

Product Photography

Lighting, Styling, and Avoidance Protocols

A beautifully curated grid won't save a flat product image. Customer hesitation happens in milliseconds. Your photography needs to solve their visual doubts before they even read the caption. Stop shooting generic layouts and start answering visual objections. This protocol defines the rigid standards for product presentation.

01 LIGHTING & TECHNICAL LOGIC

HARD VS. SOFT LIGHT

Soft light sells texture and approachability. Hard light sells edge and geometry. Do not mix them aimlessly. Understand what your product demands before setting up the frame.

BOUNCE CARDS & FLAGS

Shadows define shape, but uncontrolled shadows look amateur. Use white bounce cards to fill dark voids and black flags to absorb light, creating crisp negative space. Control your contrast.

COLOR CALIBRATION

Auto white balance can introduce inconsistent colors across a shoot. Keep your lighting consistent and lock your white balance. Daylight-balanced lighting (around 5600K) is a reliable starting point.

02 ADVANCED STYLING PROTOCOLS

- **Anchoring the Subject:** Floating products lack context. Anchor your item with subtle shadows, hard surfaces, or deliberate props that communicate scale and environment.
- **The Rule of Odds:** Groups of three or five often create a more natural composition than even-numbered arrangements. Symmetry in styling often feels stagnant and overly engineered.
- **Intentional Cropping:** Show only what matters. A tighter crop on a defining detail converts better than a wide shot that loses the product in the background noise.

03 NICHE EXECUTION & AVOIDANCE

Fashion & Apparel

- **Movement over Static:** Garments need context. Static flatlays work well for catalog consistency, but movement helps communicate fit, drape, and texture.
- **The Detail Crop:** Buyers want to feel the fabric through the screen. Include extreme close-ups of stitching, hardware, and fabric texture.

WHAT TO AVOID

Steer clear of floating ghost mannequins unless strictly required for wholesale catalogs. Avoid shooting dark garments against pitch-black backgrounds without a rim light to separate the subject from the void.

Beauty & Cosmetics

- **Swatch Integrity:** People buy the finish, not the packaging. Show exact swatches under natural, untreated light. Do not over-saturate your edits to make colors pop.
- **Skin Texture:** Leave the pores. Erasing skin texture removes trust instantly. Buyers need to see how the product performs on actual human skin, not blurred plastic.

WHAT TO AVOID

Never use overly styled lifestyle props that distract from the product's actual use. Avoid mixing different color temperatures on skin, which creates muddy, amateur undertones.

Jewellery & Hardware

- **Macro Precision:** A ring without context looks generic. You need dedicated macro shots that highlight prong settings, metal finish, and stone clarity.
- **The Worn Scale:** Necklaces and earrings require human scale. A 16-inch chain looks identical to a 20-inch chain on a white background. Show it resting on a collarbone.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not shoot highly reflective metals in cluttered rooms. The metal will reflect the environment. Use light tents or strict flag setups to ensure clean, controlled reflections.

04 QUICK SHOT LIST

Standardize your shoot by capturing these essential angles for your respective niche before moving on to creative setups.

Fashion

- ☐ Hero Shot
- ☐ Fabric Texture
- ☐ Model Walking
- ☐ Label Close-up
- ☐ Packaging
- ☐ Lifestyle Shot

Beauty

- ☐ Product Only
- ☐ Swatch
- ☐ Before / After
- ☐ Texture Macro
- ☐ Shelf Shot
- ☐ Hand Holding Product

Jewellery

- ☐ Macro Front
- ☐ Side Profile
- ☐ Worn Shot
- ☐ Packaging
- ☐ Detail Clasp
- ☐ Scale Comparison