

shutterstock™

Contributor Success Guide



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Turn Your Creativity Into Cash

Want to earn cash for being creative? Do you already submit to stock sites, but want to learn more techniques for mastering sales? Then this is the guide for you. **We've assembled hundreds of tricks, tips, and explanations that can help you become a top provider of stock images and video.**



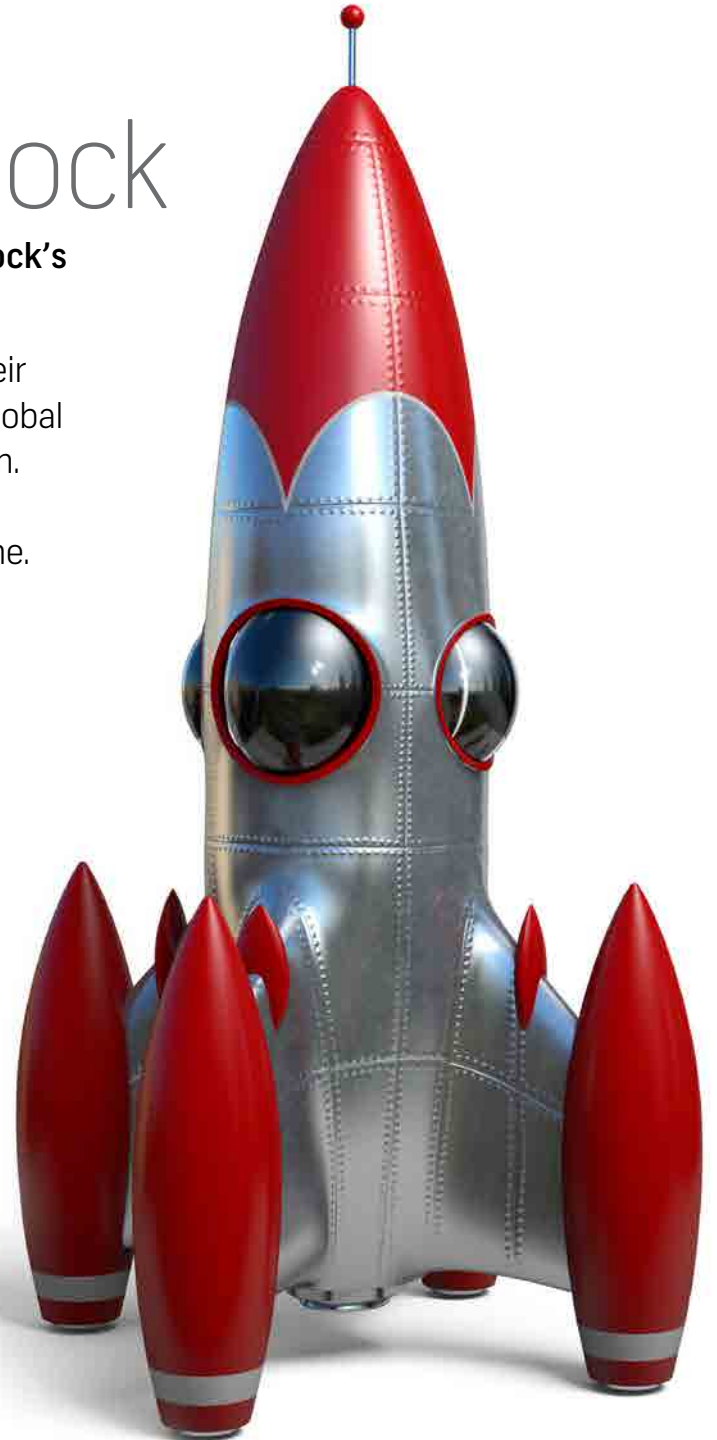
A Letter from Shutterstock

There has never been a more exciting time to be a member of Shutterstock's creative community.

Today, photographers and illustrators have thousands of creative tools at their disposal, ranging from digital paintbrushes to affordable HD DSLR video. A global network of enthusiasts and professionals regularly trades tips and inspiration. Image buyers are no longer just major publishers and big companies—small businesses and individuals are licensing images for every use you can imagine. It's all happening globally and instantaneously.

At Shutterstock, we want to support artists as they connect with image and motion buyers in a global, instant, “always on” marketplace. We value our relationships with our contributors and we want to continue to invest in their success.

With that goal in mind, we created this free guide to being a successful stock image seller. We hope that you enjoy it and find it useful for building your business.



About Shutterstock

Shutterstock is a leading provider of high-quality stock photography, vectors, illustrations, and video to creative professionals around the world. Our current library contains 50 million royalty-free images and over 3 million footage clips. We've served more than 500 million downloads to over 1 million customers in 150 countries since the company was founded in 2003. Shutterstock supports a contributor community of thousands of photographers, videographers, artists, and illustrators from around the world.



Why Should You Contribute to Shutterstock?

In the past 20 years, the business of visual communication has undergone massive change. Photographs used to be published in newspapers and magazines once per day or once per week. Today, there are nearly 3 billion Internet users consuming visual content 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Businesses and publishers big and small find themselves in need of more and more visual content. You can take advantage of this new opportunity by contributing images and video to Shutterstock.





We're a leading source of revenue for photographers, illustrators, and videographers.

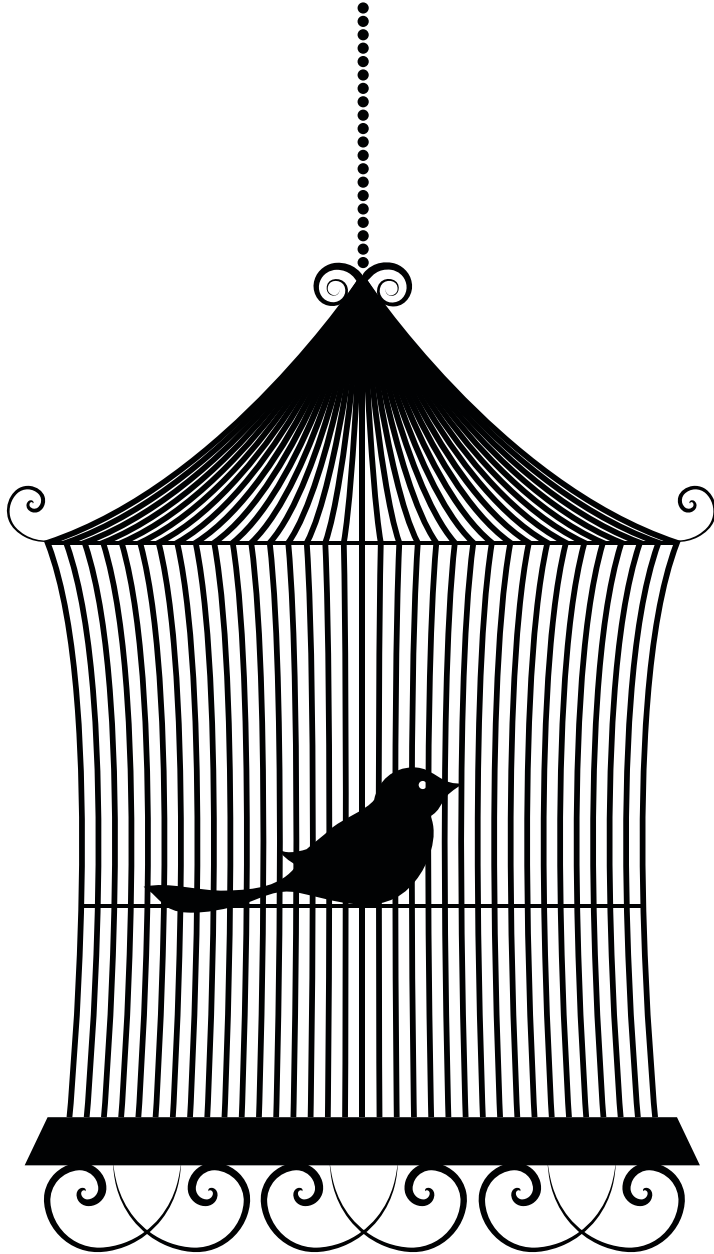
We've served more than 500 million image downloads to over 1 million customers in 150 countries and 20 languages. According to an independent survey by a leading contributor website*, Shutterstock is consistently ranked #1 for overall individual earnings among similar competitors.

We bring your images and video to customers worldwide.

Each year, Shutterstock invests millions of dollars in global marketing programs to keep our site a favorite of the world's image buyers. Our ads can be seen prominently in search engines, on leading web sites, and in print around the world.

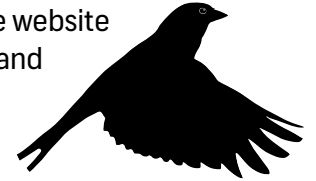
Our team meets regularly with customers and contributors at more than 20 leading trade shows, including shows by HOW, AIGA, Adobe, TED, and the World Photography Organization. We travel the globe to meet and welcome new customers.

*Microstockgroup.com, 2013 Microstock Industry Survey, 2/12/2014



We respect our customers and contributors.

From our transparent pricing model to our simple website experience, we believe in putting our customers and contributors first. We talk with both every day.

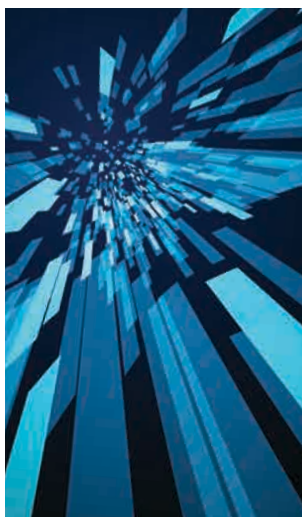


Contributing work is fast and easy.

We maintain high quality standards with a fast and efficient upload, submission, and approval process. Contributors can start earning money within 24 hours of submitting new content.

We're non-exclusive.

Enjoy the freedom. We don't pressure you into exclusively distributing images or video through Shutterstock. Your content is yours to control to maximize your selling opportunities and profit.



We believe in continuous innovation and the value of new technology.

As a technology company, we ensure that our product teams are always looking for new ways to improve and enhance the experiences of both customers and contributors. As just one example, be sure to check out our iPad and iPhone app!

We provide valuable tools and information.

Helpful features like our Keyword Trends tool give you valuable data to make better decisions about your business.

And our favorite reason artists contribute to Shutterstock?

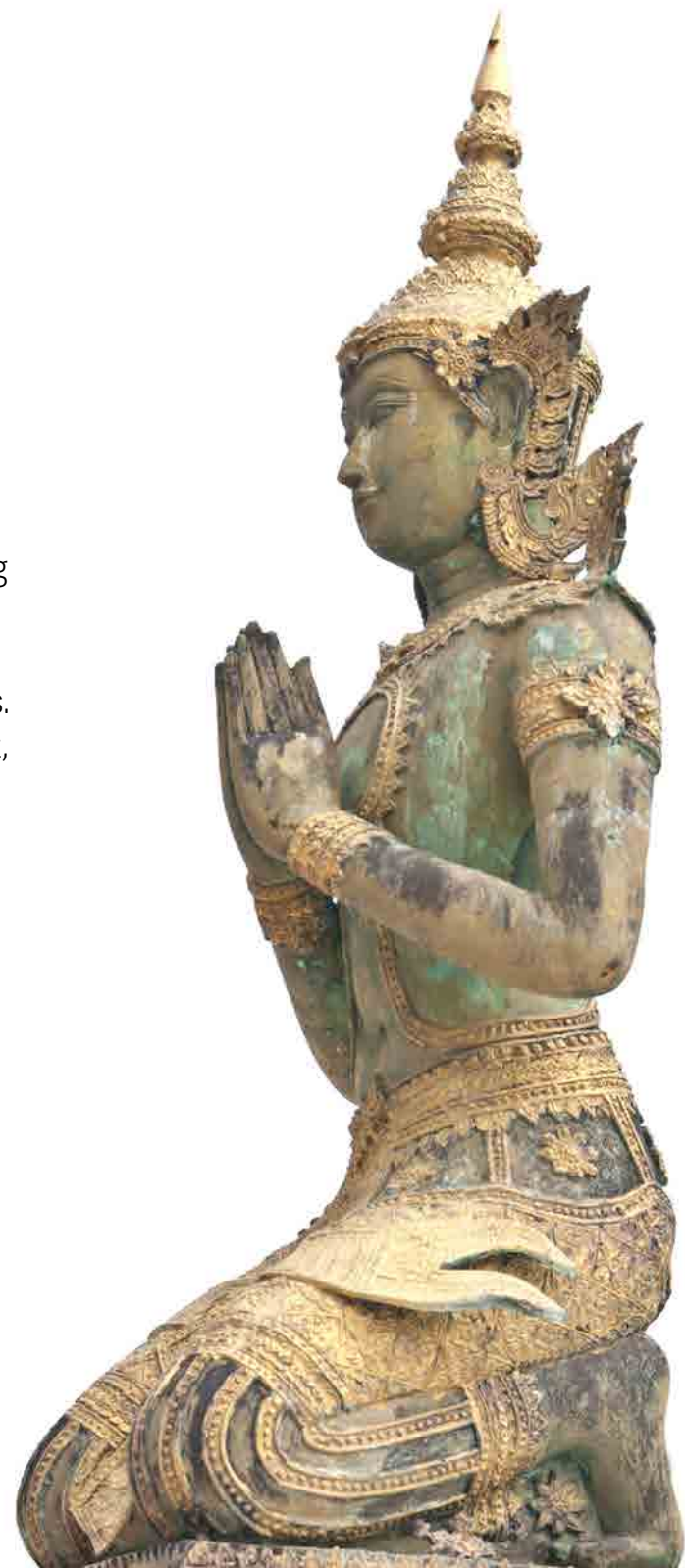
Because it's fun. Unleash your creativity by joining a community of thousands of contributors at one of the most creative marketplaces in the world.

What Are Stock Images?

Simply put, stock imagery means any art that already exists and is ready to use. A stock agency maintains a library of images covering a large array of subjects and licenses those images to customers. People often refer to “stock photography,” but “stock” can refer to any type of visual content, including photos, videos, or illustrations. Thanks to the ease of distributing digital content over the Internet, stock imagery has grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry.

Stock can provide you an outlet to license all of those images you have been creating. More than ever, buyers are looking for locally relevant images that are high-quality and professional. With Shutterstock’s power to reach art buyers worldwide, we can help bring your images to the people who want them.

And since images can sell over and over, your creative work can generate income for years to come.



What To Create



A Newton's cradle with three visible silver spheres hanging from thin wires. The spheres are highly reflective, showing distorted reflections of the environment. The background is a plain, light color.

10 Ways to Find Trends and Inspiration

Images are a means of communication. And just as spoken and written language adapts over time, visual language does too. Successful stock contributors keep their portfolios current and optimized to serve the needs of image buyers.

So where do you go to find trends and inspiration? Start with a paper notebook, a tablet computer, a smartphone, or any desktop, and keep an “idea journal” or “mood board” of what you find. Here are some places to get ideas for the imagery you create.



Social Media and Online Tools.

1

What topics are trending? Who are the most influential people in news and culture? What causes do they believe in? What issues are controversial? How could they be illustrated conceptually and literally?

The Newsstand.

2

Scan the latest headlines. Are there any common themes? What are the political issues that will carry into the next election? Are there any emerging or inspirational aesthetic or visual trends?

Home Furnishings and Fashion.

3

What colors are most popular? What looks were popular in this year's fashion shows? What styles are popular in home and garden magazines?

Technology.

4

What are the coolest new gadget trends on the technology blogs? What types of products and technology make headlines at the electronics trade shows? How do popular products today, like cell phones or computers and tablets, differ from ones seen in previous years?

Demographics.

5

What is changing about ethnic and cultural diversity? How is your neighborhood changing?



6

The Calendar.

What are the anticipated news, social, and cultural events that will be coming up in the next year or two?

7

Your Street, Your World.

What's different about your neighborhood? The local food? Local fashion? Architecture? Religion? Cultural events? There's increasing demand for "local" and "authentic" images.

8

Holidays and Celebrations.

What are the popular holidays and celebrations around the world or in your town?

9

Contemporary Art.

You should never copy the work of other artists. But you should keep an eye on what's interesting and new in the world of art, including photography. What problems, issues, or concepts are contemporary artists trying to explore? What new techniques are available? Take a look at gallery shows, as well as art blogs, books, and magazines.

10

Classical Art.

Sometimes the old ways are the best. Museums and art shows that include traditional paintings are great sources of timeless inspiration.

What Buyers Are Begging For

To maximize your success, you need to understand what buyers are looking for. We frequently talk to customers who ask for images with these qualities.

Images that show “authenticity.”

Perfectly posed images of beautiful models are popular, but buyers tell us every day that they also want authenticity. Images need to be inspirational, professional, and of high quality, but people and activities should look natural, relaxed, and “real.”

Images that show cultural diversity.

We live in an increasingly global economy and shared culture. For years, buyers have been asking stock agencies for images that reflect how culturally diverse our world is in a way that feels honest and accurate.

Images that show local culture.

Shutterstock serves a global audience. Does a business meeting in Hong Kong or Rio De Janeiro look exactly the same as one in London or Rome? Don't copy “popular” images. Buyers want high-quality and authentic images of the world as seen through your eyes.



Distinct variations from the same shoot.

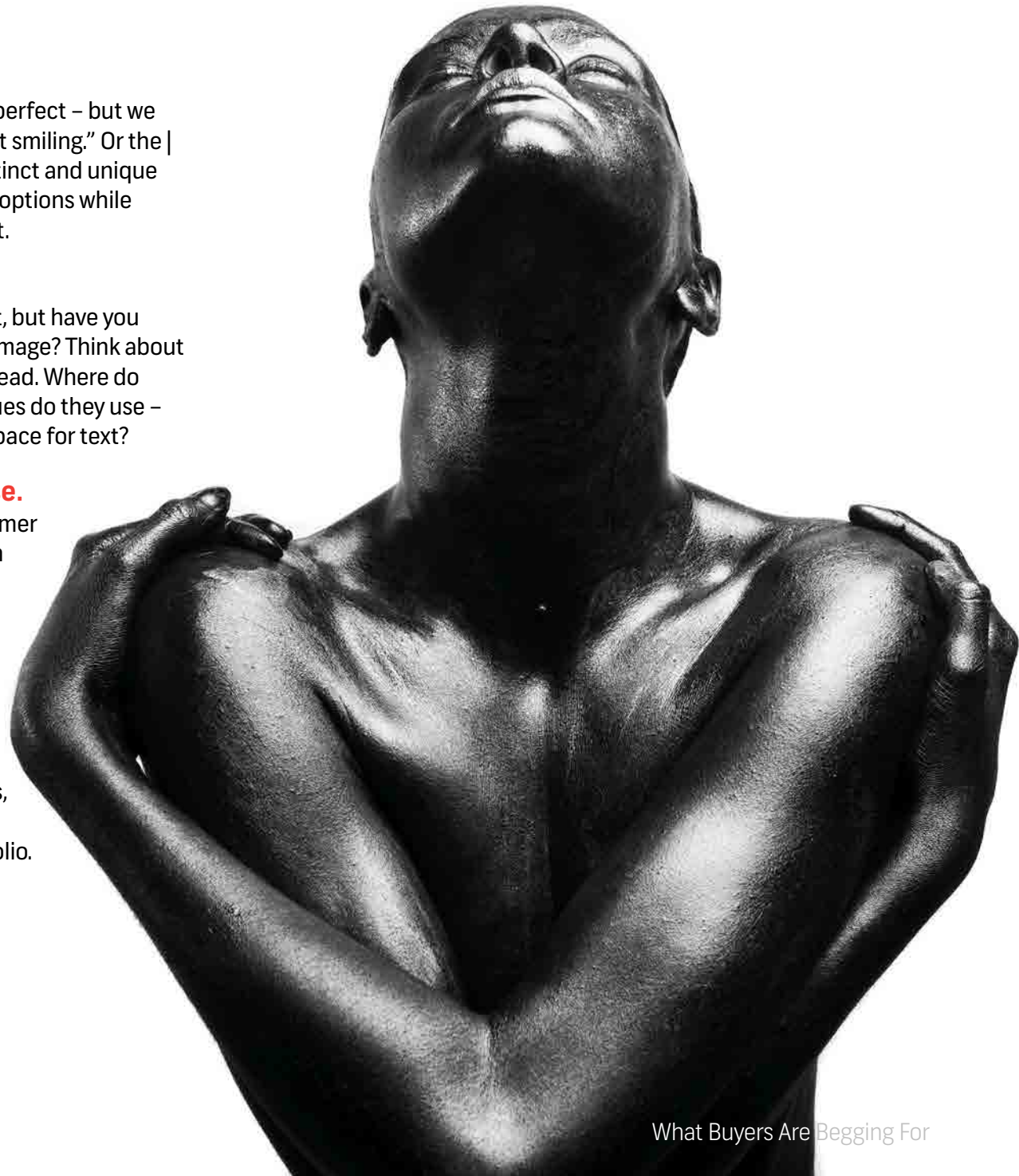
Buyers often tell us things like this: “The shot was perfect – but we couldn’t use it because the person was serious, not smiling.” Or the image was horizontal, not vertical. By shooting distinct and unique variations of the same scene, you can give a buyer options while maximizing sales opportunities from a single shoot.

Thoughtful room for text.

Your images need to have a clear center of interest, but have you thought about how text might be overlaid on the image? Think about a magazine cover, advertisement, or two-page spread. Where do photographers leave room for text? What techniques do they use – like shallow depth-of-field – to create a suitable space for text?

Images that they can’t find anywhere else.

We were recently approached by a potential customer who works for a government agency specializing in wastewater treatment. She was a regular buyer of images of sewer sludge. Who would imagine that? Popular themes such as nature, objects, business, and healthcare may seem obvious to beginners, but since those categories are saturated, finding images of unique subjects should also be a major part of your portfolio strategy. These images might not be the top sellers, but your unique, niche images are up against less competition, and will help you diversify your portfolio.



How to Maximize Your Profits When Shooting

Even top professionals consider how to save money on production costs to maximize revenue. Here are the top tips to keep your production expenses low.

Rent—don't buy—certain equipment.

1

It's likely that your camera, basic lenses, and flash are things you want to own. But studio lighting and other equipment can often be rented in a cost-effective way. Top professionals often rent equipment when the benefits of renting outweigh the cost of buying, storing, maintaining, and insuring equipment that could be technically obsolete in just a few years.

Share equipment and studio costs.

2

If you know other photographers who submit for stock as well, talk to them about sharing production costs. For example, studio lights can be rented by the week and then shared among a few individuals. Always remember that whoever signs the rental agreement is responsible for the equipment in case something is lost, broken, or stolen, so choose partners who are trustworthy and responsible.





Shoot multiple scenes with your models.

3

There are photographers who develop entire portfolios around a few models. While it's best to use a diverse selection of models, you should maximize your time when you have models in the studio. Different sets, angles, facial expressions, orientations, clothing, and scenarios are all ways to maximize the return on a single shoot.

Shoot video and stills at the same time.

4

More and more cameras have HD video capability. HD video is an increasingly popular stock medium and videos are often licensed at higher prices than stills. There are differences between shooting stills and video, but you can greatly increase your earning potential by creating both during the same shoot.

Try before you buy.

5

Photography software can be very expensive. Thankfully, many companies like Adobe offer 30-day free trials of their software. If you're not sure if you're going to need certain functionality, try out a few software packages before settling on your final workflow and committing to making purchases.



6

When you do buy, try to DIY (“Do It Yourself”).

Brand-name video and photography accessories can be expensive. Thankfully, a large number of “DIY” sites have been created. Sites like CheesyCam.com have tutorials to create or buy inexpensive versions of popular items like video stabilizers, dollies, LED lights, and camera sliders.

7

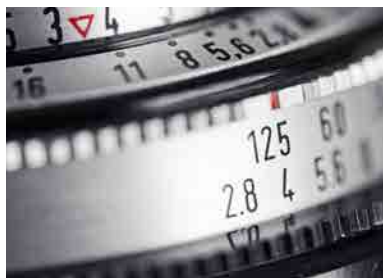
Get releases and avoid logos and trademarks.

If your images show people or property, they can’t be licensed for commercial use without a model or property release. They also can’t be used commercially if they contain obvious logos or trademarks. Getting a signed release will ensure that you get the highest return on your work.

8

Get creative with your space.

You don’t need a 2,000-square-foot studio to shoot sellable photos. A clean white bathtub can be used creatively to get object shots on a white background. Many amazing shots are taken in garages against a small seamless white or black backdrop. Be sure to pay careful attention to lighting, but remember that no one can see what’s outside of the frame.



9

Take good care of your equipment and sell it when it makes sense.

There are many reasons to take good care of your equipment. One reason is that camera equipment such as lenses and flashes often holds its value very well. If you protect your glass, you might find that you can sell it on eBay for almost as much as you paid for it. Camera bodies might not retain their value as well, because new technology comes out with great improvements.

10

The most important budget-saving technique: run your business like a business.

Be conscious of exactly what you're spending on equipment, models, and each shoot. Keeping track of your expenses with a spreadsheet is a smart way to increase profits. It's like dieting: unless you count calories and weigh yourself, you begin to quickly lose track of how you're doing against your objectives. Set realistic goals and plot a long-term strategy for success.

Bonus tip:

Top photographers also know that their value is often in creating images, not keywording and uploading. Images and video can be sent to third-party production houses to be keyworded, retouched, and optimized for sales. Or a paid assistant can do the same. This approach typically applies to photographers who create thousands of images.

Video: Get Much Higher Royalties with a Little More Shooting Time

We see increasing demand for video. The rise of Internet video, mobile video, video advertising, paid TV – and the availability of inexpensive and easy tools to both create and edit video – have increased the sales potential of stock footage.

True, it requires an investment of time, talent, and equipment to shoot, edit, color-correct, transfer, and upload clips. However, there are rewards. Video has traditionally sold at a higher price point. Royalties at Shutterstock are as high as \$23 per download, and your clips are up against less competition compared to still imagery.

So what can you do to take advantage of this opportunity? Many cameras these days are sold with HD video capability. A growing number of photographers are shooting both stills and video as part of their portfolio strategy, even during a single shoot.



Here's what you *ideally* need to get started in professional video:

An HD DSLR, or a camera capable of creating HD video.

You might already have this. The Canon 5D Mark II, 5D Mark III, Canon 7D, and Nikon D800 are popular Digital SLR cameras for creating HD video. Smaller “Micro Four-Thirds” cameras, and even compact cameras such as the wearable GoPro Hero, are also capable of shooting HD video. DSLRs will give you more control and more lens options, and they are typically more suitable for use with tripods and other accessories.

A stable tripod with a fluid head.

A photograph can be a snapshot of a fraction of a second. A video clip can last a minute or more. Professional videos are consistently stable and steady, even when panning. For hand-held shots, there are various stabilizers and brackets, as well as “build it yourself” options, to reduce the blur and vibration caused by camera shake.

An extra viewfinder or an external monitor.

Video is typically viewed through the small LCD of a DSLR camera. Unfortunately, that makes it hard to get precise focus as objects are in motion. There are many aftermarket accessories available for enlarging the view of the LCD screen. One such accessory mounts on the back of the camera and works like a large loupe or magnifying glass. Alternately, a small external monitor can also be used with a bracket. Both will give you more precise focus ability.

“Continuous” lights.

Still cameras rely on a single “flash” of light. Video requires continuous lighting that stays on and stays cool. Lights can be rented or purchased, but you'll want color-balanced lights that fit the above criteria. Popular models include camera-mounted LED lights and studio lights made by ARRI and KinoFlo. These kinds of lights can also be rented.



Audio recording devices: microphones and digital recorders.

Shutterstock accepts audio with video clips, but only ambient audio and background noise. Music or audio provided by third parties (licensed or otherwise) is not allowed. That being said – even for ambient sounds – “on-camera” audio is typically poor quality. If you want the best possible audio, get a Zoom H4n or similar dedicated recorder – along with a quality, shotgun-style or omnidirectional microphone and a wind shield.

High-speed or high-capacity storage cards.

Video files are very large compared to photos, often running a gigabyte or more per clip. When it comes to speed, most storage cards sold today are sold with video in mind. But it’s worth checking the speed and size of your cards to make sure you have enough storage and that they’re fast enough to properly capture and transfer video.

Hard-disk space.

It won’t take much time to fill up your desktop or laptop hard drive with your clips. Having additional hard drives will allow you to offload your videos efficiently and will also allow you to move files between multiple computers. Always back up your data, too.

Video editing software.

There’s a variety of video editing software out there. Some of the more popular packages are Final Cut Pro by Apple, Adobe Premiere, Sony Vegas Pro, Pinnacle Studio, and Avid Studio. In addition, packages like After Effects and Photoshop 6 Extended will allow you to apply filters or color-correct your clips. Research what you need before making a purchase.



The Ingredients of Top-Selling Stock Images or Videos

They have “commercial value.”

1 “Commercial value” represents the likelihood that your image or video will be useful to a creative buyer. Since many images are licensed for commercial, corporate, marketing, or advertising uses, the more attractive and usable an image is for a broad number of uses – including both editorial and commercial uses – the more it is considered to have “commercial value.”

They have both literal and conceptual meaning.

2 An image of a surfer riding a huge wave represents literal subject matter such as a “surfer,” “wave,” and “surfboard.” But some images of surfing illustrate abstract concepts such as “risk,” “adventure,” “excitement,” “danger,” and more. Images that have both literal and conceptual meaning are more likely to be popular as stock images.

They have room for text.

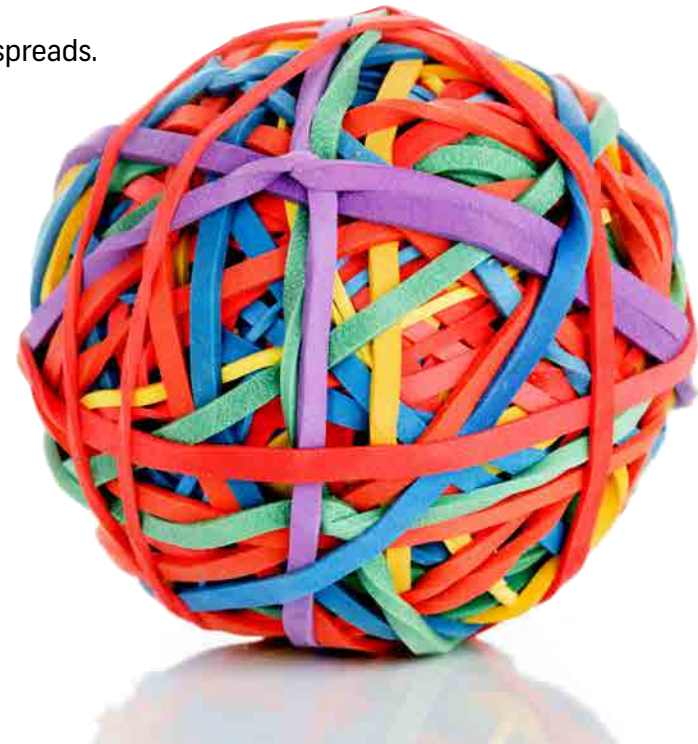
3 Go to the newsstand and pick up some magazines. Look at the magazine cover and flip through the spreads. Look at advertisements. How are designers overlaying text on the images? Are the images filled with visual clutter and distractions or are they visually simple and clean?

They’re inspirational.

4 Images that inspire an emotional reaction are more valuable than those that do not. An image of a mountain climber celebrating on a peak can challenge our notions of what’s humanly achievable and can highlight new levels of aesthetic beauty.

They balance “aspiration” with honesty and authenticity.

5 “Aspiration” is defined as a person’s desire to be something better. However – in the case of people – we can’t all expect to be bodybuilders, mountain climbers, or supermodels. Buyers often want images that balance positive values that we all aspire to with honest depictions that an audience will feel are both realistic and achievable.



Submitting to Shutterstock

shutterstock



YES



YES

Your First Submission and Application Success

If you have existing images, or if you're ready to start creating stock, then joining Shutterstock is as straightforward as 1-2-3. We maintain quality standards, but we also have a very fast and efficient upload, submission, and approval process. Many of our contributors start earning money within 24 hours of submitting content.



Here's how to get started with your first batch of images (or video):

Read Shutterstock's submission guidelines.

1

Our guidelines explain your legal rights and responsibilities, technical criteria, and what content is appropriate for the collection.

<http://www.submit.shutterstock.com/guidelines.mhtml>

Consider whether your images have “commercial value” and/or “editorial value.”

2

“Commercial value” and “editorial value” are defined as the likelihood that an image buyer will find your content useful to license. Is it realistic that your image would be used in an advertising campaign? If the image is editorial in nature, could you see it being published for news or educational purposes? Images are licensed for many different purposes, but you should think about how desirable your images might be for different types of editorial or commercial uses.

Edit your images down to a quality set.

3

Even the best photographer can be a bad editor, because he or she has an emotional investment in the photographs. If you're not sure what your 10 “best” images are, consider consulting other sellers in the Shutterstock or MicrostockGroup forums for their feedback.



Check your photos at 100% – 200%.

4 View your images at 100% to 200% magnification in order to locate noise, artifacts, and other defects that might jeopardize their approval.

Include quality metadata and keywords.

5 For the most part, buyers don't find your images by visuals alone. Search engines match a buyer's search terms to the keywords you've entered. Better keywords = better sales. Accurate keywords = better sales. If you enter 25–45 accurate, relevant, and properly spelled keywords for each photo, your chances of success are very high.

Upload and submit.

6 Once you're satisfied that your images meet the above criteria, it's time to submit! Upload your images at <http://submit.shutterstock.com> and keep an eye on your email inbox for your official acceptance!

Don't get discouraged.

7 Many successful Shutterstock contributors were rejected on their first submission. If we reject your first submission, keep improving and try again!

Keywording

Make keywording a routine part of your workflow. Your images will sell better if you put a little extra effort into writing accurate keywords, and lots of them.

Here are a few tips to help you master the art and science of keywording.

Think like an image buyer.

Picture the person most likely to download your image. Now, put yourself in that person's shoes and think about which words they'd type to find an image like yours. Get specific.

Use 25 to 45 accurate keywords, and customize them for every image as much as possible.

As a general rule, try to input 25 to 45 keywords per image. It might be tempting to upload a batch of images from a single shoot and label them all with a list of identical keywords. However, if you put in a little more time to write precise keywords for each image, you'll see better sales.

Make your titles and descriptions unique.

Titles should be succinct, punchy, and descriptive of exactly what's seen in the image. Make the title as accurate and unique as possible. For example, if you have two images of dogs, don't give them both a title of "Dog." "White Dog Playing With Ball" and "Black Dog Eating" will help differentiate the photos. The time you save when batch editing might result in fewer sales.



Don't spam.

Never label your images with irrelevant keywords in an attempt to get more views. Remember, the whole idea is to help the right customers find your images. Shutterstock reserves the right to ban contributors who use spam keywords.

Be precise with descriptions of people.

Use as many accurate words as possible to describe your models' ages, races, and genders. Take particular care in how you describe someone's race and ethnicity. Don't label someone with inaccurate ethnicities.

Think about concepts and feelings.

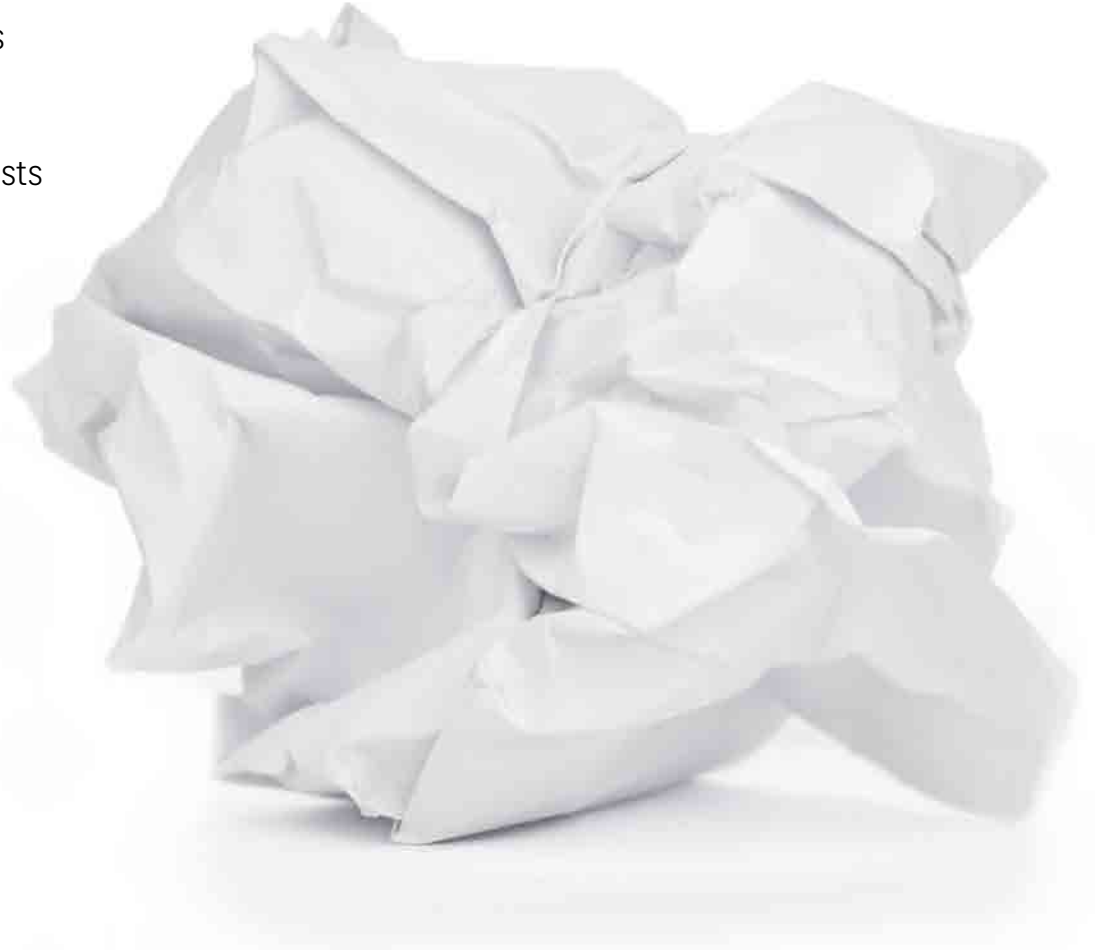
A smiling person isn't just "smiling." He or she might also be conveying "happiness," "joy," "delight," "humor," or any number of other emotions. Image customers often search for conceptual words like these, so think about which words might apply to your images and use those keywords liberally. Use a thesaurus to find new words and a dictionary to spell your keywords correctly.



Rejection Reasons– Get ALL of Your Photos Approved

Our reviewers are responsible for quality control and enforcement of legal and editorial standards. Reviewers inspect hundreds – if not thousands – of images per day. The reviewers are trained to inspect with a careful, professional eye. They are often photographers and artists themselves. The review process is subjective – but fair. It is important to keep in mind that you should never take a rejection personally.

With the goal of getting ALL of your images approved, here are some of our top rejection reasons and their associated solutions.



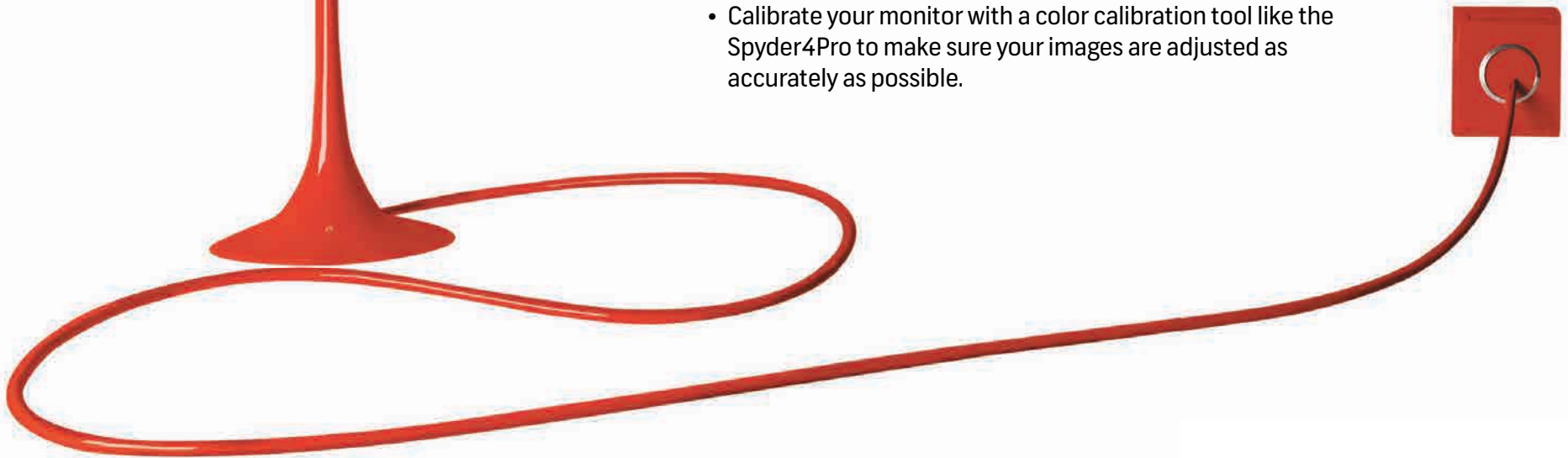
1

Poor Lighting.

“Poor lighting” describes issues with color balance (or white balance); exposure, brightness, or contrast; or intrinsic lighting qualities such as the presence of shadows.

How to get the best lighting for your images:

- Take a lighting workshop or watch instructional videos.
- Make sure that you’re familiar with your camera’s white balance and exposure settings.
- Learn to bounce or diffuse your flash, which often creates more flattering lighting conditions.
- Use your camera’s “bracketing” features to shoot with several exposures as a safety policy against poor exposure.
- Adjust lighting in post-production, with features such as levels, curves, masks, and toning features in Photoshop and other image editing programs.
- Calibrate your monitor with a color calibration tool like the Spyder4Pro to make sure your images are adjusted as accurately as possible.



2

Composition

“Composition” issues describe an image that is framed, cropped, or composed in a way that limits its editorial and commercial usefulness.

How to solve composition issues:

- Think about how text might be placed over the image.
- Frame your subject carefully in relation to the edge of the image.
- Avoid distracting patterns.
- Keep crops a little loose to give the customer more flexibility.
- Don’t tilt your camera unless you’re confident that the tilt adds value to the image

3

Focus

“Focus” issues describe unintentional or inappropriate blurriness in an image, either caused by lack of focus, motion, or poor lens quality. This is intended to be separate from the intentional or artistic use of motion blur, “selective focus,” and depth-of-field.

Precise focus allows you to direct the viewer’s attention. A lack of focus can be distracting and can undermine the likelihood an image will be accepted or downloaded.

How to solve focus issues:

- Be precise in your focus, shoot test images, and use a tripod.
- Learn how to properly use depth-of-field.
- Buy quality lenses, and micro-calibrate them to your camera body if that feature is supported.
- Learn how to judiciously use Photoshop sharpening tools such as “unsharp mask.” Never oversharpen.
- Shoot at a sufficient shutter speed to prevent blur.



4

Dust & Scratches

The “Dust and Scratches” rejection pertains to images that have sensor dust, scratches, or an unclear background. These issues can be easily fixed in post-production before your images are submitted to Shutterstock.

How to submit images that are dust- and scratch-free:

- Keep your camera and lenses clean. Store them where dust is minimal and clean them periodically. Take great care when changing lenses and use the appropriate sensor cleaning kit when necessary.
- If you are scanning negatives, slides, or old photos, make sure that your scanner is clean and handle your images with care. Add a note to the reviewer when you submit scanned content.
- If you are photographing an object on a solid background, make sure that the background is clean and free from any dust or debris.
- Inspect your image at 100% before you submit. If there are any noticeable imperfections, carefully remove them with cloning tools or brushes in your image editor.

5

Noise

“Noise” is usually created by over-sharpening, film grain, dust, shooting with improper exposure, insufficient light, or other artifacts.

How to solve issues with noise:

- Don’t over-sharpen images.
- Shoot with a DSLR, rather than a lower quality camera.
- Use the lowest ISO setting possible.
- Avoid longer exposures.
- Get the right exposure as you are shooting – use a light meter if necessary.

Trademarks

When you take pictures that you intend to sell as stock, you absolutely must not include any distinguishing visual clues that relate to an already existing brand, corporation, company, or famous design. If you do, this could constitute infringement and you will receive the following rejection reason:

Trademark: Contains potential trademark or copyright infringement – not editorial.

The obvious exception here is if you are submitting the image as editorial – but if this is the case, remember that the image should also be newsworthy.

How to solve issues with trademarks:

- Avoid submitting images of isolated subjects which may bring to mind a specific product or service.
- Remember that isolated elements may have trademark protection. Watch for discernible labels or logos on items such as clothing, electronics, or background advertisements.
- If your image has questionable elements, remove them in post-production.
- Familiarize yourself with our list of Known Image Restrictions:
<http://www.shutterstock.com/buzz/legal/stock-photo-restrictions>



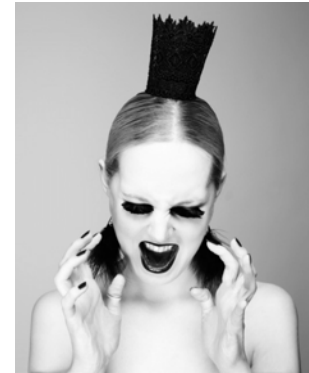
Making Money at Shutterstock: Royalties Explained

Technically speaking, image customers don't "buy" your images. They "license" them. You still own the rights to distribute and display your image or video, but a license gives the customer permission to use your work.

Each time a customer licenses one of your images from Shutterstock, we pay you a royalty fee. Shutterstock is best known for its subscription services, but we also sell single image licenses, image packs, enhanced licenses, custom licenses, and video licenses.

You can see each of our license types and their associated royalty amounts on our earnings schedule:

http://submit.shutterstock.com/earnings_schedule.mhtml



About “Sensitive Use”

In addition to our standard and enhanced licenses, Shutterstock provides custom licenses to buyers such as large advertising agencies. These agencies require more rights and some flexibility in how an image might ultimately be used. That flexibility may include “sensitive uses.” An example of a “sensitive use” is a healthcare advertisement or political ad.

Many stock image agencies, including many of our direct competitors, include a clause in their license that allows “sensitive uses.” Unlike those stock agencies, Shutterstock puts you in control. You have the option to decide if you want to participate in these sales opportunities.

The “sensitive use” clause of our TOS allows select large-volume customers to use images for certain “sensitive subjects” with the following limitations: Customers must indicate that the image is of a model and used for illustrative purposes only. Our policy prohibits the use of images in pornography; in ads or promotional materials for adult entertainment clubs or similar venues; or for escort, dating, or similar services.

If you choose to participate, you will have the opportunity to earn much higher royalties from customers representing the top ad agencies in the world. “Sensitive uses” will be a small fraction of the licenses secured by these high volume buyers, but participation gives you full access to the sales opportunities these buyers provide, as well as royalties of up to \$120 or more per download.

If you do not want to participate in these sales opportunities, please visit your account page to change your preferences.



Turning Pro

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It's the Law!

Copyright, Trademarks, and Marketplace Integrity

Copyright is a form of legal protection that gives the authors of a creative work the exclusive right to display, reproduce, distribute, and financially benefit from the work they create. Authors of artistic works can provide permission to others to do the same – and can choose to do so for compensation – which is the fundamental premise behind “licensing.” The right of copyright is found in most countries’ laws and is respected internationally through conventions. There is no universal copyright law, and protections can vary by country.

Ideas are not protected by copyright. However, authors’ expressions of ideas are protected. If an unauthorized person copies original elements of another person’s photographs or designs, and if those elements are “substantially similar” to the original work, that person can be held liable for copyright infringement.



So what does this mean for you?

First, it means that you own your photographs. When you submit them to Shutterstock, you are providing Shutterstock with permission to license the images to photo buyers on your behalf.

Second, it means that you should be careful to avoid copying any original or unique elements of another person's work. In just the same way that you have protections and rights afforded to you by copyright, so do other artists and authors.

The best way to steer clear of copyright issues is to simply focus on creating original work. Be your own artist. Avoid copying the work of others. It's not worth the risk.

When Shutterstock pursues copyright infringement

Shutterstock pursues copyright infringements, including the following:

- Unauthorized use of your images.
- When one contributor copies another contributor's work.

Copyright issues are taken seriously, since they can result in legal disputes and they can affect customers' perception of the integrity of the archive. Our goal is to have a safe and secure marketplace for everyone involved.

For more on copyright laws in the U.S., see:

<http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf>



What is a trademark?

A trademark is a word, name, symbol, or device — or a combination of these things — that is used to distinguish and identify the source of certain products or services. An example of a trademark is a company logo or a design that would be associated with a specific product or service.

Like copyright, there is no universal trademark law, and protections vary by country. Generally, trademark law seeks to protect identifiers of certain products or services so that there is no confusion regarding their source. We do not accept images which contain trademarks for commercial use, as they could potentially be used in a way that is likely to cause confusion of the source of certain products or services — and may therefore unfairly infringe on the trademark rights of others.

So, how can you avoid trademarks in your work? If a word, name, symbol, or device in your image brings to mind a specific product or service, then it may be protected by trademark. If your image contains a trademark, you must remove the trademark from the image before you submit it for commercial use. (Editorial use is still acceptable.) It's as simple as that!

For more information on trademark laws in the U.S., please see:

<http://www.uspto.gov/trademarks/law/index.jsp>



How to Work with Models

When you're photographing people, don't simply rely on friends who might not have the look you're aiming for. Here are some strategies for finding good models who will help make your images successful.



Agencies.

In almost any city, you can contact a local modeling agency and hire professional models for a few hours or a day. This can get pricey, so consider ways to negotiate for a lower fee, such as offering to take models' headshots in exchange for them working with you.



A "Go-See."

Consider teaming up with another photographer and hosting a "Go-See." Use social media to advertise a casting call and let the models come to you. Hold the casting during a convenient time for a few hours. Call each model in one at a time to interview them and take a quick snapshot. This will help you build a database of people to call on when you want to work with a new model.



Street casting.

Ever pass a person on the street and wish you had taken their picture? Next time you spot someone who you think would be a great subject, approach them and explain what you do and that you like their look. Direct them to your website (if you have one) so they can see your work. Avoid putting yourself in a difficult or uncomfortable situation with a stranger; the best models are confident and relaxed. Before you shoot the model, agree to a rate at which you will pay them.

Family and friends.

What about the people you know? Do you have photogenic family members who might make good models? From babies to senior citizens, family members at any age can make great subjects. If you plan to use family members, including children, please refer to the section about Sensitive Use.



Don't forget the details:

- **Model releases.** Any photo depicting an identifiable person must have a model release for commercial license. The release needs to be signed by the photographer, model, and a witness. If the model is underage, a guardian will need to sign the release. You can find model releases here: <http://submit.shutterstock.com/legal.mhtml>
- **Compensation for the model.** Knowing exactly what to pay a model can be a challenge, but no matter what you agree upon, be sure to work out this detail ahead of time.
- **Set expectations.** When you use any model, be sure to explain stock photography and how the images might be used.

On the Shoot

Working with models can be both challenging and rewarding. Here are some helpful hints to make your shoot run smoothly.

- **Make sure your models are ready for close-ups.** Grooming is critical. Ask your model to come to set with a neutral, fresh manicure, and minimal makeup and hair product, if any.
- **Play some music.** This will help your models relax and enjoy their time with you.
- **Shoot multiple scenarios and various angles.** Move around. Give models various props, scenarios, and emotions to convey.
- **Let your models interact naturally.** Try not to over-direct them to avoid stiffness or awkward poses.
- **Shooting from below a model usually isn't flattering.** Try shooting straight on or from above, looking down on your subjects.
- **If possible, hire a stylist.** The stylist can also help with wardrobe, hair, and makeup.

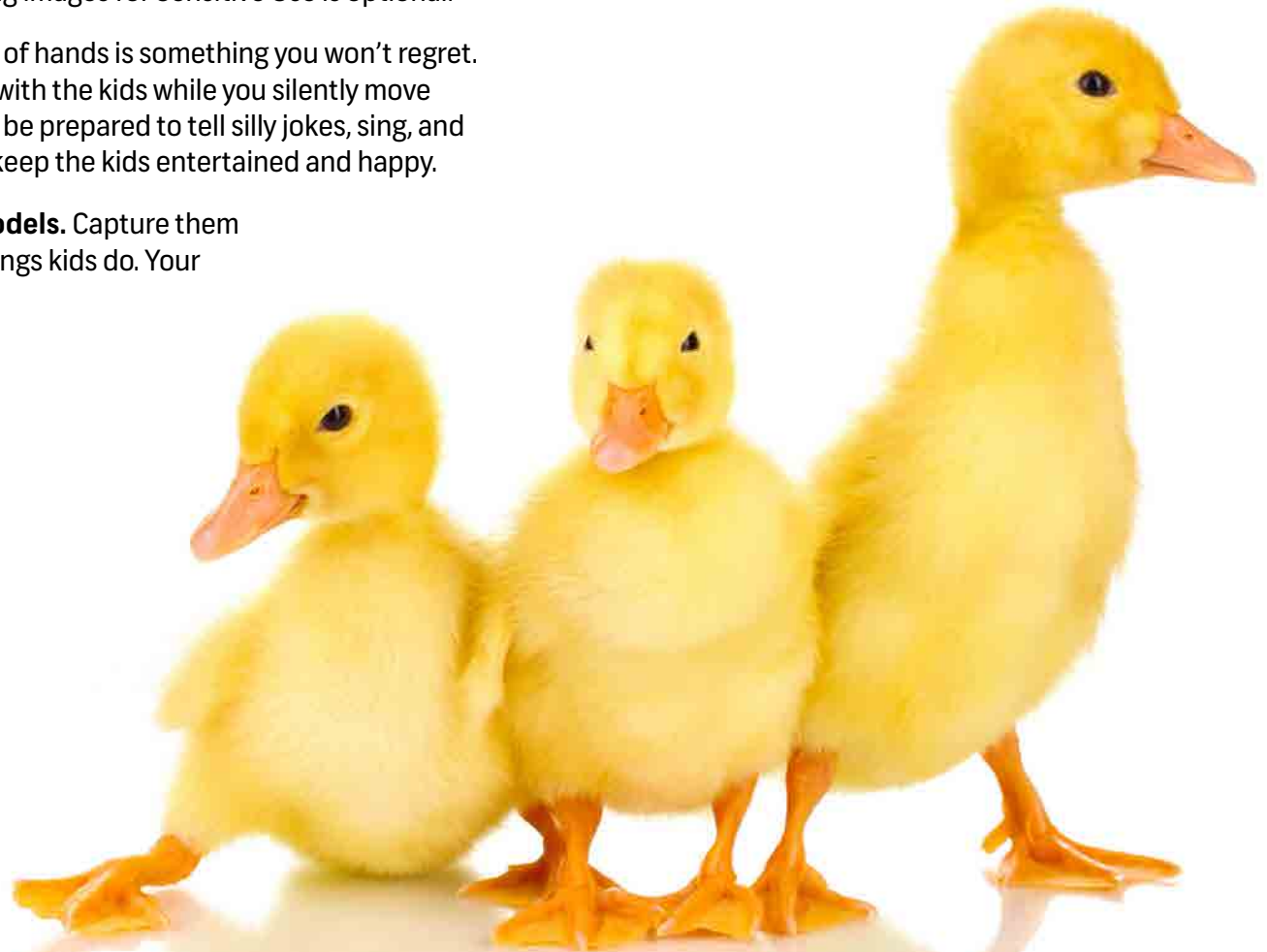


Photographing Children

Photographing babies and kids can make for fantastic and surprising images.

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- **Get permission.** This should be obvious, but never photograph a minor without a parent or guardian's permission.
- **Set expectations.** Be sure that everyone understands the many ways in which images might be used. Be sure to explain Sensitive Use to the parents or guardians of your little models. Allowing images for Sensitive Use is optional.
- **Have an assistant on set.** An extra set of hands is something you won't regret. Let this person entertain and interact with the kids while you silently move around the room. The wrangler should be prepared to tell silly jokes, sing, and dance around the room - anything to keep the kids entertained and happy.
- **Try not to over-direct your young models.** Capture them while they move around and do the things kids do. Your images will be more fun and REAL.



Production Strategies of the Pros

The pros in the stock industry have one thing in common – they plan each and every shoot and know exactly what they are walking into. Help build up your portfolio by following these simple tricks.

Map out your shoot.

Whatever the concept is, sit down with your team and map out every shot. Come up with a list of 30 to 50 shots that you aim to capture.

Hold a pre-production meeting.

Teams often meet before a shoot for a “Pre-Pro” to go over last-minute details, including everything from wardrobe and props to lighting and subject placement.

Have backup equipment.

Have a second camera handy and be prepared for any scenario.

Watch the time.

Keep your shoot moving by following the schedule you pre-planned. If something isn't working, move on.

Build a strong team.

A retoucher, producer, and stylist will help take care of everything around you while you focus on taking pictures.

Stay away from the cliché.

Stock photo clichés are in abundance on every photo site, including ours. Follow what the pros do, and shoot popular concepts in unique ways so your images stand out from the pack.



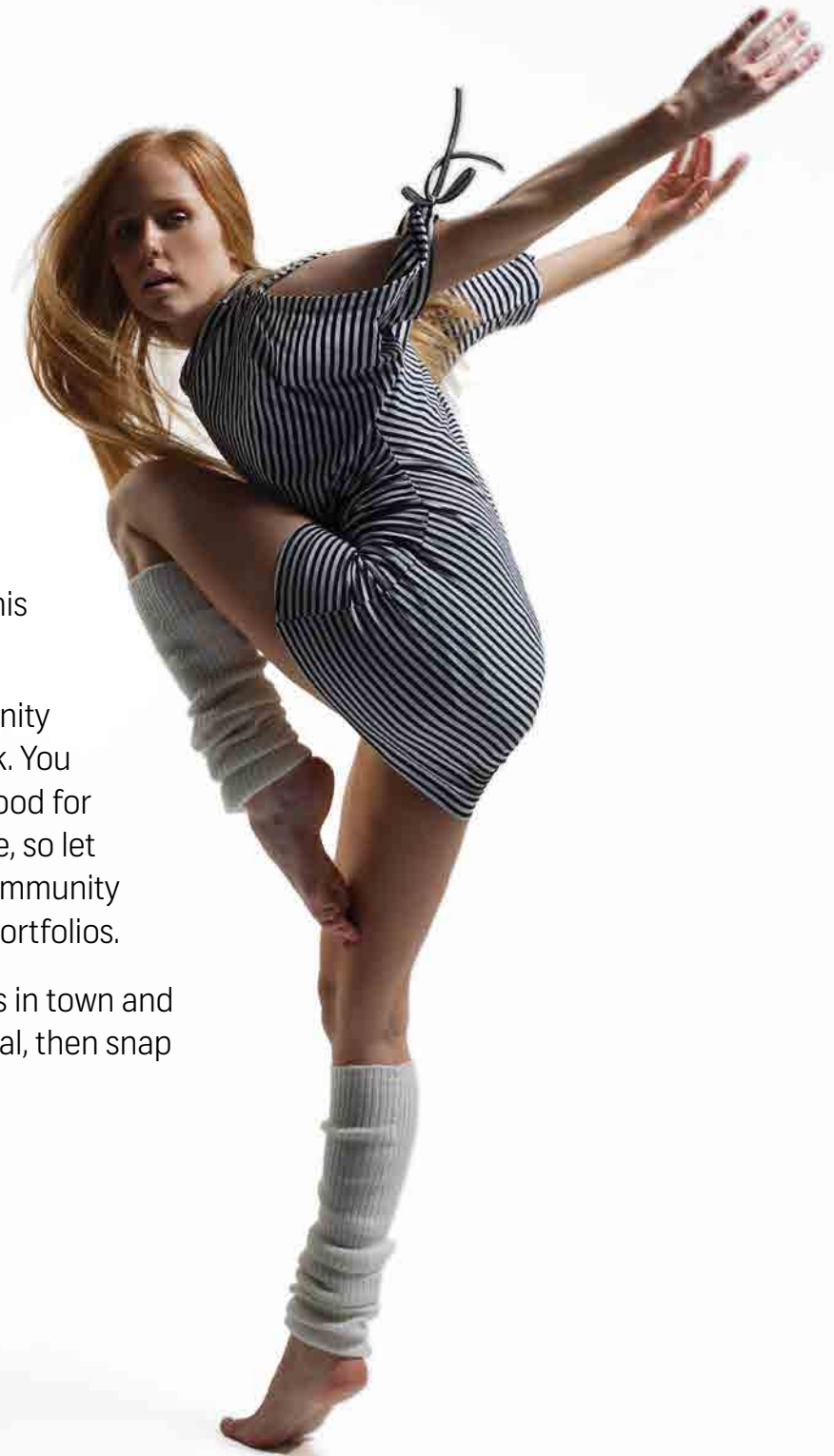
Assembling a Team

Leave what you don't know to the people who do know.

While you might make excellent pictures, your skills might not be in food preparation, wardrobe, or bed making. Leave it to the pros (the other pros) to step in and help with those tasks. Finding and building the right team can be tricky, and it can take a number of shoots before you feel comfortable working with others. But building a successful team will make your images smarter and more polished. In this field, it's hard for one person to do everything alone.

Start by placing ads online or at local art schools. Ask the photo community in your town, use Craigslist and LinkedIn, and network, network, network. You might find a friend who has always loved to bake and is willing to style food for you. Or another friend might make a bed like nothing you've seen before, so let them help style your soft goods (pillows, sheets, linens). Rely on your community and offer to send prints to your helpers so they can develop their own portfolios.

Love food photography but not a great chef? Approach new restaurants in town and offer to take shots of the dishes on their menus. Let them prepare a meal, then snap away. Making trades like this can help you expand and diversify your portfolio with minimal costs.



Resources



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Glossary

Do you come across words in the forums or on stock sites that you think you should understand, but don't? Here are a few terms that will help you get up to speed.

1

Royalty Free (RF) – Unlike Rights Managed (RM—see below), RF licenses have very few restrictions. These images can be used multiple times by the same customer without additional fees. RF images are not given on an exclusive basis and are typically less expensive than RM. These licenses can be very popular because they are easier for a customer to understand and maintain. Shutterstock specializes in RF licenses.

2

Rights Managed (RM) – One of the original types of licenses, an RM license grants permission to use an image for a one-time specified use. However, if the customer needs the same image again, they must pay an additional fee. Sometimes RM images are licensed on an exclusive basis to prevent others from using the same image.

3

Subscription – Shutterstock offers many types of products, but some of our most popular products are subscriptions. Our clients can sign up for a monthly subscription, which allows them to download up to 25 images daily. Each download generates revenue for you. This creates significant sales volume and gives customers the freedom to be creative.

4

Microstock – This is an industry term for stock collections with open submission channels and “micropayment” pricing that appeals to small businesses. Unlike traditional stock agencies, which are heavily edited and have many barriers to entry, images

5

in a microstock collection can come from anyone, from high-end professionals to the general public. Shutterstock is commonly called a microstock site, though much of our business extends beyond that label.

6

Commercial Use – “Commercial Use” refers to images used in advertisements, product packaging, and other channels intended to promote a good or service. Commercial use of an image may require special permissions, such as a model or property release.

7

Editorial (or “Non-Commercial”) Use – “Editorial Use” images depict a newsworthy subject or event. Such images are usually not appropriate for commercial use. For example, an image of a professional hockey player may be newsworthy, but it would not be allowable to use that image in an advertisement without the permission of the subject.

8

Copyright – Copyright is a form of legal protection that gives the authors of a creative work the exclusive right to display, reproduce, distribute, and financially benefit from the work they create. Authors of artistic works can provide permission to others to do the same – and can choose to do so for compensation – which is the fundamental premise behind “licensing.”

Metadata – Metadata is information (or “data”) about an image. For example, keywords describing the content of an image are a type of metadata.



Sign Up Now

Joining our creative community of photographers and designers is **fast and easy**.
Sign up now, and you could be **earning income** from your account in as little as 24 hours.
Visit submit.shutterstock.com today to **get started** making money from your work.

Sign up now

submit.shutterstock.com

Helpful Links

Shutterstock

Shutterstock for Contributors

<http://submit.shutterstock.com>

Shutterstock Contributor Blog

<http://www.shutterstock.com/contributor-blog>

Shutterstock Contributor Forum

<http://forums.submit.shutterstock.com/>

Contact information

<http://submit.shutterstock.com/contact.mhtml>

