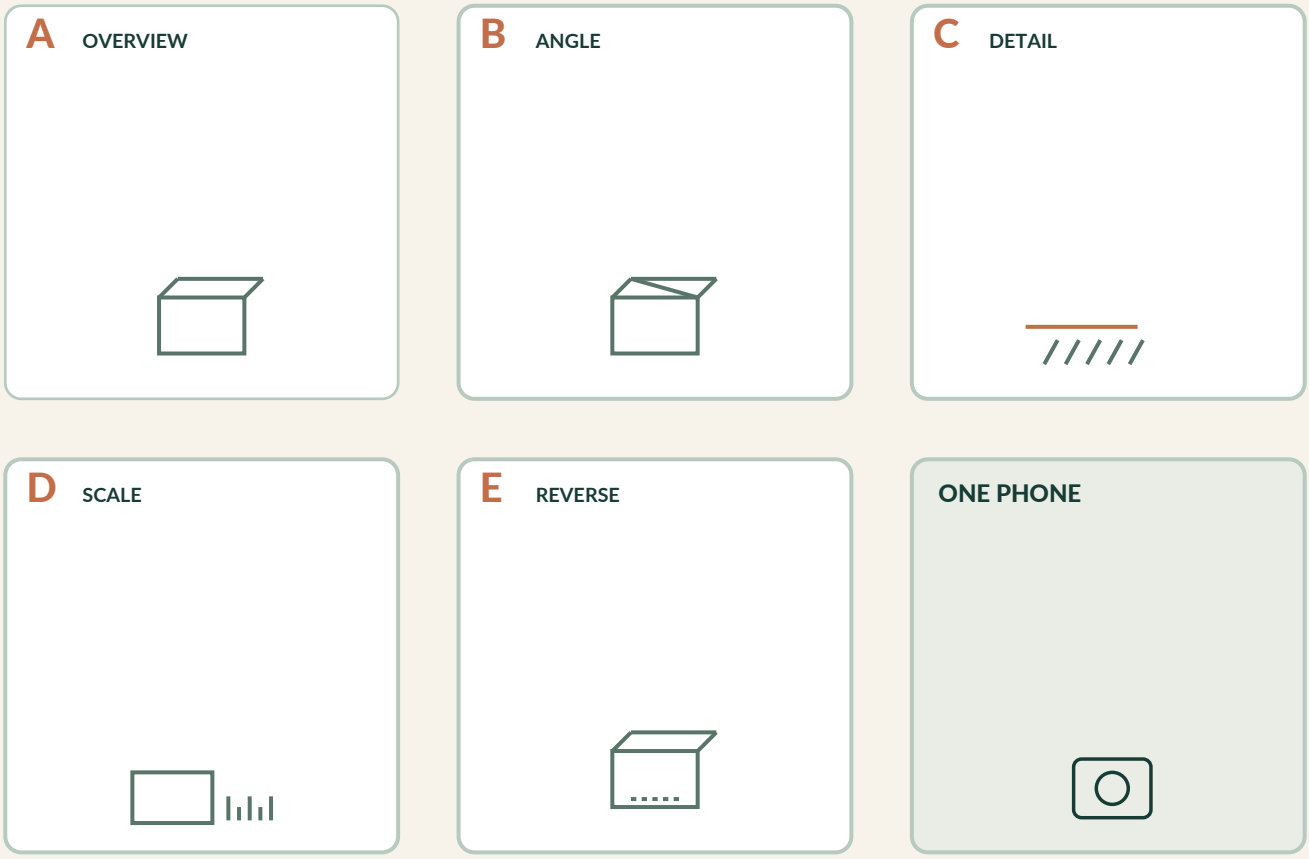
MAKING SKILLS / PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHY

Photograph a Finished Handmade Project

Five honest views, one simple lighting setup, and a useful photo record



FIVE VIEWS + CAPTION & PRIVACY WORKSHEETS

Original editorial illustration. Not evidence of a physical product test or certification.
Original educational diagrams and two printable worksheets

Steadleaf Press / MAKE / M01 Making Skills, Tools & Design / STP-MAKE-F020 / FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE / COMPLETE EDITION

An honest five-view photo sequence, a small-space lighting plan, and a printable image-and-caption checklist.

A finished handmade object deserves more than a dim photograph taken before the tools are put away. A useful record should show what you actually made, how it is shaped, and the details a viewer cannot see from one distant angle. You can make this record with a phone and a window. You do not need a studio, a paid editing subscription, or a claim that a polished picture proves the object is strong, safe, or professionally made.

The output of this guide is specific: one overview photo, one different angle, one close detail, one honest size/context photo, and one photo of the reverse, inside, or finish where relevant. You will also write a short factual caption and save the unedited originals. The photos document the object as it exists; they are not a physical strength test, an appraisal, or evidence of a technique you did not perform.

1. Decide what the photographs must tell the reader

Before taking your phone out, name the purpose. Is this a private project journal, a gift record, a portfolio item, or a proposed online listing? A journal may need only a recognizable front and a record of the repair you made. A sale listing normally needs an honest account of every important visible surface, including flaws, and must meet the relevant marketplace's rules. A photo used for a safety-critical repair cannot replace inspection or qualified testing. Photographs cannot certify structural integrity, load-bearing capacity or regulatory safety of handmade objects.

Write a one-sentence subject description: **“I made a [specific object] from [known material] using [observable process], and these pictures show [the important result].”** If a detail is uncertain, say so. A blue fabric may look teal under the camera's automatic colour adjustment; do not label an unknown fibre as linen, a reclaimed wood piece as food-safe, or an untested finish as waterproof.

Pick the one important feature before you plan the picture. For a paper box, it may be the fold and lid edge. For a sewn pouch, it may be the opening, the corner seam, and the inside finish. For an ornamental paper card, it may be legible lettering and the crease. Your shot sequence should make those details easy to inspect rather than merely attractive from a distance.

2. Make a clear, safe tabletop setup

Choose a stable table near broad indirect window light, a plain wall or a sheet of neutral card, and a place where your phone can rest without falling. Put the project on a clean surface. Keep liquids and food away from unfinished adhesives, paint, tools and electronics. Remove loose blades and needles from the frame **only after they have been counted and stored safely**; do not hide a hazardous unfinished edge while claiming a finished safe object.

Adobe's product-photography guidance describes controlled lighting and a clean background as a way to make a product easier to see. [1] Shopify's beginner phone-photography guide likewise discusses window light, a continuous neutral background and a white bounce card. [2] These are adaptable presentation ideas, not equipment standards for every craft. A simple cloth or paper backdrop is enough if it is clean, neutral, stable and does not shed fibres onto a tacky surface.

Place the backdrop beneath the work and, if useful, curve another sheet gently upward behind it to remove a distracting horizon. A small handmade coaster might lie flat, while a paper keepsake box should stand upright so the lid and depth can be seen. A tall ceramic object should sit on a stable, level surface; do not prop it on improvised stacks near a table edge to improve the camera angle.

Look around the edges of the scene. Remove personal letters, street addresses, handwritten phone numbers, school names or identifiable faces you have no reason to publish. If a person is visible, obtain appropriate permission before sharing; a photograph of a gift does not automatically give permission to post the recipient's private note. Check labels and reflective surfaces for accidental personal information. Before any public upload, review location metadata and remove GPS or other personal metadata when appropriate; the image content and embedded data are separate privacy checks.

3. Control light before changing camera settings

Start by placing the object to one side of a window rather than in hard midday sun. Turn it slowly until the important texture is visible. If one side falls too dark, hold or prop a clean white sheet of card outside the camera frame on the shadow side to bounce some light back. If the window makes a shiny surface glare, move the object or shift the phone a few degrees instead of raising exposure until the highlights are blank.

You need neither a bright ring light nor two coloured lamps for the first session. Mixed light sources can make a white paper object appear yellow on one side and blue on the other. If daylight is changing rapidly, take a short series while the light is consistent, or use one steady household light suitable for the workspace. Do not place hot lamps against fabric, paper, adhesives or other flammable surfaces, and follow the light manufacturer's directions.

Look at the darkest and brightest areas of a test picture on the phone screen. You should be able to distinguish folds in a dark textile and detail in a pale card. A deliberately dark mood photograph is fine as an extra, but your essential record still needs one clear, readable view. If the colour remains uncertain, put a neutral white or grey card beside the project in a **separate reference frame**; remove it from the final composition unless it helps explain scale or finish. The card is not a calibrated colour standard and does not certify colour accuracy.

4. Use a phone deliberately, not at random

Clean the camera lens with an appropriate soft cloth and turn on the phone's ordinary photo mode. Avoid digital zoom for the first overview if stepping closer safely gives you a clearer image. Tap the part of the craft that matters so autofocus selects it, hold the camera steady with two hands, and inspect the result by zooming in on-screen. If the object is reflective, focus on a visible real edge rather than on the bright reflected light.

A support or timer can reduce camera shake. A small tripod is helpful but optional; a stable phone stand or firmly supported hand position is enough when the object is well lit. Keep tripods and cords away from small children, pets and walking paths. Do not lean over a hot, sharp or moving craft tool merely to get an overhead photograph. Ask someone else to help or move the object to a safe position once the craft is complete.

Keep vertical edges approximately vertical when photographing a box or vessel. Stand back slightly instead of pushing a very wide-angle lens close to one corner, which can exaggerate perspective. A flat paper pattern may be best photographed from directly above, with the lens plane approximately parallel to the paper to reduce shape distortion. A close-up should show the actual stitch or fold with enough surrounding area to understand where the detail belongs.

Do not trust the first preview. Open each image and check three things at full screen: the subject is sharp where needed; the object is not cut off unintentionally; and its colour is reasonably recognizable compared with the actual piece under ordinary light. Change only one variable before the next attempt: light direction, phone position, background or focus.

5. Take the five-view record

Follow the views in this order so you do not lose the essential pictures while styling one impressive detail. You can take extra frames, but do not replace the factual sequence with unrelated decorations.

Frame	What to show	The question it answers
A - overview	The complete object on a plain background	What did you actually make?
B - second angle	Side, three-quarter view or partly opened position	What is its depth or construction?
C - useful detail	One honest close-up of seam, fold, join or texture	How was this feature made?
D - size/context	Object beside a clearly identified ordinary reference or a labelled ruler	How large is the visible piece?
E - reverse/finish	Back, underside, inside or unfinished edge	What would the front-only view hide?

Frame A, overview. Leave a small, even margin around the entire object. If the project is a pair, show the pair and identify which is which. Use the cleanest background, but do not smooth away a real bent edge or the uneven silhouette of an actual handmade piece. The viewer should recognize the object without needing the caption to explain every shape.

Frame B, second angle. Turn the piece or the camera enough to reveal depth. For a paper box, photograph it with the lid beside the tray or raised in a separate supported position. For a soft cloth, show a natural fold. A second photograph of the exact same view is not a different angle simply because it was cropped more tightly.

Frame C, detail. Select one feature with genuine informational value. Put a knot, crease, stitch row or cleanly aligned edge near the middle and include a little context around it. If your phone cannot focus at extremely close range, move back until it can focus, then crop modestly. Never invent detail by artificially sharpening an out-of-focus patch into a convincing-looking thread line.

Frame D, scale and context. If useful, photograph an ordinary ruler laid **beside**, not on, the project. Put both in approximately the same plane, show the measurement unit and avoid perspective tricks that make a small object look unusually large. A coin or familiar object is not an exact international measurement standard. If a ruler is inappropriate, state dimensions from actual measurement in the caption rather than pretending the photo alone proves them. Do not include an identity card, credit card number or personal address as a scale reference.

Frame E, reverse or finish. A credible record includes the unglamorous side. Show the interior seam of a pouch, the back of a card, the underside of a repaired item or the place where paper tabs join. If one part remains unfinished, call it unfinished. Do not present a concealed tear as a sound seam, or depict a weight-bearing connection as safe because it looks tidy.

6. Edit enough to clarify, not to rewrite reality

After capture, compare each selected photo with the real object under neutral light. Rotate a tilted frame, crop away irrelevant table edges, and adjust exposure or white balance enough to make details legible. Preserve the original files before exporting edited copies. A neutral background may look slightly grey; an honest grey is better than clipping the edges of a white project to make everything pure white.

Basic correction is not the same as changing the product. Removing a stray speck of dust from the backdrop is different from erasing a cracked finish, a damaged corner or an off-centre stitch. Do not add a fabricated second seam, change the colour of fabric for a buyer, or substitute a flawless generated picture for the physical object without disclosure. When preparing a sale listing, comply with the platform's image and description rules; this free guide is not legal advice about advertising.

Crop consistently across the overview set if they will appear in one gallery. You need not force a wide textile and a tall vase into identical tight crops; prioritize showing the whole subject. Export as an ordinary compatible photo format such as JPEG or PNG according to the destination's rules. Do not claim a fixed pixel count guarantees sharpness or require paid software. The important checks are legibility, correct orientation, manageable file size and a truthful caption.

7. Write a factual caption and name the files clearly

Choose a title that tells readers what the piece is: *Folded paper keepsake box*, *handmade*, *cream card*. A useful caption names material if known, a process you actually used and an observable detail. Add dimensions only if you measured them, with units. If you worked from a pattern, credit the pattern or resource where appropriate; making an object does not automatically transfer ownership of someone else's photograph or pattern.

A straightforward caption template is: **“[Object], made from [verified material], photographed [date or occasion]. Detail shown: [actual seam/fold/finish]. Measured size: [value and units, if checked].”** Separate subjective phrases such as “my favourite project” from objective claims such as “washable” or “sturdy.” When a value is unknown, write “not recorded” instead of guessing.

Keep one original and one edited file if you make significant changes. A consistent filename might be **STP-project-2026-11-20-A-overview-original.jpg** and its **-edited** counterpart. These are examples, not required naming standards. Do not publish image filenames or embedded metadata containing a private home address, personal email, location data or details about someone else without checking what will be shared. Keep a local backup of the best originals and store permission information with the project if the photos will be used publicly.

Alternative text helps someone using a screen reader understand the visual. Write a literal description such as “Cream paper box with a separate flat lid, photographed at a three-quarter angle,” rather than stuffing search keywords or claiming a material property you cannot see. For a close-up, identify the detail shown; for a decorative photograph, describe what matters in context without turning the caption into a sales pitch.

8. Check the result and troubleshoot honestly

The image is blurry. Recheck focus on the real object, clean the lens, increase safe available light, and support the phone. Do not use an algorithm to fabricate missing stitch detail. A small shutter movement can spoil a close-up even when the overview looks fine.

The white card looks yellow. Turn off a conflicting warm lamp and compare with daylight or one consistent light. Try a neutral reference frame. Avoid global colour changes that make the photographed object materially unlike the real one.

The top view makes the rectangle look trapezoidal. Square the phone with the surface, step back and use a less distorted angle. A photograph taken obliquely is not a substitute for measuring the object.

The foreground looks good, but the back is hidden. Add the reverse/finish view. A tidy front is only part of a handmade project's record.

The ruler is angled or covering a detail. Put it in the same plane beside the piece, reshoot, and state measured dimensions separately. Do not use a tilted scale photograph to assert a precise size.

The background is visually busy. Remove one object at a time. A clean sheet of paper is often a better fix than investing in new equipment or using aggressive digital background replacement.

The photo shows personal information. Save it privately, remove the identifying item physically from the scene if appropriate, and reshoot before publishing. If a person or someone's work appears, verify consent or credit rather than assuming it is okay to reuse.

9. Finish with a useful record, not an invented photo test

Fill out the companion five-view shot list and caption worksheet. Mark each view present, absent or unnecessary, note the image filenames, and write one improvement for the next session. If you choose to share your work, choose the small number of views that answer actual questions. Do not assert a commercial listing meets a marketplace's specifications without checking them separately.

A fictional example illustrates the approach, not a real studio trial: June photographs a hand-sewn pouch near a window. Her first overview has the top cut off, and the zipper seam is too small to inspect. She reshoots the overview with the whole pouch, takes one close frame of the seam, and includes an inside photograph. She writes “lining material not recorded” because she cannot identify it confidently. Her final caption is more useful without falsely promising the pouch was load-tested.

A finished photo record is successful when another person can tell what the handmade item looks like, see its important construction details, understand the approximate or measured size, and distinguish observed facts from assumptions. The camera does not make the object safe or the photographer an expert. It makes a small project easier to understand, share and improve.

Sources and editorial boundaries

[1] Adobe, *What is product photography and how do you do it?* — product preparation, controlled lighting, clean backgrounds and multiple views. Read source

[2] Shopify, *Phone Product Photography: How to Take Product Photos* — smartphone setup, neutral background, bounce light and framing. Read source

The shot list, checkboxes, caption templates, file naming conventions, scenarios and vector diagrams are original Steadleaf Press instructional work. No third-party photos, generated product images or supplier photographs are reproduced. No physical craft-item photography session, colour-calibration trial, sale-listing review, product safety inspection or certification was performed for this publication. Reader experiments and observations should be recorded as such rather than claimed as publisher evidence.

FIVE-VIEW PROJECT PHOTO RECORD

Five clear images of the actual object, not proof of safety or structural strength.

A / OVERVIEW

☐ Taken ☐ Retake ☐ Not needed

Complete object in one clean frame

Filename: _____

B / SECOND ANGLE

☐ Taken ☐ Retake ☐ Not needed

Depth, side or partly opened construction

Filename: _____

C / DETAIL

☐ Taken ☐ Retake ☐ Not needed

Real seam, fold, join or texture

Filename: _____

D / SCALE / CONTEXT

☐ Taken ☐ Retake ☐ Not needed

Ruler beside object, if measured

Filename: _____

E / REVERSE / FINISH

☐ Taken ☐ Retake ☐ Not needed

Inside, underside or unfinished side

Filename: _____

Object / material (verified, not guessed):

Do not publish private notes, faces, addresses or location metadata inadvertently.

One important feature to show:

CAPTION, EDIT & PRIVACY RECORD

Keep the original images; record facts separately from presentation choices.

Object title, verified materials and observable construction:

Actual measured dimensions + units (if checked):

Light / background / device and focus adjustment:

Edited file names (originals preserved separately):

What, if anything, was rotated / cropped / adjusted?

Any visible imperfection or unfinished surface to disclose:

Caption: what the viewer can truly see:

Alternative text for the most informative frame:

- [ ] No invented structural, safety or durability claim
- [ ] Permission/credit handled for people and third-party work
- [ ] Location metadata checked before publishing
- [ ] No private notes or personal addresses visible

Photos communicate appearance; they cannot certify construction or load capacity.