

Home Sweet Home

By Marilyn Nieves

The concept of Home Sweet Home evokes a range of feelings. Regardless of what structure we call home, many of us relate it to feelings of love, happiness, comfort, safety, and family, among others. Often it's a place we feel grounded and welcomed. For this reason it's a popular theme used in all kinds of advertising.

Think of your fondest childhood memories. Did you enjoy being greeted at the door by your pet or a loved one?

Or is it the aroma of dinner being prepared in the kitchen that creates a spark?



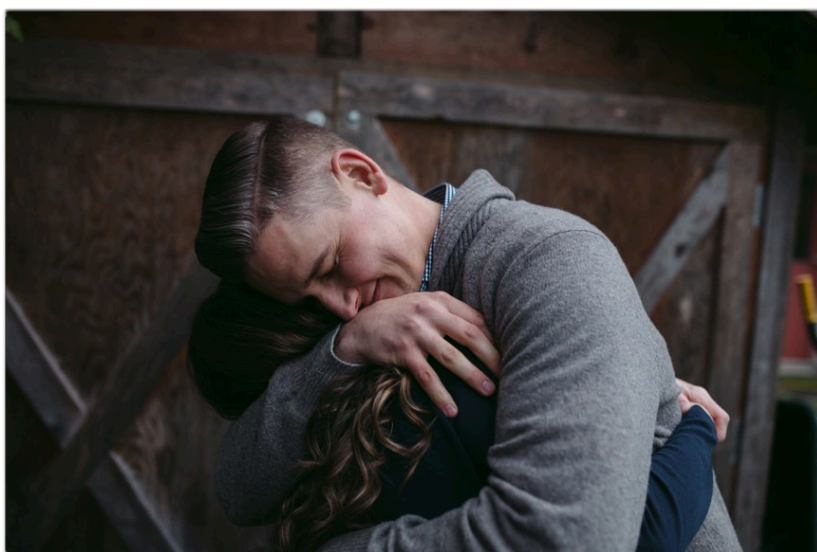
What makes you feel at home now? Is it your favorite reading spot? I imagine myself curled up in bed listening to music without a care in the world or lying down on the floor of the living room as a child, drawing, with my dog, Mimi, randomly walking over me as if she had no other way of getting around me.

Because we can all relate to these fond moments in one way or another, it's easy to evoke an emotion from the viewer. This makes Home Sweet Home a great theme for stock photography.

Home Sweet Home Images as Stock

Think beyond the traditional wooden sign hanging in the foyer. This is a perfect opportunity for storytelling. Enlist your family and friends as your models. Use them to capture “connection.” Let’s look at a few more examples:

You can just feel the love in this image of an embrace; it feels sincere, warm, and secure. While it looks natural, don’t feel you have to get lucky to capture that moment; you can still direct it. Set your models up where you want them (considering the background) and let them know what you want them to do. When it comes to a moving subject, be ready to shoot multiple exposures, as the most genuine moment can sometimes come in between your intended shots. To do this, check and see if your camera has a “burst” mode in which it will fire several



shots at once when you press the shutter button.

In the second image, the photographer decided to take the family outdoors for a simple portrait in front of their home. This type of photo sells very well.

It speaks to Home Sweet Home in various ways. It’s welcoming and has feelings of safety, happiness, togetherness, and love surrounding a family. It’s a versatile image that can be used in a broad range of concepts.

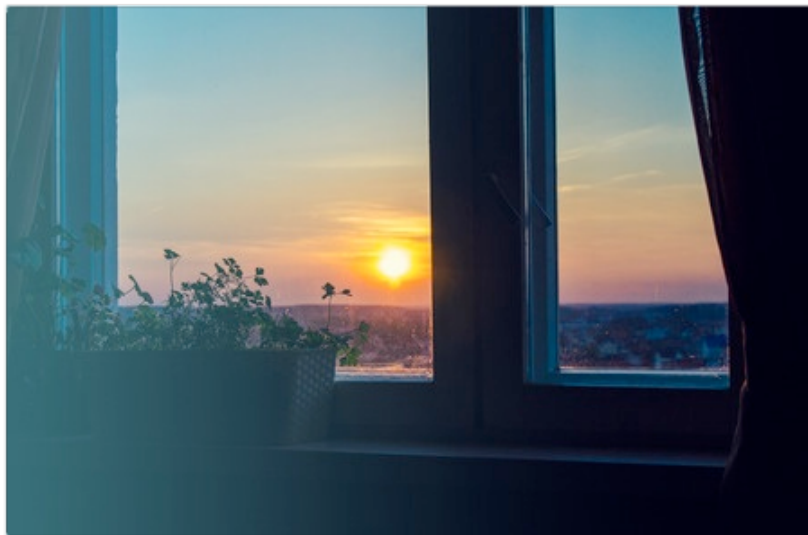


Let's not forget about our furry friends at home, either! Snuggling up with your favorite canine or feline companion is heartwarming and speaks very well to this month's theme.

Be sure to have some fun with this concept! After all, it's a great excuse to let the kids jump on the bed, to curl up with a book and a cup of tea, or to make a delicious mess in the kitchen!



While people images tend to be more dynamic, it's not necessary to have people in all your images to get the concept across.

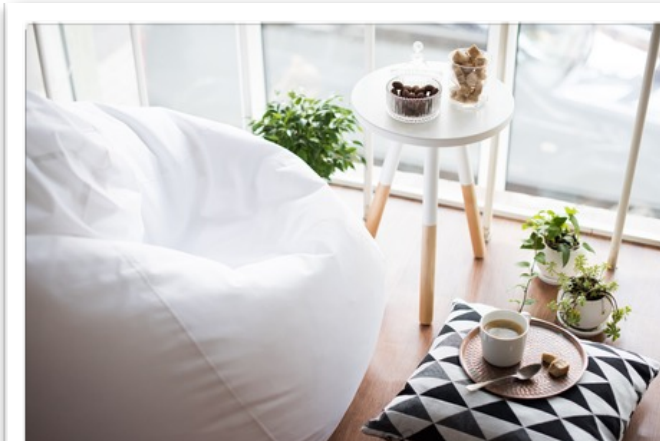


This simple image, taken from inside the home looking out into a warm sunrise, evokes a homey, comforting, and peaceful feeling. The point of view chosen by the photographer brings the viewer in to experience it from a personal perspective.

Opportunities and Ideas for Home Sweet Home Stock Images

As the holidays approach, you'll have even more opportunities to explore the concept from a seasonal perspective. Will you be cooking special treats and homemade meals? In this example, the photographer added an extra touch of whimsy to the morning routine with a heart-shaped cookie cutter.

Take a look at your home surroundings. What's your favorite spot? See how you can set it up so that your shot conveys the feeling you love so much when you are relaxing in it.



More Home Sweet Home ideas:

- Kids helping in the kitchen.
- Practicing a musical instrument in the living room.
- Arriving or happily entering at the front door.
- Greeting guests.
- Moving into a new home.
- Relaxing in bed or in any cozy spot.
- Enjoying quiet time at home.
- Home cooking.
- A bubble bath.
- Watching TV with family or friends.
- Cuddling up with your pet.
- Outside view of a home well-lit and feeling secure.
- Welcoming flowers in a vase on the table.

These are just some ideas and thoughts to get you started. Have fun exploring the concept and feel free to recreate and draw inspiration from some of the examples in this Roadmap, adding your own unique vision to them.

Shooting Tips

Create mood with light. Drinking coffee and reading next to the warm glow of a fireplace can evoke a feeling of warmth and comfort, as if you are settling in for the day. Doing the same in a room brightly lit by the window can also provide a feeling of comfort but the mood changes to something more spirited, as if you are just starting the day or taking a short break. Compare the difference the quality of light makes in the mood of the two photos below:



Use your lenses. A wide shot with a 17-40mm lens will give you a different feeling than a close-up shot with a 100mm lens. Let's continue with the example of a cup of coffee. The photos above were taken with wide angle lenses, while the photos below were taken with a telephoto lens to focus in closer, creating a completely different composition.

These shots still feel homey and cozy but there's a more intimate and personal point of view drawing the viewer in. Keep this in mind as you plan ahead for your shoot so you know what lenses to bring to achieve the look you want.



Use props. Holiday decorations are a great way to bring the Home Sweet Home concept to life. You can isolate them, as in this still life image:



Or use props such as decorations in a larger context to create a storytelling image such as the one below:



Change your perspective.

Experiment with angles. Are you outside looking in or are you in the middle of the moment? There's no wrong or right here, it's just a matter of how you are telling the story.

Capture authentic moments. Posed images are fine and they have their usefulness, but the trend these days is more toward lifestyle images centered around authentic moments. Those are the moments between interactions that feel most genuine. Although you are aiming to capture a "spontaneous" moment, giving some direction to your models can be helpful.

Here are a few additional tips to help you capture authentic moments:

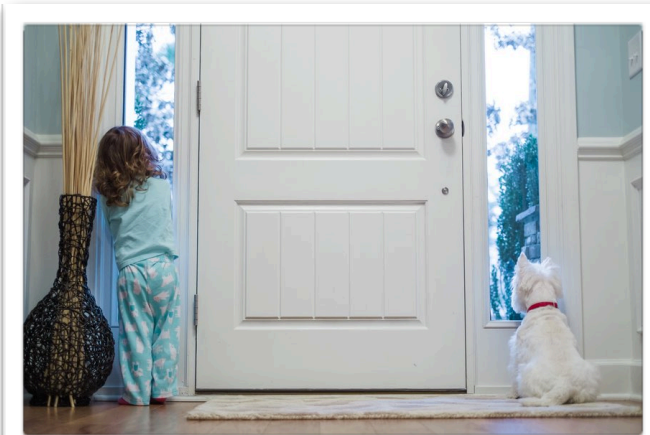
- Have your camera ready. For a constantly moving subject where you are using natural light, use Aperture Priority mode. This will allow you to control your depth of field by setting the aperture, and the camera will adjust the shutter speed quickly for you.
- As mentioned above, switching your camera to continuous or burst shooting mode will help increase your odds of capturing the perfect moment or facial expression.
- Have a chat with your models and explain to them what you would like them to do. Be sure to share your vision for the shoot and the overall mood or feeling you are trying to create. Chatting beforehand and developing rapport with your models will also help them feel more at ease and relaxed during the shoot.

Keywording

Once you've got the perfect image, you can't forget about the keywords. Keywords are essential to your photos being found by buyers and it's imperative your keywords be relevant to the image or you will simply be causing frustration for the buyer.

Let's use the first image in this Roadmap as an example. Some good keywords are:

adorable, anticipation, awaiting, canine, child, childhood, copy space, dog, door, expectation, female, friendship, front door, young girl, indoor, looking, patience, peeking, pet, toddler, waiting, daytime, west highland terrier, window, home.



Three examples of bad keywords would be: *tree*, *wooden floor*, and *postcard*. Sure, we can see some trees through the windows, but if a customer is searching for "tree" this is certainly not what they will expect to find. Perhaps an isolated tree or a forest full of trees would be more in line. A child hanging an ornament on a tree would also be appropriate. The tree needs to be a significant part of the

story being told in the image. We can also see a thin section of the wooden floor, but it's not a large part of the image and a customer would want to see more of the floor if that's what they intend to feature in their media. The last example, "postcard," is popular among new contributors. The rationale is that the image can be used as a postcard but we can certainly say that about any image. What the end media will be to the customer is irrelevant as a keyword. A customer searching for "postcard" is going to want to see an actual postcard being used in the image, whether it's a photo of a postcard or a significant prop within a larger context.

When keywording here are a few things to think about:

- What is the main subject of your image?
- What is the setting?
- What is the time of day and is there a mood being created by the light?
- Are there people or animals in the image?
- What's the concept and what emotions does it evoke?

There's no place like home, so I hope you have some fun creating photos for this month's Challenge theme!