

## GET YOUR SHUTTER UP TO SPEED

> To capture the beauty of your floral arrangements and the artistry of your staff, your best bet is to hire a professional photographer. That's not always practical or affordable, though. The good news is that with the right equipment, you can create your own professional-looking photographs, even if you're just learning to shoot. Drawing on 18 years of experience as a photographer, I've pulled together tips you can start using today to create better photos for your business.

### Light it Right

Using a constant source of quality lighting when photographing flowers will enhance your photographs by allowing you to see any glare or shadows before taking the shot, so the image you produce is as close as possible to the real-life version. Flash, by contrast, looks unnatural on flowers, is not the easiest light to control and will often take many adjustments to get right. Natural light is usually the most flattering option (and the cheapest) but when that's not available, technology can help.

My favorite constant light sources are daylight balanced, 5500K compact fluorescent lights (CFL). CFLs are usually in the 13- to 26-watt range, but you'll likely need more power. I recommend looking for a constant lighting kit that has at least 800 watts with two separate light stands,

umbrellas and bulbs, such as the Cowboy Studio 1200-watt kit (\$100 to \$150, Amazon.com). Having a lighting kit like this gives you the ability to have natural-looking lighting anywhere. Some kits come with a combination of a black, white and green screen backgrounds and have everything that you need to take clean, basic photographs of your designs.

If you're a more advanced photographer, buy a lighting kit that includes a boom arm. This will allow you to place a light over the top of the arrangement. Lighting with one light above, and two in front (usually about 3 to 5 feet away), will bring out even more detail and depth and make the edges of the flowers more distinct. One advanced kit to try is Model No. newcb+bwg13+VL-9004s-B6, also from Cowboy Studio (\$319, Amazon.com). Once you have a kit that fits your needs, play around with it and put tape on the floor to show you where you had the lights. Steps to remember:

1. Start by facing the subject. Stand around 6 feet away.
2. Set up one light to your left and one to your right, about an arm's length away.
3. Set the height of the center of the umbrella to a couple of inches above the center of the subject, and keep the center shaft of the umbrellas level horizontally to the subject. (Remember, umbrellas help direct light toward your subject.)
4. Finally, slide one light a couple feet closer than the other to create a better contrast in the final photograph, and if you have it, add the overhead light.

With your lights set up, you can take photos with either your smartphone or higher end camera without having to make any big changes to the setup. (See my tips on camera purchases at [safnow.org/moreonline](http://safnow.org/moreonline).)

### Clean and Clear

With backgrounds, simple is almost always better. A clean white sheet is an affordable, versatile option that you should keep handy. As you progress and photograph more of your own work, you may need a setup that works for your brand and style. Pieces of fabric on a background stand work; you can also staple



**AFTER** This shot has consistent, good light, a more appealing angle and clear separation from the background.

them to a wall or clip them together to create layers. Adding different materials and textures (old doors, windows, or sheets of metal) can complement your brand. Small tables and fitting accents are also easy ways to create your look. The most important thing to look for is that the background stays the background and doesn't distract from the subject.

To better utilize any background, never put your subject directly against the background; leave 4 feet between the subject and the background. A larger background — 10-by-10-feet is a good size — will give you the flexibility to photograph large and small pieces without having to change or modify your setup. If you have an accent wall with a nice texture or a well-lit wooden bench in your design room, make that your go-to location. 📸

**Adam Donohue** is a freelance photographer and no stranger to the floral industry — he has photographed attendees at SAF's Congressional Action Days for more than a dozen years and, most recently, was behind the camera during SAF's One-Day Profit Blast. [adam@gallerydphotography.com](mailto:adam@gallerydphotography.com)



**BEFORE** This shot suffers from a bad angle, too much flash, shadows and no separation between flowers and the background.

### CHAPTER TWO

Find out how to compose the shot, choose a camera as well as the ins and outs of organizing and backing up your photos, at [www.safnow.org/moreonline](http://www.safnow.org/moreonline).