

Guy's simple rules for photographing your turned work

Use a plain neutral background. Graduated, plain gray, or white seamless paper only – no colors, bed sheets or table tops. Minimize distractions.

Use soft light to eliminate hard shadows. Shoot outside in the shade, no direct light such as camera flash, flood lamps or sunlight. Reflect your lights off white foam core or paper. Soft light from above works best – bouncing light off a white ceiling can work – even fluorescent will work for B&W images. Use as much light as you can, or a high aperture and long exposure to ensure depth of focus. Shallow platters may require stronger side lighting to pick out the contours.

Compose the object in the frame. The image must “float” properly. Don't fill the frame – the object must have “breathing room”. The longest dimension should fill just over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the frame. Don't center the object, place it low enough in the frame to “ground” it. Don't center that special wood knot or grain feature – turn it partly away from the camera to keep the viewer's eye moving. Group odd numbers in groups for visual interest – even numbers are boring.

Consider the angle of view. Each type of object needs to be photographed from a different height to best represent the piece's best features. Open forms should be looked down on to see inside, but closed forms and candle sticks should be shot from just above the top edge to best show the contours. Use a tripod to allow for long exposures and control the framing.

Use a long lens to reduce distortion. For 35mm cameras use 80-150mm lens or zoom setting, and an aperture of at least f.8 – preferably higher than f.11 to maintain depth of focus. Digital cameras zoom all the way in. Don't use macro mode unless the object is very small, use the smallest aperture that you can to keep depth of focus.

Color balance. Use the right film (daylight or tungsten), or set your digital camera manually for the lights you are using, if it has that feature.

Color correction tip for Photoshop. Use the color picker (eyedropper) tool and select a middle gray section of the background (assuming the b.g. you used was neutral gray). The Options/Info box will show the RGB values at the picker location. If one color is different from the others, then use the Image/Adjust/Color Balance tool to add or subtract red, green or blue in order to make the RGB values the same in the color picker. This will make sure the whole image is the right color.