

Tips on Photography

Photography and visuals greatly increases the chances of news coverage. With digital cameras, we can now quickly capture and send images. However, there are a few things to consider to get the right quality for the right purpose. By following these guidelines we'll be able to better serve both you and the media. It may be a cliché but it's often true—a picture's worth more than a thousand words.

What Kind of Images?

Photos and more...

- Photos – Digital images are great for many uses – but don't throw away your old print camera. Most digitals under 4 Megapixels can't capture the high resolution needed for poster size photos. That is when the old trusty SLR cameras come in handy.
- Renderings - In the early stages of a project, a rendering can be an effective tool to convey an image of the project. Ask the architect for a copy.
- Logos - images of company logos (i.e., distributor, architect, contractor, etc) will help us to provide some exposure for the involved parties.

Uses - ICFA has many outlets for photos. This will affect the quality resolution we are looking for, and the type of shot. Keep these uses in mind:

- Presentations - for this we are looking for photos of:
 - Details of construction
 - Innovations
 - Action shots - of workers with HARDHATS and safety gear!
 - Concrete placement shots
 - Anything you feel is interesting to pass along
- Web photos, news release page, etc. – These photos can be lower resolution, but since they are very small – the subject must be pretty simple and clear.
- Technical Briefs, Marketing Pieces, and “feeds” to magazines – for increased exposure for ICF projects.
- Fun photos - for various uses – perhaps to liven up the Web site, newsletters, or Powerpoints - i.e., Fun photos of ourselves, dog on top of the ICF wall, happy customer faces.
- Trade Show Photos - These are generally a full job photo, finished or semi-finished, or a very unique under construction photo. This is where the professional photographer is handy to get the high resolution photos.

A “good” picture speaks 1,000 words – Try to capture newsworthy aspects of ICF jobs, such as:

- Unique architectural feature
- Unique integration of other building elements i.e., hollow-core floor, tie into existing building, steel framing, etc. Products and action shots.
- Installation action shots of finish applications - sheetrock, stucco, stone siding, etc. Take photos of the phases of application.



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- Unique structural example – i.e., red steel infill, large openings with beam on top, tall walls, pilasters w/lots of rebar, etc.
- Location - seashore? Mountains? Capture these in the photo
- Size of project - for large projects, try to capture the full size – probably at an angle to fill up the whole frame. If rows of houses – take a photo down the row of houses.
- Human interest story - i.e., Habitat House photo would show the volunteer crew at work, or the new homeowners.
- Establish comparable – i.e., in a tornado – find a before, a comparable neighbors house (damaged more), and another “havoc wreaked” shot.
- Site signs, truck company signs, city signs - These can all enhance a photo by lending it a sense of place, or connection with a company.

Keep it simple

- Composition—Give the shot news value by presenting its subject in an interesting, informative way. Fill the frame. Include a person or two, but get rid of job site clutter in the photo.
- Perspective - Look at the building / detail from an angle, a height (can get on top of a truck, building next door, crane, etc.). Aerial shots are also nice for certain jobs. “A good photograph is knowing where to stand” Ansel Adams.
- Lighting - Best time is early in the morning – the light is usually more interesting and the job site is cleaner.

How to get the right quality photo

Understand the format of photos

- Format— Send us the photos in a TIFF (best) or .jpg (or .JPEG) file format, saved at high resolution with **no** compression. Make sure this is the default setting for your digital camera. JPEG files corrupt every time you open them – so send them to us right away and we can edit and save as a TIFF file for archiving. We will then size them for different other uses (Web site, project profile) and save them as a smaller JPEG.
- Size—See below for a complete understanding of photo – geek–speak. As a rule of thumb:
 - 300 dpi at regular photo print size, or Medium resolution, about 1600 x 1200 pixels will be good for printing up to about a 5.5” x 4” photo. This covers us for project profiles, PowerPoints, etc. This will be about 2 megapixels, and take about 350 K disk space. Set your camera at those settings, with no compression.
 - 200 dpi at 16” x 20” , or 3200 x 4000 pixels is what we need for large poster size prints. This will end up being about a 40 Mg File. Depending on the digital camera lens & chip, somewhat smaller files can sometimes be interpolated up to the sufficient resolution. This is not possible on most digital cameras and will require a regular old fashioned SLR camera.



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Understanding your camera - read the manual *before* you need it.

- Zoom – Optical vs. Digital – Optical zoom works like a traditional camera lens. The photo quality is maintained. Skip the Digital Zoom, which uses its electronic brain to analyze what it sees and interpolate a small portion of an image to artificially increase the size. Unfortunately, it also reduces the resolution of the image. Stick to Optical Zoom.
- Resolution – know how to set it and how to change it. You'll want to set the default at about 300 dpi, or Medium. You also want to know how to switch it to a high resolution if you have a few photos that you think are worth enlarging.

Document the source on the photo file

- Complete the information on “properties,” “summary” (right click on file). If the properties information is not completed – the photo will get lost in the files, with no identification.
- Include credits – magazines will generally want to provide a credit for the source of the photo.

Sending photos

E-mail

- Send your photos by e-mail attachment. If the files add up to more than 3 megabytes, use separate e-mails or send them on a CD-ROM. Photos can also be sent to us on disk. We can accept files on PC disk, CD-ROM, or Win Zip Disks.

Snail Mail

- Large files for poster enlargement will need to be sent on a disk, since these will be at least 40 Mg of file space. DVDs are especially useful for photos, since the files take up so much room.
- If you have prints, please send us the negatives so we can choose to scan these as needed.

REVIEW

- Carry a digital camera for general use photos – set at medium setting. Send these to us for use in press releases, project profiles, Web site, etc.
- Carry a film camera for large format shots – best to use slide film, or keep the negatives from the prints. Take just a few GREAT shots for reproducing to poster size, and you only need to develop when the roll is full. Send us the slides, or the prints AND negatives. This will also help if your project will be submitting for awards.
- Find a friend who is a photographer for a newspaper, amateur photographer – or hire a professional.

GEEK SPEAK

Pixels:

Digital cameras capture images as pixels. "Pixel" stands for "picture element." The pixel is the smallest element in a computer image rather like the tiles in a mosaic that combine to make up a picture. Pixel dimensions are typically expressed as the number of pixels (or dots of information) in the width of the image by the number of pixels in the height of the image. When you multiply these two dimensions together, you get the overall size of the image expressed in Megapixels. Digital cameras are often specified by the size of image they can capture in Megapixels - for example a 2.1 Megapixel camera captures an image at 1600 x 1200 pixels.



Now that you understand what the "Megapixel" thing is all about, why is bigger better? As you can see from the pictures above, the more pixels you have the more "detail" you have. You may have heard people talk about "high res" or "low res" images. Resolution is expressed as Dots Per Inch (dpi) when printed, or Pixels Per Inch (ppi) when viewed. The dpi measure indicates the quality of the image, but depends on the required output size. The higher the dpi value is, the higher the density of visual information that is available to represent the image. The more visual information there is the sharper and more colour rich the image.

If the image is enlarged, the dpi value decreases; conversely, if the image is reduced in size, the dpi value or resolution increases. In simplified terms, just remember that the lower the resolution, the fuzzier the image quality appears. The higher the resolution, the sharper the image quality appears.

For example, if an image is 1280 x 960 pixels, and you want to print an image that is 200 dpi, then divide 1280 and 960 each by 200 dpi to get the maximum size that the image can be printed without losing clarity, in this case, 6.4 inches by 4.8 inches. Check our photo quality guide to see how big you can print your photos. You cannot directly compare pixel quality printed by an inkjet or laser with that of a true photographic process.



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			PRINT SIZE					
Mega Pixels	File Size	Image Size	5x3.7"	6x4"	5x7"	6x8"	8x12"	10x15"
0.3	50k	640 x 480	Yellow	Orange	Low Quality	Red	Red	Not Usable
0.5	100k	800 x 600	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Red	Red
0.8	150k	1024 x 768	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Orange	Red	Red
1.2	200k	1280 x 960	Green	Green	Good Quality	Yellow	Orange	Red
1.9	350k	1600 x 1200	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Orange
3.1	700k	2048 x 1536	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
4.3	1.1MB	2400 x 1800	Green	Green	TOP Quality	Green	Green	Green
6.0	2MB	2832 x 2128	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

The Formulas:

Picture dimension x preferred dpi = pixel size, i.e., a 3" x 5" picture at 300 dpi will be 900 pixels x 1500 pixels = 1.35 megapixels

Setting the Resolutions on the Camera

In order to have good quality when the photo is printed in one of our documents, it must be of sufficient resolution. We prefer to have a minimum of 300 pixels per inch resolution at the final size the photo is to be used. The absolute minimum usable resolution is 200 pixels per inch at the final size. Most digital cameras shoot at 72 ppi. Most digital cameras are now described according to the size of file they produce. A 1 Megapixel camera produces a file whose width x height in pixels = over 1,000,000 pixels, a 2 Megapixel camera would thus produce a file over 2,000,000, etc. For practical purposes, it takes a 1.3 to 2 Megapixel camera to produce even a small photo that is suitable for use in print, and a 2.5 to 3 Megapixel camera would be much better.

Resolutions for different media

- PPT - The quality will be limited only by the number of pixels the projector displays. For example, say a projector has a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels. This is actually a fairly small photo. A rule of thumb is to keep the photos at 100 dpi at roughly a 6"x 5" size, or 640 x 480 dpi, low resolution for average digital cameras.
- Web mail - To share a small photo on the Web, it does not need to be more than the resolution for the final viewing size - i.e., at most a 5" x 10" enlarged size at 100 dpi = 500 x 1000. = .5 MegaPixel, or 1.5 mg file size.
- 300 ppi color images (at final size) are both expected and sufficient for commercial prepress purposes. Newspapers are happy with 150 to 200 ppi images, at final size.