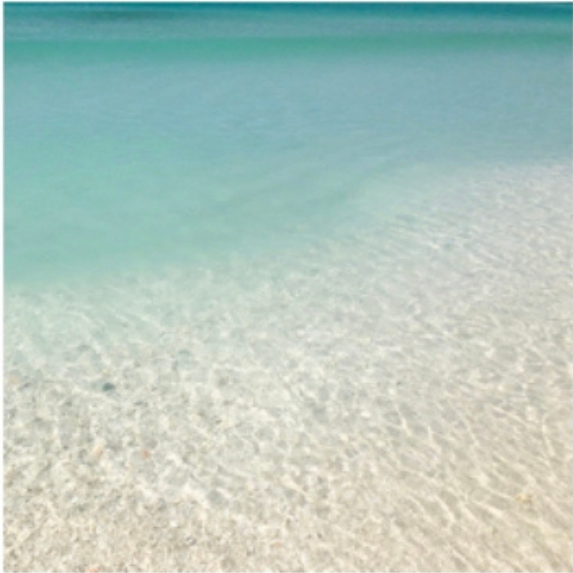




# GUIDE TO GREAT PHOTOS WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

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## BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

FIRST THINGS FIRST... A FEW SUGGESTIONS ABOUT CARING FOR & GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PHONE. THIS ACTUALLY MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE IN YOUR PHOTOS!!

### 1. CLEAN THE LENS

I FEEL LIKE THIS ONE SHOULD BE OBVIOUS, BUT IT'S OFTEN NOT. YOU DON'T REALIZE HOW MANY TIMES A DAY YOU TOUCH YOUR PHONE AND IT'S INEVITABLE THAT YOU (OR YOUR KIDS) ARE GOING TO GET FINGERPRINTS (OR REALLY ANYTHING) ALL OVER THE CAMERA LENS.

### 2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT CASE

BULKY, FULL COVERAGE CASES ARE GREAT IF YOU'RE PLANNING ON DIVING WITH YOUR PHONE, BUT OTHERWISE, THERE ARE PLENTY OF CASES ON THE MARKET THAT PROVIDE FULL PROTECTION WITHOUT ADDING AN EXTRA LAYER OF PLASTIC BETWEEN YOUR PHONE'S CAMERA LENS AND THE WORLD OUTSIDE.

THAT LAYER OF PLASTIC WILL GET HAZY OVER TIME CREATING LESS THAN CLEAR IMAGES AND EVEN WHEN IT'S BRAND NEW, WHEN LIGHT HITS IT AND REFLECTS INTO YOUR LENS IT'S ONLY DEGRADING THE QUALITY AND SHARPNESS OF YOUR IMAGE. IF YOU AREN'T GETTING SHARP IMAGES, YOUR PHONE CASE IS PROBABLY YOUR BIGGEST ISSUE.

3. ONLY SHOOT WITH YOUR PHONE'S BUILT IN CAMERA CAMERA APPS THAT YOU CAN DOWNLOAD FROM THE APP STORE ACTUALLY DEGRADE THE QUALITY OF YOUR IMAGES. TRUST ME, YOU DON'T NEED THEM!



# LIGHT

Light is by far and above THE most important part of photography with the greatest impact on your photos. It's even more of a factor when shooting with a device that wasn't designed specifically to serve primarily as a camera (your phone). The goal is sharp images! Blurry shots and graininess come from not enough light!





## NATURAL VS AMBIENT LIGHT

When you're shooting candids in your day-to-day life, it's not always possible to choose the light, but whenever possible, moving just a little bit into the best light is going to really take your photos to the next level.

Natural light produces the best photos so if possible, turn off ambient room lights and open up the blinds or move toward windows.

Here's an example of the difference between an image shot in artificial light (on the left) and an image shot in natural light (on the right).







## SHOOTING IN MIDDAY SUN

When you're shooting outside, shooting in direct sunlight midday when the sun is highest can create some really harsh shadows, especially in photos of people (hello raccoon eyes!) Moving to an area of open shade or even light is your best choice.

If you have no choice but to shoot in midday sunlight, what you can do is move your feet. Rotate around your subject or move your subject until you find the angle where the shadows are the softest

Here's an example of 2 images shot in harsh sunlight. The photo on the left, the subject was lit from above and off to the right. The photo on the right, I rotated until the sun was creating directional light on the subject (lighting it from off to the side) which created softer shadows.

Which you like best comes down to personal preference, but notice the difference in contrast. The softer, dreamier look created by directional light is much more flattering for photos of people when shooting midday.



## DIRECTIONAL LIGHT

Mastering lighting is tricky and takes lots of practice. Play around with the positioning of your subject in relation to the light source until you find the best, most even lighting.

My personal favorite style of lighting is directional, where the light hits your subject from the side and creates a pattern of highlight and shadow across the image. You may prefer softer shadows, so even lighting across the photo may be more your preference.







## **BACKLIGHTING**

**Another favorite lighting style of mine is backlighting the subject for sunflare. This creates a glowy, magical effect. Understand that the light hitting your lens will make the image appear hazy, so for images where sharpness is of most importance, this would not be the best style of lighting.**





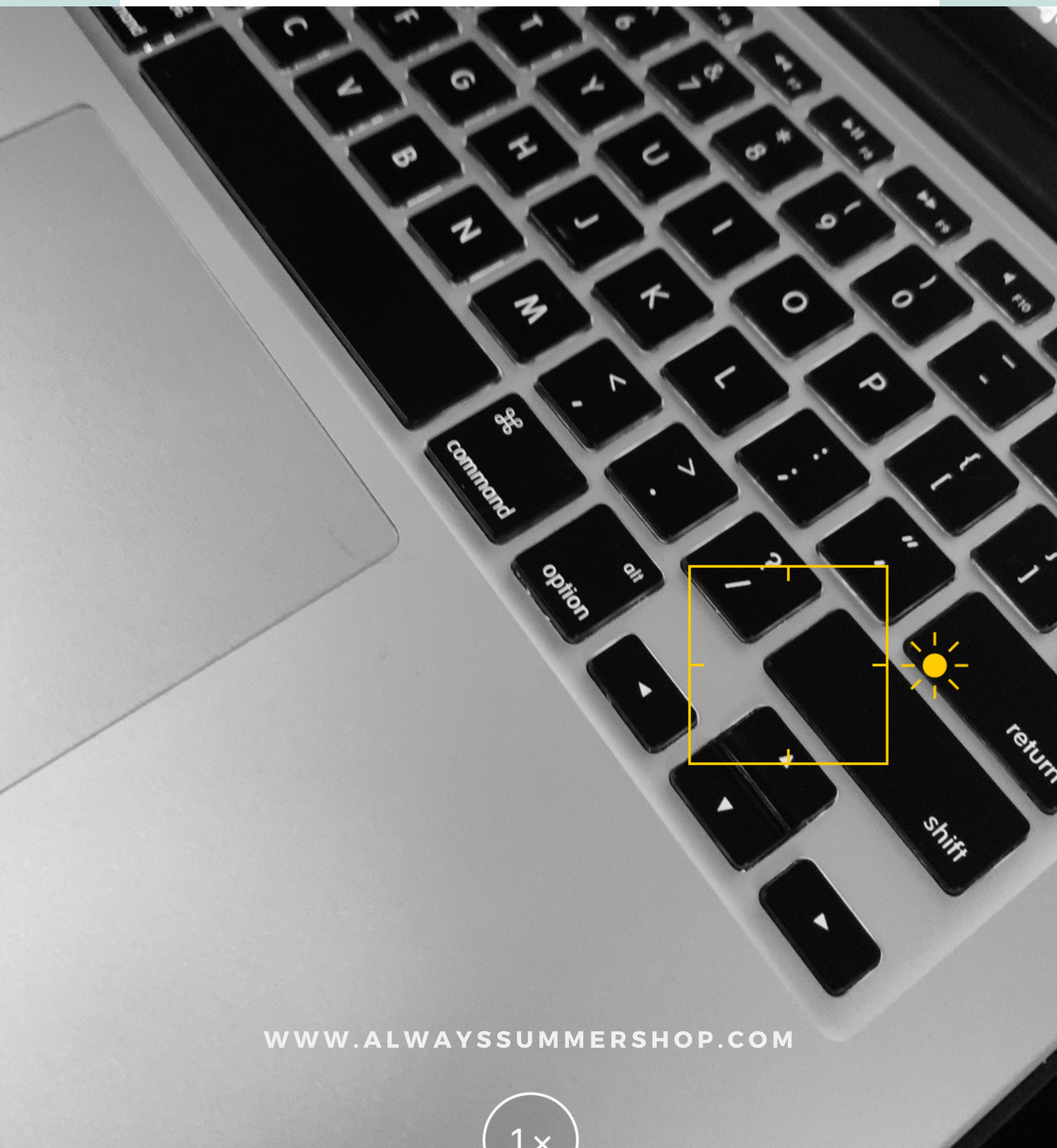
## **BEST PRACTICES FOR QUALITY + SHARPNESS**

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## AVOID USING THE IN-CAMERA EXPOSURE TOOL

For a long time I loved this tool because it makes it really easy to get a good idea of what your final image will look like, but over time I have found that using this tool can actually degrade the image and more detail can be saved by brightening the image in post processing instead.





**Another factor that contributes to blurry images is camera shake. Try to hold the camera as still as possible. This is especially important for nighttime and low-light photos as well as for photos of a fast-moving subject.**

**Stabilize your phone when taking motion shots or nighttime shots. The easiest way to do this is by propping your phone on a solid surface before taking the photo.**



**When shooting a subject far away, it can be tempting to use the in-camera zoom feature (in iPhone you zoom by pinching the screen). In fact many phones tout the zoom feature. But I've found that I retain far greater quality and detail in my images by shooting without zooming and then cropping in on the photo after the fact, than I do by zooming before I take the shot. Try it out for yourself!**



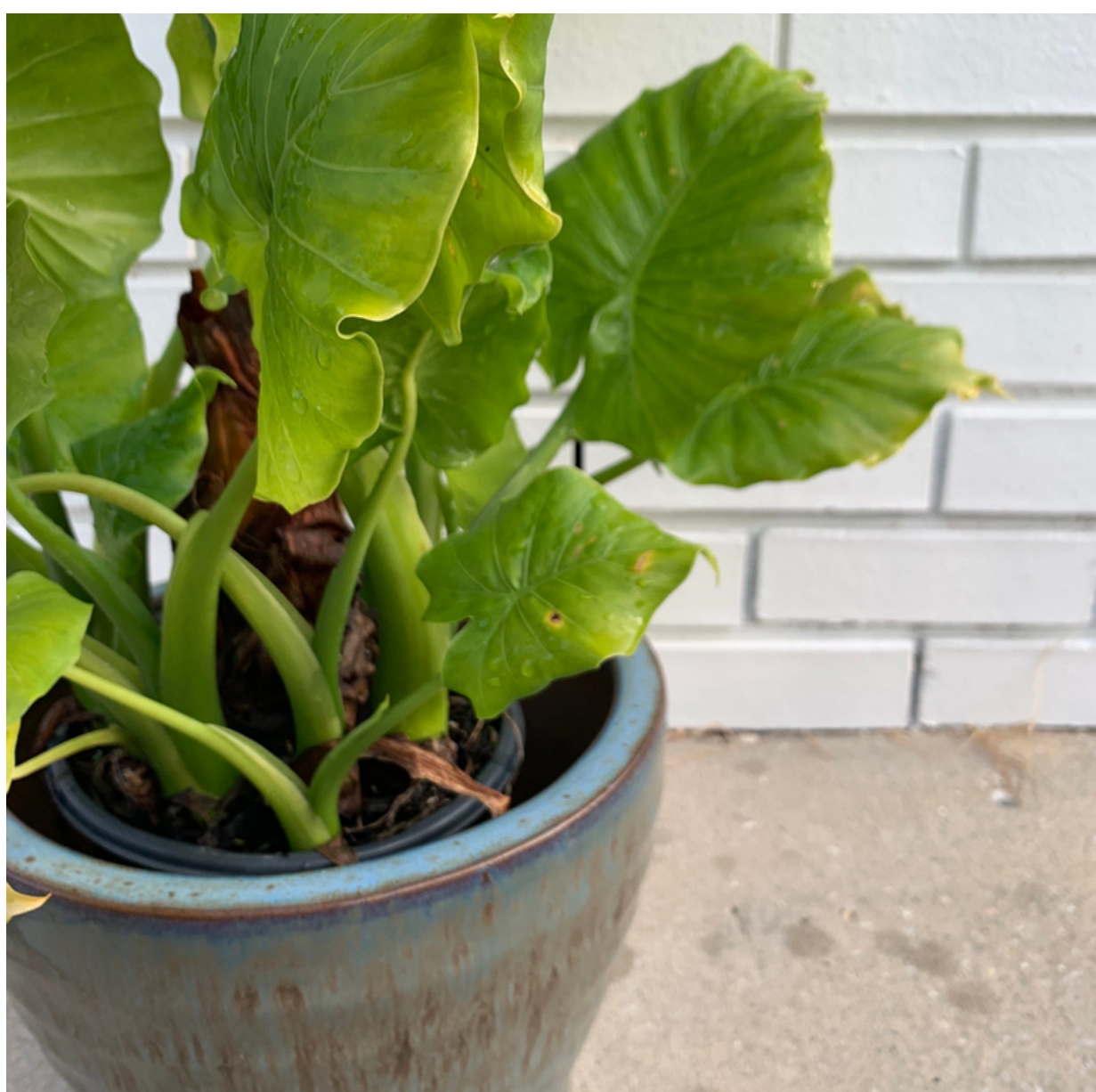
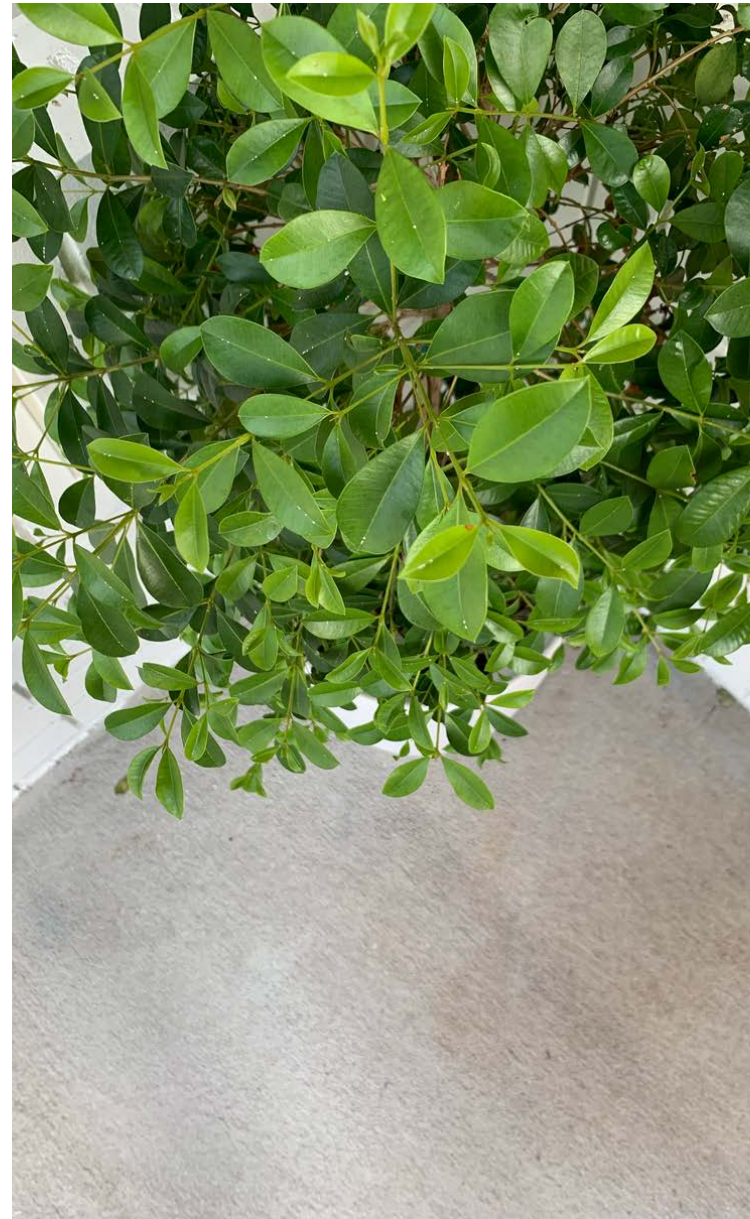
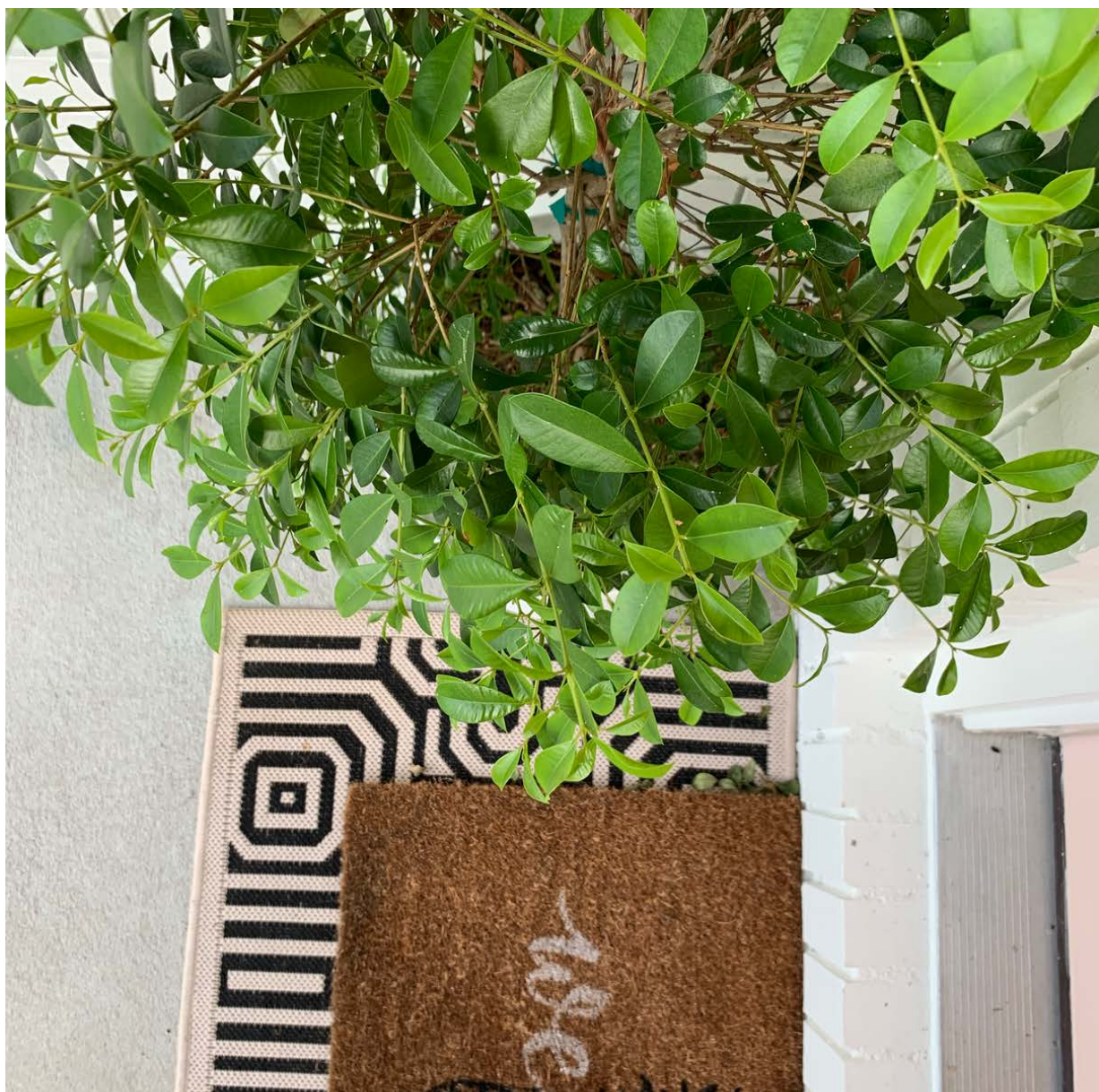


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**framing  
the shot +  
location  
tips**







Here are a few tips for getting images that feel bright and clean.

A dark background = a dark feeling photo.  
A light background = a bright feeling photo.  
A busy background = heavy feeling photo.  
A simple background = a clean feeling photo.





**Before taking a photo, remove clutter and distracting elements. A busy background draws attention away from the subject while a cleaner background indicates what the focus of the photo should be. While shooting, also attempt to compose your photo such that it crops out distracting elements like signs, open doors, etc.**



**Hold your phone straight up and down while shooting. This keeps the lines in your photo straight instead of distorting edges, which can look unnatural. Use lines in your photo such as the edge of a wall or the horizon as a guide to make sure you are shooting straight up and down.**

**This can be more difficult for smaller subjects or subjects below your eyeline. Instead of shooting down at an angle towards your subject, flip your phone upside down and proceed to make the lines as straight as possible in your phone screen's camera view. (This is also my #1 tip for close-up shots, but more on that later!)**





## **CLOSE-UPS**

**The best way to get close-up shots is more than just moving closer to the subject. Try tapping your screen to show the camera where you want it to focus.**

**My favorite trick for great close-ups is actually to flip my phone upside down. This allows you do get closer and on the same level with your subject. The further the subject is away from the background also creates a sharper subject with a blurrier background.**



**Camera is right  
side up**



**Camera is  
upside down**

**Your phone will have a minimum distance that the subject has to be from the camera in order for it to focus, so if you find that you are unable to focus, you may be too close. Back away a tiny bit at a time, tapping the screen to focus, until you achieve focus.**





## MOTION SHOTS

**For fast-moving subjects, it can be tricky to get a shot in focus. Taking your photo in a well lit area is the #1 thing that will impact your photo being in focus. If the location is too dark, your phone tries to let more light in, which means that it takes the photo more slowly, leading to a blurry image.**

**In the above photos, on the left Princess Jasmine's twirl creates motion blur in the low lighting. On the right, the twirling of the Main Street dancers is frozen and sharp due to ample lighting, even though it's an overcast day.**

**Many phone cameras also have a burst feature, where you can hold down the button while taking the photo, which results in a rapid fire of photos being taken one after another. This typically triggers your phone to shoot at a faster rate, freezing motion. Whether your phone has this feature or not, keeping your phone as still as possible is very important. See the next section for more tips on stabilizing your phone.**





**Here's an example of putting these tricks together to capture a very fast moving target... an ocean wave.**

**To catch a shot like this, I turn my phone upside down, allowing me to be eye level with the wave. I then shoot as it's approaching and get ready to move my phone out of the way just before it soaks me and my phone. Because this photo is taken in broad daylight, it is tack sharp.**



## NIGHTTIME + LOW LIGHT

Nighttime and low-light images can be some of the most difficult shots to nail. Often they turn out blurry, dark and out of focus. The goal first and foremost should be to get the image in focus because it can be brightened up later with editing.

Stabilizing your phone is one of the most important parts of shooting in low light. Prop your camera on a solid surface (or even consider getting a mini tripod for your phone if you shoot at night a lot) to keep your phone as still as possible. Tapping your screen before taking the photo can also help to indicate to your phone where the focus should be and can help to bring back some of the detail in the blown out areas where the lights are very bright but the background is very dark. For these types of photos, editing is your friend!





# PORTRAITS

Generally speaking, unless the background is really pretty and well lit, the best photos of people are closer up, with the subject filling around 40-60% of the frame.



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## **PORTRAIT MODE & WHY I DON'T LOVE IT:**

**If you shoot with an iPhone, there is a feature on the newer phones called “portrait mode.” It is designed to mimic a professional portrait lens by creating a sharp subject with a blurry background. In reality, what it does is use smart software to artificially blur the background of your image.**

**However it often misses a spot here or there and blurs an area of your photo that looks unnatural or fails to blur the entire background. You can see an example of this in the above left photo.**

**It also doesn't work as well in low light.**



**I use “portrait mode” for the occasional creative photo, but I actually tend to use it more as a telephoto lens of sorts, to shoot a subject that is farther away, if I am unable to move closer to the subject.**

**But I can typically achieve just as good of a shot if I move closer to my subject, creating a short distance between me and the subject but a pronounced distance between the subject and the background, which naturally creates a sharp subject with a blurry background.**

**Here is an example of shooting the same subject in portrait mode from a distance of a few feet away (left) and then moving closer to the subject to shoot the same composure in regular camera mode (right).**

**Notice that both have a blurry background but the image shot in regular camera mode actually has more blossoms in focus.**





**For a sharper subject with a background that is soft and out of focus, pull your subject away from the background. Creating distance between your subject and the background increases the background blur. Move your subject closer to the camera for an even sharper subject and blurrier background.**

**Here is an example of simply moving the subject closer to the camera and further from the background.**







**And my lsssst tip for ya is one that drove me crazy forever until I figured out a trick for getting a shot where I can see my subject but also fit in the entire background I want in the shot too.**

**Here's my method for framing a portrait in front of a desirable background. To get both the entire desired background + the best view of your subject, first compose the shot to fit the background. Then place your subject in the photo, having them walk toward the camera (or physically moving an inanimate subject) until they are in perfect position. This saves a lot of time and frustration caused by you moving your feet around trying to get the best composure of both. Compose for the background, then add the subject.**

**Above is an example of framing the background and then placing the subject into shot (right) vs just framing for the subject and attempting to get the background in the shot as well (left).**



# HOW TO EDIT WITH YOUR PHONE:

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I hope these tips bring you joy!

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