

NOTE: You must own the copyright to or have permission from the copyright owner to use any photos, images, or other media you send us.

For a professional-looking web site (or any other business marketing material), **quality photographs are an essential element**. Clip art just won't do, and neither will snapshots. Look around the web and try to find a good web site design that doesn't include at least one photo—you won't have much luck! Also, as you are looking at sites, notice what a difference good quality photos make as opposed to poor quality ones. **Good quality photos are an essential investment for every business owner.**

You will need to provide Cruxwire Web with some photos and graphics for your site such as your logo, staff portraits, product photos, photos of your business location (nice for a Directions page), etc. To get the best photos, please read the advice below.

We encourage you to hire a professional photographer for your business photos, especially for your product images and for staff portraits if you plan to use them on your site. A professional photographer can make the process of acquiring photos simple and easy for you. They'll help you figure out what you need and make sure you get the photos in the formats you (and your web professionals) need.

A professional photographer may seem expensive, but think about it again. Good photos are essential for all your marketing materials, not just your web site. You will use those photos over and over again throughout the life of your business. They are a very worthwhile investment, guaranteeing that all your marketing materials will look professional.

If you have a penchant for photography and feel you are on too tight of a budget to hire a professional photographer, you might consider taking your own photos. If you do, please keep these tips in mind.

- *Use your flash selectively.* Take a good look at the light and shadows. Do you really need a flash? A flash will brighten and eliminate shadows in the foreground. If that's what you want, good, but take a moment to observe the lighting first and make sure you are getting the shot you really want.
- *Set your digital camera to its highest resolution and quality.* The file size can always be reduced later, and higher resolution photos give your web designer more to work with in producing the best web images. Print designers in particular need high resolution photos, and you will want to be able to use your photos for both print and web purposes if possible.
- *Give your photos extra dimension, depth and interest by placing some subjects closer to the camera and some farther away.* However, keep your photos simple. Don't add extra objects to the photo just to have some closer and some farther away.
- *Try shooting your photographs from different heights.*
- *Don't be afraid of "white space!"* "White spaces" are the empty areas of your picture. Crowded photos usually have less impact and are less visually appealing than simple, clean photos. Also,

simple photos with plenty of white space give your designers a much greater degree of flexibility in using the photo. When in doubt, leave extra elements out of your photo. You don't need to tell your whole story in just one photograph.

Product photos in particular should be very simple. Photograph just your product on a white surface with a white background—nothing else. Arrange lighting so that minimal shadows are cast. Your customers are making a leap of faith in purchasing your products without ever having actually held them. Make the leap of faith easier for them by having high quality product photos.

- *In your photos, use colors that coordinate with your business' current logo and branding color schemes.* Your web site and other marketing materials will most likely use the same colors, and your photos will blend better with your site. *This applies to your own portrait, too.* If your business colors are tan and soft blue, don't show up for your portrait in bright green!

Snapshots will always look like snapshots and will make it very difficult for your designers to come up with professional-looking materials. Resist the urge to use snapshots and take the time to create photos that will serve you better.

Once you have your photos, treat them like the valuable investment they are. Archive them in their original digital format in a safe place. You'll want them in the future and your designers will be thrilled to have originals to work with.

Cruxwire Web will most likely select several stock photos to use on your site in addition to photos you provide. (Stock photos are professionally taken photos available for purchase.) Stock photos are a great way for us to get high-quality, professional photos to use in your site design.

One drawback to using stock photography, however, is that there is a limited selection. Chances are we won't be able to find the perfect picture you are dreaming of. Please be open-minded about which images are acceptable. The limited selection of stock photos is especially a problem when trying to choose a photo of a person or people while being conscious of diversity. If you want a photo of a handsome twenty-something Caucasian man with a cell phone, then sure, there are plenty of choices. However, if you are looking for a photo of an average-looking, professional, fifty-something Hispanic woman, the choices are much fewer. This is an unfortunate truth, but a truth nonetheless.

Even given this limitation, however, stock photos are an extremely useful, irreplaceable design tool. We have a good selection to choose from and will provide a reasonable number for free.

If you live in the Seattle area, we can recommend an excellent photographer.