

Photographing your shop and your stock on a phone

The demonstration-room photograph is the hardest-working asset you own, and it is usually the worst thing on your website. Fixing it costs nothing.

The short version

The photograph of your demonstration room is the hardest-working asset your business owns. It sits on your Google profile, your website, your social accounts and every dealer application you ever send to a manufacturer. It is usually the first thing a customer sees and the only evidence they have that a visit is worth the drive.

It is also, in most shops, a dim snapshot taken on a winter afternoon with a stepladder in the corner of the frame. The phone in your pocket is entirely capable of better. What is missing is not equipment.

THE FOUR THINGS THAT MATTER

Tidy the room. Wait for daylight. Get lower. Take thirty. That is most of it. Everything else in this guide is refinement on those four, and any one of them will improve your pictures more than a better camera would.

1. Tidy, then tidy again

You have stopped seeing your own shop. The box behind the chair, the coiled cable, the mug, the price gun, the cardboard waiting to go out — you walk past them daily and no longer register them. The customer sees nothing else.

Before you lift the phone

- **Remove everything that is not deliberate.** If it is not part of the demonstration, it is not in the photograph.
- **Deal with the cables.** Not hidden — a hi-fi shop with no visible cable looks fake — but dressed, straight, and running where they should.
- **Square things up.** Speakers level with each other, equipment fronts aligned, shelves parallel. The eye reads this as competence before the brain reads anything.
- **Clean the screens and the glass.** Dust and fingerprints show far more in a photograph than in life.
- **Wipe the phone lens.** It lives in a pocket. This one step fixes more soft, hazy photographs than any other.

2. Light: wait for it rather than fight it

Shop lighting is designed for looking at things, not for photographing them. It is usually a mix of downlights and daylight at different colour temperatures, which is why your pictures come out orange in one corner and blue in the other.

- **Photograph in daylight**, mid-morning or mid-afternoon, on a bright but overcast day. Overcast is better than sun: it fills the room evenly and there are no hard shadows across a speaker cabinet.
- **Turn off as many overhead lights as you can** and keep the light sources consistent. Mixed colour temperature is the single biggest reason a shop photograph looks amateur.
- **Do not use the flash.** Ever. It flattens the room, throws a hard shadow behind everything, and reflects off every gloss surface in a hi-fi shop, of which there are many.
- **Keep the window behind you**, not behind the subject. Shooting into a window turns the room into a silhouette.

THE LAMP TRICK

A single warm lamp switched on in the frame — on a sideboard, beside a listening chair — makes a demonstration room read as somewhere you would want to sit rather than a showroom. It is the cheapest improvement available and it costs nothing but flicking a switch.

3. Get lower, and stand further back

Almost every bad shop photograph is taken from the height of a standing adult, pointing slightly down. It makes the room look small and the floor look enormous.

- **Shoot from seated height** — about a metre and a bit. This is where the customer will actually be when they listen, and the room immediately looks like a place rather than a floorplan.
- **Hold the phone level.** Turn on the grid in the camera settings and use it. Vertical lines that lean are the giveaway of a rushed picture, and a room full of rectangular boxes shows it badly.
- **Back into the corner** and use the ordinary lens rather than the ultra-wide. Ultra-wide bends the edges and makes a good room look like an estate agent's listing.
- **Include a chair.** A demonstration room photographed without somewhere to sit reads as a warehouse.

4. Take thirty and delete twenty-nine

The difference between an amateur and a professional here is not skill, it is quantity. Nobody takes one photograph and keeps it. Move a step. Crouch a little. Turn slightly. Take another. Do that for ten minutes and you will have one good picture, which is one more than most shops have.

Then look at them on something bigger than a phone before you choose. Every photograph looks acceptable on a phone screen.

Photographing the stock itself

Different job, same principles. The manufacturer's product shots are better than yours will ever be — studio lit, retouched, and free. There is no point competing with them, and no point copying them either.

Photograph what the manufacturer cannot: the thing in a real room, in your shop, at your scale, next to something a person recognises. That is the picture that answers the customer's actual question, which is not “what does it look like” but “what would it look like in a room like mine”.

- Shoot it **in situ**, set up and playing, rather than isolated on a bench.
- Get **one detail close-up** — a veneer, a control, a connector. Close-ups are what people share.
- Include something for **scale**. Loudspeakers in particular are impossible to judge from a catalogue photograph.
- **Used and part-exchange stock especially**. Nobody else has a photograph of that exact item, so yours has to be good, and it will be the whole reason somebody enquires.

Afterwards

- **Edit lightly**. Straighten, crop, lift the exposure a little, warm it very slightly. Stop there. Heavy filters date fast and look untrustworthy on a shop.
- **Keep the originals** in one folder, backed up, named so you can find them. You will want them again for the website, for a brand submission, for a magazine.
- **Reshoot annually**. Rooms change, stock changes, and a photograph with discontinued equipment in it quietly tells people the shop has not been touched in years.

WHERE THESE GO

The Google Business Profile first — it is where they do the most work, and guide 01 explains why. Then the website's contact and about pages, which are read far more than anyone expects. Then social. And keep three good ones ready to send the moment a manufacturer asks what your demonstration facilities look like.

ALSO IN THIS SERIES

01 Getting found locally — where these photographs earn their keep.

03 Reels, hashtags and music — the same rules, applied to video.

All seven guides are free to read, member or not, at [the Clarity guides page](#).

Clarity Alliance — the British hi-fi industry trade association. The guides are free because nobody joins a trade association for a PDF. They are the argument, not the product. Membership is sold on the card rates, the standard, the conference and Bira.