



Getting Good Catalog Product Photography

When hiring us at Design of the Times or another product photography shop, follow our tips below for getting the most from your catalog product photography experience.

Product is always the hero

No matter what style of catalog design or photograph, the point should always be to make the product the hero. The best (and probably the most common) catalog product photographs feature the product in bold color and stunning clarity shown with no background and a soft drop shadow. The benefits of this style of product photography are:

- Product jumps off the page
- Product photographs are larger
- The drop shadow “eases” the transition between product edges and the page
- The product photographs are more versatile

Avoid group shots

For the same reason that product shots with cropped backgrounds are good, group shots or shots of products with backgrounds are generally less favorable. Studies show that products in group shots typically have lower sales than products photographed individually. Exceptions to this rule are items such as books, cards and stationery.

Negotiate a “group rate” and get unlimited use license

Traditional photographers charge per photograph on a per use basis and retain ownership of the photograph rights. Instead, find a photographer who specializes in product photography. Such a photographer will charge by the hour resulting in far lower costs and be efficient in their work while producing excellent images. Negotiate either unlimited use of the product photographs or outright ownership. By the way, at Design of the Times we work on a simple hourly rate resulting in very low per-photograph rates. Also, you get full ownership rights to the images when your bill is paid in full. Always.

Make sure you get not only the photography but the image processing as well. To prepare a product photograph for use in catalog design the image will require processing of the digital file for exposure, color, clipping path and saving in a format ready for print. Find a photographer who will complete both the photography and the image processing. At Design of the Times we always complete the processing of the images with our expert Photoshop staff so that each image is ready for print.

If the budget allows, design your spreads before shooting photographs
If your catalog design will require special non-standard product photographs -



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group shots, outdoor shots or shots with special backgrounds - design those shots on paper first and get those sketches to the photographer well in advance of your photo shoot.

Always get a good single shot first, even if the same product is shot with a group or with a background

Group or background product shots have a short lifespan. We typically shoot products in standard single shot format in addition to any special photos. That way the product doesn't need to be re-shot when the catalog spread design changes. Use supplier supplied art sparingly and with discretion

Manufacturers art varies in style and quality from one to the next. Certainly some suppliers provide excellent quality art. Many do not. We suggest using supplier art only if necessary. But understand it will usually have a negative effect on the catalog design and your brand image.