FREE EBOOK · E-COMMERCE

Product Images That Sell: A Guide for Online Stores

How to shoot, edit, size, compress and upload product photos that build trust and help your store sell more

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Introduction

When someone shops online, they cannot pick up your product, feel the fabric or turn the bottle in their hand. Your images do that job for them. A clear, well-lit, honest photo answers questions before the customer has to ask them. A dark, blurry or inconsistent photo raises doubts, and doubt is the enemy of a sale.

This guide is for small business owners, new store owners and anyone who manages product listings on Shopify, WooCommerce, marketplaces or social media. You do not need a professional camera, a studio or a big budget. A modern smartphone, a window and a few cheap household items are enough to get started.

By the end of this guide you will be able to:

- Set up a simple home photo corner for under the cost of a single studio session
- Shoot clean main images and attractive lifestyle images with your phone
- Remove and replace backgrounds so your catalogue looks consistent
- Choose the right size, aspect ratio and file format for each platform
- Compress images so your store loads fast without looking blurry
- Name files and write alt text that help search engines understand your products
- Follow a repeatable workflow from shoot to upload

Throughout the guide we mention free tools available at dadtechnologies.com/tools/, including the Product Image Resizer, Image Compressor, WebP Converter and Background Remover. You can use any tool you like, but these are free and built for exactly the tasks described here.

Chapter 1: Why Product Images Matter

Images are your sales assistant

In a physical shop, a sales assistant can show the product from every side, explain the size and point out details. Online, your images carry most of that work. Before a shopper reads your description, they look at the pictures. If the pictures look careless, many shoppers assume the product or the business is careless too.

Good images help in several practical ways:

- **They build trust.** Clear, real photos tell the shopper that you actually have the product and know what you are selling.
- **They reduce questions.** A photo showing the back of a phone case or the inside of a handbag answers a question that might otherwise come through WhatsApp or never be asked at all.
- **They reduce returns and refusals.** When the product arrives looking exactly like the photos, the customer is less likely to feel misled. This matters a lot for cash-on-delivery stores, where a disappointed customer can simply refuse the parcel.
- **They make ads work harder.** Your product images often become your ad creatives, catalogue images and social posts. One good shoot feeds many channels.

What "good" actually means

A good product image is not about looking expensive. It is about being:

1. **Clear** - sharp focus, no blur, no noise from low light
2. **Accurate** - colours and size shown honestly
3. **Consistent** - same background, framing and size across your catalogue
4. **Complete** - enough angles and details to answer the shopper's questions
5. **Fast** - small enough in file size to load quickly on mobile data

Keep these five points in mind. Every chapter in this guide supports one or more of them.

Chapter 2: Shooting With a Phone on a Budget

Your phone is enough

Most phones made in the last few years have cameras that are more than good enough for product photos on a website. The camera is rarely the problem. Light, background and steadiness are what separate amateur photos from professional-looking ones.

Before every shoot:

1. Wipe the camera lens with a soft cloth. Fingerprints cause hazy, soft photos.
2. Turn off the flash. Built-in flash creates harsh shine and hard shadows.
3. Use the main (1x) lens rather than the ultra-wide lens, which can distort product shapes.
4. Turn on the grid lines in your camera settings to help keep products straight and centred.
5. Tap the screen on the product to focus, and slide the exposure control if the image looks too dark or too bright.

Light: the most important ingredient

Natural daylight from a window is the cheapest good light you will ever find.

- Place your table next to a large window, with the window to the side of the product, not behind it.
- Shoot on a bright day but avoid direct, harsh sunlight. If the sun shines straight in, hang a thin white curtain or tape white baking paper over the glass to soften it.
- Turn off room lights. Mixing yellow bulbs with daylight creates odd colour tints.
- Put a white card, foam board or even a sheet of white paper on the opposite side from the window to bounce light into the shadows.

If you shoot at night or have no good window, buy two inexpensive LED panel lights or softbox lights with the same colour temperature (look for "daylight" or around 5000K to 5600K). Place one on each side at roughly 45 degrees to the product.

> Tip: Shoot all products for one collection in the same session and the same light. This is the easiest way to get a consistent look.

Background

For main images, a plain white or very light background is the safest choice. Some marketplaces require it for the main image.

Budget options:

- A large sheet of white chart paper or poster board, curved from the table up the wall to create a "sweep" with no visible corner
- A white bedsheet ironed flat and clipped to a chair
- A cheap foldable light tent or light box for small items like jewellery, watches and cosmetics

For lifestyle images, use real surfaces that suit your brand: wooden tables, marble tiles, fabric, a kitchen counter or an outdoor setting.

Angles to capture

For most products, plan these shots:

1. **Front view** - the hero angle, straight on
2. **Three-quarter view** - turned about 45 degrees, shows depth and shape
3. **Side and back views** - especially for bags, shoes, devices and bottles
4. **Close-up details** - stitching, texture, buttons, ports, labels, ingredients
5. **Scale shot** - the product in a hand, on a person or next to a familiar object
6. **Packaging** - what the customer will actually receive
7. **Variants** - each colour or size shown separately, not just described

A simple budget set-up

Here is a set-up that many small sellers can build in an afternoon:

- A table next to a window
- A white chart paper sweep taped to the wall and table
- Two white foam boards as reflectors
- A phone tripod or a stack of books to keep the phone steady
- Blu-Tack or clear tape to hold small products in position
- A microfibre cloth and a small brush for dust

Use the phone's self-timer (2 or 3 seconds) or a cheap Bluetooth remote so that tapping the screen does not shake the camera.

Chapter 3: Main Images and Lifestyle Images

The main image

The main image is the first image a shopper sees in search results, collection pages, Google Shopping and marketplace listings. Its job is to show exactly what the product is, quickly.

Rules for a strong main image:

- Plain white or very light neutral background
- Product centred and filling most of the frame, with a small, even margin around it
- No text, logos, badges, borders or watermarks on the image
- Only what the customer receives (do not include props that are not part of the sale)
- Same angle and framing style across all products in the same collection

Marketplaces and Google Merchant Center have their own specific rules for main images, such as background colour and how much of the frame the product should fill. These rules change from time to time, so check the platform's current requirements before you upload.

Lifestyle images

Lifestyle images show the product being used or placed in a real setting. A watch on a wrist, a cushion on a sofa, a perfume bottle on a dressing table. They help the shopper imagine owning it.

Good lifestyle images:

- Match the customer you are selling to (their home, style and daily life)
- Show the product clearly as the main subject, not lost among props
- Use props that support the story without distracting from the product
- Show scale naturally

How many images per product

A practical starting point for most products is five to eight images:

1. Main image on white
2. Three-quarter or alternate angle
3. Back or side view
4. One or two detail close-ups
5. Scale or in-hand shot

6. One or two lifestyle images
7. Optional: an infographic image with dimensions or key features (use on your own store and social media, but not as the main image)

Imagine a store selling leather wallets. The shopper wants to know how many card slots there are, whether coins fit and how thick it is in a pocket. A photo of the open wallet with cards inserted, a side shot showing thickness and a photo of the wallet in a hand answer all three questions without a single word.

Chapter 4: Background Removal and Basic Editing

Why remove backgrounds

Even with a careful set-up, home shots often have grey corners, uneven white or a visible edge of the paper sweep. Removing the background and replacing it with clean, pure white (or a consistent brand colour) gives your whole catalogue a uniform, professional look.

Background removal is also useful when you:

- Shot products at different times in slightly different light
- Want a transparent PNG for ad designs, banners or social posts
- Need a white-background main image for a marketplace from a photo taken on a coloured surface

How to remove a background

1. Start with the sharpest, best-lit version of the photo. Background removal tools work best when the product edges are clear.
2. Upload it to a background removal tool such as the free Background Remover at dadtechnologies.com/tools/.
3. Download the result as a PNG with a transparent background.
4. Check the edges carefully at full zoom, especially around hair, fur, glass, chains and fine details.
5. Place the product on a pure white (or chosen) background and add a soft, natural shadow if your editing app supports it, so the product does not look like it is floating.

> Tip: Transparent or very shiny products (glass bottles, jewellery) are the hardest for automatic tools. Shoot these on white from the start to reduce how much editing you need.

Basic edits that make a big difference

Keep edits honest. The aim is to show the product as it really looks, not better than it is.

- **Crop and straighten** so the product is level and centred
- **Brightness and exposure** so whites look white, not grey
- **White balance** so colours are accurate (a white sheet should look white, not blue or yellow)
- **Contrast** in small amounts to add depth

- **Spot removal** for dust, lint and small marks on the product or background

Avoid heavy filters, strong saturation and beauty effects on product photos. If a red dress looks orange in your photo, you will get unhappy customers and returns.

Colour accuracy check

After editing, put your phone next to the real product in daylight and compare. If the colour on screen is noticeably different, adjust it. For products where colour matters (clothing, cosmetics, home décor), consider adding a note in the description that colours may vary slightly between screens, but always aim to make the photo as accurate as you can.

Chapter 5: Sizes and Aspect Ratios for Each Platform

Why consistency matters

If one product image is square, the next is tall and the next is wide, your collection pages will look messy. Many themes crop images automatically, which can cut off part of the product. Choosing one aspect ratio and sticking with it solves both problems.

Aspect ratio is the shape of the image, written as width to height. A 1:1 image is square. A 4:5 image is slightly taller than it is wide. A 9:16 image is tall, like a phone screen.

Resolution is the number of pixels, such as 2048 × 2048. Larger images allow zoom, but larger files load slower, which is why compression (Chapter 6) matters.

Common sizes by platform

The table below shows commonly used starting points. Platforms update their guidance regularly, so check the platform's current requirements before a big upload.

Platform	Common shape	Commonly used size	Notes
Shopify	Square 1:1	2048 × 2048 px	Keep all product images the same shape; your theme may also suggest a size
WooCommerce	Square 1:1 (theme dependent)	1200 × 1200 px or larger	Check your theme and the WooCommerce product image settings
Marketplaces (Amazon, Daraz, others)	Usually square	1000 px or more on the longest side, often larger for zoom	Main image rules are strict; read the seller centre guidelines
Instagram feed	1:1 or 4:5	1080 × 1080 or 1080 x 1350 px	4:5 takes up more screen space in the feed
Instagram Stories and Reels	9:16	1080 × 1920 px	Keep key content away from the top and bottom edges
Google Merchant Center	Usually square	At least 800 × 800 px is a sensible target	No watermarks or promotional text; minimum sizes and rules apply

Resizing without stretching

Never drag an image to a new shape. It will stretch the product and make it look wrong. Instead:

1. Decide on your target shape (for example, square).

2. If the original photo is not square, add white space (padding) around the product to make it square, or crop carefully without cutting off any part of the product.
3. Resize the result to your target pixel size.

The free Product Image Resizer at dadtechnologies.com/tools/ lets you set exact dimensions and keep the product centred, which is handy when you need square images for your store and 4:5 versions for Instagram from the same photo.

Keep a master copy

Always keep the original, full-size edited image in a "masters" folder. Create resized and compressed versions from the master for each platform. If a platform changes its requirements, you can create new versions without reshooting.

Chapter 6: File Formats and Compression

Choosing a format

The three formats you will use most are JPG, PNG and WebP.

Format	Best for	Transparency	File size
JPG (JPEG)	Photos, product shots on white, lifestyle images	No	Small to medium
PNG	Images that need a transparent background, logos, graphics with sharp text	Yes	Often large for photos
WebP	Website images where you want small files with good quality	Yes	Usually smaller than JPG or PNG at similar quality

Practical rules:

- Use **JPG** as your default for product photos you upload to marketplaces and most platforms.
- Use **PNG** when you need transparency, such as a cut-out product for a banner design.
- Use **WebP** on your own website when your platform supports it. Some platforms, including Shopify, already convert and serve images in modern formats automatically, so you may not need to convert yourself. For WooCommerce and other self-managed sites, converting to WebP can reduce page weight noticeably.

The free WebP Converter at dadtechnologies.com/tools/ converts JPG and PNG files to WebP in a few clicks.

> Tip: Check whether a platform accepts WebP before uploading. Some marketplaces and ad platforms only accept JPG or PNG.

Why compression matters

A photo straight from a modern phone can be several megabytes. If a product page has eight such photos, a shopper on mobile data could wait a long time for the page to load, and many will leave before it does. Compression reduces file size by removing data the eye barely notices.

There are two types:

- **Lossy compression** removes some image data. At sensible settings the difference is hard to see, and the size savings are large. This is what you want for most product photos.

- **Lossless compression** keeps all image data and saves less space. Useful for graphics and images with fine text.

Target file sizes

These are practical targets rather than strict rules:

- Product images on your store: aim for roughly 100 KB to 300 KB each
- Large banners or hero images: aim to keep under about 500 KB
- Thumbnails: often well under 100 KB

If your image looks blurry or blocky after compression, step back to a higher quality setting. The goal is the smallest file that still looks sharp on a phone screen and when zoomed.

How to compress

1. Resize first. There is no point compressing a 4000-pixel image if your store only needs 2048 pixels.
2. Run the resized image through a compressor such as the free Image Compressor at dadtechnologies.com/tools/.
3. Compare the before and after at full zoom.
4. Check the final file size and adjust the quality setting if needed.
5. Use the same settings for every image in a batch so quality stays consistent.

A worked example

Imagine a store owner shoots a handbag and the original photo is 4000 × 3000 pixels and 4 MB. They pad it to a square, resize it to 2048 × 2048 pixels and compress it as a JPG. If the final file is 250 KB, it is now about one sixteenth of the original size (4 MB is roughly 4,000 KB, and 4,000 divided by 250 is 16). Across eight images on one product page, that is roughly 2 MB in total instead of about 32 MB.

Chapter 7: File Names and Alt Text for SEO

Why file names matter

Search engines cannot see images the way people do. They read clues such as the file name, the alt text and the text around the image. A file called IMG_4821.jpg tells them nothing. A file called black-leather-bifold-wallet-front.jpg tells them a lot.

Rules for good file names:

1. Use lowercase letters
2. Separate words with hyphens, not spaces or underscores
3. Describe the product plainly: type, key feature, colour, angle
4. Keep it short and readable
5. Avoid stuffing the same keyword many times

Examples:

- rose-gold-hoop-earrings-close-up.jpg
- cotton-lawn-suit-blue-floral-front.jpg
- stainless-steel-water-bottle-1-litre-side.jpg

Rename files before uploading. Some platforms keep the original file name in the image address, so it is worth getting right the first time.

Writing alt text

Alt text (alternative text) is a short description of an image. Screen readers read it aloud for visually impaired shoppers, and search engines use it to understand the image. It is also shown if an image fails to load.

Good alt text:

- Describes what is in the image in plain words
- Mentions the product name and the key visible detail
- Is usually one short sentence or phrase
- Does not start with "image of" or "picture of"
- Is different for each image of the same product, describing what that image shows

Examples:

- "Black leather bifold wallet open with six card slots"
- "Blue floral cotton lawn suit worn by model, front view"

- "Stainless steel water bottle next to a laptop bag for size"

Where to add alt text

- **Shopify:** open the product, click an image and add alt text in the image details
- **WooCommerce:** in the Media Library, select the image and fill in the Alternative Text field
- **Marketplaces:** many do not offer alt text fields, so focus on clear titles and descriptions there

> Tip: Write alt text for your top-selling products first. You can work through the rest of the catalogue over time.

Chapter 8: Workflow From Shoot to Upload

A repeatable process

A simple, repeatable workflow saves time and keeps your catalogue consistent, especially if more than one person handles images.

1. **Plan the shoot.** List the products and the angles you need for each. Gather props for lifestyle shots.
2. **Prepare products.** Clean, iron, remove tags and stickers that will not be in the customer's parcel, and dust them off.
3. **Set up.** Arrange the background, light and reflectors. Take a test shot and check it on a larger screen if possible.
4. **Shoot.** Follow your angle list for every product. Take a few versions of each angle so you can choose the sharpest.
5. **Select.** Delete blurry, crooked and duplicate shots. Keep the best of each angle.
6. **Edit.** Crop, straighten, correct brightness and white balance, remove dust.
7. **Remove backgrounds** where needed using the Background Remover, and place products on a consistent background.
8. **Save masters.** Store full-size edited files in a "masters" folder.
9. **Resize** to each platform's size with the Product Image Resizer.
10. **Convert** to WebP where your website supports it, using the WebP Converter.
11. **Compress** with the Image Compressor and check quality.
12. **Rename** files with descriptive, hyphenated names.
13. **Upload** to your store in a logical order, main image first.
14. **Add alt text** for each image.
15. **Check live.** View the product page on a phone and a computer. Check zoom, cropping on collection pages and loading speed.

Organising your folders

A simple folder structure might look like this:

- Product name or SKU
- 01-raw (original photos)
- 02-masters (edited, full size)
- 03-store (resized and compressed for your website)
- 04-marketplace (sized for marketplace rules)

- 05-social (1:1, 4:5 and 9:16 versions)

Batching saves time

Do each step for all products at once rather than finishing one product completely before starting the next. Shooting twenty products in one session, then editing all twenty, then resizing all twenty is far faster than switching tasks twenty times.

Updating old listings

If your current store has poor images, you do not need to fix everything at once. Start with:

1. Your best-selling products
2. Products you are running ads for
3. Products with high views but low sales
4. Everything else, gradually

Quick-Start Checklist

☐ Clean the phone lens and turn off flash before every shoot

☐ Set up a table beside a window with a white sweep background and reflectors

☐ Use a tripod or stable support and the self-timer

☐ Shoot front, three-quarter, side, back, detail, scale and packaging angles

☐ Create a clean main image on white with no text or watermarks

☐ Add at least one or two lifestyle images per product

☐ Remove or clean up backgrounds for a consistent catalogue look

☐ Check colours against the real product in daylight

☐ Choose one aspect ratio for your store and use it for every product

☐ Keep full-size master copies of all edited images

☐ Resize for each platform and check the platform's current requirements

☐ Use JPG for photos, PNG for transparency, WebP for your website where supported

☐ Compress product images to roughly 100 KB to 300 KB each

☐ Rename files with lowercase, hyphenated, descriptive names

☐ Add unique alt text to every product image and test pages on mobile

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