

3 STEPS TO TAKING A GREAT PHOTOGRAPH OF YOUR ARTWORK

Step 1: Start with Good Lighting

Chances are you don't own lighting equipment. That means you have to either rely on the lights in your home or natural daylight.

The problem with the lights in your home is that they cast shadows. So, the easiest way to achieve great lighting is to go outdoors. Because you have a single light source (the sun) it's quite easy to position yourself to one side of the picture and take an overhead shot without casting your own shadow.

You may want to place your artwork on top of wooden boards or a larger sheet of paper to give the illusion it is framed. If it's windy outside, tape your artwork to ensure it doesn't fly away!

Here's an example:



If it's a really bright, sunny day, place the artwork in a shaded area to avoid over-exposure. Here's an example of that:



What if it's raining and I need a photo now?

To take a photo indoors, again take it during the day. Tape your picture to a wall (or stand it up on an easel) directly opposite the window that is receiving the most light at the time. Leave all the lights OFF.

When you place your picture, move it up and down until you find a spot where the light is the most even. What you'll find is that the top of the image might be slightly lighter than the bottom, or vice versa. You want to minimize this as much as possible and get an even light from top to bottom and from left to right.

Here's a bad example of that (look how the grey background is lighter in the top-left compared to the bottom-right):



STEP 2. Make Sure it's in Focus

If you're using a digital camera, it's probably set to autofocus and you won't have an issue, especially if you take a couple of shots to account for any adjustments the camera is making.

If you're using a tablet or phone, it also likely has a built-in autofocus feature too, though it's not as reliable. It's definitely a good idea to take at least three or four photos, from slightly different distances, each time waiting a few seconds before taking the photo (to allow the camera to adjust).

If you're using an iPhone or an iPad, simply tap and hold the object on your screen that you want to focus on. For example, if you're taking a photo of these feet, you'd tap and hold on the feet on your iPhone / iPad screen and it would set the focus to those, blurring the background:



Since your artwork is going to fill most of the screen, you still want to tap and hold to focus. It guarantees your photo and your artwork is as crisply focused as possible. Don't worry if you have some background wall, floor, or tabletop in the shot, around your artwork. You'll be able to crop this out later.

3. Edit Sparingly... But Do Edit

Digitally editing your photo after the fact is neither disingenuous or 'cheating'... so long as you don't go overboard and follow the guidelines of what you can and can't edit.

As a general rule, you should use editing as a way to recreate the look and feel of the drawing or painting, as if you were standing right in front of it.

Here are the digital edits that are **allowed**:

- Cropping borders and rotating if necessary
- Increasing/decreasing the overall brightness
- Increasing/decreasing the overall saturation
- Increasing/decreasing the overall contrast
- Adjusting the overall temperature or tint

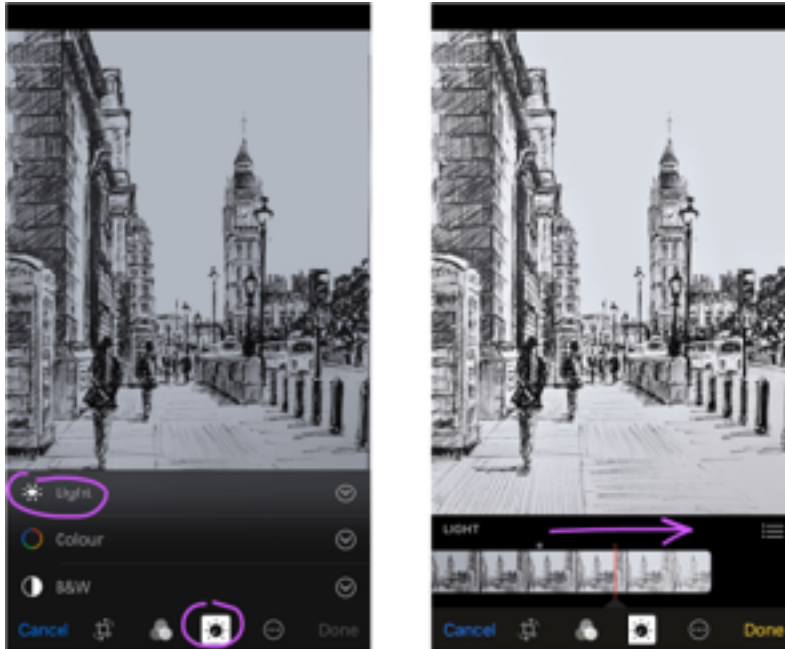
Here are the digital edits that are **NOT allowed**:

- Changing the tone, color, temperature, brightness etc. of specific areas or objects compared to others
- Any kind of airbrushing

Below are some examples of approved editing. Let's take a look at some examples of photos of artwork, and how to improve them digitally, in a way that brings them more in line with how the artwork would look under daylight conditions to the naked eye. *Please note that each device may have different directions on how to edit photos.

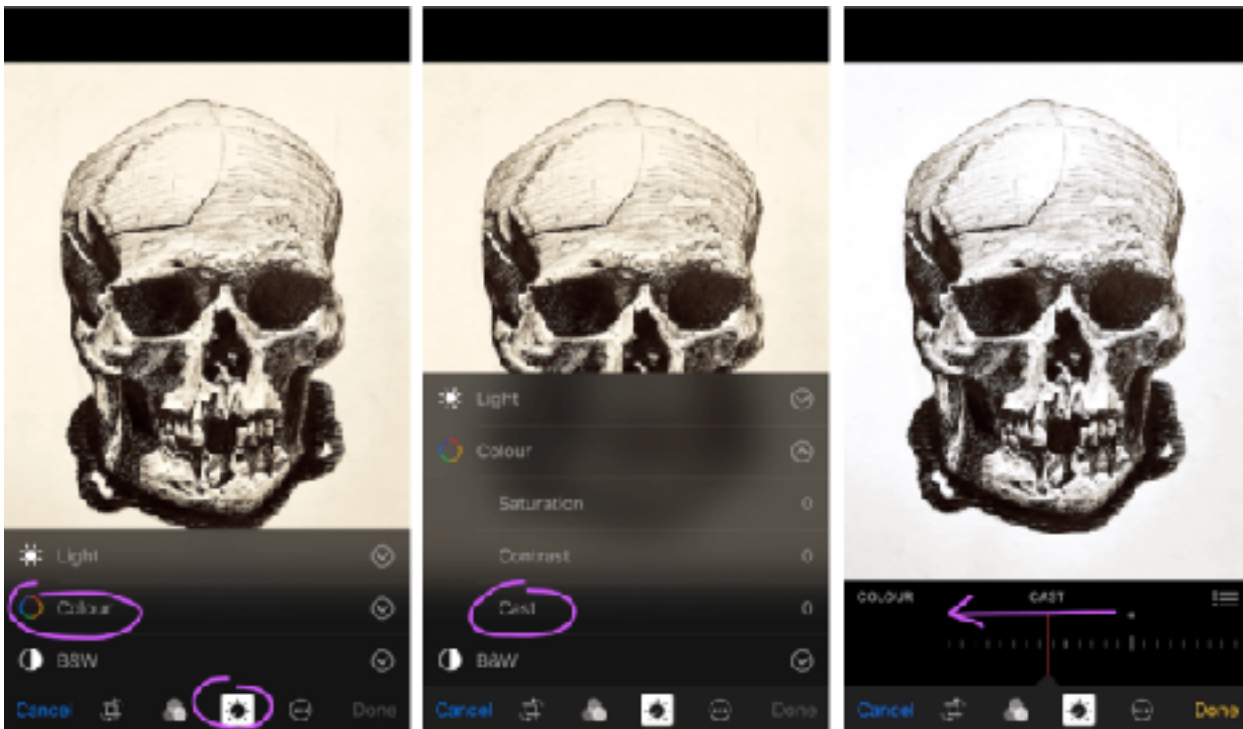
Example #1: Increasing or Decreasing Brightness

This photo was taken outdoors on a dull day. The lighting is nice and even so all it needs is a bit of cropping and brightening up. You know you've brightened it too much if the darks start to look faded. Remember, you're not editing the photo to alter what it looks like; rather, you're editing to restore how the artwork would look if a judge was looking at it in person.



Example #2: Adjusting temperature or tint

This photo was taken under very warm (yellow-orange) lights. You can see how warm the white of the background looks:



You can move the slider to the left to add a cooler, bluer cast, or to the right to add a warmer, yellow cast. In this example, moving it to the left makes the overly warm photo more neutral.

Example #3: Adjusting temperature or tint

Counter to example 2, this photo was taken under cooler (blue) lights. So, you would adjust the cast to warmer:



Example #4: Increasing or Decreasing Contrast

Finally, in this quick sketch, the darks look washed out because the lights of the studio are reflecting back off the graphite. Adjust the contrast to make those darks **truer to life**:

