Real Estate Photography
Equipment, Techniques and Tips
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Introduction to Real Estate Photography
INTRODUCTION TO REAL ESTATE PHOTOGRAPHY

Why It Matters.

Today’s home buyers do most of their house hunting online, and great home pictures are an absolute must. Most of us would agree that bad listing photos are a very real problem in our industry. All you need to do is browse through the listings on any public real estate portal to see how bad many of them are. These images are the first impression a buyer has of not only the listing, but of the Real Estate agent who posted them. Bad photographs are simply one more dagger in the chest of an industry that is working hard to improve its reputation and showcase its relevancy and value.

That’s why we wanted to help you with some techniques, tips and tricks for taking amazing real estate photographs. These are the same techniques, tips and tricks that many of our professional photographers use, but you don’t have to be a professional to take advantage of most of these!
**More online views.** According to a study done by Redfin, listings shot with great photography receive 61% more online views than their competitor listings. More online views can turn into more interested buyers, more showings, and a quicker sale!

**Better first impressions.** For 95% of online shoppers, the first thing they look at is your listing’s front exterior photo. Furthermore, studies show that they will spend about twenty seconds looking at that front exterior photo, before moving on to the other photos or listing details. Make that first 20 seconds really count!

**Win more listings.** Let’s face it, there is a lot of listing competition out there. Having a beautiful portfolio of previous listing photos just may help you win that listing. Especially when you combine it with the stats previously mentioned.

**Social media content.** Visual content is all the rage in social media these days, and having a library of beautiful professional photos is a huge asset. Use those photos on sites like Pinterest, Instagram, Google+ and Facebook to attract interest and gain referrals.

**Trigger emotion.** Beautiful photos trigger an emotional response. And emotion sells. In fact, for most buyers, emotion is about 80% of the buying decision. Buyers use logic to choose price ranges, locations, and home sizes. But from there, most consumers will rely on emotion to choose the homes they visit in person and ultimately purchase.
CHAPTER 2

Equipment
101
The Right Equipment is Essential.

A DSLR CAMERA BODY
You can’t shoot real estate with a point-and-shoot (non-interchangeable lens) camera. Sorry. Won’t work. A primary gear driver in real estate photography is a good quality wide angle lens and this means you need a DSLR camera with interchangeable lenses. Don’t even think about using a wide angle converter that screws on a point and shoot; they cause distortion in your images most are very poor quality!

How many mega-pixels do you need to shoot real estate photography? Most experts will tell you that 12 MP is perfect. It will create images that can be printed up to poster size, and the images are a size that can be managed easily on most computers. But what is more important than megapixel count is the quality of the lens on your camera.

There are tons of DSLR choices, ranging in cost from $500 to over $10,000. Most of the lower priced DSLR camera bodies will work perfectly.

Click here for a list of the top 10 lower-priced DSLR cameras.

According to a study by Redfin, listings shot with DSLR cameras receive 61% more online views than their competitor listings.

A WIDE ANGLE LENS
Real estate photography shoots often put the photographer in tight situations. Small bathrooms and bedrooms are difficult to photograph without having a wide-angle lens. In fact, ALL real estate images look better when shot with a wide angle lens. But choose your lens wisely, because shooting with too wide of an angle will cause distortions and inaccurate perspectives.

Obeo’s photographers typically use a lens with focal lengths between 16mm and 24mm (If you are using a camera with a full frame sensor). If you are using an APS-C sensor size, you will need a 10 or 12mm lens. And this is the same focal length that I recommend for your lens. Low-end lenses will have a bigger impact on your photographs than the camera body. If you’re going to budget, save on the camera body but splurge on the lens!

One of my favorite photography blogs is Photography for Real Estate. It’s full of great information, including this chart of commonly used wide angle lens. It includes a rating system, which might be helpful.
A FLASH
Anyone who shoots real estate photography needs at least one good flash. Good lighting is essential in real estate photography. One of the cheapest ways to dramatically improve the quality of your photography is to invest in an external flash, or “speed light”. These flash units are far more powerful than the one built in to your camera. This additional light output makes it possible for you to shoot at smaller apertures for greater depth of field. The additional power output also makes it possible to light up larger areas. Both of which can be very important in creating great images.

The speed light mounts on your camera hot shoe. Most feature heads that tilt or swivel, which allows you to bounce the light from nearby walls or ceilings. This technique results in a softer, more flattering light than what you get from direct flash. When bouncing light, be sure you are using a white surface. (For instance, if you bounce the flash off of a red surface, everything will turn red in your image.) You can either buy a proprietary flash unit that matches the manufacturer of your camera, or you can choose a third party unit (verify compatibility).

A STURDY TRIPOD
The tripod has been hailed as the greatest photographic accessory ever invented! A steady camera is a necessity for all types of photography, and a sturdy tripod is like an assistant, helping you hold your camera steady.

Here are some additional reasons to invest in a good tripod.

>>> Better framing precision. How many times have you seen photos with angled walls? Lots of times, I’m sure. By using a tripod with a bubble level, you can assure a straight image every time.

>>> Enhanced depth of field. You want an image that is sharp from the foreground to the background. Slower shutter speeds will increase your depth of field, but require the use of a tripod to avoid motion blur.

>>> It makes you look more professional! If you’re not going to hire a professional, then you’ll want to impress your homeowner with how professional you are.

Listings marketed with DSLR photography have higher perceived value and sell for more money. According to the Wall Street Journal, these listings gain anywhere from $934 to $116,076 at closing.
Tips and Tricks to Capture Amazing Real Estate Photographs
TIPS AND TRICKS

SHOOT LEVEL
Doors, walls and window frames are almost always perfectly vertical in real life. They should be vertical in your image as well. Using a tripod is the easiest way to start taking real estate photos like a pro! Your camera needs to be 100% level. A good tripod with a bubble level is the key. If your tripod does not have a bubble level, you can buy a bubble level at a local camera supply store that attaches to the camera.

Shooting with a level camera will straighten the vertical lines in the frame and make the resulting photo much more pleasing to look at.

AVOID BRIGHT WINDOW LIGHT WHEN POSSIBLE
Tired of fighting the glare and dark exposure when there is a large amount of light coming in through the windows? Bright light streaming in a window confuses the camera into thinking the entire room is bright. A simple way to avoid this is to take your listing photos when the amount of light outside is similar to the amount of light inside.

Using a flash can also help you balance the light inside the house with the amount of light outside of the house. When the outside of the house is brighter, a bright flash while shooting inside will allow you to see detail outside of the house as well.

Overcast days, although not as good for exterior photos, are great for interior photos because it softens the light coming in through the windows.
MAKE ROOMS LOOK SPACIOUS

The last thing you want to do when photographing a listing is to make it look smaller than it really is. But there is a very easy way to create the feeling of space. **To make photos appear more spacious, simply avoid shooting straight at walls.** Shooting straight at a wall makes the photo look flat and can distort the perspective.

Instead, shoot into the corner of a room, which will create more depth and make the room appear more spacious. Be sure to stand back as far as you can, perhaps shooting from the doorway of a room. Or even the opposite corner.

Trying lowering your tripod just a tad. Photographing from a lower angle and with a wider angled lens is also a great way to increase the perceived size of the room.

SHOOT DURING THE “MAGIC HOUR”

The professionals all know about the “magic hour.” It’s the hour during sundown or sunrise. The challenge is in determining the exact time because it varies geographically and seasonally. Try a series of shots and you’ll see just how wildly the light varies as day turns into night.

**Shooting during the magic hour is the easiest way to get brilliant, contrasting colors** in the sky, building…and everything! It’s soft, warm, dimensional and just flat-out magical. Capturing the magic hour adds something to images that can’t be replicated no matter how many filters or actions you use.
ADJUST TRIPOD HEIGHT

Many beginners will set their tripod at eye level and shoot everything from that level. But, depending on the size of the room and the contents of the room, going lower or higher may help.

Lowering the tripod slightly will make a room appear slightly larger. But this technique looks terrible on kitchens, where you need to see over the countertops. So when shooting kitchens, raise the level of the tripod.

The best advice here is to take the time to choose the best height for each individual room, and not just use a standard height.

CAMERA SETTINGS MATTER

➤ Shoot in Aperture priority mode. Simply set your camera to the A or “Aperture Priority” mode and adjust your other settings from there. If unsure which aperture to shoot with, start at f8, and adjust as you go. This will require you to use slower shutter speeds, which is why again, why a tripod is essential.

➤ Sharpness Matters. For real estate photos, you want your image to be sharp from foreground to background. Try using what’s called the “hyperfocal principle”. Simply focus on an object that is approximately one-third of the distance into the scene.

➤ Meter on a mid-tone object, not a piece of dark furniture or a white wall. Or, consider purchasing an 18% gray card from your local camera shop. Point the camera at the card to set your manual exposure. Make sure the lighting on the card is the same as the lighting in the room. This will set your exposure perfectly every time.

➤ Manually adjust for White Balance. We’ve all seen photos with off-color hues. To avoid this, try manually setting your camera’s white balance. This is super easy. When shooting outside on a sunny day, use the setting marked with a sun icon. When shooting outside on a cloudy day, use the setting marked with a cloud icon.

When shooting inside a home, we always recommend turning on all lights. It provides a dimension you can’t get with only natural light. But it can also create white balance issues. So try using the white balance setting for incandescent light. You can also try doing a manual white balance using the 18% gray card.
MARKET YOUR IMAGES IN A MOBILE FRIENDLY PLATFORM

There are a lot of choices out there when you are looking for a platform to market your listing photos. But very few platforms offer mobile friendly viewers. Even fewer offer responsive designed viewers. In fact, the only company we know of that offers a responsive designed Property Website is Obeo.

Responsive sites are fluid, so whatever new screen size is the next big thing, your site will respond and work. Obeo’s Property Website displays listings beautifully on every single device, from big screen monitors to small screen tablets and phones. Big, finger friendly buttons, super fast load speeds, and lead generating forms make this the perfect platform for promoting your gorgeous photographs.

For 95% of online shoppers, the first thing they look at is your listing’s front exterior photo.
CHAPTER 4

How to Prepare a Home for a Photo Shoot
Everything You and Your Seller Need to Know
**FRONT AND BACK EXTERIOR**

- Remove cars from driveway
- Close all windows
- Sweep all walkways
- Pick up debris, sticks, leaves, and branches.
- Put toys and bicycles away
- Store away any seasonal décor
- Put away all garden tools and supplies
- Remove hoses
- Hide trash containers
- Straighten and arrange deck furniture
- Clean pool area/remove any safety gate
- Hide pet supplies
- Remove pet droppings

**MAIN INTERIOR AREAS**

- Remove personal items and family photos
- Remove all visible clutter
- Open all shades and blinds
- Replace any burnt out bulbs
- Empty all trash containers
- Hide all pet beds, dishes, toys
- Tidy up or put away all children’s toys
- Vacuum carpets
- Sweep floors
- Turn off all televisions
- Display attractive books
- Minimize knick-knacks
HOW TO PREPARE A HOME FOR A PHOTO SHOOT

DINING ROOM
- Straighten and push in all dining chairs
- Add centerpiece and or candles
- Set the table for a nice dinner
- Add a vase of flowers
- Add a bottle of wine and glasses

BEDROOMS
- Make all beds
- Remove all clutter
- Arrange decorative pillows on the beds
- Put away all clothing and shoes
- Clean under the bed
- Clean and organize closets
KITCHEN

- Remove all items from refrigerator door
- Store all food out of sight
- De-clutter counters and stove
- Stow away small appliances
- Hide soaps and cleaning items
- Clear sink of all dishes
- Put away dish rack
- Hide dishtowels and sponges
- Organize items on any open/visible shelves
- Place bowl of fruit on counter

BATHROOMS

- Make bathrooms sparkle
- Hang fresh folded towels
- Clear counters of all toiletries
- Clean mirrors
- Clean toilet and close the lid
- Remove all toiletries and items from bath tub and shower
HOW TO PREPARE A HOME FOR A PHOTO SHOOT

30 MINUTES BEFORE THE PHOTO SHOOT

- Open all window shades and blinds
- Turn on all lights
- Light a few candles
- Turn on gas fireplaces
- Move pets to a secure location.

Beautiful photos trigger and emotional response. And emotion sells. In fact, emotion impacts about 80% of the buying decision. Buyers use logic to choose price ranges, location and home size, but they rely on emotion to choose the homes they visit and ultimately purchase.
Your photos and Obeo EasyEdge are a match made in heaven!

Let EasyEdge automate the creation of your listing’s marketing content, using your photography. Single property websites, YouTube Videos, brochures, eflyers, mobile text codes, syndication, statistics, social media postings and more, all automatically generated with your photos. Learn More Now!