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Are Your Listings Picture Perfect?

Put an end to boring or unflattering property photos. Here are six quick fixes to common photo challenges.

By Melissa Dittmann Tracey | July 2008

Buyers today want to see photos, and lots of them. But if the snapshots you're taking of your listings are unflattering, lack detail, or are simply too boring, you could actually be doing a disservice.

To get more eyes on your listings, you've got to make sure your photos are showing off properties to their fullest. Photographer Barbara Lane offers photography tips and illustrations for real estate practitioners in her book *How to Photograph Interiors When You Barely Know How to Work a Camera* (Barbara Lane Photography, 2007). Here's how she solves the trickiest photo challenges:

1. The problem: Photos are too dark. You have tons of light pouring in from windows, yet your photos look too dark. Sound familiar? When you have your camera in its automatic mode and photograph a room with windows during the day, your camera can get confused and think the room is brighter than it really is. The result? An underexposed, or very dark, image.

Quick fix: First, frame your photo in your viewfinder. Then, move your camera to focus on another part of the room that's not pointed at a window. Press your camera's shutter button down halfway to lock the exposure in. Move your camera back into position for the original view. Press the shutter button the rest of the way down and take the picture.



2. The problem: Photos look like UFO sightings. Big, white, blobby hot spots can appear in your images when the reflection of your flash is caught on reflective surfaces, such as windows, mirrors, glass, or metals.

Quick fix: Change the position or shooting angle so that you aren't facing the reflective surface straight on. Or, if you have enough light, just turn off your flash.

3. The problem: You're losing details. Buyers looking at your photos should be able to tell crown molding from wallpaper. But blurry photos can leave buyers straining to see a home's features. The main culprits: not having your camera in focus or not using a tripod in low-light situations.

Quick fix: Before taking a photo, determine the most important element in the scene and make it the focus of your photo. Then, press and hold the shutter button halfway down so that your camera locks its focus on that object. This will help ensure the important features you're trying to capture are clear.

4. The problem: Photos tend to emphasize flaws in the room. The photos are showing smudges on the windows, disorganized throw pillows, and lopsided lampshades. You don't want the imperfections to become focal points in your photos.

Quick fix: Be watchful for imperfections. Before you snap, take a close look at what you're getting. Take a few sample photos to see what's being caught on camera, and then fix any distractions (straighten the lampshades, organize the pillows, etc.) before taking the final round of snapshots.

5. The problem: Your photos are all starting to look the same. You're so attuned to the details that your photos are getting to be a bore, with images that look alike because they're taken from the same angle and are the same size.

Quick fix: Mix it up. Take some horizontal shots and some vertical. Move around the room; go low (kneel down)



or high (stand on a chair) to give your images more variety and perspectives. And after you're finished taking photos, use photo editing software to crop, sharpen, and resize the images so that your listings look picture-perfect.

6. The problem: Your photos are tilted. Walls look like they're leaning and windows are going sideways. It's a common amateur mistake to tilt the camera while taking a photo — mostly because you don't realize you're doing it.

Quick fix: Use a tripod. If that's not available, manually keep yourself in check: Look inside your camera's viewfinder and make sure the vertical lines of the walls are parallel to the sides of your viewfinder. You may need to squat lower or stand on stairs or a chair to get the image level.

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