



# PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY GUIDE

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**Tips For Great  
Photos and Videos  
With Your Camera  
or Smartphone**

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# TOP 8 TIPS

1 Always look at your background and things that will be in the frame that are not necessarily your subject. Keep backgrounds as clean as possible, avoiding muck tubs, neon hoses and other clutter.

2 Make sure you have enough light to take a clear photo. You will have more control over this with a DSLR, but it is important to start with good light and proper exposure. Post-production can not create photographic information if the photo is under exposed. The more light you have, the less grainy your photos will be, too.

3 Most indoor arenas do not have enough light to take action shots with a cell phone, so you are better off taking video, plus video is great for social media!

4 Anticipation is the key. The first thing to learn is that you need to be ready. It's vital to have your camera set up to shoot so that all you have to worry about is composing and capturing the shot you want. Before your subject enters the arena, you can test your compositions and exposure settings. Knowing what you want to achieve can be helpful, but getting great action shots is more about reacting quickly and decisively to what is going on around you.



# TOP 8 TIPS

## *Shooting with a Digital Camera*

**5.** When using a DSLR indoors, especially for action shots, you will want a high ISO, fast shutter speed and an open aperture. Good settings to start with are ISO 1000, exposure of 1/2500 and f 2.8. From there, you can adjust your ISO for exposure.

**6.** Prepare with the pre-focus. In many cases, you'll know where the action is about to happen, for example, over a specific fence. In order to do all you can do to prepare yourself for the shot, focus your lens on that area before the horse appears. Then all you have to do is wait until the scene unfolds through your view finder and get snap the shutter.

**7.** Shoot in RAW mode. It takes up more space on your memory card but it can save you during the editing process by giving you the ability to white balance and make other adjustments without being destructive to the photographic information captured. Make sure you have access to Photoshop or another RAW editing software. If you are shooting action, make sure you are not shooting in RAW+JPG, as your camera will slow down trying to save both file types while shooting.

**8.** **ALWAYS** have a spare battery and memory card just in case something fails or your battery dies.



# HORSE-CENTRIC TIPS

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1 Be sure to time your photo correctly to capture quick moments. Timing your shot perfectly to capture a horse mid-air over a jump can be very tricky, but gets easier with practice. For beginners, we recommend that you set your camera to sports mode and allow for continuous shooting. The goal is to capture the horse at the peak of the movement (ie. when jumping you want the horse to have square knees and be centered over the jump).

Helpful hint: Horses jump nicer over oxers than verticals. For photos of horses on the flat, follow the knees of the horse, snapping the shots at the top of the movement.

2 Don't frighten the horses- It's important that you don't distract the horse and rider while they are competing. Don't get too close to the rail and quietly step back when the horse is coming close by. Always walk, never run. If you choose to shoot from a crouched position remember to slowly stand well in advance of the horse reaching you. Mute your phone and while it may be tempting, NEVER use the flash.

3 Horses have good angles and expressions that translate better in photographs than others. Be sure to practice and learn what these angles are.



# HORSE-CENTRIC TIPS

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**4** Different-colored horses show up differently in photographs. Some are easier to expose than others. For instance, cameras often have trouble focusing on dark-colored horses, resulting in dark, featureless horses or an overexposed background. This is where shooting in manual mode can really help you get the best exposure.

**5** For Awards Photos Bring Candy or Tic Tacs. It is important that the horse stand square and keep his or her ears forward, looking attentive. Ask the people in the shot to look at the camera. Be meticulous--how does the ribbon look? If wearing a cooler, is it straight and are the buckles fastened? Shake the tic tacs or crinkle the candy wrapper to encourage horses to put their ears forward.



# FRAMING

## *Do's and Don'ts*

When taking a photo, keep in mind the composition. For media use, we only accept horizontal or landscape images, as vertical photos do not create enough space for cropping and are not easily formatted for web or eblasts. It is always easier to crop a horizontal image to fit in a vertical application. See the included here for a reference.

By framing the subject with another object in the scene, you can create striking compositions that really draw the viewer into your image.



## *Search The Scene For Framing Objects*

A framing object refers to anything in the scene that can be used to form a visual frame around the subject or focal point.

Frames will add wonderful visual interest to an image, as well as context and depth. See below the images with the IHSA and sponsor logos. The frame is perfect for drawing the viewer's eye into the scene toward the focal point.

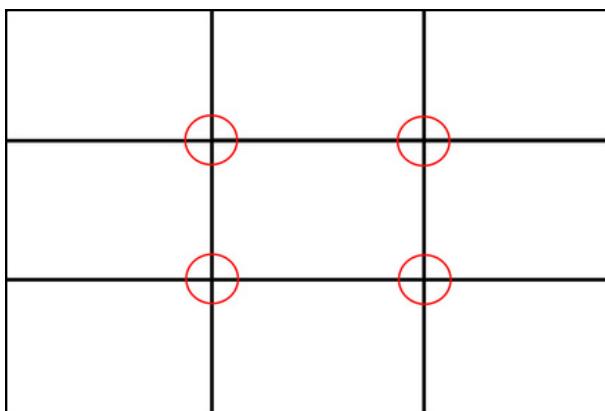
The simple act of taking a few steps back, or changing your shooting position and viewpoint, can result in a more interestingly framed image.

# FRAMING

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## *Follow the Rule of Thirds*

The rule of thirds is all about where you position the main elements in a scene. The rule (which is really just a guideline) suggests that an image will look more balanced and aesthetically pleasing if you position important parts of the scene off-center. See the diagram below.



The rule of thirds suggests that the most powerful areas of the image are the four points where the lines intersect, and that our eyes are naturally drawn to these areas first. Position your main subject on one of these intersections to give the most emphasis to your subject.



# BACKGROUND

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## *When Taking Photos, Be Aware of Your Surroundings*

Be vigilant and reduce as many outside distractions as you can, such as rogue trees, port-a-potties and tents. Keep your mind focused on the image as a whole. Power lines, signs, garbage and sometimes even trees can be serious distractions from the overall focus of the image.

These all take away from the image and distract the viewer. Even with a blurry background, some objects can really distract from the subject.

In a stadium setting, choose a position or angle to shoot where the background seats are full. Empty seats in the background are not ideal and can rarely be used.



# LIGHTING

1 If you are shooting outside, make sure you have appropriate lighting. More light is not always better. Some of the best photos can be taken in the early morning after sunrise or in the golden hour when the sun sets just above the horizon.

Direct sunlight is harsh, makes your subject squint, creates hard directional shadows and unpredictable white balance conditions. Direct sunlight is caused by full sunny conditions during much of the day.

If you're shooting during the middle of the day, move to a position where the sun is behind you and directed at the horse. It's a good idea to take some practice shots so you can test the lighting.

When shooting in the shade or overcast days, there are no more harsh shadows, only smooth milky shadows created by your subject's natural features. This makes exposure easier on your camera, and easier in post-production.



# LIGHTING

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If you are going to be shooting in an indoor arena, stand in a corner of the arena if possible so you can get the best photos when natural light can illuminate the rider. It is better to underexpose than overexpose. If photos are a bit dark, they can be edited and lightened. Photos that are too light or overexposed cannot easily be edited.



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Smartphones are pretty good at exposure and white balance overall, but you will still find that shade and overcast conditions produce softer and more balanced images.

# FOCUS

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Lack of correct focus in an image is probably the number one reason why a potentially good photo can fail. They appear clear, but when zoomed in, the subject is slightly blurry. Other problems such as exposure and color can often be fixed in post-processing, but when something is too out of focus there's nothing you can do—you can't make a blurry photo sharp.



A photo that is completely out of focus, where all parts of the image are blurred, obviously won't look good. Your eye needs something to land on, so even if you are using motion blur as a creative effect, some part of the image should be clear enough to make out what the subject is. If the entire image is blurred you won't be able to make out any detail in the scene. Making sure that at least part of your photo is in sharp focus is very important.

# FOCUS

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## *Tips and Tricks- Smartphones*

**1**  
Always Tap To Focus on Your Phone  
As clever as the camera on your smartphone is, it can't always recognize the most important part of the scene. The camera's autofocus is pretty good at picking out faces, but without a face to focus on it will always focus on the center of the scene.



**2**  
Adjust Exposure After Focusing  
Your smartphone will automatically set the exposure based on where you tap to focus. If you tap to focus on a bright area of the scene, the camera will ensure that area of the scene is correctly exposed. Likewise, if you tap to focus on a dark area of the scene, exposure will be set for that part of the image.  
After tapping on the screen to set your focus point, simply slide your finger up or down the screen to adjust the exposure to suit. As you slide your finger, you'll see the yellow sun icon moving up or down the exposure slider next to the focus box. As you adjust the exposure try to ensure that no part of the scene goes completely white or completely black, otherwise the camera might not capture any detail at all in these regions.

# FOCUS

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## *Tips and Tricks- Smartphones*

### 3 Don't Change Distance After Focusing

After setting your focus on a particular part of the scene, make sure you don't change the distance between the phone and the subject. This is very important as focusing works by setting the focus point at a particular distance from the camera.

Therefore, if you tap to set focus and then you change the distance between your camera and the subject, that subject may no longer be sharply focused because it's not situated at the focal point that you set.



### 4 Avoid Very Close Subjects

The distortion in the iPhone lens creates odd proportions if you are too close to your subject. Sometimes it is better to stand further away and use your digital zoom or crop it later. To see this in action, ask a friend to stand with their horse and you can walk closer and further from them and watch how their proportions change as you move. Then, stand further away and zoom in. You can see how their proportions do not change. This idea can also be applied to framing. If you are trying to get a muck tub out of the background or "hide" it behind your horse, you can experiment with moving your body vs zooming.

# PRESENTATION SHOTS

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When taking a presentation/award photograph, make sure that the area for the presentation is well lit. The rider's face should be visible and easy to see, as well as the presenters in the photograph. The photo on the left represents a poorly lit presentation, and the rider's face is shadowed. Even if you are unable to change the lighting, you should address shadowed faces by asking the subject to lift their hat or to reposition. Also, make sure that all awards are tilted in a way that they are not reflecting the light.

Make sure you are standing perpendicular to the award background and make sure any signage, jump standards, etc. are straight! Photos can be skewed both left to right and top to bottom, and it makes a huge difference in the photo when all lines are straight!



# PRESENTATION SHOTS

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# TEAM PHOTOS

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When taking your team photographs, there are some easy things you can do to make the photo look as professional as possible. Riders should be dressed in the same outfit, whether it is a clean polo and jeans or show attire. Coaches can wear a different outfit, but it should be clean and professional. Helmets and hats are optional. Sometimes shadows on visors hide faces. Utilize stairs on campus buildings or outdoor arena bleachers so nobody is hidden or needs to crouch. Be aware of your background and make it as simple as possible.

It is best to have the photo taken with a digital camera so the end result is high quality.

Make sure you are standing perpendicular to the background and make sure any signage, jump standards, fence posts, etc. are straight! Photos can be skewed both left to right and top to bottom, and it makes a huge difference in the photo when all lines are straight!



# PHOTO SUBMISSION

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Photos should protect the IHSA brand image.  
High standards in presentation and safety are  
required for IHSA photos.

## *Submission Guidelines*

- Professionally attired riders (neat hair, no tank tops, clean boots, etc.).
- Well-presented horse (i.e. no cross rails, dirty/broken fences, fences with no ground rails, horses with hanging knees, dirty horses, ill-fitting tack).
- Legally obtained photos (no watermarks unless photos are provided by the photographer).
- Helmets always on hunter seat riders and helmets or hats for Western riders (if possible, this can be a challenge). Re-member that headwear shades the eyes and try to keep your subjects lit.
- Photo is high resolution: From your smartphone, email photos at actual size.
- If you email from a laptop, attach the file or share to a Dropbox folder.
- Photo is oriented horizontally or landscape.
- Photo is in focus.
- For spotlight riders and horses, subject should be looking at the camera.
- Spotlight rider shots should be headshots with helmet or cowboy hat, riding shots are not acceptable.
- Include the names of the subjects, check the spelling. Include the photo credit spelled correctly.
- Better yet, name the photo file with the subjects and the photographer credit. If you name the file properly, no one will ever need to search for the information.
- Submit with your contact information, including phone and email.

# THANK YOU

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*This is only the tip of the iceberg!*

Just like riding and training horses, there is always room to learn and grow. Talk with other photographers. Ask questions. Practice! The joy of the journey is to keep learning!

*Thanks for the Photos*

Maddy Falkowitz

Stella DiBernardo

Lily Scarth

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