

# REALTOR'S GUIDE TO USING PHOTOS IN REAL ESTATE MARKETING

Photographs are a central component of marketing a property. **The primary function that photos perform is to get prospective buyers to come look at the property.**

In today's market where 87% or more home buyers start their home search online a little thumbnail of the front of the property becomes the first reason buyers choose to look at more photos of your listing over the 20 other properties at the same price in the same area. Great interior photos in turn become the reason a buyer chooses to physically come look at your listing instead of the others. As pointed out by Vivian Toy, in her classic February, 2007 New York Times article, *Making Every Pixel Count*, "a picture can be worth more than a thousand words, much, much more."

But there are even more compelling reasons for using great photography to present your listing:

- Your home seller client will be pleased how you are presenting their property.
- It's a well established fact that great photos and marketing materials are a way to get more listings. Neighbors of the listing property watch carefully how a property is marketed. If they like what they see, they will ask you to list their property when the time comes to sell.
- If you are competing for a listing, the commitment of professionally done photography and marketing materials can help you win the listing.

As the marketing expert in charge of selling your client's property it is all important these days to understand the way marketing photos work so you can use photography to maximum benefit whether you are shooting your own photos or hiring a professional photographer.

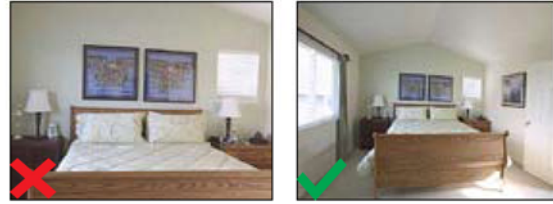
Here are 10 essential principles that you can use to give your marketing photos maximum effectiveness:

1. **Keep in mind that the primary purpose of a real estate marketing photo is** present the features of the property. Make sure that each photo visually supports this purpose. Any visual distractions that distract the viewer's attention from this purpose need to be eliminated. Items 3 through 9 below are the most common distractions that pull the viewer's attention away from the purpose of the photo. Also, photo composition is all important because it controls the photo viewer's attention and focuses attention on the purpose of the photo.

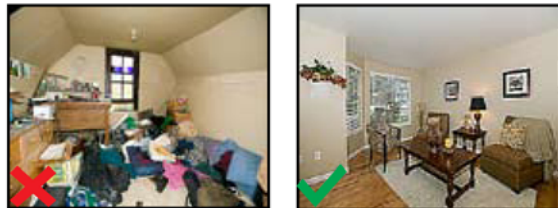


The two photos above illustrate how the angle the photo is taken from can focus attention on the most important features of a room. In the photo on the left it is not clear what the most important features of the room are. In the one on the right, attention is focused on the fireplace and the large window.

2. **Use a wide-angle lens to shoot interiors.** Wide-angle lenses increase the feeling of space in interiors. What's a wide-angle lens? Lenses with a wide enough angle of view to shoot interior don't usually come with off the shelf cameras. For interiors a lens should be between 16mm and 24mm effective focal length.



3. **Remove clutter and stage interiors for best results.** It's a well known fact that staging homes pays off. Homes sell faster and for a higher price when they are staged. Most lived in homes have too much clutter. Photos will look better and show more of the home if clutter is reduced and furniture is staged by a trained home stager.



4. **The primary exterior shot is THE most important photo.** Spend extra time, money and effort to get a "knock-out" front photo because this is the photo that will be seen most and first by prospective home buyers. Online thumbnails of this photo must entice the buyer to look closer at the property. Many homes benefit from an elevated front shot where the camera is 10' to 20' above the street level. Find a photographer that does elevated shots.

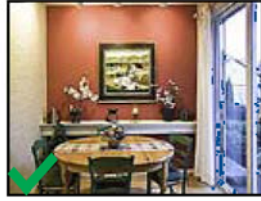
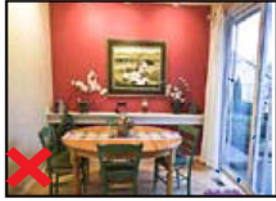


5. **Render interiors light and bright.** Bright interiors are up-beat and make a more positive impression on the prospective buyer so you want light and bright photos. Amateur cameras often under expose. Special lighting or photo editing techniques must be used to get interior photos to come across light and bright.



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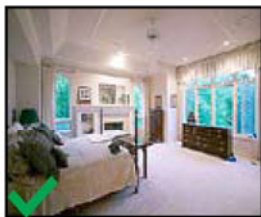
6. **Vertical lines (walls etc) must look perfectly straight.** We live in a world where we unconsciously know that all walls are perfectly vertical. When a viewer sees a room where the walls are not parallel with the side of the photo the viewer is visually distracted and disoriented. A voice in their head is saying, "this is not right".



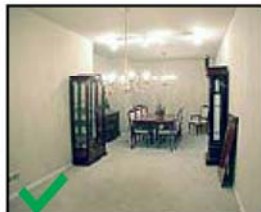
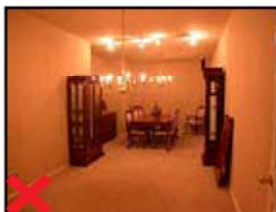
7. **Vertical and horizontal lines must be straight.** Wide-angle lenses cause lines near the edges of photos to curve so special efforts and software must be used to remove distortion.



8. **Don't let bright windows distract.** Unless special lighting or photo editing software is used interior windows will tend to look too bright so the view out the window is not visible. It is always possible to show the view out the window if the view is an important selling point of the property. However, special work by the photographer may be required to make sure the exterior view is clearly visible.



9. **Don't let color casts distract.** Strong color casts (typically a strong orange color) distract the viewers attention.



10. **The way photos are presented online has a huge impact on the overall effectiveness of marketing a property.** Photos have the most impact when presented large (800

x 600 pixels or larger) and in a smooth easily controllable slide show. Real estate sites typically do not present photos in the most effective way possible. One of the purposes of a virtual tour or slide show is maximize the impact of marketing photos.

You can hire a photographer that uses these principles or you can use these principles to shoot photos yourself if you are technically inclined or have support staff that shoot your photos. But either way, you are listing agent in charge of marketing a property, so use these principles to produce, select and present your marketing photos for maximum effectiveness.

Since these are well accepted photographic principles, most experienced real estate photographers will follow these principles without being told, but there are some that won't. It's easy to think because you have a digital camera that you can be a professional. Remember, you are the marketing expert, it's your job to make sure the marketing is effective if it isn't ask questions.

Creating great interior photos will require:

1. **A wide-angle lens** that is typically not standard on off-the-shelf cameras. A wide-angle for this purpose is one that is between 16mm and 24mm.
2. **Photo-editing software** to straighten verticals and remove lens distortion. Great photos require adjustment after they come out of the camera.
3. **Lighting equipment or special software** to enhance the natural light.

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