

Mobile Phone Photography

by

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A brief discussion on using the camera application supplied with Android Smartphones. This also applies to iPhones though there may be some differences in operation.

This will be a participatory presentation in which the audience are requested to try out the different aspects of this discussion on their own smartphones as we proceed.

I will mainly be covering Auto operation but will occasionally dip into taking over manual control.

Basics

Clean your lens(es), preferably using a lens cloth to avoid scratches.

Storage location: store your photos on SD card rather than Internal Storage. Go into  find Storage location and select SD card. If you don't have one fitted, A SanDisk Ultra 32GB micro SDHC card is approx £5.50

Turn off your flash, many people forget to – see section on Lighting

Quick Launch

Check if you have a Quick Launch facility so you don't have to turn on your phone first.

For those spur of the moment shots, particularly if you also have the volume buttons assigned to take the picture.

Check if you have these facilities in Settings 

Framing and Composition

Enable the grid on your screen

Go into settings  and look for Grid Lines. Turning this on will display the Rule of Thirds grid on your screen to assist you in framing your shot.

Compose your shot

Make sure that everything in the frame is there because you want it there and there are no unwanted subjects in shot.

Digital Zoom

Zoom is Enabled by a pinching movement of two fingers on the smartphone screen but this is not Optical zoom as on your camera.

It is Digital Zoom which crops and resizes the picture reducing resolution and which when enlarged can give a pixelated image. It can also increase camera shake.

If you can, use Manual Zoom i.e. get closer to your subject.

Some of the more expensive phones do have optical zoom and also hybrid zoom, a combination of optical and digital zoom and software magic (e.g. Pixel 4 and Galaxy S20)

(Clip-on telephoto lenses are another subject tbdaald)

Lighting, Flash or No Flash

Use natural light where possible, few smartphones produce good indoor shots due to their small sensors

The flash of an LED light from a smart phone may give your images a harsh, odd-coloured look compared to light being diffused from one or multiple sources.

If you want to take photos at night, try to find other sources of light, setting sun, indoor lights, or another smart phone's torch mode to provide a more consistent light source.

Or alternatively see if your phone's camera has a Night mode.

Also beware of the “shakes” - see the next slide....

Steady Yourself

You have a tripod (don't you?) for your DSLR / Compact camera so why not on for your phone.

A tripod is so versatile. It allows you to practice many techniques and photography styles: long-exposures, time-lapse, low light photography and others.

You can get a mini tripod with phone adaptor and a Bluetooth remote control from Amazon for £10 (Weighs only 90g)

The Bluetooth control is especially useful for night-time or other occasions where a long exposure is needed.

Or or you can steady the phone against a lamp post or wall to prevent camera shake

Example of low priced mini tripod / clamp to support a smartphone

← → ↺ 🏠 https://www.amazon.co.uk/Soft-Adjustable-Flexible-Bluetooth-Universal-Black/dp/B07SDDBKVX/ref=sr_1_5?crd=1RM 110%



10in

7.48in

**Lightweight Design
for Convenient Portability**



WIRELESS REMOTE SHUTTER



Android



iOS



Roll over image to zoom in

Soft digits Adjustable Mini Tripod, Flexible Tripod Camera Travel Tripod with Bluetooth Control, Universal Clip 360° Rotating Camera Stand Holder for GoPro and Small Camera

Brand: Soft Digits

★★★★★ 1,791 ratings | 55 answered questions

Amazon's Choice for "flexible tripod"

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Delivered in minutes: Shop Gift Cards

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Compatible Devices OnePlus 6T/ 6/ 5T/ 5, Xiaomi 9/ 8/ 7/ 5/ 4/ 3/ 2, Redmi Pro, Redmi Note 7/ 6/ 4/ 3/ 2, Huawei Mate 20 Pro/ P20 Pro/ P10/ P10 P...

[See more](#)

Brand Soft Digits

Material Rubber

Tripod Head Type Camera Rotator Heads

Colour Black

Remote Shutter Release

Rather than tapping the shutter button on screen which can induce camera shake and a not so clear picture, why not do it remotely.

If you are using a tripod as discussed use a Bluetooth remote or use the phone app's delay timer 2/5/10 secs. Some also have voice control – say “Cheese or Shoot” etc.

The voice control is also very handy for hand held shots in unsteady conditions.

On Android smartphones, you can ask your Google Assistant to take a photo, selfie, or timed image and watch your smartphone open the camera app and voila.

Expose Your Subject Properly

By default, camera meters are set to read and analyse light levels of the entire frame. If there are many objects in the frame that are dark and bright, the camera will try to find the middle ground, although it might not be the best setting.

On android phones if you tap the screen over the subject you are taking, a circle will appear locking the exposure at that point.

This is particularly useful when snapping a subject against a light background, or the sky

If you want to manually tweak the exposure, a slider will appear below the circle allowing you to alter the exposure, generally by +/- 2 stops.

Portraits

Most smart phone cameras will have a dedicated Portrait mode function which simulates the shallow depth of field (bokeh) found in photos shot on professional cameras.

This can produce quite appealing portraits

on my Samsung Galaxy A40 it is called Live Focus, uses face detection and has a slider that applies increasing levels of background blur.

You may have similar or a Mode button that gives a number of options including Portrait mode.

HDR

HDR mode stands for High Dynamic Range, and it is a feature on modern smartphone cameras.

It adds detail from the dark and light areas to provide better balanced exposure. In other words, it will stop the sky being too bright or the ground being too dark and really suits landscape photography.

If there's a big difference between the lightest and darkest parts of your scene, using the camera phone's HDR function is a good option.

It's an option that can be enabled in the Settings menu.

Changing your stock camera app

Every phone comes with its own camera app. Give that app a fair trial before downloading a new one. Manufacturers develop these apps specifically for the camera on your device. There are often features these apps have that others do not so explore it thoroughly.

Only add an extra camera app to complement the default one, to expand your feature set rather than replace it.

That said, explore “camera apps for free” in Play Store, read the ratings and reviews and give it a go. That said a lot of these have ads, nothings for free.

