



# Things you need to know when using a professional real estate photographer

## *Introduction*

Photographers are a motley crew. You will find former CEOs, IT experts, police officers, chefs, designers, politicians, marketing professionals ... you name it.

They all have some things in common – a passion for photography and a wealth of knowledge and experience behind them.

This document will provide you with essential information when using a real estate photographer. These topics are challenges that photographers face daily. Even if you're a seasoned buyer of photography services I'm sure you will find this information useful and a help to sell your vendors property.

You as a **professional** real estate agent have expectations of your photographer; your photographer also has some expectations from you. You are both running a business - this information is designed to make this as easy as possible.

As a real estate professional you are well aware photography is the cornerstone of marketing a property. So it is important to form a good relationship with the photographer you choose to work with. Your photographer should be able to provide you with advice and suggestions as to what will work best for a particular type of property. It may be still images, video, virtual reality or something else.

## *Preparing the property*

Preparing the property prior to the photo session is essential. Please respect that your photographer is not a cleaner and editing/photoshopping is not an alternative to tidying up. For various reasons outlined below your photographer will not / should not touch anything in a vendors home.

Firstly, for privacy reasons, moving personal possessions around is an invasion of privacy. Photographers will not move personal belongings without the vendors express permission.

Secondly, what happens if something breaks - a blind falls down when a photographer tried to open it or a kitchen cabinet door comes off its hinges when trying to close it. Believe it or not this happens regularly.

Thirdly, and most importantly is the health and safety of the photographer, agent and the home occupants. Photographers can go from a farm or lifestyle property with livestock to a residential home with illness present to an ex-rental that may have been used for who knows what, all in one day. As much as we are very hygiene conscious, accidents happen, germs spread and with all the care in the world contamination can happen.

Real estate photographers should not touch anything they don't have to in the property. Not because they're lazy – because they look after you.



If you think the property needs a spring clean before photos are taken, there are companies specializing in the preparation of homes for sale – your photographer can put you in contact if need be.

For the reasons outlined, you need to be at the property before the photographer arrives to make sure everything is set to go.

Feel free to use REPA NZs home preparation guide, which can be found on under Resources.

***Do I, as a real estate agent, need to be present during the photo session?***

From the REAA Code of Conduct. 9.5

A licensee must take due care to -

(a) ensure the security of land and every business in respect of which the licensee is carrying out real estate agency work; and

(b) avoid risks of damage that may arise from customers, or clients that are not the owner of the land or business, accessing the land or business.

There are always exceptions but the general answer is YES.

- You need to make sure it is ready to be photographed and set up to the standard and styling you are happy with.
- This is especially important if the property owner isn't present. It's protection for you and your photographer. It avoids the possibility of unfounded accusations against the photographer and/or agent. It also ensures any items you would prefer to be moved can be moved prior to the shoot.

***At the photo shoot***

Most photographers have systems and methods they work through so nothing is missed. They need to be able to do their job without interruptions.

Discuss any preferences with your photographer before he/she starts to shoot.

Make sure you and your vendors are out of the way so you don't show up in doorways, through windows etc. Please don't park right outside the property, as your car most likely will show up through windows.

If you need to arrange several services to be carried out at the property to save return trips for each, e.g. building inspector, valuer, etc., please allow at least 30 minutes for the photographer's appointment either side of any other services. As a rule of thumb, the fewer people present at the time of the shoot the more efficient the process.



### ***Terms & conditions***

Each photographer will have his or her own set of Terms & Conditions unless they're using REPA NZs standard terms. If you have been supplied with them prior to a photo shoot you need to read them as you are now bound by them.

They contain important information such as:

- Copyright and usage rights
- Health and safety expectations
- Expectations of photographer
- Cancellations, payments and complaints/feedback

### ***Copyright & usage rights***

It is a common misunderstanding that you own the images your photographer has taken. This is very rare and if that's the case you need to have that in writing from your photographer according to legal expertise. More information relating to this can be found on [www.AIPA.online](http://www.AIPA.online).

Professional photographers apply a usage based pricing and this will also tell you how the images can be used.

Please note that copyright also includes altering and editing the photos.

If you have been supplied photos from someone who isn't the creator you need to ask who has taken them and go back to the photographer and ask for permission to use them otherwise you might be infringing on copyright.

If you pass on your photographer's photos to vendor, purchaser or any other party make sure this is ok with your photographer and that any copyright and usage rights are passed on as well. Too often photographers find their images being used in marketing or advertising outside of real estate without permission.

Please remember that licensing photos for various purposes is the livelihood of photographers.

It is recommended that copyright and usage information is clearly outlined in the listing agreement between agent and seller.

### ***Health & Safety***

**Earlier we covered some health issues and how to protect your vendors.**

Real estate photographers also need to be able to work in a safe work environment.

The most common safety hazard photographers are exposed to are pets, most commonly dogs. Photographers get bitten despite reassurances that the pets are friendly. Electric fences are also a common hazard as well as risk of tripping and falling.

If there are any known risks you need to make your photographer aware of these and pets especially dogs need to be removed or contained for the duration of the photo shoot.



### ***What to expect from a professional real estate photographer***

First a few words on how to select a photographer:

One just doesn't become a photographer by buying a real estate photography franchise or putting together a leaflet or a simple webpage. It takes time and he or she has either gone through a mentoring/training process with an experienced photographer or through a formal training program. Either way during this time an aspiring photographer will have had time to learn the required techniques; some of them outlined below, and also have had time to put together a portfolio that demonstrates skills and consistent results.

This is what you need to look at: A portfolio with consistent results. Not just a few photos of a friend's property (believe it or not this happens all the time) but a wide range of images that helps you make a well informed decision whether to use or not to use a certain photographer. Photographers are different and will have different styles that may or may not suit you but consistency in lighting techniques and image composition is important.

#### **1. The light**

Photography is all about light – capturing the light in the right way.

The human brain is an amazing thing. When we walk into a room the brain through our eyes sees every little detail in the darkest shadows as well as in the highlights when looking out through that sunny window. As of today no camera is able to capture that dynamic range without help and that's where a professional photographer comes into the picture.

There are different techniques used to achieve this.

Two very common techniques are:

- Flash photography: A photographer uses one or more flashes to balance the indoor light with the window light.
- HDR (High Dynamic Range) Photography: Multiple photos with different exposures are taken and then merged together to get details in both shadows and highlights.

Both techniques have their pros and cons. It's all about making the images and the light look natural.

HDR can give an unnatural look to images with shadows too bright or no shadows at all.

Shadows are ok as long as details are preserved, as the human brain perceives it.

Flash photography done wrong gives harsh and prominent, unnatural shadows around furniture and light fittings.

One way to determine if the light looks natural is to determine where the strongest light source is in a photo.

In daytime photos the strongest light should come from the window not from where the photographer is standing.

#### **2. Reflections**

You should also expect to have images free of camera, flash or photographer reflections in mirrors, windows, splashbacks, tiles or other glossy surfaces.

#### **3. Wide angle**

Another hot potato is the use of extreme wide-angle lenses. Often have we heard of visitors to an open who are disappointed: "This is a lot smaller than it looks in the photos."



Not only does the use of extreme wide angles misrepresent properties it also makes furniture and property features look distorted if used incorrectly. Careful use of these lenses is to be expected.

#### 4. Verticals are vertical and horizons are horizontal.

With the possible exception of the Leaning Tower of Pisa people expect rooms to be vertically upright and horizontally level. Look at doors, windows, curtains, cabinets, furniture, appliances and pictures on the wall. Are they straight, as one would expect, or slanted, suggesting that the house is collapsing. Likewise, when viewed straight on, are counters, rooflines, landscaping horizontally level?

#### 5. Color balance

Most doors, trim, baseboards, and even ceilings are white, or off-white in the shadows. Are they white or some shade of orange and yellow?

This is what we call white balance and if the white balance is not done correctly the colors, especially white walls and ceilings will look yellow-ish.

#### ***If it's looks to good to be true...***

It often is. We have all been tricked into going to an open home because the property looks stunning and when we get there it is not so stunning.

We often hear that potential buyers that are being deceived by stunning photography become suspicious and starts to question the honesty of the real estate agent or seller.

Real Estate photography should of course be stunning and show a property at its best but should never ever outshine the real deal.

The purpose of photography is to draw potential buyers to open homes and once they're there they should be pleasantly surprised and not disappointed.

Remember that REA states that you should ensure that the impression the marketing gives is a correct reflection of the property or business being marketed.

We often see properties photographed too wide and in combination with photographed from a too low position (a natural viewing position is 150-160 cm above floor level) and over whitened ceilings, it really can misrepresent a property's size and look.

#### ***Feedback & Complaints***

Being a photographer is a constant learning curve. It is hard work to keep up with the digital technology and trends that are constantly changing.

Feedback from clients is important. Not just "Thanks - great photos", instead photographers need to know how to improve what they are doing.

- Is it shot from the right angle?
- Too wide?
- Not wide enough?
- Less harsh shadows from the camera flash?
- Is white balance/colors off?
- Too good to be true?



Photographers learn and evolve from constructive feedback and this is how they can improve what they are doing. The learning never ends.

However there're a few things to think about:

- Are the photos too bright or too dark?
  - o To accurately judge this you need to make sure your monitor is properly calibrated. Viewing photos on a monitor that is not setup correctly can make any good image look flawed
  
- Are the colors off?
  - o The same thing here. To judge color accuracy again your monitor needs to be setup properly.
  
- Why do the photos look different in print than on line?
  - o Real estate photographers optimize their images for use on the internet because that's where they will have their longest lifespan. The color profile sRGB is used for this. Many printing processes struggle with this because they use a different color profile .If you are printing the images this is something you need to be aware of and talk to your printer about and have them to do a hard proof before printing the final product.  
Photographers are often blamed when the printed product is not what was expected when a hard proof would have revealed any problems.

If you're not happy with the photos you need to let your photographer know immediately so he/she gets a chance to correct any mistakes and learn from them. Photographers are only human and will make mistakes.

You also have to accept receiving feedback if eg. the property is not prepared, photos are used for other purposes than they have been licensed for (copyright infringement), payment is not made on time, repeated last minute changes and cancellations.

Just like you have the prerogative to choose your photographer, sought after photographers can pick and choose whom they want to work for.

It goes both ways so lets do this right together 😊

### ***Bookings - Cancellations - Delivery - Payments***

As mentioned above: Good photographers are sought after and are therefore busy. Booking in good time is essential, usually several days ahead. Please don't book your photographer until you have secured the listing – that means having a signed and confirmed listing form. When you book you also need to allow time for the vendor to have sufficient time to prepare their home.

If it's a new build or renovation project, don't book your photographer until you have a confirmed completion. It is a common problem for photographers having a last minute cancelation because jobs are not finished on time.



Things can change and you may need to cancel and reschedule. This is normally not a problem unless it's done at the last minute the day before or, worst of all, the same day. Expect to be charged for at least a part of the photo shoot if you cancel or postpone in the last minute.

Most photographers deliver within a few business days, some even faster. It is important that you discuss with your photographer what you expect when you book.

As much as you want your images on time, your photographer needs to be paid on time. Ensure you supply your photographer with the correct person/email to direct invoices to at the time of booking, follow up with your accounts department to make sure everything is working, especially if you've just started working with a new photographer. Be aware that a late payment will incur additional costs and that you might also be missing out on a prompt payment discount.

In general, if payment is not made on time you lose the right to use the supplied imagery until all arrears are cleared.

Again you need to read the Terms & Conditions you have committed to.

***We all have the same goal: We want stunning imagery to get the most out of a property sale so lets do this right together***