

MOBILE FILMMAKING GUIDE

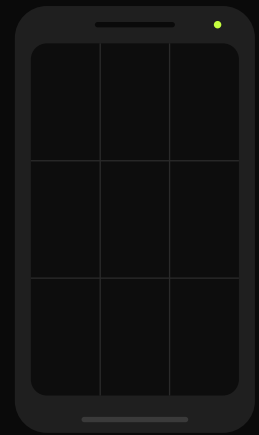
# Photography Studio

Film your own Instagram content  
with just a smartphone.

Lights, backdrops, the dance of model and photographer. Filming a photo shoot is its own art.

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Phone basics every owner should know**  
Lens, light, lock — the cheat sheet.
- **Up to 30 shots designed for your business**  
Each one drawn so you can copy it on set.
- **Tips that pros guard like trade secrets**  
We give them away. You keep your customers.



## PHONE BASICS · READ THIS FIRST

# 10 things pros do that amateurs skip.

Every shot in this guide assumes these ten basics. Read once, then forget about them — they become muscle memory after a couple of days.

**01 Clean your lens.**

Wipe with your shirt or microfiber. Fingerprints destroy cinematic look in two seconds.

**03 Lock exposure & focus.**

Tap-and-hold the screen until "AE/AF Lock" appears. Slide the sun icon to fine-tune brightness.

**05 Steady your hands.**

Brace elbows on a counter, lean against a wall, or use a stack of books as a tripod.

**07 Vertical for Reels (9:16). Horizontal for YouTube**

Most posts go vertical. Lock orientation in your phone's Control Center so it doesn't flip mid-shot.

**09 Three takes minimum.**

First is rehearsal. Second is good. Third is best. Storage is free. Mediocrity is expensive.

**02 Use natural light.**

Turn off ceiling lights. Position your subject 90° to a window — never directly facing it.

**04 Get close. Don't zoom.**

Zoom = crop = blur. Walk closer instead. Phones distort under 30 cm — stay 60+ cm from faces.

**06 Shoot in 4K 30fps.**

For slow-motion: iPhone uses 240fps slo-mo, Android picks 1080p slo-mo. Use only for water, fabric, or impact.

**08 Roll early. End late.**

Press record, wait 3 seconds, then start the action. End 2 seconds after the action. You'll trim later — never the other way.

**10 Airplane mode while filming.**

No notifications. No calls cutting off your hero shot. It also stops random app updates from heating your phone.

## CAMERA SETTINGS

# Best quality settings for your phone.

Set these once, forget about them. They're the difference between a video that looks like 2015 and one that looks like a TV ad.

## iPhone

- **4K at 30fps (or 24fps for film look).**  
Settings → Camera → Record Video → 4K at 30fps. 24fps is more cinematic; 30fps is safer for fast action.
- **Slo-mo: 1080p at 240fps.**  
Settings → Camera → Record Slo-mo → 1080p HD at 240 fps. Use only for water, fabric, sweat — not for talking.
- **Turn ON: Grid + HDR Video.**  
Settings → Camera → Composition → Grid (rule-of-thirds). Settings → Camera → Record Video → HDR Video (newer iPhones only).
- **Format: High Efficiency.**  
Settings → Camera → Formats → High Efficiency. Saves storage; quality stays the same.
- **Cinematic mode for talking heads.**  
iPhone 13+. Auto-blurs background. Use for interviews, reactions, owner-to-camera shots.
- **Tap-and-hold to lock AE/AF.**  
Yellow box appears. Tap-and-hold = box turns yellow + says "AE/AF Lock". Slide the sun icon to fine-tune brightness.

## Samsung Galaxy

- **UHD 4K at 30fps.**  
Camera → Settings (gear icon) → Video size → UHD 30. For social media, this is the sweet spot.
- **Super Slow-mo: bursts only.**  
Camera → MORE → Super Slow-mo. 960fps for split-second moments. Don't try to film 5 seconds of slo-mo with this.
- **Pro Video mode.**  
Camera → MORE → Pro Video. Manual ISO, shutter, focus. Lock ISO at 100 in daylight, 400 indoors.
- **Turn ON: Grid + Stabilization.**  
Camera Settings → Grid lines → 3x3. Stabilization: ON for handheld, OFF for tripod (it crops the frame).
- **Director's View.**  
Records front + back camera at the same time. Perfect for owner reaction + product shots.
- **Tap-and-hold to lock focus & exposure.**  
Yellow circle appears. Slide the sun icon to brighten/darken. Same as iPhone.

## LIGHTING

# The single biggest upgrade you can buy under \$100.

If your videos look like "hostage footage", the problem is almost always lighting — not the phone. One light + one window = pro look.

## THE 90° RULE

Stand your subject so the light hits them at 45° from the side — never straight-on (flat) and never directly above (raccoon eyes). The simplest free version: subject 90° to a window, you stand on the dark side and shoot toward them. Magazine cover light, zero dollars.

## TYPES OF LIGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW

### Ring light

Even, beauty-friendly. Best for face content (salons, beauty, talking heads). \$30–80.

Drawback: flat. Skin looks airbrushed but boring.

### Softbox

Big, soft, flattering. Best for portraits and food. \$40–80.

Bigger = softer. The bigger the softbox, the more flattering the light.

### LED panel

Versatile workhorse. Best for products, B-roll, wide shots. \$50–150.

Add a piece of white shower curtain in front for instant softbox.

### RGB tube light

Adds colour and atmosphere. Best for fashion, bars, restaurants. \$60–120.

Don't overuse purple/red. One coloured rim light + one neutral key = pro.

## WHAT TO BUY (AMAZON)

- **Neewer 480 LED Panel** · ~\$40  
The starter panel everyone recommends. Adjustable brightness + colour. Search "Neewer 480 LED".
- **Neewer 18" Ring Light Kit** · ~\$60  
Phone holder included. Perfect for face content (salon, beauty, owner-to-camera). Search "Neewer 18 inch ring light".
- **GVM 50RS RGB Light** · ~\$65  
Adds colour. Great for fashion, restaurants, salons. Search "GVM 50RS".
- **Lume Cube Panel Pro 2.0** · ~\$89  
Pocket-size pro panel. Travels well. Search "Lume Cube Panel Pro".
- **Aputure Amaran AL-MX** · ~\$109  
Tiny, professional-grade quality. Premium pick. Search "Amaran AL-MX".

## THE 2× LENS TRICK

# Why your face shots look bad — and the 30-second fix.

## TRUE STORY

A barber friend kept asking why his customers' faces looked bad on camera. Two reasons: (1) lighting, and (2) he was filming too close with the regular lens. We switched him to 2× zoom and made him stand back. He was so happy he still thanks me a year later. Here's the rule:

**The Rule**

**For face shots: stand 1.5–2 metres back, switch to 2× zoom.**

Never get close with the standard 1× lens. Phones distort under 60 cm.

## WHY IT WORKS

The wide-angle lens (1×) bulges what's close. Noses get bigger, ears get smaller. The 2× zoom on Pro iPhones (and many Samsungs) is a real telephoto lens — different physical glass — that flattens the face. The result is the same look magazines use for portraits.

## WHICH PHONES HAVE A REAL TELEPHOTO?

- **iPhone Pro / Pro Max (11 onwards).**  
2× or 3× telephoto built-in. Tap the 2 or 3 button above the shutter.
- **iPhone 14 Pro Max / 15 Pro Max.**  
Up to 5× telephoto. Use 2× for faces, 3× for product, 5× for tighter portraits.
- **Standard iPhones (11, 12, 13, 14, 15 non-Pro).**  
Only 1× lens — the 2× is a digital crop. STILL use it for faces; the crop is better than the wide distortion.
- **Samsung Galaxy S/Note (S20+ onwards) Plus & Ultra.**  
3× telephoto. Same rule — use it for any face shot.
- **Samsung A-series & older Galaxies.**  
Usually digital zoom. Same trick: 2× still beats 1× for faces.

## FACE-FILMING CHECKLIST

1) Light from 45° (window or panel). 2) 2× zoom, stand back. 3) Subject 1 m from background. 4) Tap-and-hold to lock focus on the eye. 5) Roll for 30 seconds — real expression appears around second 12.

## TRIPODS &amp; PHONE PLACEMENT

# Where you put your phone is half the shot.

Most amateur footage is filmed from standing height. That's why it looks like a security camera. Pros change the height for every shot.

## USE A TRIPOD WHEN...

- **Any product shot (jewellery, food, packaging).**  
Hand-held macros never look pro. Always tripod.
- **Top-down (overhead) shots.**  
Hand-holding overhead is impossible. Tripod or stack of books.
- **Any shot longer than 5 seconds.**  
Five seconds is the longest a human hand stays steady.
- **Talking heads, interviews, sit-downs.**  
Lock the frame. Let the speaker move.
- **Slow-motion + time-lapse.**  
Both magnify camera shake. Mandatory tripod.

## WHERE TO PLACE YOUR PHONE

- **Eye level.**  
Default for talking heads and interviews. Most flattering. Stand or sit subject; phone at their eye height.
- **Hip level.**  
Heroic feel for products and architecture. Buildings, cars, furniture, hero shots.
- **Below knee.**  
Power shots. Cars, gym lifts, fashion runways. Subjects look ten feet tall.
- **Top-down (overhead).**  
Flat-lays, food, hands at work. Use a tripod with horizontal arm, or lay phone face-down with the lens off the table edge.
- **On the ground (literally).**  
Drama. Cars driving past, runners, dogs. Pebble or coin under the phone for slight tilt.

## TRIPODS WORTH BUYING

- **Joby GorillaPod Mobile** · ~\$30  
Bendy legs wrap around chairs, railings, branches. Most versatile \$30 you'll spend.
- **Manfrotto PIXI EVO** · ~\$45  
Sturdy mini-tripod. Best for tabletop/macro shots.
- **Ulanzi MT-08** · ~\$25  
Extends to 90 cm. Great budget tripod for vlog-style shots.
- **DJI Osmo Mobile 6 (gimbal)** · ~\$159  
Worth it once you're past the basics. Smooth tracking, walking shots, follow shots.
- **Free version: stack of books.**

## MUSIC &amp; SOURCES

# What music to use, and where to download it.

Music is half of every Reel. The wrong track turns a beautiful video into a stock-photo ad. Here's where to get good music — most of it free.

## FREE

- **YouTube Audio Library**  
youtube.com/audiolibrary. Free, royalty-free. Used by millions of creators. Search by mood + length.
- **Pixabay Music**  
pixabay.com/music. Free, no attribution required. Good for Instagram and websites.
- **Free Music Archive**  
freemusicarchive.org. Older but reliable. Indie folk + lo-fi gold.
- **Instagram + TikTok in-app library**  
Use the Reels music tool. Free for Reels but won't work for ads or YouTube.

## PAID (worth it for businesses)

- **Epidemic Sound** · \$15–49 / mo  
epidemicsound.com. Used by most YouTubers. Huge library, easy to search by vibe.
- **Artlist** · \$14–25 / mo  
artlist.io. Premium quality. Great for Reels + ads. Single subscription covers all platforms.
- **Soundstripe** · \$11–13 / mo  
soundstripe.com. Smaller library, cheaper, well-curated.
- **Musicbed** · \$25+ / mo  
musicbed.com. Film-quality. Premium pick for big-budget shoots.

## WHAT MUSIC FITS YOUR BUSINESS

- **Restaurant, café, bakery** Mid-tempo jazz, lo-fi, indie folk, acoustic. 80–95 BPM.
- **Salon, spa, beauty, boutique** Chill house, R&B, indie pop, ambient. 70–100 BPM.
- **Gym, fitness, sports, auto** Hip-hop, drill, electronic, rock. 110–140 BPM. Drops on motion.
- **Real estate, architecture, hotel** Cinematic orchestral, ambient piano, soft strings. 60–80 BPM. Builds slowly.
- **Construction, industrial, trades** Driving rock, motivational electronic, energetic indie. Strong percussion.
- **Office, corporate, agency, consulting** Uplifting corporate, light electronic, calm ambient. Avoid stock-photo cheese.
- **Wedding, event, photography** Emotional piano, romantic strings, indie folk. Slow builds.
- **Pet, kids, family** Light upbeat, ukulele, whistling melodies. Wholesome but not childish.

## EDITING IN CAPCUT

# Free, on your phone, good enough for ads.

CapCut is what most professional Instagram creators actually use. It's free, it lives on your phone, and the auto-caption feature alone is worth \$30/month — except it's free.

**QUICK START (10 MINUTES)****01 Download CapCut.**

App Store / Google Play. Free, no ads in the app itself.

**02 New Project.**

Tap the big +. Select your clips from the camera roll. Import all at once — you'll trim later.

**03 Trim each clip.**

Tap a clip on the timeline → drag the white handles. Cut the boring start and end of every clip.

**04 Add transitions.**

Tap between two clips → pick a transition. Use "None" or simple cuts; fancy transitions look amateur.

**05 Add music.**

Tap Audio → Sounds → search by mood or paste a CapCut-imported track. Drag music to start at clip 1.

**06 Auto-captions.**

Tap Text → Auto-captions → select language. CapCut transcribes in 30 seconds. Edit any wrong words.

**07 Add B-roll cut-aways.**

Tap Overlay → Add overlay → pick a clip. Layer over your main shot for visual cuts.

**08 Export at 1080p 30fps.**

Top-right export button. 1080p is plenty for Instagram. Higher = bigger file with no visible benefit.

## CAPTIONS

# 80% of Instagram videos are watched without sound.

Add captions or watch your retention drop. Captioned videos get 12% more views on average — easier to scroll past silence than silence with words on it.

## WHERE TO ADD CAPTIONS

- **CapCut auto-captions** · Free  
Best for mobile. 30+ languages. Edit wrong words by tapping the caption.
- **Instagram in-app captions** · Free  
When posting a Reel: tap Captions sticker. Auto-generated, instantly.
- **Submagic** · ~\$15 / mo  
submagic.co. Premium animated captions. The ones you see on viral Reels with the highlighted words.
- **Captions.ai** · ~\$10–20 / mo  
captions.ai. Designed for short-form video. Templates built-in.
- **Veed.io** · Free tier + paid plans  
veed.io. Browser-based. Good for editing on a laptop instead of phone.
- **YouTube Studio auto-captions** · Free  
Upload to YouTube as a private video → grab the captions → use anywhere. Free trick.

## CAPTION DESIGN RULES

- **Bottom-third position.**  
Above Instagram's UI (the like / comment / share icons). Otherwise UI covers your words.
- **1–3 words at a time.**  
Match the rhythm of speech. Don't drop a full sentence on screen at once.
- **Big, bold, simple font.**  
Inter, SF Pro, Helvetica, or CapCut's default. Avoid script and serif fonts.
- **Highlight key words.**  
Use one accent colour (your brand colour, or warm yellow) for emphasis words.
- **Match cut speed to caption speed.**  
If clips are 2 seconds, captions should change every 2 seconds. Sync = pro.

## PRO TRICKS

# The things pros do that you won't read in any tutorial.

Real production secrets. Most are free. Use one and you'll see the difference; use all of them and your content will look like an agency made it.

**01 Wipe the lens between every shot.**

Phones gather oil from your face every time you pick them up. A 2-second wipe between shots is the difference between sharp and hazy.

**02 Lock exposure on the brightest important thing.**

Tap-and-hold on the lit subject — not the dark background. The phone tries to balance everything; you have to overrule it.

**03 Roll early. Stop late.**

Press record 3 seconds before the action. Stop 2 seconds after. Always trim later — never the other way.

**04 Three takes minimum.**

First is rehearsal. Second is good. Third is best. Storage is free; reshoots cost time.

**05 Use the 2× lens for faces (the barber rule).**

Stand 1.5–2 m back, switch to 2× zoom. Faces flatten and look like portraits. Never close-up at 1× — phones distort.

**06 Light from 45°, never head-on.**

Window on the side. Subject 90° to it. Magazine cover light, zero dollars.

**07 3-second clips for Reels.**

Most amateur Reels die because each clip is too long. Cut to 3-second beats. Watch any viral Reel — you'll see it.

**08 Cut on action, not on stillness.**

Cut while a hand is moving, head is turning, mouth is opening. Static-to-static cuts feel jarring; motion-to-motion feels invisible.

**09 Audio matters more than video.**

Bad audio kills good footage instantly. Use the phone close to the subject when sound matters; record audio twice if needed.

**10 Shoot on the rule of thirds, not the centre.**

Subject's eye on the upper-third intersection. Centre framing feels amateur unless deliberately symmetrical.

**11 Match clip length to the music beat.**

Use a metronome app or just count. Each clip should end on a music beat. Cuts on beats are why pro Reels feel addictive.

**12 Underexpose by half a stop for cinematic look.**

When you tap-and-hold to lock exposure, slide the sun icon DOWN slightly. Slightly darker = moodier = more cinematic.

**13 Airplane mode while filming.**

Notifications interrupt rolls. Updates heat the phone. Turn it on. Turn off Bluetooth too — battery.

**14 Front-facing camera = lower quality. Always.**

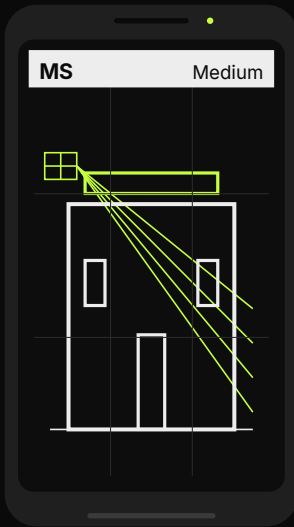
Use the rear (main) camera even for selfies. Get a friend to hold it, or use the timer + tripod. Quality jumps instantly.

**15 Slow-mo only when motion deserves it.**

Water, fabric, sweat, impact, hair flips, drops. Don't slo-mo a static product or a face — it just looks weird.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

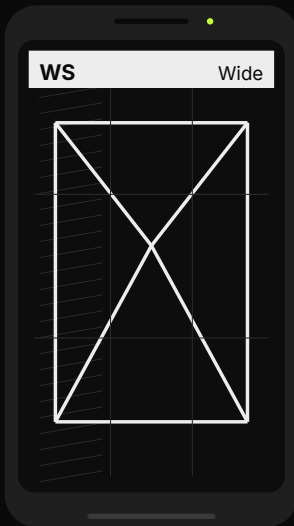
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**01 Studio door open**

MS. Light spills from inside.

**PHONE TIP**

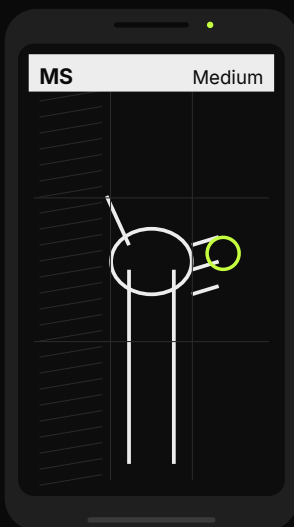
Empty studio = best opening.

**02 Empty studio wide**

WS. Backdrop, lights, no people.

**PHONE TIP**

Phone vertical, low angle. Looks like a film opening.

**03 Backdrop being unrolled**

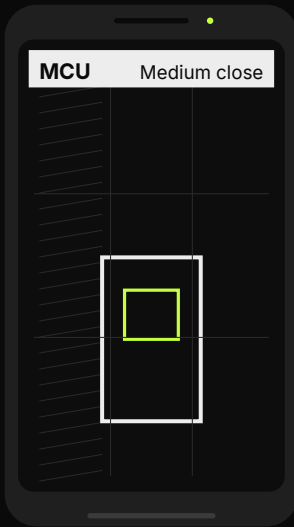
MS 60fps. Paper rolls down.

**PHONE TIP**

Slow-mo. The unfurl is satisfying.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

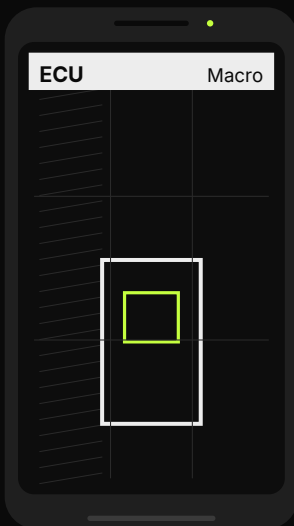
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**04 Light stand setup**

MCU. Adjusting strobes.

**PHONE TIP**

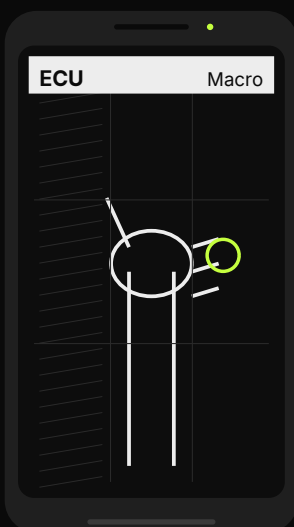
Show the rig. Behind-the-scenes content.

**05 Camera body, ECU**

ECU. Body, lens, dials.

**PHONE TIP**

Don't show brand if it's borrowed. Show your own.

**06 Lens being attached**

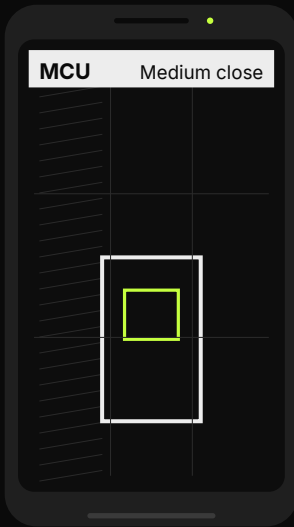
ECU. Twist click.

**PHONE TIP**

Audio. Lens click is gold.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

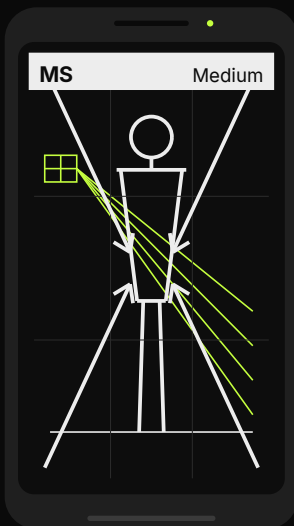
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**07 Test frame on screen**

MCU. The display.

**PHONE TIP**

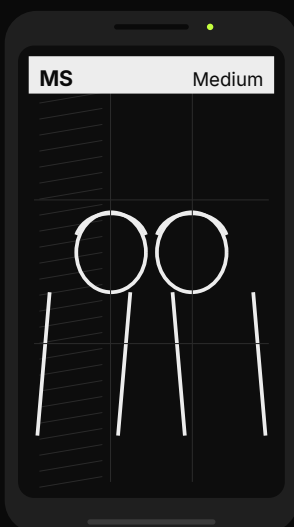
Lock focus on the screen.

**08 Model arrives**

MS. Through the door.

**PHONE TIP**

Backlight. Heroic entry.

**09 Hair and makeup chair**

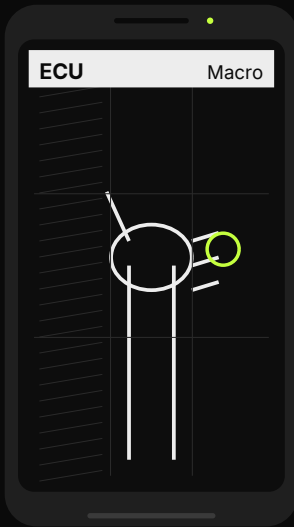
MS. Model in chair, stylist working.

**PHONE TIP**

Side angle. Front feels staged.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

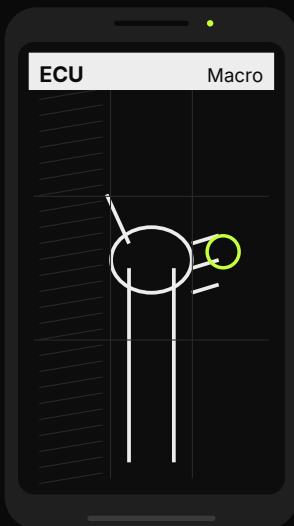
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**10 Brush on cheek**

ECU. Makeup brush.

**PHONE TIP**

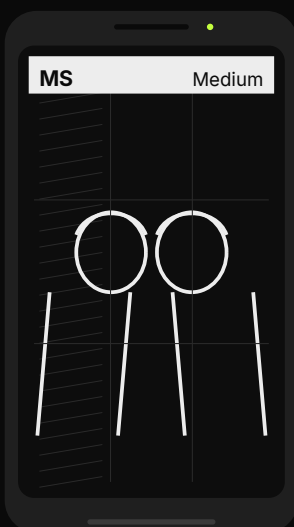
Soft, repetitive motion. ASMR.

**11 Mascara application**

ECU. Eye, lashes lengthening.

**PHONE TIP**

Steady hand. Brush wrist.

**12 Model checking mirror**

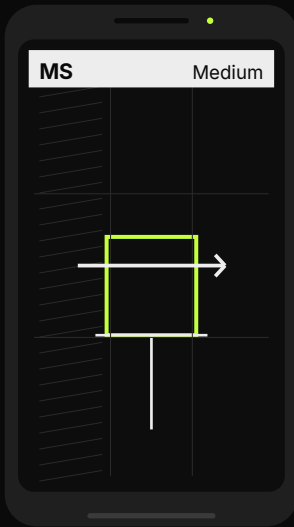
MS. Approval in reflection.

**PHONE TIP**

Mirror frame in frame.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

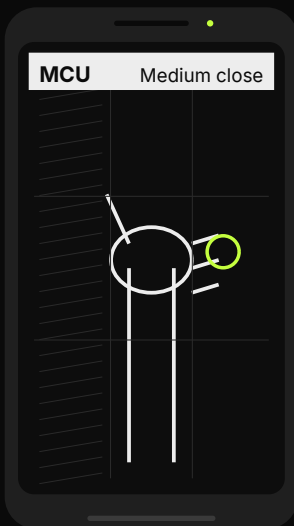
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**13 Wardrobe rack, full**

MS. Garments on hangers.

**PHONE TIP**

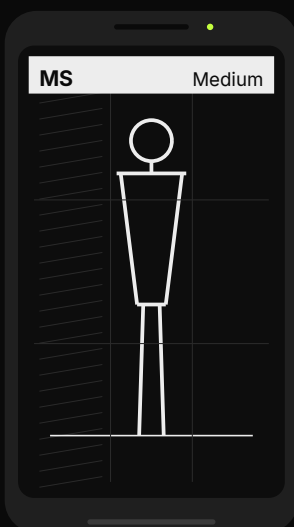
Slide horizontally. Variety = content.

**14 Stylist tugging garment**

MCU. Last-minute adjustments.

**PHONE TIP**

Real adjustments. Don't direct.

**15 Model on backdrop, first pose**

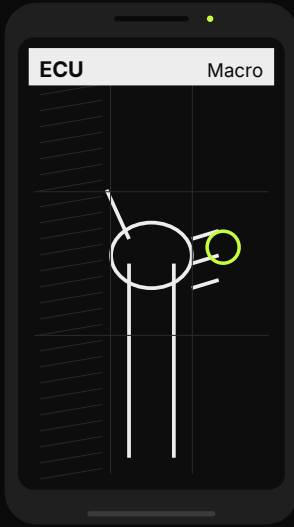
MS. The pose.

**PHONE TIP**

Wait for them to settle. Don't film transitions.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

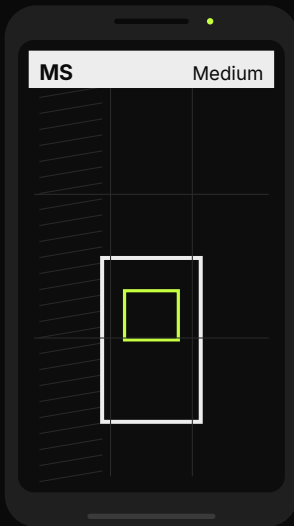
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**16 Camera shutter, ECU**

ECU. Finger pushes button.

**PHONE TIP**

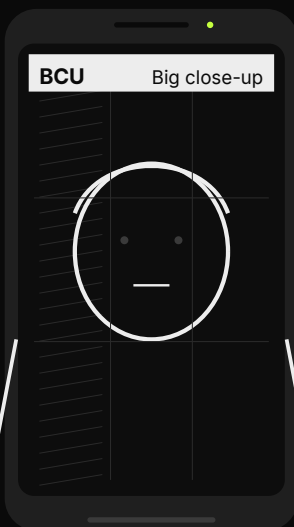
Capture the click sound.

**17 Strobe firing**

MS 240fps. Light fires, model visible.

**PHONE TIP**

Slow-mo strobes look magical.

**18 Model laughing genuinely**

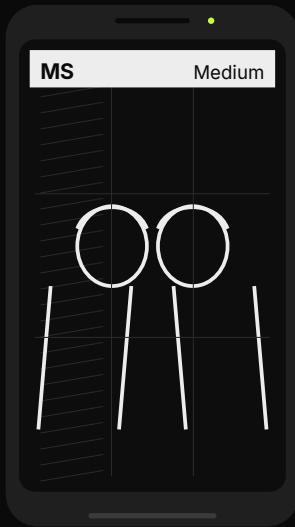
BCU. Real laugh between shots.

**PHONE TIP**

Roll between takes. Real laughs happen there.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

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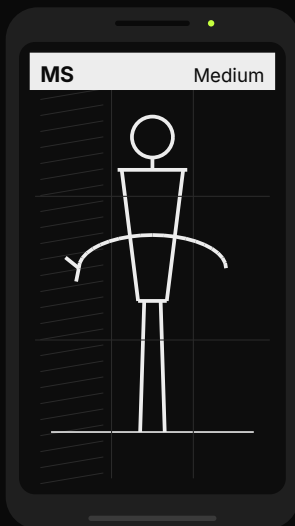


## 19 Photographer reviewing on screen

MS over shoulder.

**PHONE TIP**

OTS view. Sees what the photographer sees.

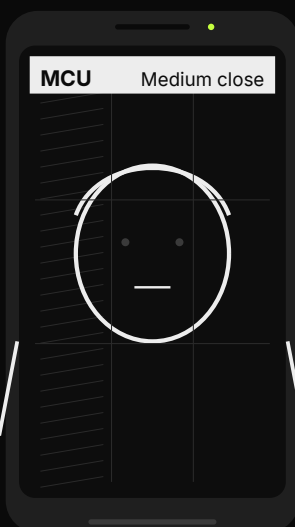


## 20 Model spinning

MS 60fps. Twirling for shot.

**PHONE TIP**

Slow-mo. Looks like high-fashion.



## 21 Wind machine on hair

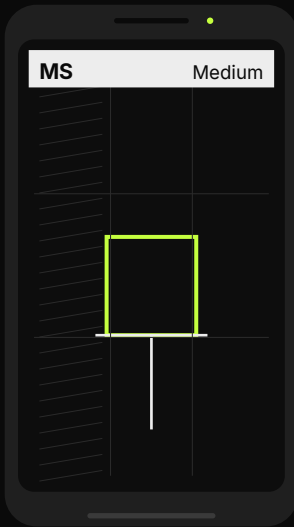
MCU 240fps. Hair blowing.

**PHONE TIP**

Backlight. Hair without backlight = blob.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

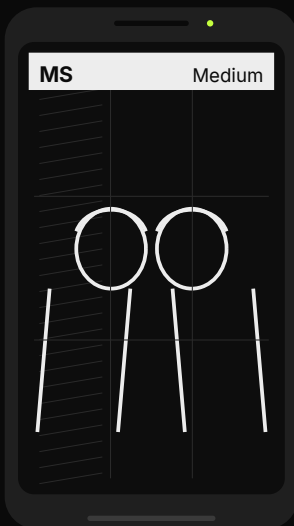
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**22 Confetti/petal toss**

MS 240fps. Falling stuff.

**PHONE TIP**

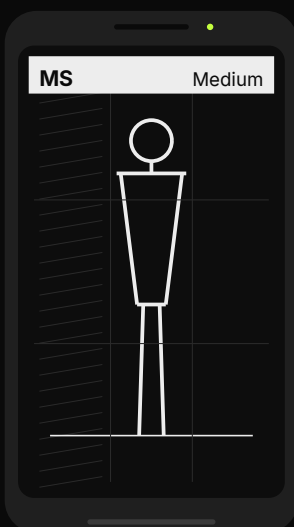
ASMR slow-mo, top-tier.

**23 Director conferring with photographer**

MS two-shot. Pointing at screen.

**PHONE TIP**

Real dynamic. Don't direct.

**24 Outfit change, behind a screen**

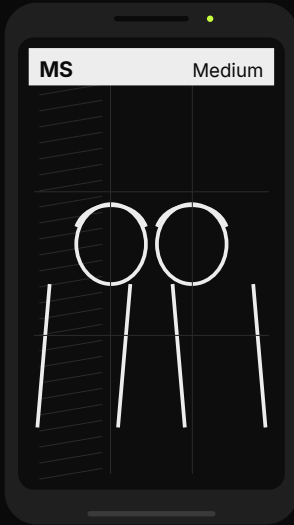
MS. The screen, silhouette behind.

**PHONE TIP**

Composition through screen. Modesty + drama.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

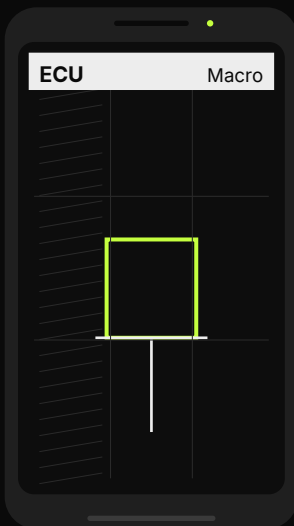
SHOTS · PAGE 9 OF 10

**25 Snack break, casual**

MS. Crew eating, model on phone.

**PHONE TIP**

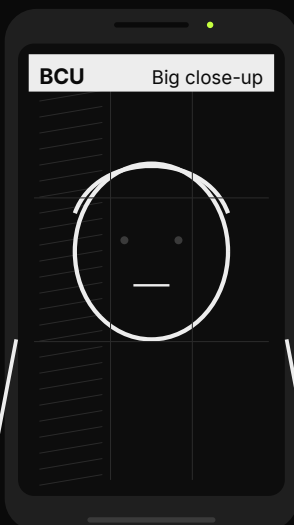
Real downtime. Authenticity sells.

**26 Final shot of the day, polaroid**

ECU. The instant photo developing.

**PHONE TIP**

Audio of the printer. Use clean.

**27 Model removing makeup**

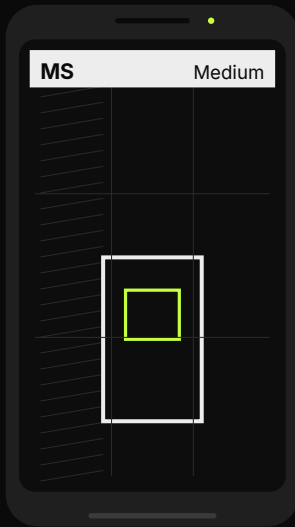
BCU. Cotton pad on cheek.

**PHONE TIP**

End-of-day shots. Use as Reel ender.

## PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

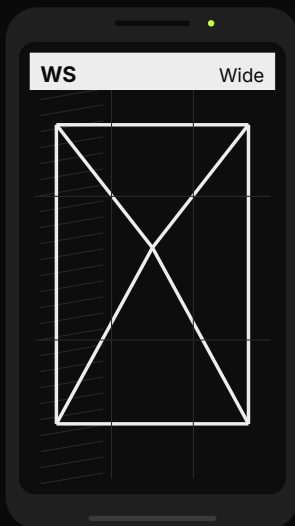
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**28 Lights powering off**

MS. Strobe lights dimming.

**PHONE TIP**

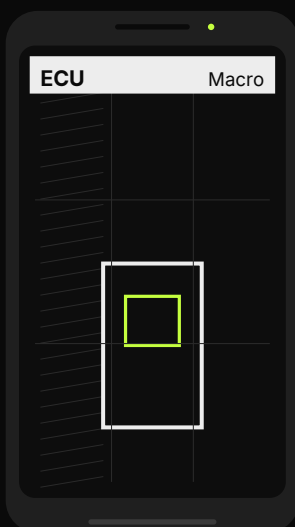
Atmospheric.

**29 Empty studio at end**

WS. Quiet, used.

**PHONE TIP**

Same as opening but used. Time-passing.

**30 Hard drive copying files**

ECU. The drive ticking.

**PHONE TIP**

Post-shoot reality. Use as ender.

YOU'VE GOT THE PLAYBOOK.

# Now go shoot.

This guide was built specifically for photography studios. Every shot in it works on a phone you already own. The only missing ingredient is the courage to press record.

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## Want a pro to handle the big stuff?

Brand films, commercials, drone work, and the moments you shouldn't trust to a phone — that's our day job. We work with shops, restaurants, clinics, and salons across Toronto. Send us a message and we'll come see your space.

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