THE OTTAWA GUILD OF POTTERS
LA GUILDE DES POTIERS D'OTTAWA

Photography Workshop

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Ottawa Guild of Potters Photo Requirements

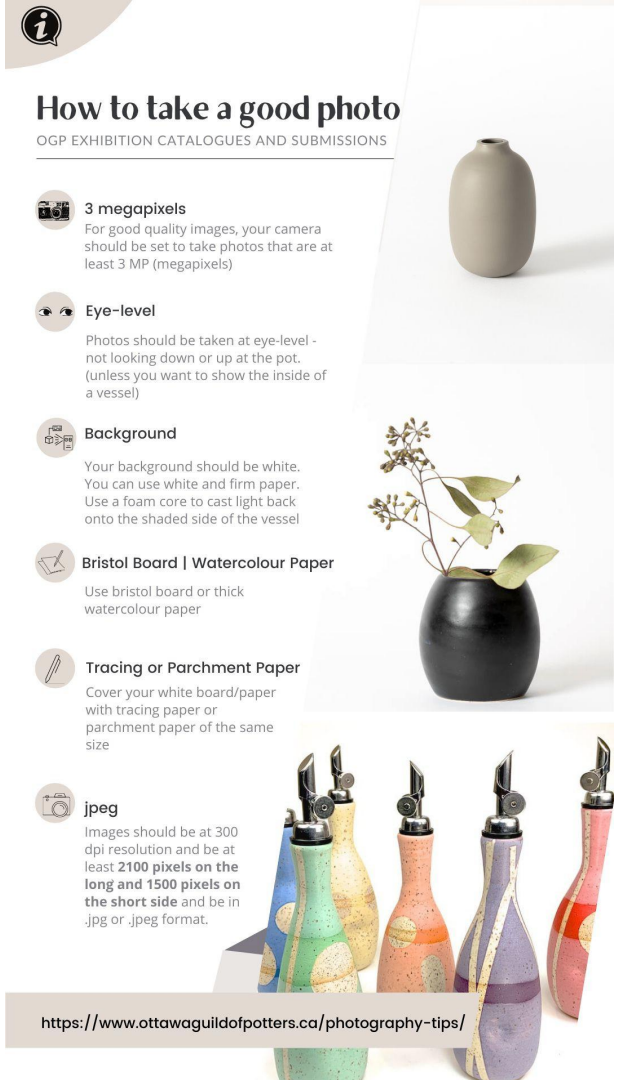
1. The format needs to be horizontal or square, never vertical. This is because the photo gets plopped onto the website and into catalogues for exhibitions.
2. The file size needs to be 72 DPI for web, and 300 DPI max for print. In other words, the file needs to be quite small.
    a. This can be done in Photoshop by save, then select JPEG or PNG, and then set the file size to small, or set the DPI to 72.
    b. A screenshot is always a small file.

Topics

1. Infographic for submitting photos of your work for exhibition
2. Light and its qualities
3. Technical aspects of photography
    a. Camera Modes
    b. Aperture
    c. Shutter Speed
    d. ISO
    e. Colour balance
    f. Point of View
    g. Exposure Compensation
4. Options for photographing your ceramics
    a. Home-made light box - good for a few times a year photoshoots
    b. Amazon box with built-in lights - good for people selling a lot of products online
    c. Working with ring lights or softboxes - An overhead softbox is good for getting a gradient
5. Editing on your cell phone, in Photopea (free) or Photoshop (far from free)

1. Infographic

How to take a good photo



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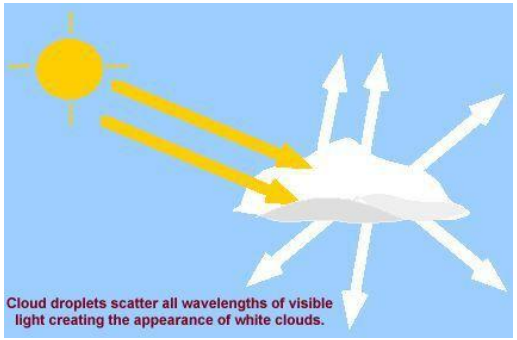
2. Light and its qualities - Diffusion

Light softens as it passes through materials that cause diffusion because the particles spread out and move in a variety of directions.

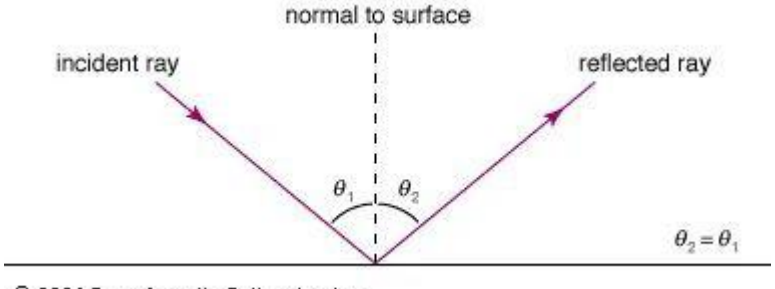


Light that shines directly

Cloud and fog creates diffused light

2. Light and its qualities - Reflection

- Consider the angle that the light hits the object. Try to be at an angle to the light.
- Consider the surface of the pot. If it has a matte glaze or a rough surface, it will not cause much of a reflection.
  If you have a high gloss ceramic piece, it will cause a lot of reflection.



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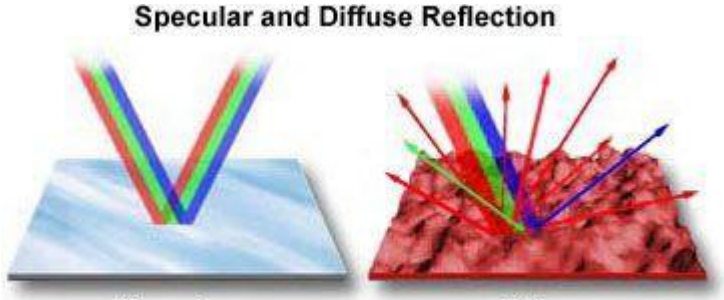
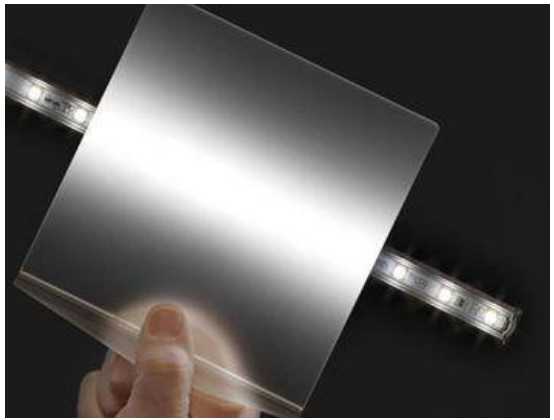


Figure 2

2. Light and its qualities - How to diffuse the light

You can use a variety of materials to diffuse light. Just be careful not to add any colour or pattern- keep it white.



- White bed sheet over the window
- Tracing paper
- Parchment paper
- Light diffusion paper
- Interfacing fabric
- Softbox

3. Technical Aspects
A) Camera Modes on a DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex)

M = Manual - you have to set everything and the light meter is overridden by your settings

AV= Aperture Priority - You set the aperture and the camera adjusts everything else

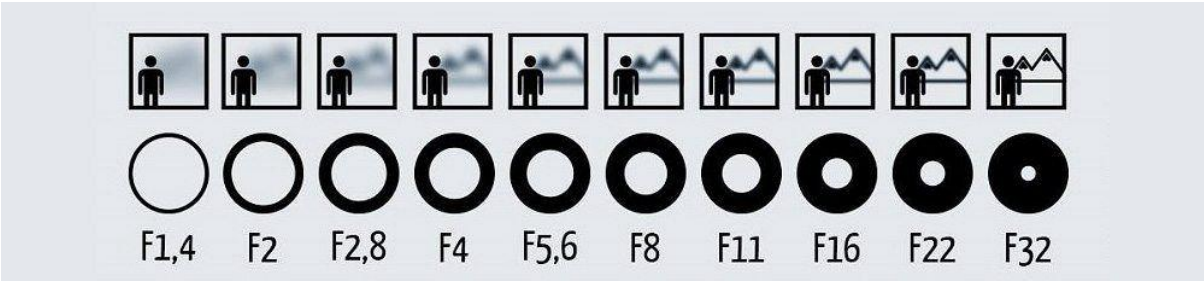
TV= Shutter Speed Priority - same as AV but for SS.

P= Program - you can set the ISO.

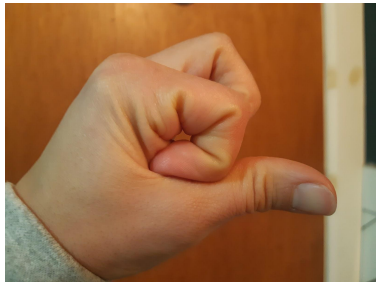
Once you go into green (automatic) and all that go beyond it, your camera thinks for you.

3. Technical Aspects B) Aperture

- How large the opening in the lens is.
- Try putting your hands together in front of your face in a large circle and then in a small circle. Which one allows you to see foreground and background both in focus?



- *It might help to remember the number for aperture is a measurement from the outside of the lens to the opening of the hole. Therefore a larger number means more distance to the hole.*



Distance affects depth of field - Imagine the front bottle is the front of a large bowl and the back bottle is the back of the same large bowl.

The distance between the objects

Close— both appear in focus

Far — back one appears out of focus

The distance between you and the objects

Close— back one appears out of focus

Far — both appear in focus

Use zoom to simulate close.

3. Technical Aspects B) Aperture

How does this affect photos of your ceramics?

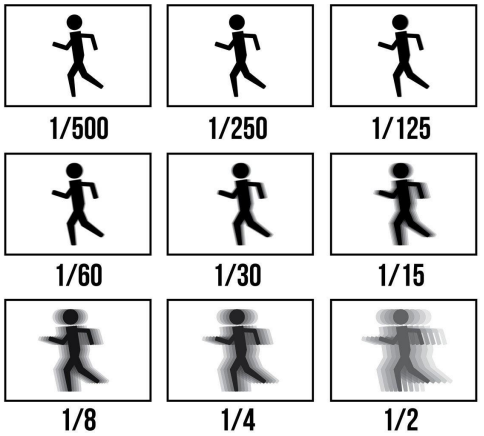
I suggest not using very shallow depth of field and having either your whole object in focus, or having it mostly in focus. After all, you are trying to show the object, not have artistic photos. Therefore, I suggest not using below *f 8* and try not to be so close to the object you are photographing (use a zoom lens as you get further away).

3. Technical Aspects C) Shutter Speed

*General rule, you should not use a shutter speed below the length of your lens. This is a minimum for photographers who generally know how to hold their camera still. If you want to be safe, double this rule.

I.e, if you're using a zoom lens at 105, you should not shoot below 1/125. Doubling the rule would put you at 1/250.

If you have a tripod, it allows you to shoot at slow speeds.



3. Technical Aspects D) ISO

This is the sensor's sensitivity to light.
The lower the number, the less sensitive it is to light and the smaller the grain.

100 - Needs to be a very bright day and be outside

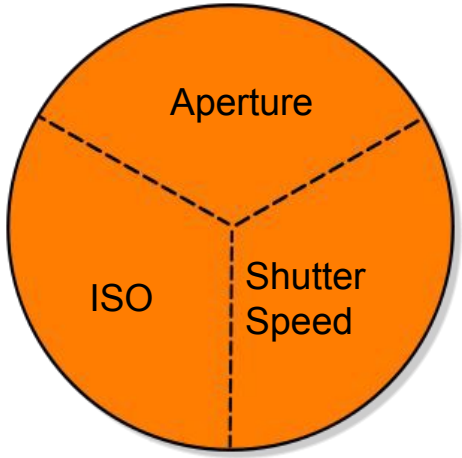
400 - Can be inside with a bright light source or outside cloudy or sunny.

800 - Indoor regular light source. This is where you start to see the grain.

Anything above 1600 will start to look grainy/pixelated.

3) Technical Aspects D) ISO and Exposure

Aperture, shutter speed and ISO are three ingredients used to form a perfect exposure. In many ways, it doesn't matter the proportions. In some ways, you need to watch what the settings are: you want to steer clear of extremes like high ISO, slow shutter speeds or very shallow depth of field.



3. Technical Aspects
E) Colour Balance and Exposure

The colour temperature in your photos might change

- The colour of the walls - it bounces light onto your piece
- The colour temperature of the lighting - often yellow temp that needs to be adjusted to more bluish.
- The position of the sun in the sky - sunrise and sunset are long, golden yellow rays.

This can be adjusted in Photopea or on your cell phone.

Exposure: all cameras (cell phones or DSLR) read for a medium grey. That means that the light meter says all is good to go when the overall lights and darks in your screen equals medium grey. **Beware**: if you have lots of white (i.e. a large white background), or lots of black. You will need to adjust the exposure. The technical term for this is exposure compensation, but you just need to know that you'll need to make the image brighter if you have a big white background.

3. Technical Aspects F) Point of View

Above eye level

Eye level

Below eye level

3. Technical Aspects F) Point of View

Above eye level

Eye level

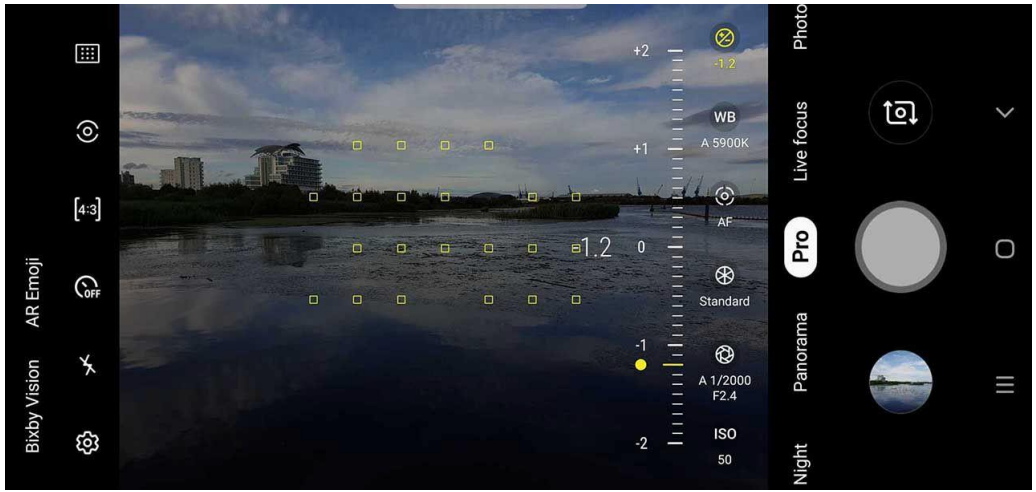
Below eye level

The examples are slight to show the difference

3. Technical Aspects F) Exposure Compensation

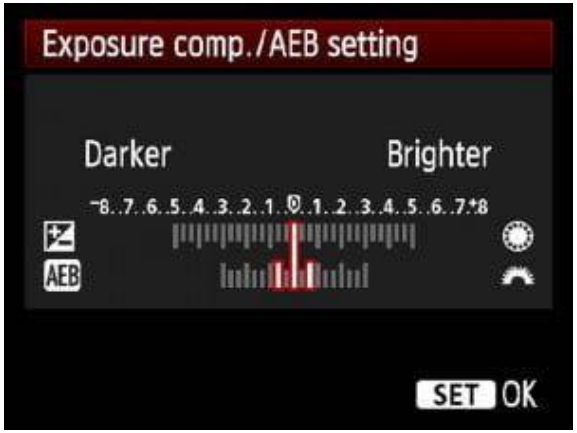
On a cell phone, when you go to take a picture, you'll see + and - numbers.

Your camera reads for a medium grey so when you have a white background, you have to manually set the exposure compensation to +1 or more. Key take away: if you have a lot of white background in your photo, you're going to need to up the exposure either while taking the photo, or during editing.



3. Technical Aspects
F) Exposure Compensation

On your camera, you can find exposure compensation in a few different places, depending on your camera.



For most Canons and Nikons, you have a +/- button on the top, or upper half of the bac

4. Options A) Home made #1

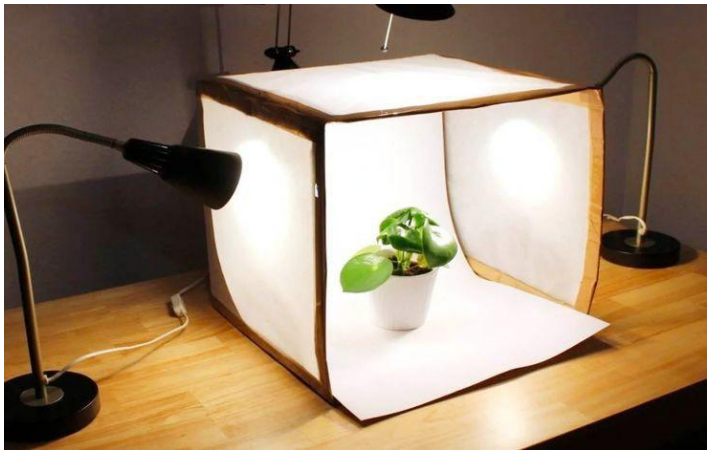
You'll need a box, a piece of white bristol board, tracing paper (up to 4 sheets) or interfacing fabric, tape, a piece of foam core to reflect light, and tape to keep it all together.

There are many different options, it depends on how you want to do this.

This option involves cutting the top and sides out of a box and using interfacing fabric (due to the close light and heat) taped across the holes. Use three cheap lamps to direct light in. Tape a piece of bristol board at the top back of the box to create a sweep.

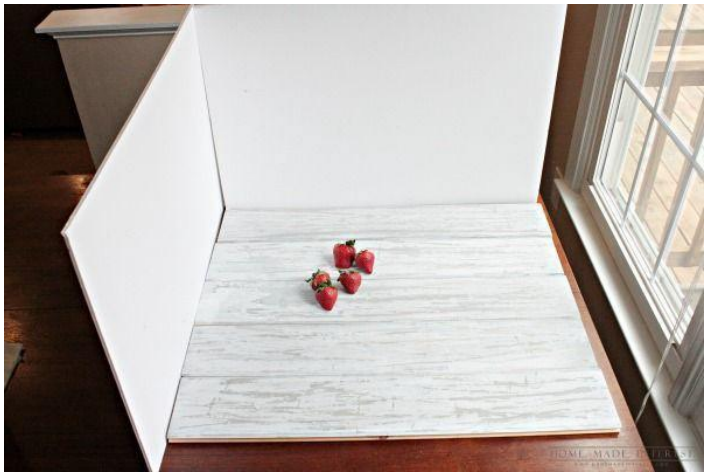
Tips: keep the top of the box on for the left, right and top sides so that it will stop the light from creating lens flare.

I like to add a sheet of tracing paper on top of the bristol board to absorb light.



4. Options A) Home made #2

This option uses a large natural light source such as a large window.



This option eliminates the need for lamps and interfacing fabric.

It introduces the need to use a piece of foam core on the non-window side to bounce light back onto the subject.

This photo doesn't have a sweep but it would still need that sheet of bristol board (covered with tracing paper).

*If you want it extra diffused, tape a white bed sheet across the window.

4. Options A) Home made #2

Pros:

- Very low cost
- Can throw out the box between shoots to save space
- Can go large or small, depending on your light sources
- Can reflect light fairly easily
- Can diffuse as much as you want

Cons:

- Light is not very strong
- Not durable

4. Options B) Store bought setups

You can shoot through the top opening or add extra lights

Photo taken on my phone with no editing or exposure compensation

Pros:

- Pretty much foolproof
- Folds down small
- Easy to assemble
- Quick, professional photos esp if you sell a lot online

Cons:

- Size limit of the piece (23x30x25)
- Lit mostly from above
- Not a lot of diffusing options

4. Options C) Studio Lights

Pros:

- You can set up a long sweep
- You can have a gradation on the background
- You can photograph very large pieces
- You can move the lights to suit you
- Lots of diffusing options. You could add a bedsheet on top of the lights, shoot through tracing paper, etc.

Cons:

- The lighting set is large for storage
- You need to know a little more about lighting to make it work

Getting a gradient

Some thoughts on ring lights

Ring lights were made for vloggers. They flatten the lighting. They give ring shape highlights. These are great for video or for portrait photography.

Ring lights will be more direct and less diffused than a soft box. You'll probably have more problems with the direction of light and reflections with a ring light.

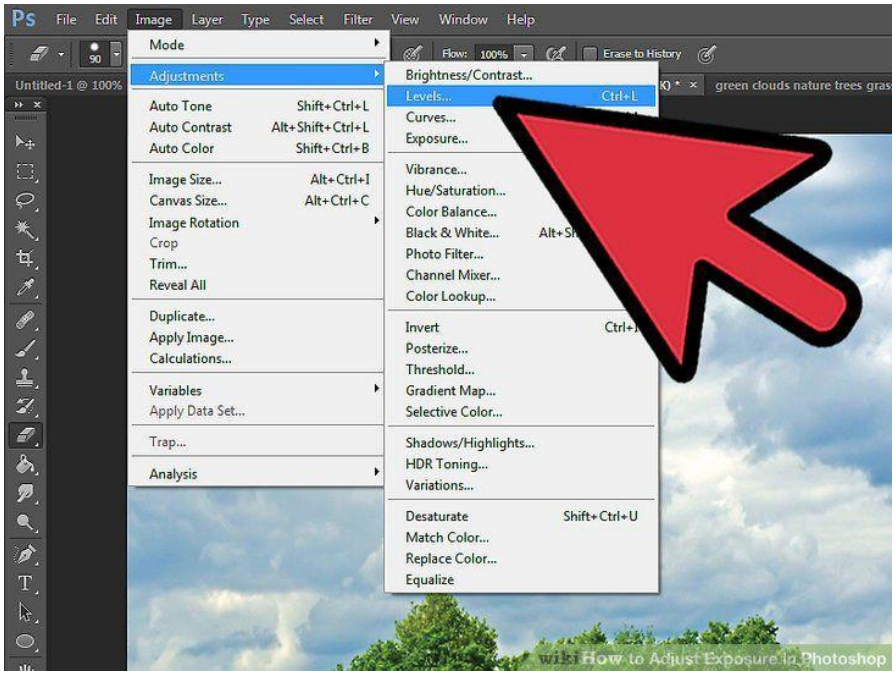
5. Photo Editing

Photopea.com - free cloud software that does a fairly good job of replicating Photoshop.

Here are the 3 most common adjustments you're likely to use:

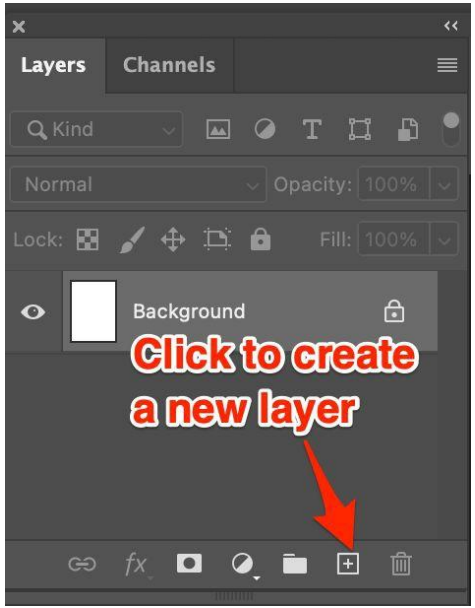
Image-Adjustments

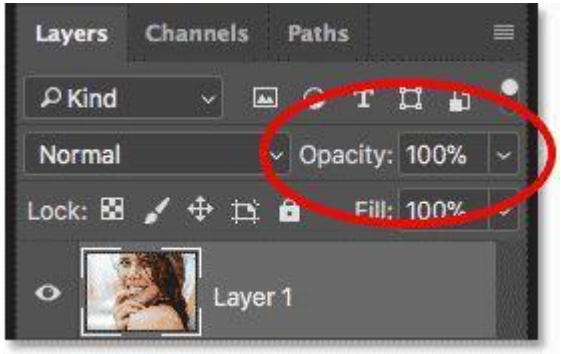
1) Brightness/Contrast
2) Hue/Saturation
3) Colour Balance



5. Photo Editing

Use layers to apply your edits so that you can change the opacity of a layer or delete a layer. Name your layers (double click on the layer).





5. Photo Editing

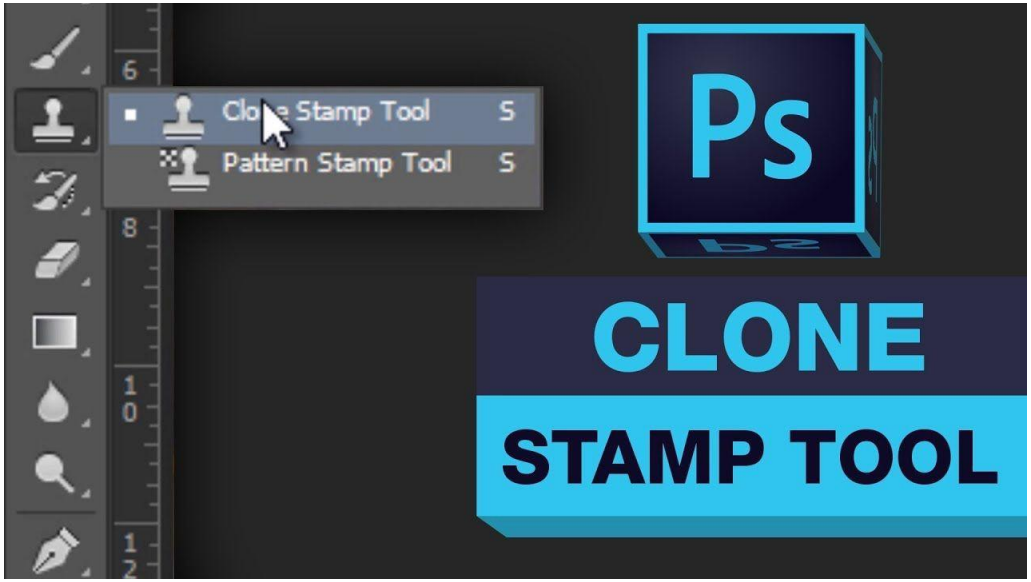
Spot Healing Brush Tool

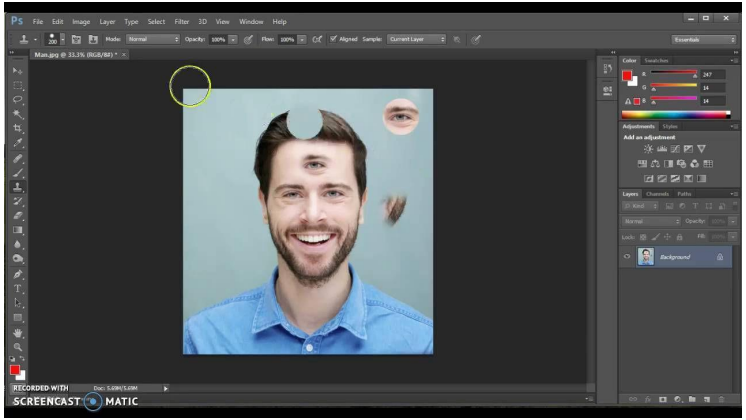
This tool is good for getting rid of small problems. It will copy the info from the area around and apply it to the area you've selected. You can lower the opacity of the layer.

5. Photo Editing

Clone Tool

This tool copies exactly another area of the image. That means you need to select the area you are going to copy from.





5. Photo Editing - Using your cell phone

In Camera - Edit - Adjust… you can adjust brightness, contrast, highlights, shadows, tint, and saturation to name a few.

A great tool that exists on some phones is **“Magic Eraser”** (Camera-Edit-Tools-Magic Eraser). You circle an area that you want artificial intelligence to figure out what should be there. Use it to get rid of glare/shine.

In Photoshop, you can use AI to generate options of what should/could be in the area you just circled to have changed. It’s actually easier to use the magic eraser on your phone if you have it.