Kaufland International

GUIDELINES FOR
PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO GUIDE
- NON-FOOD -

In design terms, photographing non-foods is even more challenging than photographing foods:

So far, we have discussed cubic and cylindrical **INDIVIDUAL shapes/packages** and bagged goods. Everything that has been said about these can be applied without restriction to non-food goods as well. No complicated instructions will be necessary regarding photography. The comparative illustrations on the next page were made in accordance with these rules (e.g. a 10° optical slope for cubic shapes or similar).

We shall now go on to consider photographing combinations of articles, such as coffee services, different-sized airtight boxes, writing sets (pens, notepads, etc.). Even when photographing food, it is important to respect the comparative sizes of articles. This is still important, but remember that on non-food pages, products can vary enormously in size. It is not rare to find a giant TV screen on the same page as a travel alarm clock. It is **IMPOSSIBLE** to respect proportionality in this case. However, it is possible to respect sizing within groups of small, medium-sized and large objects.

The new product forms we shall be considering include complex objects such as plants of all types and individual household appliances such as vacuum cleaners and tumble driers.
This will also call for more complex lighting technology to pick out the different surface textures (shiny glass surfaces, various textile textures, points of interest on appliances, etc.)

With non-foods, as with foods, products/outlines can be divided into four groups:

Cubic products/packages

Cylindrical products

Bagged goods / textiles laid flat

Random shapes/ranges

As in the first photo guide, the following pages show various examples of photos: some successful or appropriate and some “failures” either in the technical sense or because of poor layout.

Sound product photography starts with the choice of the sample to be photographed. In order to avoid costly digital retouching, **the sample must be in perfect condition.** With bagged goods, make sure that there are no, or few, reflections. Glass and porcelain are an issue unto themselves and a few representatively “difficult” examples are shown on the next few pages, all with their own particularities which sometimes require a more sophisticated arrangement or more complex lighting.

a) Plain white soup dish

b) Patterned porcelain coffee service without coffee pot

c) Plain wine glasses

This list could be endless, as every object needs its own specific lighting. However, we had to restrict ourselves to the recurring difficulties: white against a white background, glass against a white background, or how to arrange a group of products.

Examples of the different effects obtained by using different focal lengths:

1. Ultra wide-angle,

20 mm lens based on
35 mm format,
much distortion,
carton edges rounded

2. Wide-angle,

35 mm lens based on
35 mm format,
less distortion,
carton edges still rounded

3. Normal lens/, light telephoto lens

70 mm lens based on
35 mm format,
Carton edges nearly parallel

4. Strong telephoto lens

200 mm lens based on
35 mm format,
Carton edges very nearly parallel

a) Plain white soup dish

Set-up: In most cases, white light from both sides is enough.

Unedited data prior to cropping

Unedited photo: for this kind of dish, however, the lighting described above is inappropriate.

More suitable lighting: The depth of the dish can be brought out more strongly in this case by turning off or drastically dimming one of the lamps (enhances shadows).

Unedited data prior to cropping

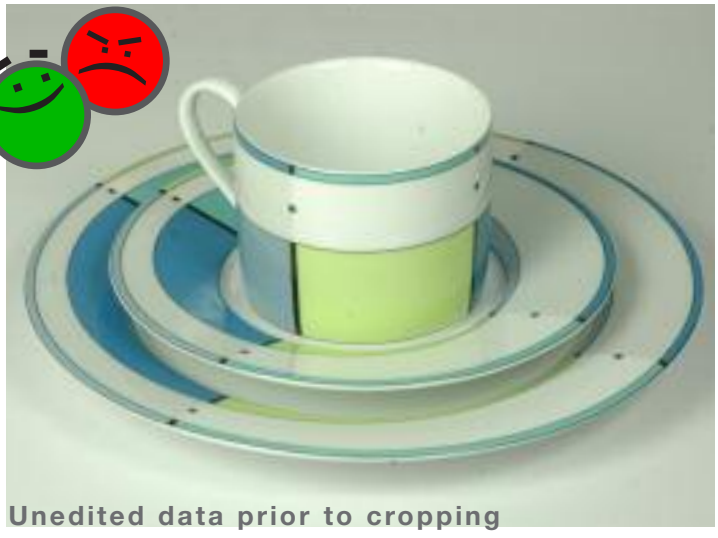
As all photos are cropped and given a digital background shadow, we can ignore the dominating shape of the real shadow in this shot.

b) Patterned porcelain coffee service
without coffee pot

Set-up: to avoid distracting reflections, the two lamps have been covered with transparent paper.
This makes the light visibly softer.

Unedited data prior to cropping

“All for one and one for all” could be the motto here, as there are few intermediate solutions between showing <u>all</u> of the items in this 18-piece service or just <u>one</u>.



Unedited data prior to cropping

Even this photo can be criticised (despite perfect sizing and sharpness), as it doesn’t show the range of the whole service. This would require a clarifying text.

b) Patterned porcelain coffee service
without coffee pot

Unedited data prior to cropping

This is one of the unfortunate intermediate solutions mentioned above – this illustration suggests that the service has only 9 pieces!

Unedited data prior to cropping

Although there is an attempt here to show the pattern clearly by standing the plates up, again the actual number of items contained in the pack is unclear or not visualised.

To help consumers recognise products in the store, you can also include the packaging (in a smaller format) in the background.

However, this is only worthwhile if the packaging has a striking design or illustrates the service clearly. The differing proportions are not a problem in this case.

c) Plain wine glasses in packaging

Unedited data prior to cropping

One solution discussed above which will suit the majority of glasses is to photograph them in their protective sales packaging (if attractive)!

Compared with the packaging below, this example cleverly plays on the darker elements in the background – reflections like these bring the glass to life!

Unedited data prior to cropping

The example shown here proves that, in the case of unattractive packaging, it is advisable to take the glasses out. Also, the white cardboard backing results in the principal problem with glassware – the glasses disappear into the white background!

“Standard” lighting
Soft lighting from the right and left

Unedited data prior to cropping

Photos taken using the lighting techniques cited above tend to be unsatisfactory for glasses with no packaging.

The dense arrangement used here simply exacerbates the effect of the numerous reflections on the glasses. The only good thing to be said about this shot is that the compact layout would enable it to be used for single-column ads.

Lighting from one side Soft lighting from the right, brighter lighting from the left

Unedited data prior to cropping

If one of the lamps is switched off or strongly dimmed (to enhance shadows), the shape of the material shows up much more clearly.

This very rigid layout can at best be viewed as a means of bringing out differing motifs on glasses. Here, however, the effect is boring more than anything.

Lighting from one side Soft lighting from the right, brighter lighting from the left

Unedited data prior to cropping

Arranging the glasses in a diagonal line is just about the ideal way of illustrating this product. To make the glass-in-glass reflections even clearer, the glasses could overlap more.

Lighting from one side Soft lighting from the right, brighter lighting from the left

Unedited data prior to cropping

Here again, numerous confusing areas have been created in the interest of compactness. This arrangement should only be used if there is insufficient space in the brochure.

Flash lighting Harsh front lighting, partial background lighting

Flash lighting
Harsh front lighting,

You will never obtain satisfactory photos using a camera with a built-in flash (even with brighter light in the background). The shapes appear flat and the harsh, sharply focused light throws annoying reflections on the glass and background. Costly digital retouching is unavoidable here.

Flash lighting
Soft lighting on rear wall

For the same cost, you can give glasses/glassware a much nobler shape:

Soft lighting on the (white) background card of the still-life table. The only accessory you need to buy is a large, black matt card.

The diagonal arrangement shown on the page before was already good.
By adding background lighting and overlapping the glasses more, the photo now provides a perfect illustration of the material.

This is helped by the two black cards, which provide reflections outlining the glasses. Another advantage is that the tunnel-shaped shade helps the lens pick out the contrast better
(like a giant sunshade).

One small, deliberate “artistic error” was that we used only one lamp to light the background, and the lighting comes from the side. The small photo in which the areas of shade are separated shows the uneven lighting caused by the light cone. It would have been better here to direct both lamps from the side onto the background.

Illuminating one single object is always simpler than illuminating an entire row. Duplicating a single glass on a PC, as in this example, is therefore legitimate.

The thing not to do is to create an artificial situation by digitally copying the glasses on top of one another. The effect is irritating if the glasses in front don't let the others show through.

A good compromise is to show one glass from the pack and then the entire package miniaturised in the background.

However, this is only worthwhile if the packaging has a striking design or illustrates the service clearly. The differing proportions are not a problem in this case.

The question of “minimum chromatic value”

While the preceding pages concentrated on how to photograph products, this chapter will deal with the question of editing the digital data while ensuring that the illustrations remain printable – that is, to ensure that the chromatic values do not go below the standard minimum (5%) (see “Quality requirements”). This is especially important with white/black objects and glassware.

Another optical illusion effect is worth mentioning here:

Unedited photo in a realistic environment

Unedited data prior to cropping

Same photo, cropped

1 stage lighter

2 stages lighter. Appears pure white, but the halftone dot value may deviate during printing (fall below 5%).

A white object appears lighter when shown in a realistic environment. Once cropped and placed directly on the white paper support, the dish looks much darker.

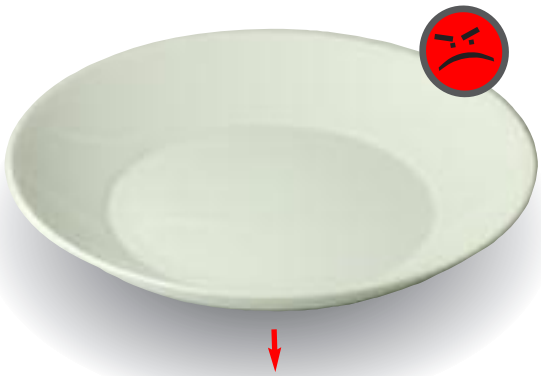
Drop Shadows!

Another important step in creating a good product illustration is to add an artificial drop shadow behind every object. This enhances the three-dimensional appearance, and in the case of light-coloured or white products it can markedly improve the contours.

Unedited photo
in a realistic environment with a strong side shadow caused by the lighting set-up

The following work steps apply to the software Adobe InDesign CS. If an illustration is extra large (3 columns), one can allocate more space to shadows. Items through which light passes at many points (e.g., plants, spoked clothes driers, wire baskets) should have shadows only on their outer edges.
Isolated pieces of glassware that are photographed with transmitted light should not be given shadows.

Ideal shadow
(always at the lower right)
The bowl was also mirror-reversed to make the light falling on it match that of the applied shadow.



Shadows surrounding the whole object
should always be avoided. Illustrations of white or lightcoloured objects must have contours that are sharp enough to show up against the paper below.

Bottle shadows
Beverage and liquor bottles with clear contents (mineral water, etc.) can also be given shadows. However, as can be seen in the case of the drinking glass, a shadow can destroy the glasslike appearance, making the object seem unnatural and “lifeless”.

This printed page shows some of the ways in which the individual illustrations could have been improved.

These suggestions are **absolutely impartial.** It is therefore unimportant whether the photos were produced by us or are genuine data supplied by the industry.

Good lighting. The various accessories are arranged in a compact way. Respects the 10° optical slope.

Respects the 10° optical

The grey outlines show how the items could have been arranged to create a more harmonious overall effect. Prices and texts are in their original positions.