

Quilt Photography Tips to Obtain Professional Results

You don't need a fancy camera to take awesome photos, most people have a cell phone camera capable of taking great photos with a little help and some tricks and techniques. If you want to use a DSLR to capture the image, you can still apply these tricks and techniques. An iPad may work, but I'm not sure about the image quality from the camera. Definitely use the higher definition camera on the back side, not the forward facing cam. Some of this info came from a lecture several years ago at an IQI meeting and some came from a lecture at a Chicago Modern Quilt Guild meeting last year.

Lighting is the single most important element to good photos. Don't take quilt pictures in the sun. A solid overcast day is best. It will yield a flat, diffused, bright light. If you must shoot on a sunny day, find an area in full shadow, like the North side of a building. You don't want shadows or areas of bright and dark on your quilt. You can apply these techniques indoors if your quilt is not too large, you just need a north-facing room with lots of windows for good light.

You don't need to hang your quilt to take a picture. I get better results, easier and much faster, by laying them down flat on the ground. You can't be directly over the quilt of course, but you can use some simple editing tools in your phone to correct for the distortion, called keystoneing. Keystoneing is when the picture is not square because the photographer was not centered on the object. If you shoot a tall building from the ground, the top will appear narrower than the base, your quilt picture probably looks similar. If you want to hang your quilt, follow the same lighting "rules" and make sure that light is not shining through from the back of your quilt. Some side lighting will highlight your quilting. Try to position the camera directly in the center of the quilt so you are looking straight on, that makes keystoneing a non issue. If the shape of your quilt in the picture is the same as the shape of your quilt in real life, you know you were centered. If your quilt is not square in the image, that is keystoneing. Try to reposition so the camera lens is perfectly centered AND you are pointing at the center of the quilt. Take a few pictures moving the camera around slightly, chances are one will be nice and square and won't require adjustment. Avoid using the flash, most cameras and phones give an option to turn it off, it will yield a washed out image with little detail. If your camera tries to force the flash usage, try again in a brighter location.

To take my pictures, I place a white sheet on the grass and use a step ladder or step stool to get "above" the quilt. Maybe you can use a deck or porch to be above your quilt. I use the highest resolution possible on my camera, I want to capture as much information as possible. This will make the largest possible file size. You don't want thumbnails or small images. When you compose your picture, attempt to have your quilt take up a majority of the frame, with a white border (from the sheet) as small as possible. Don't obsess about it, but don't have the white area be dominant or it could skew your colors. Take a couple shots while you are all set up. You may find out later that one is slightly blurry and it is good to have a few to pick from. If you find any blurry images, make sure to delete them. I like to take pictures of the back while I'm all set up too. I am able to capture 10 quilts, front and back in one half hour.

Use an editing app for your particular phone. I use Sapseed on my Android phone, but I think it works on iPhone too. The main feature you need is one called "Perspective" which you use to correct the keystoneing. Other apps may call it by a different name, just look around. Here is a link to a YouTube video for usage of the tool.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bq9nallHlaM>

The Sapseed portion is at the 11 minute mark of the video. There are a ton of other videos to teach you how to use the different functions if you are interested. Topics to investigate include adjusting curves (to color correct) and cropping to eliminate some background around your quilt.

Save your image when finished, give it an easy to remember name so you can find it later. It will probably be saved in a different location than your camera images, mine are stored in a file called "Sapseed" in my images folder.