

A person wearing a dark jacket and a beanie stands on a grassy hillside, holding a camera with a large lens up to their eye. The camera is mounted on a tripod. The background is a vast, hazy landscape with rolling hills, a winding road, and some trees under a soft, golden light, suggesting sunrise or sunset.

**GREAT
ESCAPE**

PUBLISHING

A Beginner's Guide to Stock Photography

By Professional Photographer Sarah Ehlen

breakfast
stock club

Processing
Your Photos

What Buyers
Look For

Model
Releases



101 SE 6th Avenue, Suite A

Delray Beach, FL 33483

Phone: 561-860-8266

U.S. Toll-Free: 866-415-1425

www.greatescapepublishing.com

©2018 Great Escape Publishing.

All Rights Reserved. Protected by copyright laws of the United States and international treaties. This content may only be used pursuant to the subscription agreement and any reproduction, copying, or redistribution (electronic or otherwise including on the world wide web), in whole or in part, is strictly prohibited without the express written permission of Great Escape Publishing, 245 NE 4th Ave., Suite 102, Delray Beach, FL 33483.

What is Stock Photography?

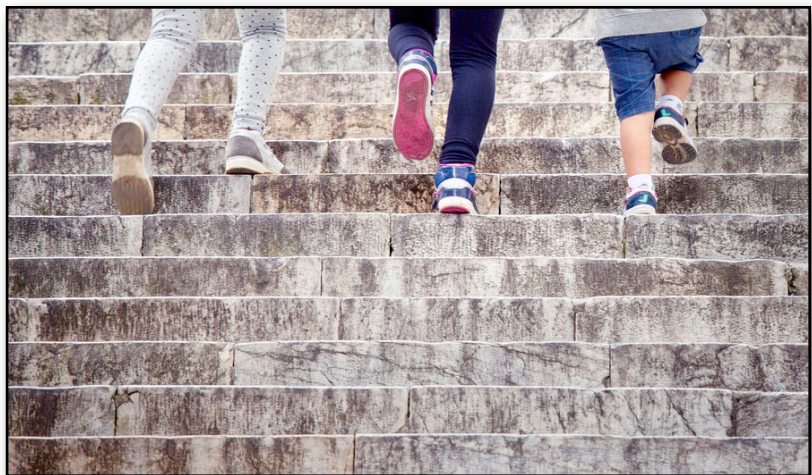
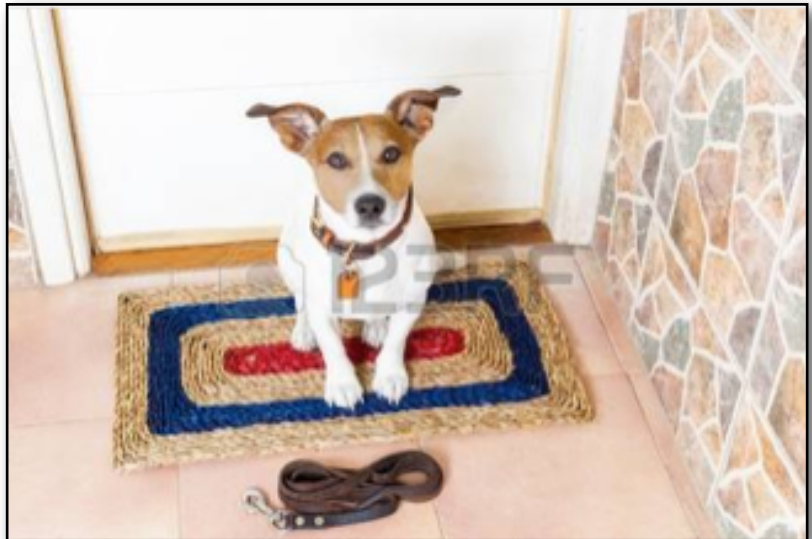
Imagine being able to take photographs of anything you want and then turn around and make money from those photos indefinitely!

I'm talking photos from your family vacation, shots you snapped right before digging into a delicious plate of food, or pictures of your dog on a daily walk.

This is what stock photography is – a simple way to sell photos from your everyday life.

You take pictures of whatever you want and submit them to a stock photo website. From there, photo buyers can purchase the use of your image, and you get a royalty from each sale. The same photo can sell over and over, so sales can really add up over time.

The best part is, once your photo is up on a stock site, you literally don't need to do anything else except watch the royalties roll in! It's the beauty of passive income – all the work is done on the front end of the process, and then you can sit back and relax.



Anyone can be a Stock Photographer!

Stock photography is especially great for beginners because it's a market that's open to everyone.



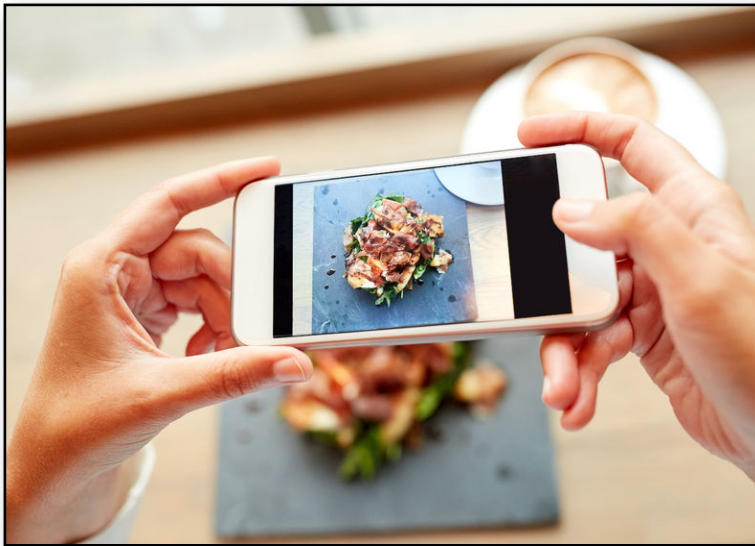
No experience is needed and you don't need any special equipment to take photos for stock. Many stock agencies even accept photos taken with cell phones!

As long as you can take a photo that is properly exposed and in focus, it really couldn't be an easier photo market to break into if you're looking to start making some side income with your camera. Best of all, it's totally no pressure and something you can simply do in your spare time.

Here's how it works:

1. **Sign up as a contributor.** I recommend starting out with about three stock photo agencies. All you need to do is sign up, get accepted, and start uploading your photos. Each site has a slightly different acceptance process, but they are all pretty straightforward. (Check our guide "Where to Sell Your Photos" for specific recommendations on agencies.)
2. **Go through your photos.** Pick out the images you want to submit and/or start taking new photos for stock!
3. **Keyword and title your images.** This can be done during the process of uploading and submitting your images on each site, or beforehand, using a program such as Adobe Lightroom.
4. **Upload and submit.** You can upload photos in batches and submit them all at once on each site.

That's it! Once you submit your images, an editor will check them over and let you know if they've been added to the site. Once your photos are accepted, there is nothing else you



need to do. At this point, buyers can purchase a license to use your images and you'll get a portion of each sale, called a royalty.

Although individual royalties will most likely be pretty small, the idea with this type of stock photography (called microstock) is that lots and lots of small sales add up. Selling microstock is definitely a numbers game – the more images you have available, the more sales you're likely to make!

It's important to note that you always keep the copyright to your photos.

Buyers are only purchasing a “royalty-free” license to use your images under specified terms. Royalty-free means that once a buyer has purchased a license, they can use your photo for any of their projects without having to pay additional fees.

Since you are still the copyright holder of your images, you are always free to sell your photos through additional outlets or remove them from the site at any time. Also, as long as you don't sign up to be exclusive with any agencies, you can post the same photos across multiple stock sites.

The Importance of Keywording

I can't overstate the importance of keywording your photos. This is how buyers will find your images! Without keywords added behind the scenes in the metadata of each photo, your image would be lost in a sea of stock photos.

With the right keywording strategy, your images will be way more likely to show up when a buyer runs a search. As a Breakfast Stock Club Premium member, you'll get monthly advice on how to best keyword images for particular genres of photography.

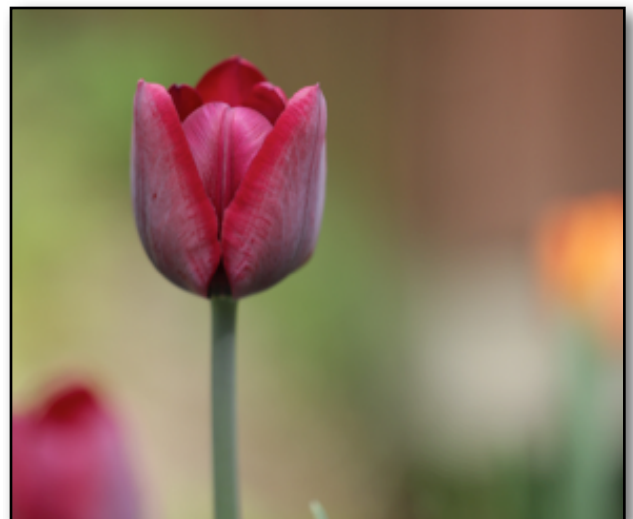


Keep up with the competition... by processing your shots.



Another way to help your stock photos stand out from the crowd is by processing your images. Adobe Lightroom is one of the most powerful tools for post processing, and it's the program most pros use. With Lightroom, you can adjust exposure, white balance, contrast, and color to help your images really pop. It's also great for keeping your photos organized and speeding up your keywording workflow.

Compare this tulip photo on the left that was processed in Lightroom and consistently sells as stock, to the one on the right that is straight out of the camera with no processing:



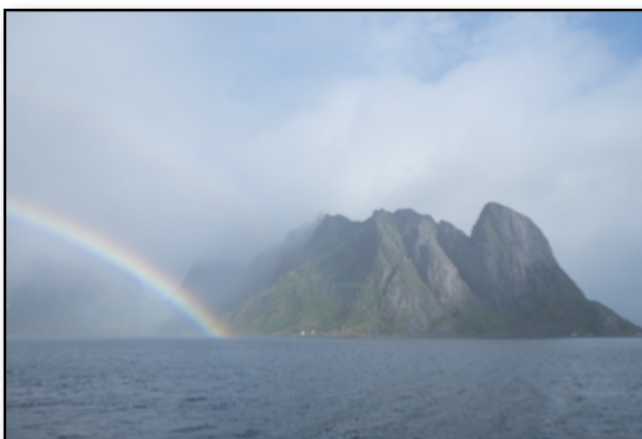
Lightroom brought out the color and contrast in the shot on the left, helping make it a best-seller. Compare that to the photo on the right which wasn't processed in Lightroom. Notice how it feels a little flat and doesn't quite pop and catch attention in the same way?

There's no doubt that learning how to use Lightroom can really bring your photos to the next level, and that will mean more sales for you.

Here are a few more examples to give you an idea of what Lightroom can do:



Before/After



Before/After



Before/After

Watch for your monthly Lightroom tutorials from stock photographer Shelly Perry, coming to your inbox as a benefit of Breakfast Stock Club Premium membership.

What are photo buyers looking for?

Although anything can sell as stock, the best-selling photos usually have a few things in common.

- Photos of people doing things tend to sell the best across all genres.
- Images that represent a concept, idea, or emotion also do really well as stock.
- Simple compositions that leave room for copy space are highly sought after.
- Photos that align with current trends are always popular.

As stock photographers, it's important to pay attention to trends in design, advertising, and mainstream culture, since this is what photo buyers will be looking for. That's why, every year, Breakfast Stock Club Premium members get access to our annual custom-written guide to stock photo trends for the year ahead. This will help you stay on top of what's been selling and what is likely to keep selling well in the upcoming year.

It also helps to think like a designer. Most stock photos that are sold will be used to advertise a product, service, or brand. It's always helpful to think about potential uses for a photo as you're shooting.

Let's look at some examples of successful stock photos.

Here is one of the top-selling photos in the "Children" category on Shutterstock. This is a fantastic shot capturing action with an "in the moment" feeling. It perfectly communicates the fun and playfulness of being a kid.



And here's one of the most popular travel photos on Bigstock. Any time you can simply but powerfully convey a relatable concept in your photos, you'll likely have a winner for stock. This shot represents the concepts of wanderlust, solitude, adventure, and freedom, all of which are popular topics for photo buyers these days.

Across the board, simple compositions usually outcompete cluttered. This best-seller from Adobe Stock leaves plenty of space for designers to overlay text or a logo across the sky.

Arranging objects and photographing them from above, such as this top-seller in the lower right from Dreamstime, is a hot trend in stock photography right now. This kind of shot would be super easy to set up on your kitchen table with window light and common household objects.

Regardless of your subject, all photos that you're thinking of selling as stock need to be technically correct. Always zoom in and check each photo at full size (100%) on your computer. Watch out for focus issues, noise, and chromatic aberration in particular. All images need to have proper exposure, lighting, and white balance as well.



Model Releases

Since most stock photos are used for commercial advertising purposes, it's essential to get model releases when needed.

If you have recognizable people in your image, you need to have a signed release from them. Even if you can't see their faces, if they could recognize themselves, you need a release.



Most stock photographers carry paper model releases with them in their camera bags. You can download a model release form from your stock agency and keep extra copies handy. There are also mobile apps such as Easy Release if you prefer to use your phone or tablet.

If in doubt, get a release.

It's also important to be up front with your models when asking them to sign a release. Be sure they understand that the image will be used for advertising purposes.



Some buildings require a property release to be sold as commercial stock. It's always a good idea to check on rules and restrictions for commercial photography when you're photographing a building you don't own.



Here's a [list](http://wiki.gettyimages.com/) of landmarks and buildings published by Getty that are known to be off limits for stock: <http://wiki.gettyimages.com/>

Although it might seem intimidating to ask someone to sign a model release, a good place to start is with friends and family. Oftentimes, you'll find that people are more than happy (even flattered) to be in your pictures. You can always offer to give them copies of the images as a trade.

Don't Fear Rejection

Every stock photographer has images that get rejected from time to time. When you upload content to a stock site, an editor will take a look and decide if they want to include the image in their agency's collection.

The reviewer will check for technical issues and also look at composition and overall content. Usually, if a photo gets declined, they will let you know the reason. This feedback is invaluable for learning and improving your photography!

The best advice is to expect rejections and not take them personally. It's just part of the process and in the end it will absolutely make you a better photographer.

Rejections really are no big deal – don't let them deter you from getting going with stock photography. Learn from failures, celebrate successes, and keep moving forward.



Conclusion

There really is no reason to delay. Stock photography is open to everybody, and the sooner you start submitting images and building up your portfolio, the sooner you'll begin making sales.

Plus, it's seriously rewarding and a huge confidence builder to see your photos sell!



Top 10 reasons why you should get started with stock – right now!

1. Stock is open to any experience level.
2. No special equipment is required.
3. You can photograph what interests you.
4. You can create passive income.
5. You'll improve your photo skills.
6. You can photograph with no pressure.
7. It will boost your confidence.
8. You have nothing to lose – you always keep the copyright to your photos.
9. The sooner you start, the sooner you make sales.
10. It's fun! It will motivate you to experiment with your camera and be creative.