

Get your online communications right:

Clinic Guide to Photography





Guide to Clinic Photography

Simply put; the images you choose to represent your business can make or break your online business. Over 15 million people used WhatClinic.com last year to find and compare clinics. And guess what? Clinics with great shots got more enquiries than those that didn't.

It's clear that good photography is a major influence on patient choice. However - ANY image is better than no image. Would you book a hotel without checking out the rooms?

Here is our guide to getting imagery right without spending a fortune.

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Cheat sheet!

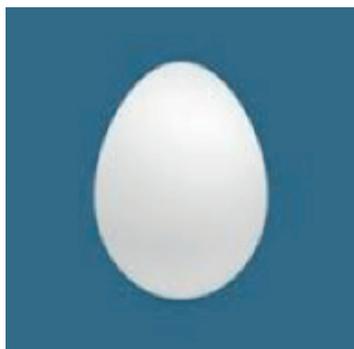
First let's dispel some of the myths before you get your camera (or your cheque-book) out.

Myth: You need to spend thousands on professional photography if you want to get your photography right.

Busted

This is completely untrue! The terrible truth is that you can spend thousands on photography, and still get it horribly wrong. And you can spend a little, or even do it yourself - and make a perfectly good job of it. All you need is time, patience and a little practical knowledge.

Fact: Any image - no matter how basic, is better than no picture at all.

Before:*@user123***After:***@AliceGenon*

Think of how you engage online. Images like this (@user123) don't exactly fill you with trust or enthusiasm. You wouldn't book a hotel without checking out the images online, would you? You can't rely on text alone. Visuals work so much harder to influence the user. The human brain processes images far more easily than it does written words. Reading requires 'processing effort'. There is far less work needed to observe an image, that's one of the reasons we find watching TV and movies so easy to do!



Myth: Glossy stock photographs are better than the real thing.

Busted

Stock photography can be very effective, especially if you need images of certain things that might be difficult or expensive to reproduce. They can be great for adding colour and excitement to your website or marketing material. We have a 60:40 rule. Never use more than 40% of stock photography in any one communication piece. If all your images are stock, how are people going to get a real sense of who you are?

Fact: Anyone can take pictures. With great camera functionality in almost all smartphones, it is no longer expensive or technically challenging to take pictures. There are some basics that will make all the difference. The advice is based on using a digital camera (even on a smart-phone) and the advice will work for photographs used anywhere online.

Getting Started: What will you need:

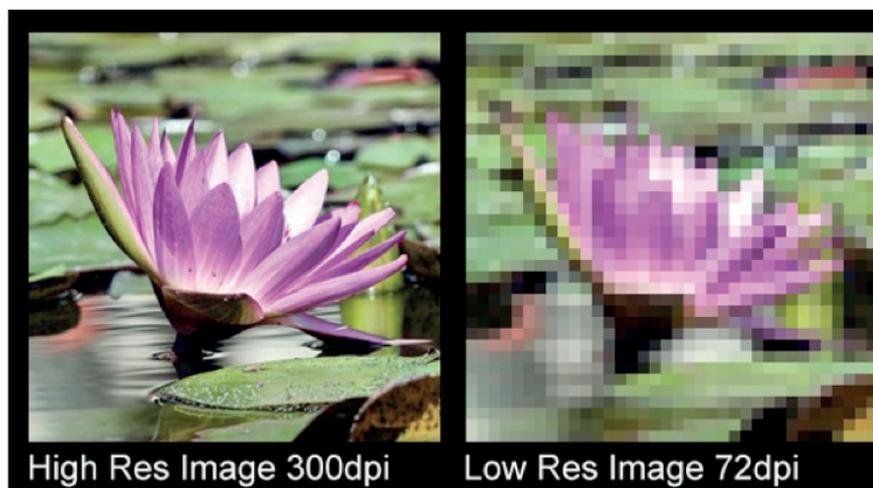
- 1) Something to shoot with - a good quality camera phone or digital camera.
- 2) Additional lighting - floor lamps, corner lights, whatever you can find!
- 3) Props – flowers, files, folders, books, some helpful staff and perhaps a 'patient' or two for some shots.



Taking shots for web: A simple guide.

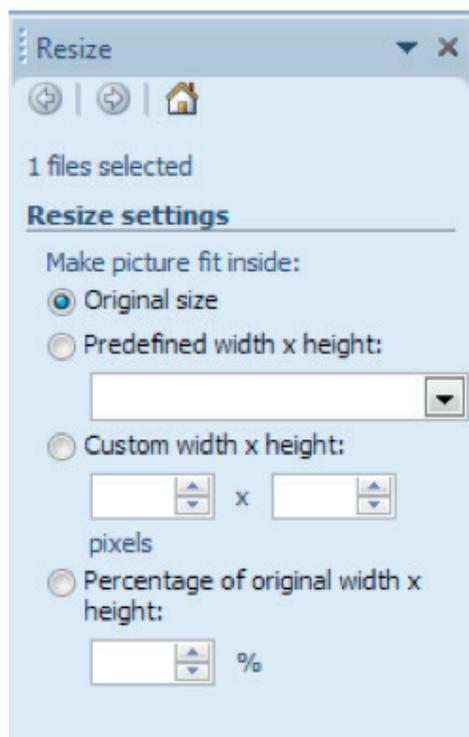
Understanding resolution

Ever see images on the web that are all grainy, blurry or pixelated? Chances are the image resolution is too low. Imagine that an online image is like a toothbrush, and every dot of colour is a bristle. A low resolution image is one where there are less bristles! This means that the image loads quickly and doesn't take up too much file storage. But if you zoom in, there's no detail. It's easy to make a big image smaller, but you can't make a small image bigger unfortunately!



Top tip: Take images at the highest resolution you can (check your camera settings) and resize only if you need to. 300dpi is about right. DPI means 'dots per inch'. Think of the bristles again!

Resizing for dummies:



Open your images on a computer. Microsoft Office and Paint are both basic programs that many of us have sitting on our desktops and these will easily let you resize and crop photos. In the toolbar, select 'Pictures' and then 'Resize'. The resize tool is great - it's got some predefined settings to let you save for print or web.

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Reviews & Feedback ★★★★★ from 13 reviews

They guy was very nice and a great help
Michelle, Ireland, 20 May 14

Informative
Bernadette, Ireland, 18 May 14

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Sat	10:00 - 5:00pm
Sun	



Understanding aspect ratio:

While we're talking about 'resizing' now's probably as good a time as any to talk about aspect ratio. Ever watched a movie where the TV was set to widescreen when it shouldn't?

Everyone looks short and fat! Aspect ratio is exactly that. Online, some picture frames are set to a certain height x width. No matter what shape image you upload, it will pull and stretch the image to fit the frame. When you resize any image - you need to lock aspect ratios, to stop images getting stretched or squashed. The best way to infuriate a designer is to ignore this rule.

Top tip:

Lock aspect ratios to avoid warping your images.

A bit about lighting:

The most important ingredient in any shot is going to be your lighting. So open the windows, pull the blinds back and find a time where your natural light is good to take out the camera. Funnily enough, the bright blue skies and beaming sun that every bride hopes for on her wedding day is the same thing that will ruin her wedding shots as everyone squints into the glare. This also leaves dark shadows in eyes. The best natural light is bright and clear, without being too bright. This will allow the colours in your images to really 'pop'. Too much light, and you'll get dark shadows and your colours could look washed out.

Top tip:

The early morning is a great time for outdoor photography, as the sun's rays are not directly overhead. Snap your rooms at different times of the day to see when the light is best!

If your room has no natural light you may want to improvise with lamps to bring up the ambient light. Soft lighting that washes over objects from many directions is better than one strong light. Think of going on a date. Would you rather sit in the glare of a spotlight, or bask in the gentle light of a few carefully positioned table lamps?

Top tip:

Professionals will use large silver or white light reflectors to 'bounce' light onto an object instead of shining a light directly on it. This reduces shadows, improves colour and detail. You can improvise with lighting to get a great shot.

What shall I shoot?

This is probably the hardest to get right and the answer needs a bit of balance. You want to show the best of your business. But the patient wants a real and authentic representation of where they will go. Getting them in the door only to disappoint is never a good experience.

What will help? Ensure the rooms you are shooting are clean, tidy and well lit. Flowers, plants, art and props can really help to 'stage' your shot. A beautician can shoot a neatly folded pile of fluffy towels resting on a shelf beside some flowers. A stack of new and colourful magazines shot from the side can bring a waiting room to life. And a great shot is your team or just you leaning against your open front door! Instead of a boring old logo, why don't you try snap the real sign that's over your premises (if you have one) This is an easy shot to take and feels authentic.

Top tip:

Use props to stage your room. Flowers, expert books and props can help dress the shot.

Files and formats:

The more detail in an image file, the more information it will need to store. High resolution files will be larger. Images come in a range of different standardised formats, and you may not be able to open some file formats without the right programme. You're probably familiar with JPGs and PNGs. You can get more technical info here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image_file_formats

Digital cameras might have a custom file format for the images that you take. You may need to download a special reader to open them on your computer. Usually cameras come with a disc to install. When you upload images to the web, you may need to convert these special file formats into the more common ones like JPGs.

A bit about cropping:

Take lots and lots of images from different angles. Then experiment with cropping! Sometimes a small portion of a shot can look really well close up. Look at this example from a great blog post we found:



Image source: <http://digital-photography-school.com/using-cropping-to-improve-photographs>

Filters and photoshop:

Lots of camera phones have filters built in and we're all getting pretty good at taking selfies and snapping our dinner! There are some amazing apps, especially for iphones - that can help edit, tweak and polish your photographs. There's a great blog post here:

<http://lifehacker.com/the-best-photography-apps-for-iphone-2014-edition-1496689753>

Our favourites are Aviary - which does just about everything, and Facetune, which smooths out wrinkles and whitens teeth :-). Nifty!

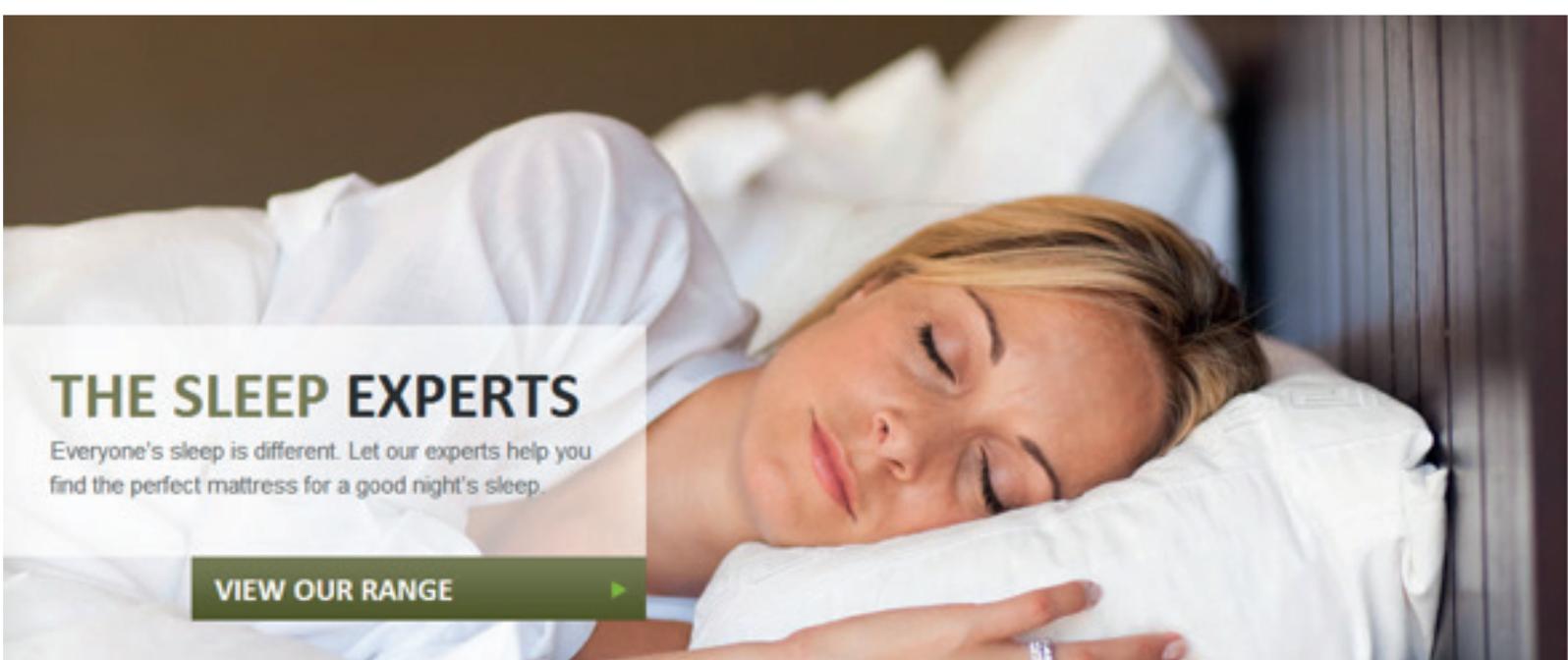


Negative space

This bit isn't really important if you're just taking profile shots to upload to WhatClinic.com. However, if you want to take images for your website and you want to overlay text onto that image, then negative space is pretty important. Negative space is the space around the object or dead, bland space in the background. This is an area where nothing much is going on, so if there is text added here, the image won't look cluttered.

Top tip:

Taking shots for your website might include a lot more negative space than regular photography, because when you add text over an image, the focal point of the image changes. Here's a good example of text on top of a photo.



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Adding photos to your whatclinic listing:

It's free to have your clinic listed on WhatClinic.com, and there are no limits to the number of photographs you can upload to your listing. Log in to your listing, and then click on the 'Profile' icon in the left hand navigation. You can then select 'Pictures' from the list. You can upload pictures one by one and add captions. Select which image you would like to be your Primary Image. This is the one that will show in the search listings.

Top tip:

We've noticed that clinics who use an image of a staff member get more traffic and enquiries than listings who use their logo.

The Cheat Sheet

- 1) Spend time setting up your shot. Remove clutter, hide wires and cables. Dress the area.
- 2) Colour and light are key components of a good image. A plant, a bright top, some colourful magazines – you don't have to go crazy to get bright colours into your shot but they will make a difference.
- 3) Take shots from lots of different angles, then look at them on a big screen to see which looks best.
- 4) Experiment with lighting. Avoid fluorescent ceiling lights. Bring in extra lights if you need to brighten up some shots. Early morning light is usually lovely for outdoor shots.
- 5) Allow yourself a lot of time, and take lots and lots of pictures. Take the same shots in portrait and landscape. You never know which way you might need to use them!
- 6) It's a good idea to take shots at the highest resolution possible. That means you'll be able to zoom, crop and if needed, do high quality, high resolution printing with all your shots.
- 7) If you're stuck you can buy photographs from istock or shutterstock for very small amounts. Never steal images from the web – you could get into a lot of trouble!

And finally:

- 8) Don't forget to include a photo of yourself and your staff. A smile is one of the most powerful visuals in the world, and it's not hard to do!

