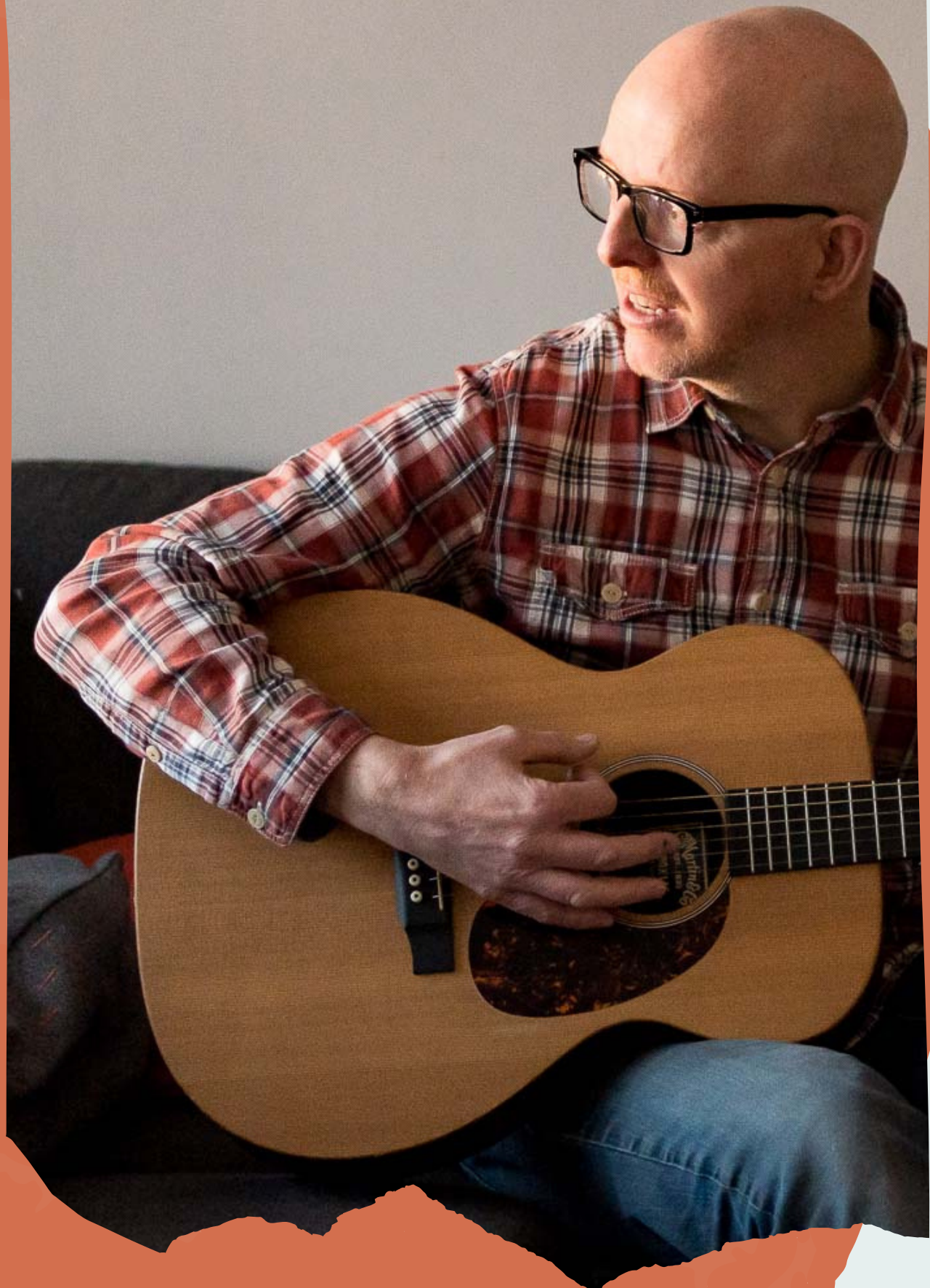
You can't edit away rubbish

16. Play with colour

Have a play with restricting the colours in your images - it helps them to stand out and creates a clarity that looks wonderful.

17. SLOW DOWN!

We're so used to snapping a mile a minute with our smartphones.

By simply slowing down and being more intentional about your photography you'll improve the photographs you're taking.

Make the process mindful; take your time.

18. **Photograph every day**

Keep your camera out and use it often. Intentionally, deliberately.

Choose one composition technique/tip per day and practice that... There's a LOT to learn.

19. Done is better than perfect

There are very few people who put images into the world without critique (and this includes professional photographers).

Ask an award-winning photographer and they'll tell you the 'flaws' in their award-winning image.

Put your photographs out there EVEN if you're afraid they're not good enough.

Authenticity breeds trust. Trust builds a great customer base.

20. Back up, back up, back up

And just in case you missed that...

BACK UP YOUR PHOTOS!!!!!!

At least one hard disk that isn't your phone/computer AND a cloud backup too.

One day you will thank me for that bit of advice!

Key points for better photos

Purpose - What is the purpose of taking the picture? What do you want to convey?

Expression/Emotion/Value - What does the photograph express?

Light - Where is it coming from, what quality is it, what colour is it, and what is it doing to your subject? Can changing the light improve how the subject looks?

Composition - Check all four corners of the frame - anything that doesn't need to be in there? Anything you could add to make the picture better?

Quality - Blur, enough light, grain? (clean your lens!)

Kit that's worth investing in

Resources

- PDF of this presentation to download
- 'The Ultimate Guide to Brand Photography in Edinburgh'
- 'How to Take Wall-worthy photos: 30 tips for novice photographers'
- A special discount valid for 24 hours

All of these resources can be found for free at

www.rebeccaholmesphotography.com/freestuff

How I can help you

- Brand photography - create a set of professional images to use alongside your own (starter 1 hour packages and full-day packages available)
- Brand film - create an introductory film for your website and social media
- Visual identity review - I'll check over your visual brand/identity and make recommendations for how you can improve it
- Headshots!
- One-to-one photography training
- Beginners and intermediates photography courses
- Business mentoring

www.rebeccaholmesphotography.com

Stay in touch

I mostly hang out on Instagram or LinkedIn

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A small selection of photos showing how to professional and candid photos can mix on a grid!

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