You don’t need a lot of expensive equipment to shoot amazing instructional photos. By following some basic guidelines, you can take professional photos to help support your work instructions and procedures.

WORKSPACE SETUP

- **Find a clutter-free table or flat workspace.**
  - Try to minimize ambient light.
  - A table by a window can have varying light conditions throughout the day, resulting in inconsistent photos.

- **Use a clean white background.**
  - Inexpensive matte posterboard or butcher paper works best and reduces distracting background textures.

- **Use two lamps, one on each side.**
  - Use “daylight” bulbs, or bulbs in the 5000-5500k color temperature range, for a clean white light. Avoid incandescent bulbs, which cast an orange glow over your photos.

- **Gather your team.**
  - **Camera Operator:** Not for the faint of heart, this job requires patience, a little technical skill, and an eye for detail. Opposable thumbs are a plus.
  - **Lighting Operator:** Requires attentiveness and near immunity to heat. Must be trusted to wield the power of blinding light responsibly; anyone who owns a laser pointer should be instantly disqualified.
  - **Hand Model:** Someone to hold parts and tools completely still from awkward, sometimes precariously balanced positions.
Use a tripod.
- For crisp, clear shots, you need to keep the camera rock steady.

Don’t use flash!
- Bright directional light from a flash distorts colors and emits a large glare that distracts your users.

Use the highest resolution setting.
- Small photos are difficult to decipher and leave large information as well.

Shoot in 4:3 aspect ratio, aka ‘landscape’.
- It may be tempting to shoot vertical (aka ‘portrait’) shots, but these don’t translate well when inserted into instructional documents.

Shoot in aperture priority mode and set exposure compensation to +1.
- Your light background will cause photos to be dark when shot in auto mode.
- Aperture mode is usually denoted by an A or Av on cameras.

Use a delay timer or remote.
- Set your camera to a short (1 or 2 second) delay, using the self-timer setting and remove your hands completely after pressing the shutter button. Having slightly shaky hands on the camera can introduce blurriness into your shots.

Use the correct white balance setting.
- For daylight bulbs, use the “daylight” or “fluorescent” white balance setting.
- For incandescent bulbs, use the “incandescent”, “tungsten” or “indoor” white balance setting.
20-STEP CHECKLIST
FOR TAKING INSTRUCTIONAL PHOTOS

WHILE SHOOTING

- Use your hands and/or tools in each shot.
  - Be sure to demonstrate the action being performed.

- Shoot in a first-person perspective.
  - Try to set up each shot so that it matches what your users will experience.

- Fill up the frame with the subject.
  - Try not to let your arms or hands dominate the view. If you’re working alone, you can use the camera’s delay timer to free up your hands.

- Keep the action in the center.
  - This helps draw attention to the most important parts of the procedure.

- Keep the subject in focus, not your hands.
  - On most point-and-shoot cameras, you can lock the focus by holding the shutter button halfway down.

- Take multiple shots for each step.
  - Switch hands or change positions in order to give users a better understanding.

- Zoom in to get detailed shots of intricate actions.
  - Be sure to leave reference points in the photo for to help orient users.

- For complex actions, use multiple photos in sequence.
  - You can create a “stop-motion” or “flip-book” effect, using up to three photos in one step.

- Use the “Macro” setting for extremely close shots.
  - This helps capture even the most precise and intricate procedures.
“Dozuki is fantastic. We put information on the site, our pictures are crystal clear, and they go out to our installers immediately.”

-Marty Trow, Director of Operations, International Telematics

Ready to use photos and videos as part of your instructions, procedures, and documentation?

Start a 30-day trial with Dozuki.