

EIGHT IDEAS FOR BETTER DIGITAL PHOTOS—it's never been easier to impress clients with professional-quality photos.

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- 1 **Know thy camera.** You don't want to be reading the manual and fiddling with settings when that once-in-a-lifetime moment appears.
- 2 **Overdo it.** With digital film, it costs you nothing to keep clicking. So try the same shot from different angles, distances, and heights.
- 3 **Increase memory.** Don't be forced to delete photos. Buy a bigger memory card. Cards offering less than 16megabytes of memory are inadequate for many high-resolution cameras on the market today. Get a 64megaby card, even if you must buy it separately.
- 4 **Time it right.** Many digital cameras have a slight time lag between the click and when the picture is taken. Master the timing of your camera so you don't miss the shot.
- 5 **Steady as she goes.** Even slight movement can blur your pictures. If you have a view-finder, use that instead of the LCD screen to line up a shot. The farther you hold the camera from your face, the more likely you are to wobble it.
- 6 **Set it right.** If you intend to e-mail photos to clients or post them on your Web site, set your camera to save images in the JPG format at the lowest available resolution (often 1 megapixel or one-quarter size). Higher quality settings will substantially increase the time it takes consumers to download the pictures. And because computer monitors can display images at only 72 dots per inch, a higher resolution won't give viewers a better picture.
- 7 **Reduce glare.** If one portion of the house your shooting comes out looking too dark, your problem is probably underexposure, which often occurs when the background light is brighter than the details you're trying to capture. To reduce the impact of background light, take exterior pictures when the sun is in front of the house or wait for an overcast day.

- 8 **Find your focus.** If you take pictures through a window, the camera's auto-focus feature may zero in on a nearby object (the window screen or a tree branch) and not the intended subject matter, resulting in blurry photos. To avoid this, set your camera's focus on infinity rather than on auto-focus or move the center of your photo slightly to shift the auto-focus away from the object that's confusing it.

Parting shots: Once you've mastered camera technique, take your camera to closings. Photograph the buyers in the waiting room, signing the documents, and holding the keys as they smile from ear to ear. E-mail them to pix along with your name and contact info so they can send the photos to friends and family—a handy way to build referrals.

Ten needs to carry in your car—prepared you'll be for any circumstance if you always carry these handy items.

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- 1 Cell phone
- 2 Tape measure
- 3 Tape recorder to note FSBO addresses and thoughts while driving
- 4 Signs to post right after nabbing a listing
- 5 Spare tire (filled of course, and an aerosol can for inflating a flat tire, such as Fix-a-flat)
- 6 PDA (with current MLS information)
- 7 Book of maps
- 8 Phone books
- 9 Laptop, portable printer, and power converter
- 10 For clients: handy wipes, extra umbrellas, tissues, and for kids, paper and colored pencils