



## 7 Smartphone Photography Techniques

As mobile phones become a modern-day necessity, their camera lenses and photoshooting capabilities have also become more and more sophisticated. Mobile phones with two to three lenses are the market trend, with resolution as high as a camera. Although the portability of mobile phones has changed the way we use cameras, it still takes some basic knowledge in photography to capture a good shot. Here are seven tips to help you get started.

### Technique 1: Clean the lens frequently

Fingerprints, dirt and dust can easily get onto the mobile phone lens, jeopardising the quality of the photos. Before using the lens, use a slightly dried-out wet tissue to brush the surface gently. Then we can wipe the lens with an eyeglasses cleaning cloth, a dry soft cloth or a piece of cotton clothing. Never use alcohol or cotton bud, as alcohol is slightly corrosive and can damage the lens, while tiny pieces of cotton may get stuck in the lens.

Written: Mr. Justin Law , Experienced Photographer

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## Technique 2: Pick a bright scene

Although image sensors of mobile phone lenses are relatively small, they can still promise higher resolution for picture clarity. Hence when the mobile phone is placed in a low-light environment, the camera will switch to a high ISO value and the noise will increase unavoidably, making the picture quality a compromised one. To ensure the quality of the photo, we should make an effort to identify the light source before shooting. In particular, for outdoor photoshoot, it is important to check that the natural light source is not coming from the back of the subject, while for an indoor environment, the lighting should be soft but sufficient.



Without sufficient lighting,  
blurry image with overlaps



With sufficient lighting,  
sharp image

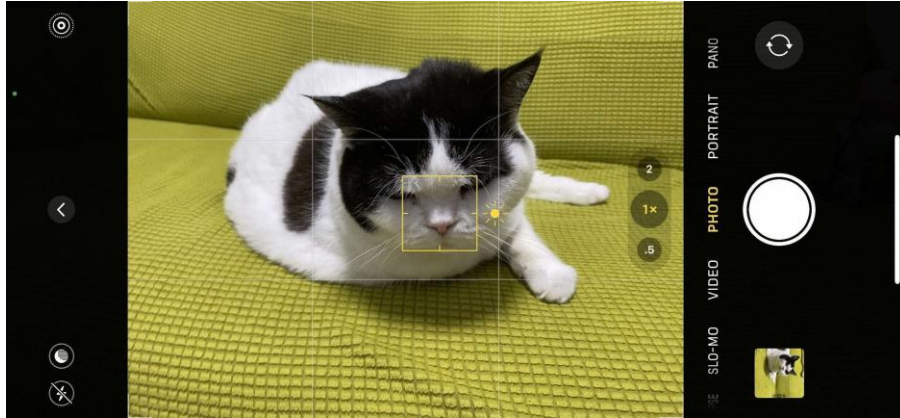
## Technique 3: Touch the screen to adjust metering and focus

Smartphones usually have the auto-focus function pre-installed, but we should still check whether the auto-focus is set on the right spot. Before each shooting, use your fingertips to touch the target object on the screen to enable the phone to adjust the metering and to focus accurately.

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Touch the object on the screen to adjust the focus. An indication of the focus will pop up on the screen (the yellow square frame).

#### Technique 4: Use different lenses to shoot exceptional photos

For mobile phones that come with three lenses – for example iPhone, which has lenses of 13mm, 26mm and 52mm – in general the 26mm lens is used for daily shooting (with the default setting of 1X). When shooting a landscape scene, we can use the 13mm lens (default setting of 0.5X) to create an imposing effect. Meanwhile, the 52mm lens (default setting of 2.5X) can be used for portraits to increase the sense of compression in the picture, and the least discord in the distance between the background and the subject. These tips work also for similar lenses in other smartphones.



**Example 1:** Effect of a 26mm lens (general photoshoot, giving a rather down-to-earth image)

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**Example 2:**

Effect of a 13mm lens

(cityscape shot, with layering and  
an imposing effect)



**Example 3:**

Effect of a 52mm lens

(portrait, with better subject-background  
harmony)

### **Technique 5: Use the nine-square grid to plan the composition of the photo**

Some smartphones have the nine-square grid mode similar to a professional camera, which can be activated to help create a more balanced photo composition. Besides placing the object right in the middle (Image 1), we can also place it on any of the four corners of the middle square (Image 2), and finetune the other objects in the photo to achieve the balance. We can also divide the image into three parts: left, middle and right; front, middle and back and place the object in one of these parts. It will give you a rather nice composition too.

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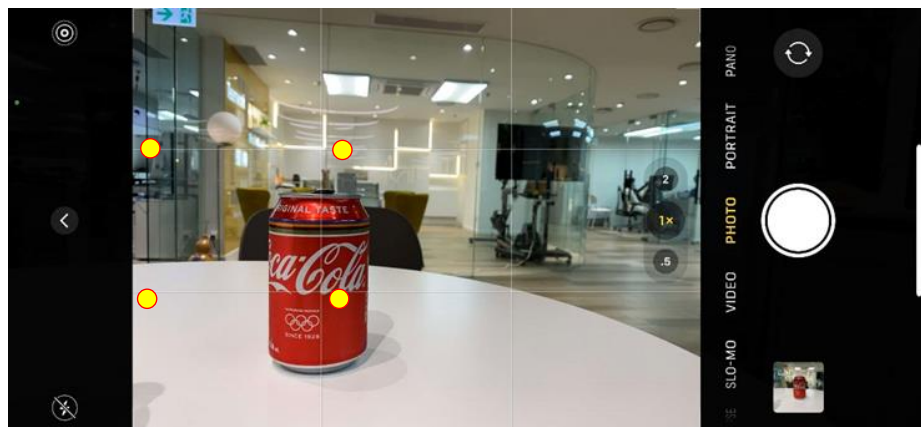
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**Image 1:** Besides placing the object right in the middle



**Image 2:** Place it on any of the four corners of the middle square

### Technique 6: Prop your phone up when shooting in the dark

Shooting in the dark requires long exposure. Although mobile phones are capable of a few seconds of exposure, without a tripod, images will inevitably be blurry if our hands are not stable.

A number of built-in photoshooting applications automatically process the data of an image taken to generate a clearer composite photo. Therefore, to maintain the same posture within a short period of time, we should find a spot to lean on, or put the phone on a flat surface and set the timer, so that the camera does not sway. This will generate a clearer composite night scene photo.

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## Technique 7: Last but not least – the right post-production

Post-production in mobile phone photography can be done using the simple built-in applications of the phone to bring a more natural effect. We can also use apps for quick and simple professional post-production, such as Lightroom, Snapseed and Photoshop, which will not over-process the photos and twist the reality.

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