



H U M P H R E Y
& G R A C E

ON IPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

You really don't need a fancy camera to take great photos. Photography is only partly about capability the camera and there is as much to be said for training your eye to see the photograph first and foremost.

I really recommend learning to make the most of whichever camera you have. Even if it is the iPhone in your pocket.

Photography is a skill that covers so much more than the technical ability of the camera so learning to get the best from your iPhone camera can enhance your photography wherever you feel your ability currently sits. Perhaps an iPhone is limited in some ways and it is true that it will never meet the technical specifications of a DSLR, but you can still take amazing photos with it.

Often I use my phone in preference to my DSLR, particularly for keeping most of the frame in focus, for streets and buildings. For landscape this is a handy feature too. I also think they are perfect for flat lay or 'from above' style photographs and still life.

Generally our phones hold are the camera we have to hand, they are quick to open and you can be taking a photograph seconds after you pick it up.

The built in camera on your iPhone is capable of a few great things, it can also be improved on with a few optional extras but they are by no means essential. I would suggest that if you look at the extras mentioned at the end, choose whatever suits your style of photography and fits your budget best. But you don't need anything extra to begin.



THE IPHONE CAMERA

iPhone cameras are very different in capabilities and which model you have will ultimately decide which features you have - needless to say the more up to date your phone, the better the camera...

SOME PRACTICAL POINTS

Some of which may go without saying, but to cover all bases I will say them anyway...

KEEP YOUR LENS CLEAN

Before you take any photographs, make sure your lens is clean. I know my phone, for one, picks up all kinds of fingerprints and dust so give the lens a quick wipe clean before you start. Even this simple step will improve your photographs!

WHICH CAMERA?

If possible, use the forward facing camera rather than the flipped screen 'selfie' camera. There is a reason for this, it is not as good. For example, on the iPhone 7, the front facing camera is 12MP while the screen side camera is only 7MP.

Essentially this means you will record more usable pixels with the front facing camera which will give you a clearer picture and more to work with in editing should you need to correct areas.

THE GRID

In the settings app on your phone, under Photos & Camera, you will find an option to turn on the grid on your camera preview screen. This can be a handy tool for framing your photographs, both for making sure your lines are horizontal and/or vertical, and for framing with the rule of thirds.

If you are just beginning to learn or like a guideline, I would recommend you turn this on. Having a visual reference to frame your image makes a big difference while you train your eye to see the photograph before you take it.

You can find more about the rule of thirds and why it's an easy way to improve your photographs in my [On The Basics For Photography eBook](#).

Straightening your lines can make a huge difference to an image, unless you are looking to capture artful angles, lines that sit more or less straight make more sense to the observer.

ON TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

EASY ACCESS

The camera is easy to access, depending on your operating system, all you need to do is swipe left from your lock screen and there it is! Alternatively, you can swipe up to the half screen menu from your home screen and press the camera icon bottom right. There is no need to find any apps to take a quick photo.

HDR

This setting is great if you are taking photographs of something high contrast and you want to even out the highlights and shadows. However it is not especially necessary for other types of photograph so I would suggest you turn it on and off as needed.

I would recommend turning off the 'auto' option though as it takes away the choice by deciding when to use HDR for you...

FOCUS

When you first open the camera, it will auto focus for you. The phone will choose a point of focus for you (often the most prominent subject in the frame) though it can struggle to focus quickly. To take control of what is in focus, simply tap the part of the frame you wish to be your main subject and it will focus on that point for you. It will also use this point as the reference for exposure - more on this below.

You can also lock a focus point. Once you have selected the part of the frame you want to be the focus point, hold your finger on the screen, the focus box will 'flash' and AE/AF LOCK will appear at the top of the screen. Focus will then stay locked until you tap elsewhere on the screen.



PORTRAIT

iPhones now also have access to a feature called PORTRAIT, which gives a depth effect to your photo. It is not perfect, but does a good job of creating bokeh if your subject is a larger, solid shape. That is to say it's not much use for a field of wild flowers, but works pretty well on a cup of tea, as in the photos to the left here

(PHOTO mode to the left & PORTRAIT mode to the right).

Obviously it is designed for portraits of people, but that doesn't mean you can't test it out on other subjects also...

EXPOSURE

Once you have set your focus, you can slide the bar just to the right of the focus box to adjust the exposure of your photograph. This function works the same whether you set AE/AF LOCK or not.

CAMERA BURST

Camera burst is great for capturing moving subjects, it uses a quick shutter release (much faster than you could tap manually) so all you need to do is anticipate when to start and finish the burst. Using this option is so simple, rather than tapping the shutter release, press and hold the shutter to begin a burst and release when you wish the burst to end.

To view the photos in the burst on your camera roll, find the burst photo (annotated as such on the cover frame), press select in the menu bar and all the photos in the burst open. At this point you can select which of the photos to keep and which to discard. Simply use the selection button on each photo you wish to keep.

When you have chosen, select 'done' and it will give you the option to keep only the photos you have selected, at which point it adds the photos to your camera roll individually.

TO ZOOM OR NOT TO ZOOM...?

In brief, get closer rather than pinch to zoom or use the 2x button above the shutter release - if you can.



It's to do with the resolution of the photograph. While iPhone cameras have improved greatly and now capture more detail, it is still better to get closer to the subject and re focus your shot than it is to stay back and zoom.

The reason? A digital zoom (as on iPhones) simply enlarges each individual pixels. The result is a less defined, often slightly blurry photograph. Get closer to the subject and your pixels stay small, which in turn means better definition and focus.

CAMERA TIMER

On the top menu bar from the camera screen there is a camera timer - it looks like a stopwatch. You can select a 3 or 10 second delay till the shutter is released. This is especially useful for photos with yourself in frame - even if only your hands.

It also works with long exposure photography if you do get more technical with any of the manual photography apps mentioned below. It goes hand in hand with using a tripod and ensuring there is no motion in the camera while the photo is being taken.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

APPS

Once you have mastered the basics, there are a few apps that I would recommend you consider if you are looking to improve your iPhone photography. You don't need all of them, in fact, they all have similar features but they vary in their range of capabilities and price so I'll simply mention some that I have used. There are, of course, others available too.

The iPhone camera shoots in JPEG format. A JPEG image is compressed by your camera and some of the information inevitably lost. Photographers shoot in RAW format. This is an unprocessed image which will need more editing BUT the file will have a lot more information and you can fine tune your photographs yourself rather than relying on your camera to convert them to JPEG for you.

I have used LIGHTROOM, CAMERA+, SLOW SHUTTER & PRO CAMERA to shoot RAW images. Each includes various options such as setting ISO, shutter speed, exposure, aperture, timers and more in the way of manual photography settings.

They are a great way to step into manual photography with your phone. If you aren't sure about manual photography, my advice is find your feet with the iPhone camera first then once you're confident, have a go! It will change your photography forever.

If you still aren't sure, perhaps have a look at all of the information on each in the app store and make your best guess from there.

The app store recently compiled a list of camera apps if you would like to investigate further, you can find the list at <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/story/id1348100616>

(I have also written an eBook On Basic Camera Settings - this explains manual photography for beginners.)

LENSES

There are a range of clip on lenses for iPhones that perform all kinds of functions from macro (close up) and telephoto lenses to wide angle and fish-eye distortion lenses. I am going to be honest here and say I don't own or use any of them but I do think they're worth a mention simply so you can look into them if you choose.

I don't choose to use them simply because I use my DSLR for anything they might do, and fish-eye distortion can be achieved in editing if that's your thing. But if an iPhone is your camera of choice, they may well be worth the investment.

TRIPODS

Tripods for iPhones come in all shapes and sizes - and to suit a range of budgets. Simply browse online and you will find a plethora of them. I actually use a Manfrotto compact tripod with a ball head and smart phone clamp - mainly because it also works with my compact camera. But as I say, there are many to choose from.

If you are considering buying a tripod, have a think about the type of photography you are likely to use it for. If you frame photos in a traditional way, pretty much any tripod will do.

If you are looking for flat lay photography, consider buying a tripod with a built in boom arm - or a separate arm to attach - that will allow you to cradle your phone so it faces the surface beneath it.

Lastly, if 'out and about' is your photography style, consider a flexible legged tripod or a compact, easy to carry, mini tripod.

Really the best thing to do is decide what you are most likely to use one for then shop around as there are so many types to choose from.

Why invest in a tripod? For a few reasons. Do you take photos with yourself in frame - even if only your hands? A tripod is preferable to taping your phone to the ceiling (yes I've done that in the past...). It is also

essential for any kind of long exposure photography. And lastly, I use a tripod for stabilising the camera while shooting films.

THE OPTION

It's just that. These are *optional* extras and you don't necessarily need them, just start with the built in iPhone camera itself...

FURTHER READING

For more basic photography and editing eBooks - <http://www.humphreyandgrace.co.uk/learn/>

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