

Best Practices for Apparel Photography

Wow your customers with amazing apparel images
by following these basic guidelines



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Contents

04 Quality Counts

16 Photographing
Your Products

07 Preparing Your
Product

20 Editing Your
Images

11 Setting the stage



You've told them that
your products are
cost-worthy and now
you need to show
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Quality Counts

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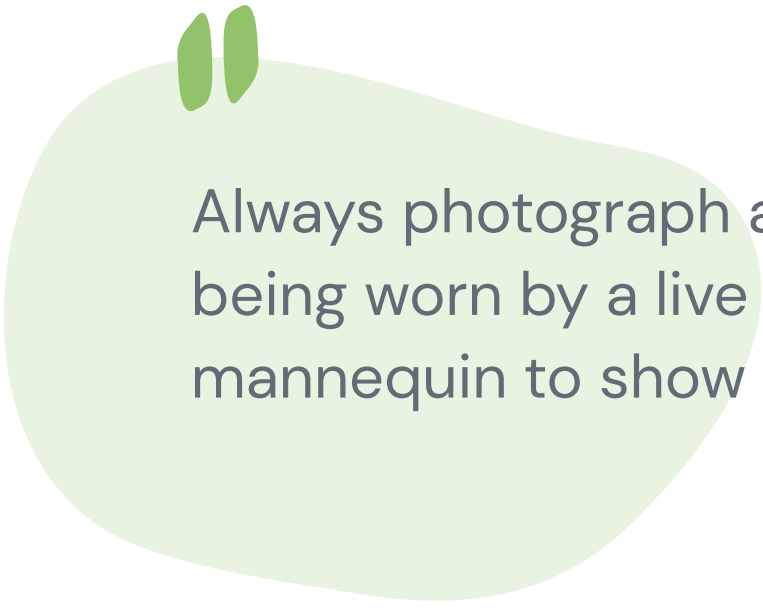
As a business owner, you know that advertising your products is a good idea if you want to make sales, build your business' reputation, and win customer loyalty. However, running ads and networking via social media are two great ways to drive traffic to your company website, but advertising is not enough to keep them there—let alone convince them to buy your products.

You've told them that your products are cost-worthy and now you need to show them.

A major factor in boosting prospective customers' confidence in the quality of your products is excellent product photography. Just as much as the phrase...

“quality counts” applies to other areas of your business, such as customer service and product development, it equally applies to your product images. Customers will associate the quality of your products according to the standards with which they are photographed. Bright, vibrant, and sharp images will make your products seem all the more appealing.

With that in mind, we compiled this list of best apparel product photography practices to help you create great images and peak customer satisfaction will outweigh the cost in the end.



Always photograph a product being worn by a live model or a mannequin to show shape and fit.

Preparing Your Product

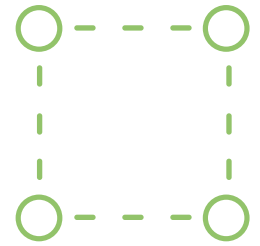
Preparing Your Product



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01 Repair imperfections.

Examine your product thoroughly for holes, missing fabric, or other imperfections that might have befallen your product during storage or transport. Try to fix as much as you can by hand to minimize your post production process, but don't worry if you aren't able to repair one specific hole or remove a particular stain—almost anything can be fixed in Photoshop with some cloning and a keen eye.

02 Remove distractions.

Labels, stickers, tags, dust, lint. All of these are distractions waiting to steal your customers' eyes away from the real prize: your product itself. Your thorough examination in step one should have brought all of these to your attention, so now is the time to deal with them. Remove those tags and use a lint roller on the product until

03 Eliminate wrinkles and creases.

Ironing or steaming your product is also a smart idea. Wrinkles and creases are not something that your future customers will find appealing.

04 Show shape by employing a live model or using a mannequin.

Perhaps the number one rule in apparel product photography is never to photograph your product flat, fanned out on a surface, if you can help it. Always photograph the product being worn by a live model or a mannequin to show shape and fit—and while it may not always be possible, live models ensure the highest quality photos. That's because depicting a living, breathing person wearing your product will coax customers to visualize themselves in your product, as well as give it some character. Practically, it also shows the product's fit and on-body appearance better than a mannequin and allows you to distinguish your brand by using similar poses throughout your product lineup (read [here](#) (hyperlink: How to shoot consistent images using live models article) for tips on that). In lack of a model, a...

mannequin is the next best alternative. Mannequins can still help the customer to gage the fit of the product and the drape of the fabric. Both male and female mannequins come in a wide range of different types, sizes, and colors, but a lighter color like white can shave time and effort from the post-production process because it will blend into that white background. Antique stores, thrift shops, eBay, and Etsy are all great places to buy mannequins. However, if a mannequin is absolutely not in the budget, it's okay to lay the product flat on a white surface, provided that you photograph it from all angles. In lack of a model, a mannequin is the next best alternative. Mannequins can still help the customer to gage the fit of the product and the drape of the fabric. Both male and female mannequins come in a wide range of different types, sizes, and colors, but a lighter color like white can shave time and effort from the post-production process because it will blend into that white background. Antique stores, thrift shops, eBay, and Etsy are all great places to buy mannequins. However, if a mannequin is absolutely not in the budget, it's okay to lay the product flat on a white surface, provided that you photograph it from all angles.

Setting The Stage



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01 Use natural light.

There is nothing so flattering as natural, diffuse lighting. This is because diffuse light naturally “wraps” around subjects and brightens up the shadows, softening smooth tones while still emphasizing detail. You can find natural, diffuse light in several places: outside on a mildly overcast day, indoors in a studio-setting with artificial light diffused to mimic natural light, or indoors beside a window, as shown in the example photo above. Studio lighting can give you more control over lighting, but it’s not necessary if you don’t have the budget. What is most important is that your images look appealing and seamless. However, if you do plan to use a studio, you can peruse these lighting setup ([hyperlink: Apparel lighting setups](#)), equipment selection ([hyperlink: Equipment selection for apparel product photography](#)), and studio setup tutorials for inspiration.



02 Use a white background.

A white background, especially when coupled with natural window light, will give your images a clean, professional look, emphasize the color(s) of your product, and also serve in its simplicity to keep the customer focused on the product itself. Additionally, using a white background will make erasing the mannequin in your post product process much easier. If you lack a white wall, you can substitute a large white foam board, white rolled paper, or a large white sheet, among other things. If you do create your own background, try to keep your photos free from seams or folds because you'll need to edit them out later.

03 Use a tripod.

Your customers might be willing to forgive mediocre lighting or backgrounds covered in patterned wallpaper (although you shouldn't count on it), but blurry photos will never make a sale. Using a tripod will stabilize your camera and help you produce those crisp, detailed images that your customers expect.

04 Position your product close to the light source.

Placing your product close to your light source will allow for that “wrapping” effect that we mentioned earlier when discussing the benefits of natural light. The closer your product is to the light source, the broader the range of light will be in your images, which renders better colors and sharper details.



05 Position your light source to the side of your product.

Facing your product directly at the light source is certainly one way to photograph a product, but we recommend keeping the light source to the side of your product so that your photos benefit from the depth of a few mild shadows while still maintaining a nice overall brightness.

06 Position your product far from your background.

The closer your product is to the background, the darker the shadow you'll have to deal with in post processing. To minimize shadowing on the background, simply move the product "out" farther, while still remaining conscious of the product's proximity to the light source.

Each product image should reflect your branding and seem to "belong" with the rest of your product photos.

Photographing Your Products

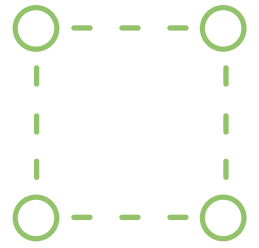
Photographing Your Products



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01 Use proper composition.

Always position your camera in front of your product and fill the frame with your product, leaving an even amount of extra space on all sides of the product to make cropping and straightening easier in post production. Try to envision what the image will look like without the mannequin as you're shooting.



02 Use a large aperture setting.

As mentioned previously, the clarity and sharpness of your images are crucial to presenting your product at its best. Detailed shots help the customer to see the nature and pattern of the fabric, which is especially beneficial your website does not have a zoom feature. Using a larger aperture setting on your camera, say between $f/11$ and $f/16$, will make every detail of your product crisp. Using a tripod helps with darker fabrics because you can set your aperture high and still use low shutter speeds, such as $1/15$ to accommodate for the darkness of your product. For more information on utilizing your camera settings and functions to capture stunning images of your product, follow this link:



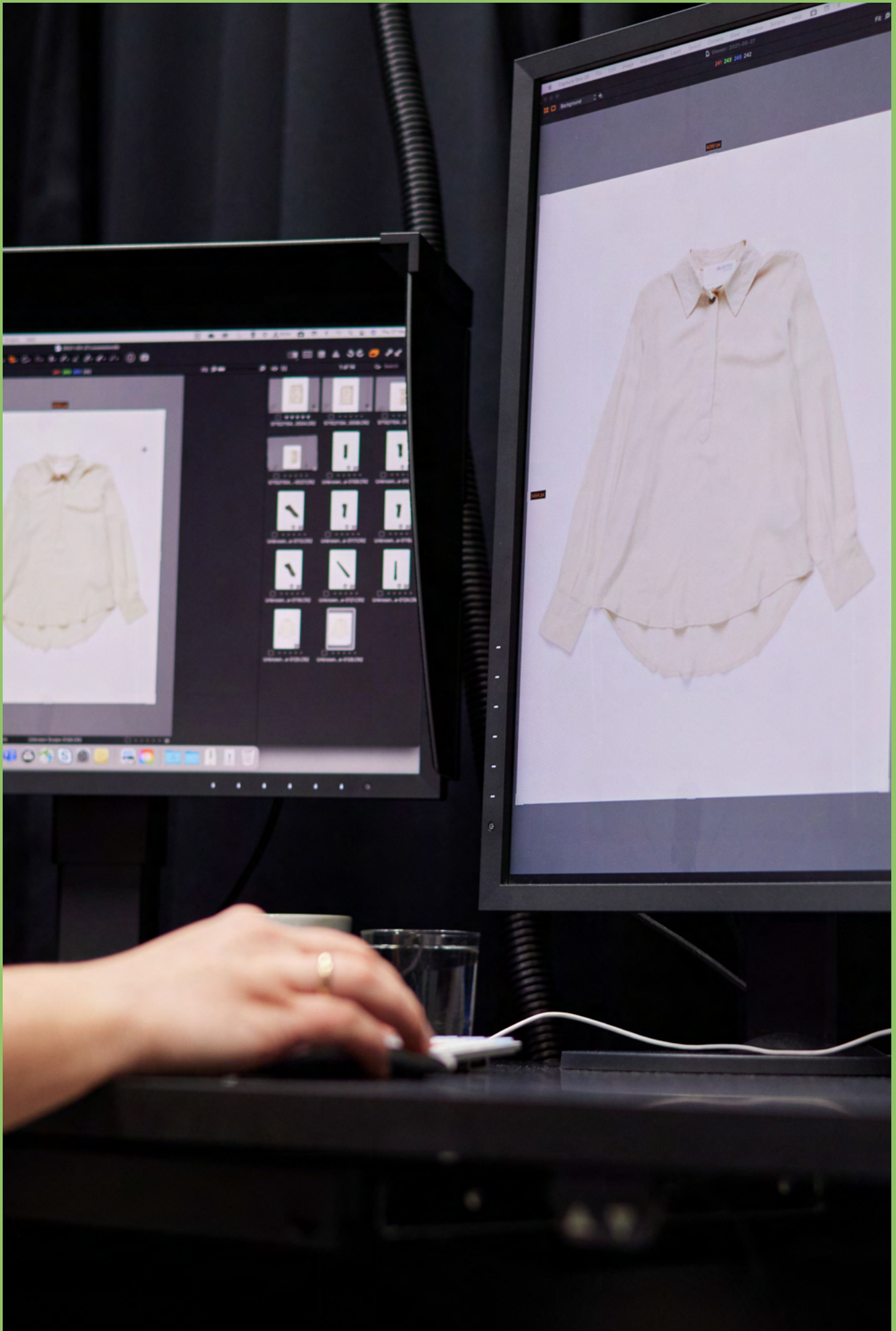
03 Show as many angles of the product as possible.

Don't stop photographing at one angle. Customers want to see the front, side, and back of each product; they want to see a close-up view and an overhead view so that they can know exactly what they're getting and whether it's worth the price to them. Giving your customer all of the information up front can prevent any negative feedback after they receive your product.pop!



Editing Your Images

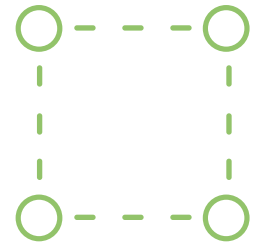
Editing Your Images



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01 Remember that quality requires time.

While post processing is time consuming and tedious work, ensuring that your images are edited properly and uniformly is of utmost importance. At the end of the day, you may have a beautifully designed website, but if your product images aren't up to par, the aesthetic of your site will quickly crumble.

02 Remember that quality requires time.

If you're feeling up to trying the post production process yourself, but haven't ever post-processed an image before, follow this link ([hyperlink: DIY 3: Editing Images](#)) for an in-depth explanation of the basics of photo editing.

03 If you outsource, hire a professional.

If you find yourself lacking the skills or the time to edit your images, hire a professionally certified editor to post-process the images for you. They'll know what you mean when you tell them that you want all of the photos to look "the same" and they know how to really make an image "pop".



04 Focus on key adjustments and standard specifications.

Whether you edit the photographs yourself or hire a professional, ensure that the following important adjustments are taken into consideration:

- ✓ Background removal
- ✓ Cropping & Resizing
- ✓ Lighting adjustment
- ✓ Wrinkle removal
- ✓ Adding or adjusting shadow
- ✓ Skin touch-ups
- ✓ Product straightening
- ✓ Ghost mannequin effect

Remember that your goal is to use standardized specifications for all of your product images to make your website selection look as consistent and clean as possible. If you include these practices into your product photography workflow, your product photos will glow with quality and professionalism, evoking a sense of trust in your customers and giving each of them the best possible shopping experience.



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