

Tips for Photographing Artwork with a Cell Phone¹

1. Set up the iPhone

- Shoot Photos in JPEG Format
 - The default on recent iPhones “high efficiency” HEIC format, but JPEG is a standard that is still the most compatible format.
 - Can be changed by going to Settings > Camera > Formats > Most Compatible.
- Set Aspect Ratio
 - Default is 4:3; must be cropped to 3:2 for a 4x6 print
 - 16:9 most common for online publications
 - For square prints (Instagram), use 1:1

2. Consider the Background

- Set up a neutral background behind the artwork to avoid bright light and reflections.
- Try “Portrait Mode” on the iPhone. This will make the subject stand out and blur the background.
 - For this to work properly, the subject should either be very far from the background or between two and eight feet from the camera with plenty of light.

3. Find the Good Light

When possible, use light from a window on days with good cloud cover. This natural light is the best light.

4. If There’s No Good Light, Create It

- Use two lamps with reflectors. Place the lamps about 2 feet above the artwork at a 45-degree angle. You can soften the harshness of the light with a sheet of diffusion material in front of the lamp.
- Use “Daylight” bulbs because they mimic natural sunlight with a cool, bluish-white light. Look for bulbs rated 5000–6500 Kelvin. Some LED bulbs have a switch near the base to select different color temperatures.

5. Keep it Steady

- Use at Tripod!
 - Cell phones are light and difficult to hold in a steady position. The built-in image stabilization is adequate for casual photos, but not ideal for photographing artwork.

¹. Information compiled from multiple internet sources (no AI), including YouTube videos. The principles can be applied to both iPhones and Android phones as well as digital cameras.

- Mounting the phone on a tripod will hold it fixed and produce the sharpest photo.
- If you don't have one, there are inexpensive tripods available, e.g., the one used in our demonstration (<\$20).

5. Focus the Phone

When the iPhone's camera is facing the subject, touch the portion of the screen where the subject appears. This will tell the phone where it should focus. By holding a finger on the screen, the item will come into focus, and the yellow square, indicating the area of focus, will blink.

6. Adjust the Brightness

Just next to the yellow square is a sun image. Sliding a finger sun image up or down will adjust the photograph's brightness. On Android, use the plus/minus icon.

7. Align the Screen with the Artwork

- Set up the artwork vertically and level
- Align the back plane of the phone parallel with the artwork
- Center the lens on the artwork
- Adjust the zoom and tilt of the phone to align the image on the screen with the border of the artwork

8. Take the Photo

- Use a remote shutter device or the phone's timer to avoid movement and blurring when pressing the shutter button

9. Editing the Photo

- Use the phone's editing features
- PC editing software