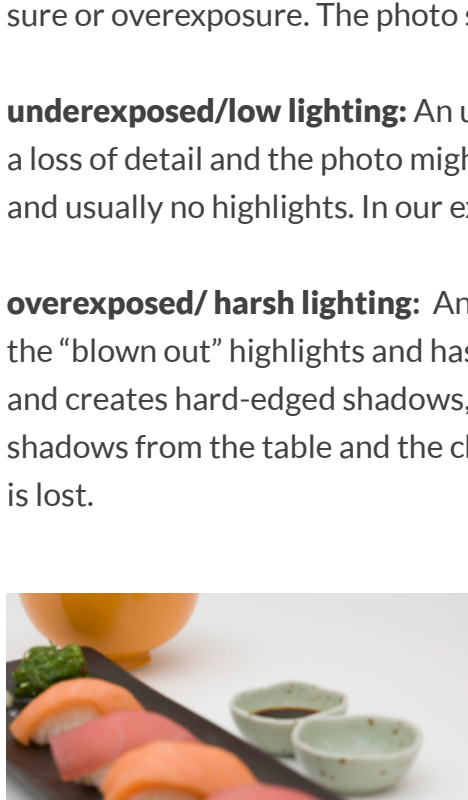


gawkerverse submission guide

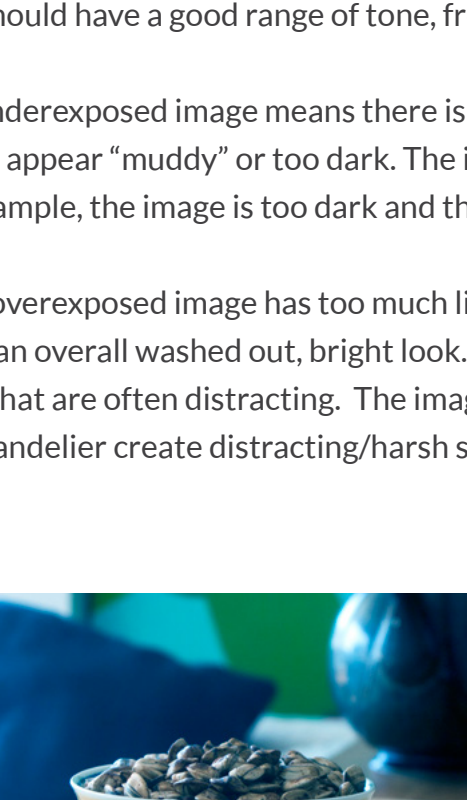
Do you want to learn more about how we evaluate submissions? This guide is an explanation of how we evaluate photography and posts for publishing on foodgawker, craftgawker, weddinggawker, dwellinggawker and stylegawker. Our team of editors assess each submission on lighting, exposure, composition, sharpness and content. A photo must meet all standards to be accepted. We hope this guide helps you navigate the submission process!

exposure

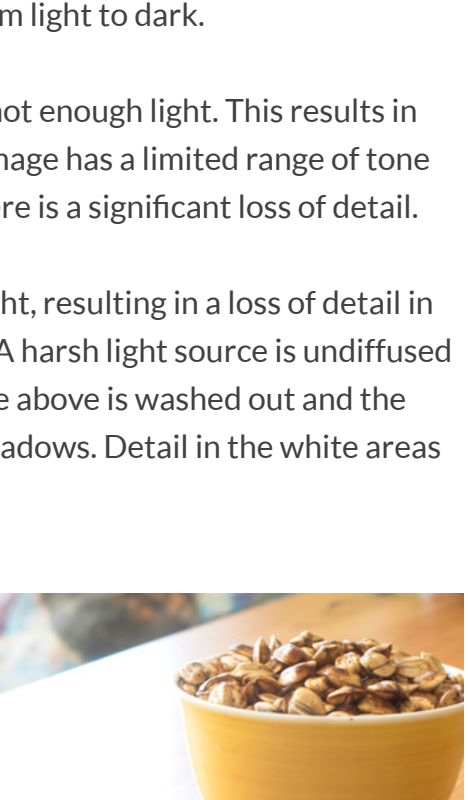
Exposure is the amount of light that reaches the sensor in your camera when taking a photo. The overall brightness or darkness of the image is determined by the exposure. Below are some common exposure and lighting issues we often encounter when reviewing submissions.



proper exposure



underexposed/low lighting

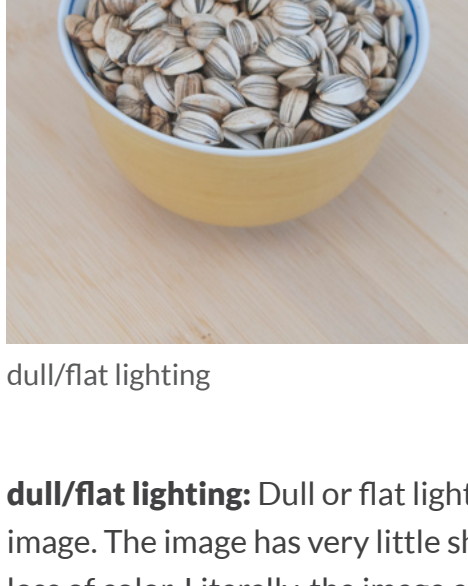


overexposed/harsh lighting

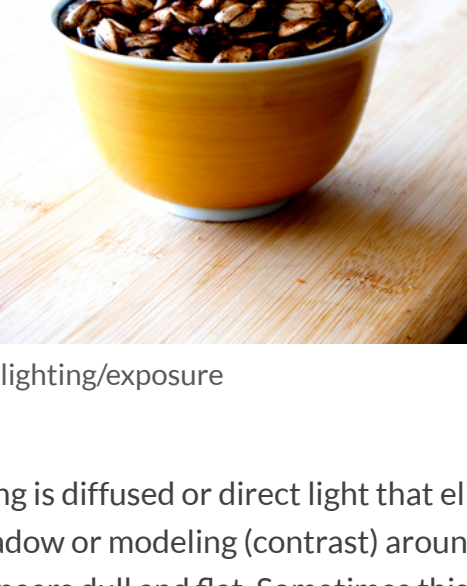
proper exposure: Proper exposure means there is enough light in all areas with no areas of underexposure or overexposure. The photo should have a good range of tone, from light to dark.

underexposed/low lighting: An underexposed image means there is not enough light. This results in a loss of detail and the photo might appear "muddy" or too dark. The image has a limited range of tone and usually no highlights. In our example, the image is too dark and there is a significant loss of detail.

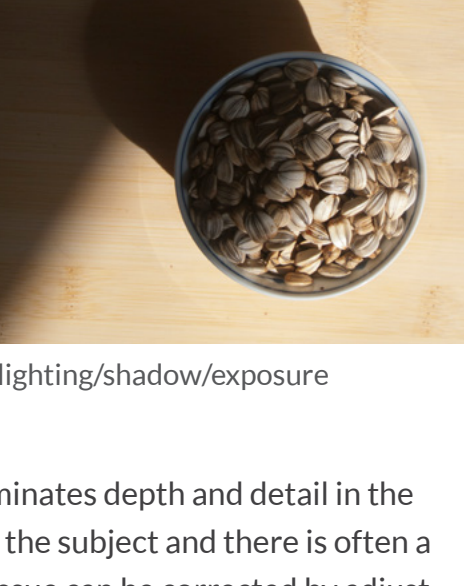
overexposed/ harsh lighting: An overexposed image has too much light, resulting in a loss of detail in the "blown out" highlights and has an overall washed out, bright look. A harsh light source is undiffused and creates hard-edged shadows, that are often distracting. The image above is washed out and the shadows from the table and the chandelier create distracting/harsh shadows. Detail in the white areas is lost.



out of focus/blurry



lighting/white balance

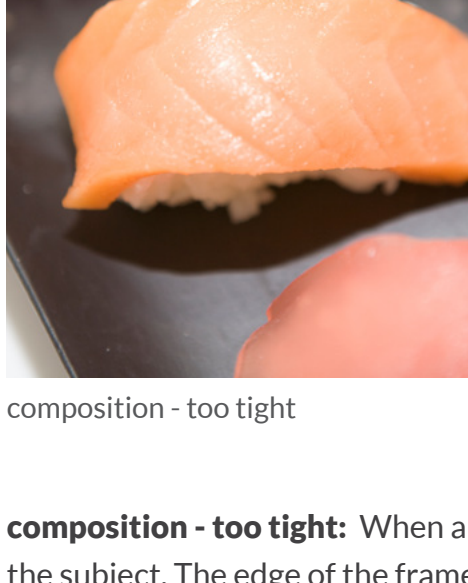


blown out highlights

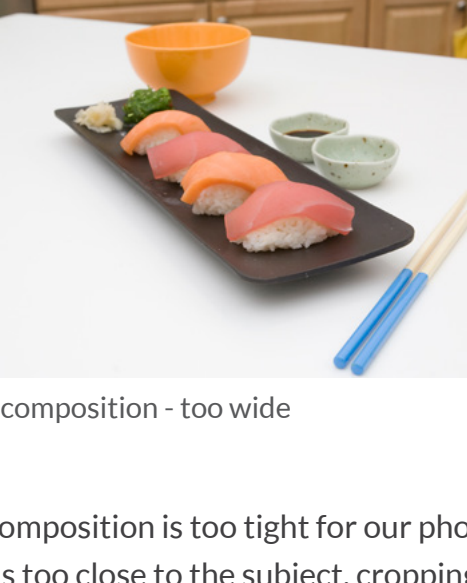
out of focus/blurry: When an image is out of focus, there is no focal point or crispness to the image. It can be caused by bumping, or shaking the camera while shooting, smudged lenses, or not focusing the camera properly on the subject. Blurring is caused by physical motion in the frame while shooting. As you can see, in our example, there is no area of focus.

white balance issues: Certain light sources and the time of day will cause a shift in the hue or color balance of your image. White balance is a method of maintaining a neutral light in the image, especially in the white surfaces. The whites in your image should look white - not blue, not yellow, not red. In our example, the image has a blue cast.

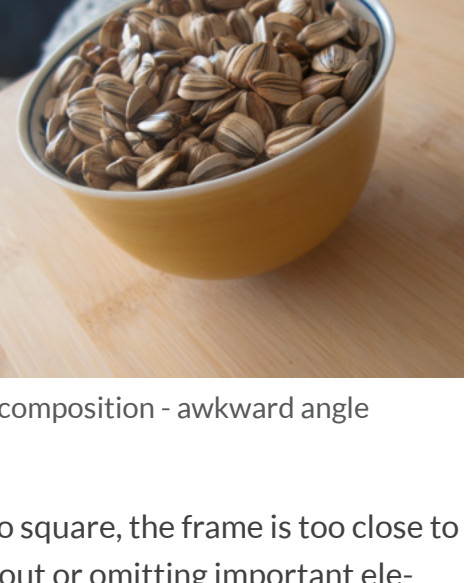
blown out highlights: Blown out highlights are the loss of detail in areas caused by overexposure or too much light. These areas are "blown out" because your camera could not record information in these areas and they appear as white spots or hard-edged shadows. In the image above, the glare/highlight is distracting and blown out.



dull/flat lighting



lighting/exposure



lighting/shadow/exposure

dull/flat lighting: Dull or flat lighting is diffused or direct light that eliminates depth and detail in the image. The image has very little shadow or modeling (contrast) around the subject and there is often a loss of color. Literally, the image appears dull and flat. Sometimes this issue can be corrected by adjusting the levels to increase the contrast. You can see that in the example above, the image has very little depth.

lighting/exposure: 'Lighting/exposure issues' is a broader term that could include elements of underexposure, overexposure and/or any unintentional lighting effects. We typically use this rejection reason when there are multiple issues with the exposure. In the example above, the image is neither over or underexposed, but the image does not look natural. The lighting appears harsh and oversaturated.

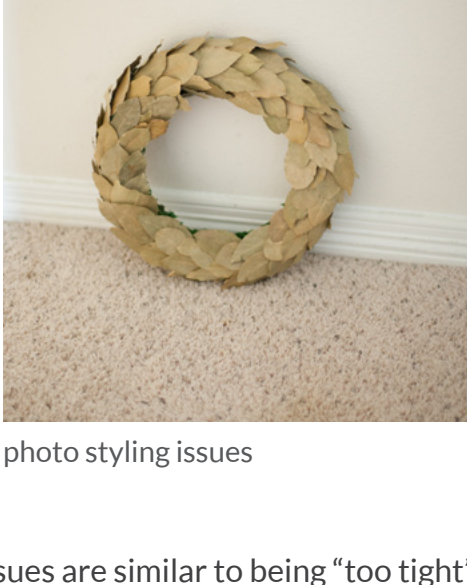
lighting/shadow/exposure: When an image has lighting/shadow/exposure issues there are noticeable shadows created by the light source. Shadows are a natural effect of lighting but unintentional or harsh shadows are distracting and a sign of improper exposure or composition. In our example, the shadows are very harsh and detract from the subject.

composition

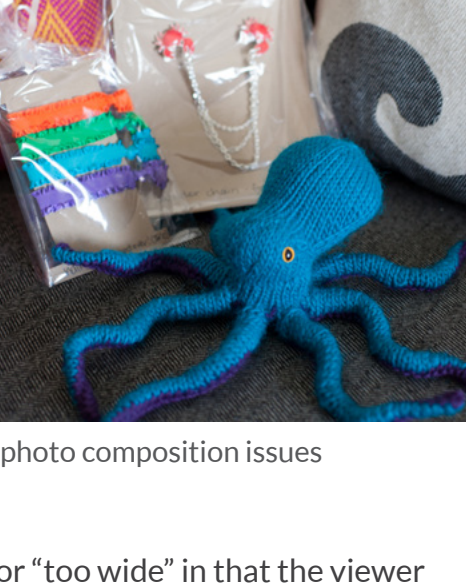
Composition is the arrangement of all elements within a photograph. It is evaluated by the balance of visual elements which include the subject, focus, line, shape, texture, color, etc. that create the overall appearance. Keep in mind that while some compositions look good in a larger size, it may not work well in our smaller square. Since many variables affect the composition, in the following section we will provide examples for the most common composition and cropping issues.



composition - too tight



composition - too wide



composition - awkward angle

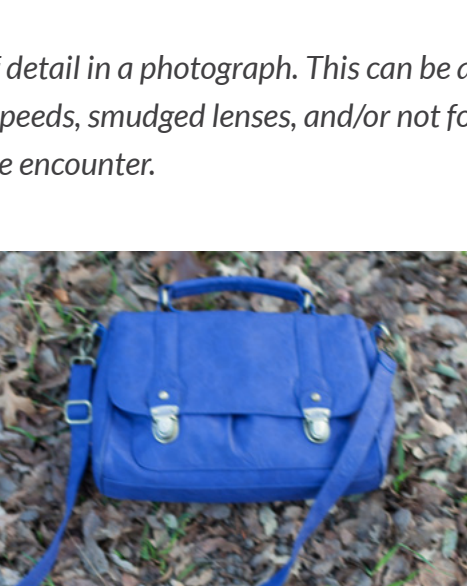
composition - too tight: When a composition is too tight for our photo square, the frame is too close to the subject. The edge of the frame is too close to the subject, cropping out or omitting important elements in the image. We prefer that the subject has some visual breathing room. In the example above the sushi is awkwardly cropped and there is an odd gap on the bottom left side of the image.

composition - too wide: When a composition is too wide, there is too much space in between the subject and the frame or includes unnecessary/distracting elements, detracting from the subject and overall image. Texture and details are often lost. In our example, the cabinets and countertop in the background distract from the subject. A closer crop would make the sushi the focal point of the image and provide more texture and detail.

composition - awkward angle: Where the camera is placed in relation to the subject determines the angle of the photograph. An awkward angle can distort, squash, or stretch the focal point, create tension, or make your photo look unbalanced. Using extreme angles and/or placing the camera too close to the subject is distracting and can be disorienting for the viewer. Natural angles are more pleasing to the eye. In the example above, the bowl appears to be sliding off the surface, because the camera is being held at an unnatural angle.



composition - too cluttered



composition-background



composition - foreground

composition - too cluttered: Clutter is caused by too many unnecessary elements that disrupt the balance of your image. A cluttered image can be caused by placing items too closely together or having too many items grouped together. It creates visual chaos within the frame and leaves nowhere for the eye to rest or focus. In our example, there are too many elements in the frame, which makes it difficult to discern the subject.

composition - background: The 'background' of an image is the field behind the focal point. It is the part furthest away from the viewer and camera. Background issues are distracting or unnecessary elements that interfere or challenge the focal point. In the example above, the kitchen counter and cluttered background distract from the sushi.

composition - foreground: The 'foreground' of the image is the field in front of the focal point. It is the closest part of the frame and directly in front of the viewer and camera. Foreground issues are elements blocking, interfering, or distracting the viewer from the focal point. The large rose, in the image above, distracts from the subject, the bowl of seeds.

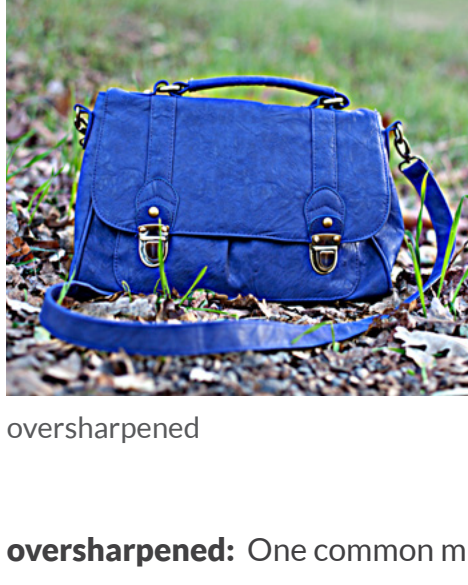


image cropping issues



photo styling issues



photo composition issues

image cropping issue: Cropping issues are similar to being "too tight" or "too wide" in that the viewer loses information due to framing. The frame could cut into the subject, omit important parts of a scene, or be awkward and unbalanced. Our updated submission form makes it easy to reposition an image by dragging it within the cropping area. The bracelet above is the focal point of the image and shouldn't be cropped by the frame.

photo styling issues: Styling is the attention paid to arranging the subject and props in an attractive, successful way. It allows you to show your personality and taste. Sloppy, random placement, disorganized props, and/or not showcasing the subject would be examples of poor styling. In the example above, the composition would be more successful if the wreath was styled on a door or a mantle. In this case, placing the wreath on the floor by the baseboard doesn't showcase the craft very well. It is out of context.

photo composition issues: Composition is evaluated by the balance of visual elements including the subject, focus, line, shape, texture, color, etc. that create the overall appearance of your image. This is a broad term that can include various elements of composition, cropping, and/or styling. We often use the term to indicate that there are multiple issues with the composition. In the example above there are too many elements in the frame which creates a cluttered and tight composition. In addition, there is no focal point.

sharpness

Sharpness is the clarity and quality of detail in a photograph. This can be affected by bumping or shaking the camera while shooting, slow shutter speeds, smudged lenses, and/or not focusing properly on subject. Below are the most common sharpness issues we encounter.



dull/unsharp image



dull/unsharp when reduced in size

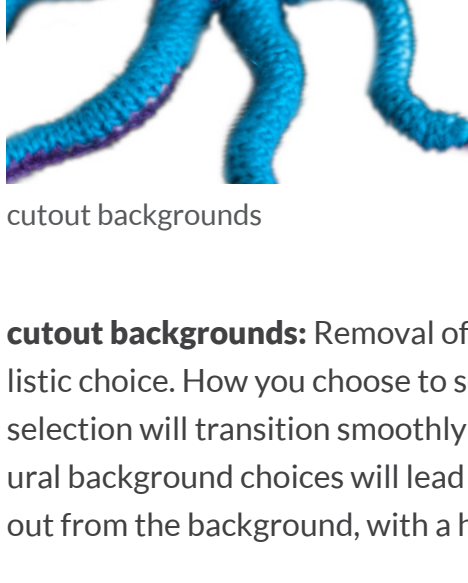


depth of field too shallow, dull/unsharp when reduced in size

dull/unsharp image: When an image is dull or unsharp, there is no crispness or focal point. The entire photograph appears hazy or muddled, with little to no detail. In our example, you can see that there is no area of focus. The entire image is just slightly unsharp.

dull/unsharp when reduced in size: Good sharpness is important even after the image is reduced in size. It's important that photos are saved as a high quality jpg.

depth of field is too shallow, dull/unsharp when reduced in size: Depth of field describes the part of the image that falls into focus and the surrounding unfocused area. When you have a narrow or shallow depth of field, less is in focus, so only a small portion of the image is sharp. If the depth of field is too shallow or small, not enough of the subject is in focus resulting in a dull, unsharp appearance. As you can see in our example, the leaves in front of the shoes are in focus, but at such a small size, the entire image appears out of focus.

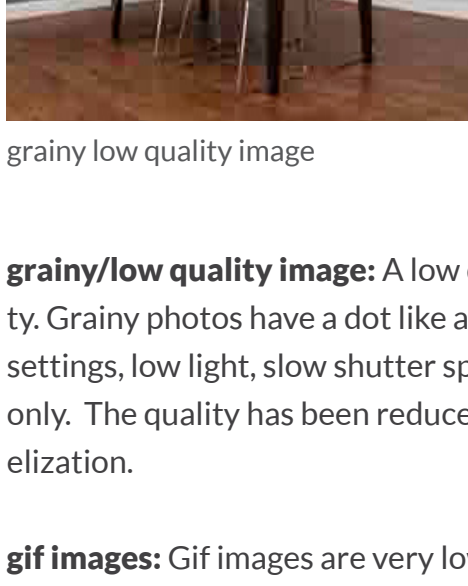


oversharpened

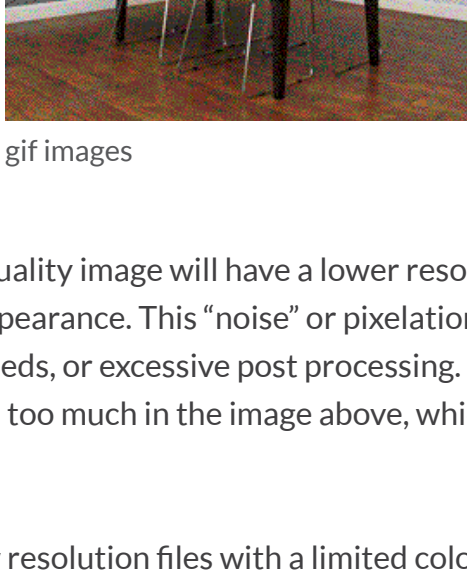
oversharpened: One common mistake is over-sharpening to the point that the image is sharpened beyond its natural appearance. The end result can be distracting. Your subject should look natural and appealing, not artificial and overprocessed. The purse in our example appears unnatural due to oversharpening.

post process

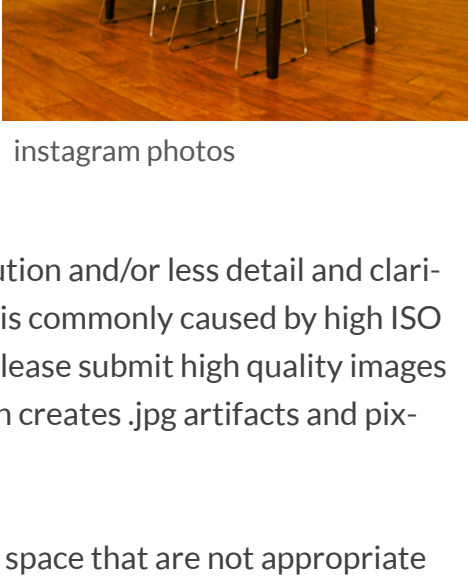
Post processing is any manipulation or editing done to the photograph after it's been captured. Usually a photo editing software is used to perform these changes and "complete" the image. While many images can benefit from post processing, in the section below we highlight issues that we prefer to avoid.



images with text/graphic elements



images with borders

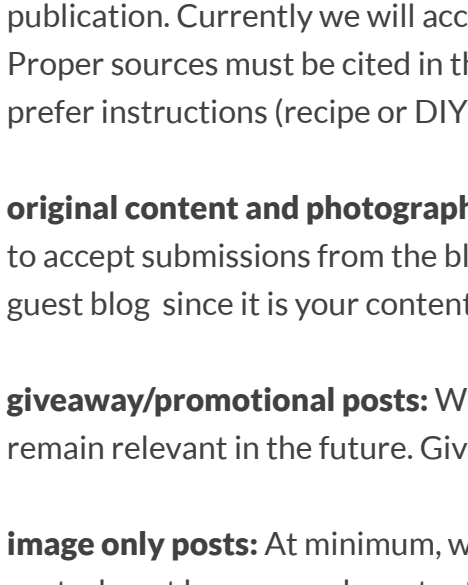


distracting watermarks

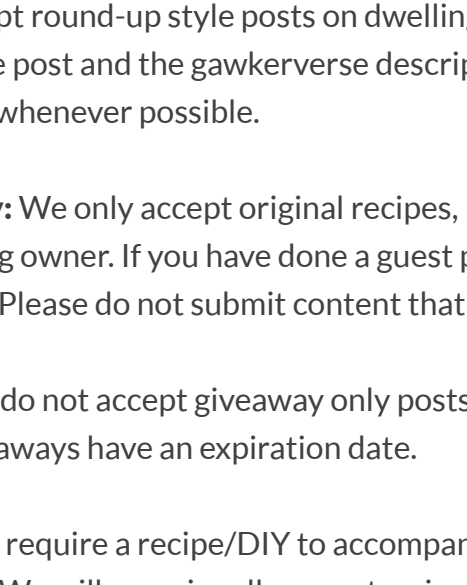
images with text/graphic elements: When adding text and/or graphics to your image, they become a part of the composition that competes with the focal point, distracting the viewer from the subject. To keep a streamlined appearance across our sites, we ask you to not add text and graphics when submitting your images. Small and subtle watermarks are acceptable, please see below for more information.

images with borders: Borders are an unnecessary addition to your image. We want to showcase your photograph and borders only take space in the thumbnail. Please do not submit images with borders. We'd like to maintain a consistent appearance, and as you can see by our example, adding borders makes the center image appear uneven and slightly smaller than the other images.

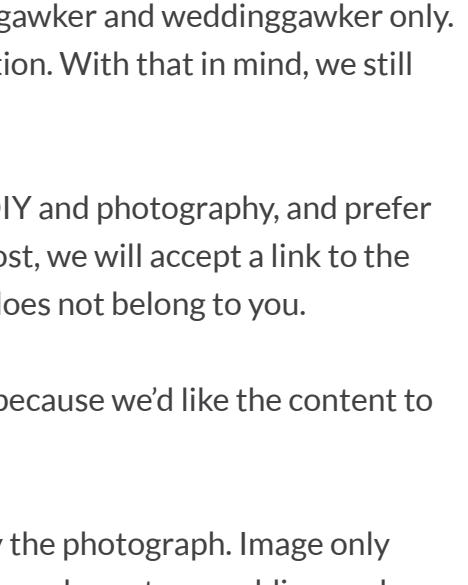
distracting watermarks: Watermarks are away from the images if they are subtle and not on the focal point. The text can be distracting and take away from the real focus, the subject. In our example, the watermark is too large and is placed right over the cake.



cropped watermark



overprocessing

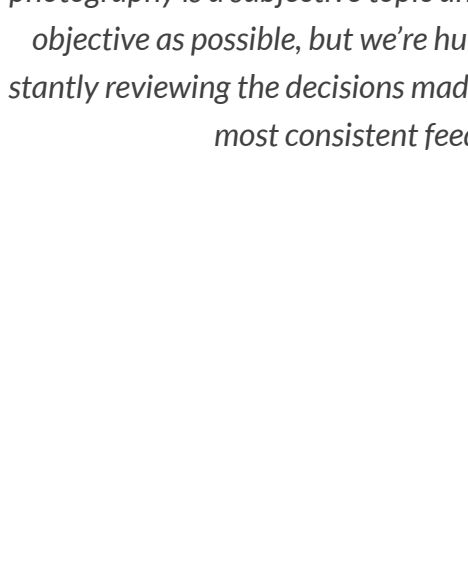


filters & effects

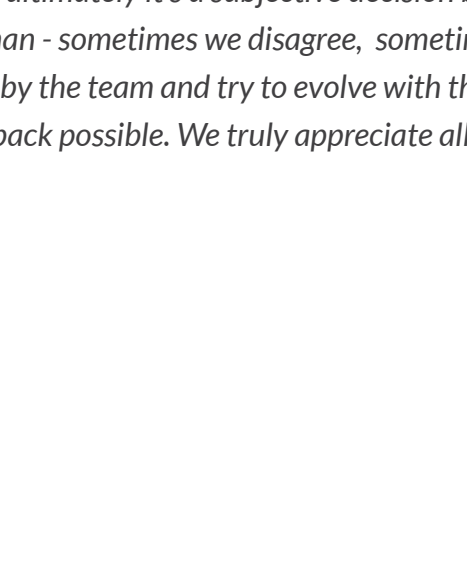
cropped watermark: Cropped watermarks should be removed entirely or repositioned so the full watermark is in the frame. If the watermark is cropped, it looks like an afterthought and is usually not legible.

overprocessing: Over-processing results from too many adjustments, creating extreme, undesirable effects. Adjustments include, but are not limited to: altering exposure, contrast, saturation, sharpness and adding blur. In our example, the contrast is bumped up a little too high and the colors are oversaturated.

filters & effects: Filters and effects are processes that alter the original image with lighting effects, stylized appearances, vignettes, color shifts, and many other possibilities. Taken to the extreme, the end result can be entirely different from the original image. The filter above is taken a little too far and distracts from the subject matter. In this case, the subject is food and it's best to showcase the natural colors of the sushi.



cutout backgrounds



faux blur/depth of field

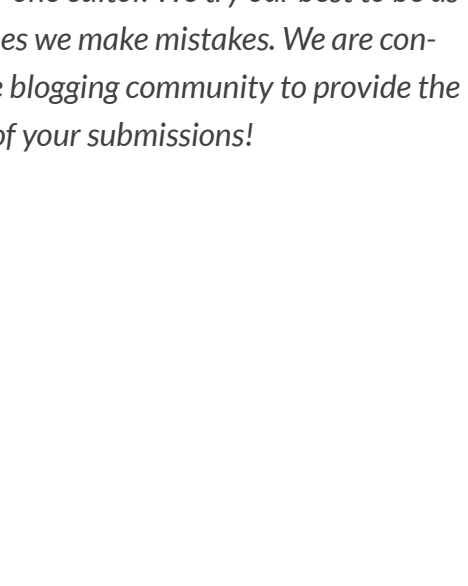


photo grids

cutout backgrounds: Removal of the image background can be used to isolate the subject or as a stylistic choice. How you choose to select and isolate the subject is very important. If done properly, the selection will transition smoothly and naturally into the new background. Obvious hard edges or unnatural background choices will lead to your image being rejected. In our example, the octopus looks cut out from the background, with a hard, pixelated edge and the background appears too stark.

faux blur/depth of field: With the aid of software, a shallow depth of field can be created in post processing, instead of in camera. When used improperly, it can appear artificial or unnatural. Please refer to sections "shallow depth of field" and "dull/unsharp" for more information. In the above image, the tilt shift blur placed on the octopus appears unnatural and doesn't enhance the photo.

photo grid: We are working with a small cropping area and submitting a grid of photos, makes for even smaller photos. Photo grids don't crop well as a square. The grid above is uneven, the images are too small, and most of the images are tightly cropped. Please submit one image, not a collage.

image quality

Image quality is the amount of information embedded in your photograph. The more information stored means a higher resolution, which produces more detail and a higher quality image. Resolution is measured in ppi or pixels per inch. This is controlled by your camera settings and any post processing/resizing done to the image. Image quality can make or break an image, in the images below we address the most common quality issues.

grainy/low quality image

gif images

instagram photos

grainy/low quality image: A low quality image will have a lower resolution and/or less detail and clarity. Grainy photos have a dot like appearance. This "noise" or pixelation is commonly caused by high ISO settings, low light, slow shutter speeds, or excessive post processing. Please submit high quality images only. The quality has been reduced too much in the image above, which creates .jpg artifacts and pixelization.

gif images: Gif images are very low resolution files with a limited color space that are not appropriate for photographs.

instagram photos: Instagram images are often lower quality, have borders/filters and are not optimal for our site.

content

Before we can consider a submission for publication, the following content requirements must be met. Below are the factors we consider when evaluating content.

submitted image appears in post: The submitted image must appear in your blog post. It can be cropped differently on your site, but the orientation must be the same as it was submitted.

content relevance: Our sites celebrate creativity and photography, so we prefer your posts do too. We only accept posts that are appropriate to each of our site's objectives.

sufficient content: We value and acknowledge the commitment of our submitters to their blogs. We want to feature those who have dedicated time to their post by developing quality photography and personalized blog content.

posts with recipe/DIY: The blog post must have a recipe or set of instructions to be considered for publication. Currently we will accept round-up style posts on dwellinggawker and weddinggawker only. Proper sources must be cited in the post and the gawkerverse description. With that in mind, we still prefer instructions (recipe or DIY) whenever possible.

original content and photography: We only accept original recipes, DIY and photography, and prefer to accept submissions from the blog owner. If you have done a guest post, we will accept a link to the guest blog since it is your content. Please do not submit content that does not belong to you.

giveaway/promotional posts: We do not accept giveaway only posts because we'd like the content to remain relevant in the future. Giveaways have an expiration date.

image only posts: At minimum, we require a recipe/DIY to accompany the photograph. Image only posts do not have enough content. We will occasionally accept an image only post on weddinggawker and dwellinggawker.

previously declined: We will decline with "previously declined" when we receive an image that we believe is the same as a submission that was already evaluated. Often people believe that we are not evaluating a resubmission, but the most common reason is that there is no change. Either the change to the image is too subtle, or the same photo is submitted more than once.

resubmissions: We don't mind resubmissions if you fix/adjust the image or resubmit another image from the blog post. If you've been declined 4-5 times, it may be best to reshoot the photo or submit a photo from another post. Due to submission volume, we only provide the primary reason a photo was declined, but there could be multiple issues with an image. We will provide multiple reasons when we can, but keep in mind that just because one issue was corrected it doesn't mean that we won't decline for another reason.

commerce sites: Our goal is to inspire our readers, we will not accept a submission from any commerce sites.

We have a team of editors who review photos based on the standards above. Even with these guidelines, photography is a subjective topic and ultimately it's a subjective decision by one editor. We try our best to be as objective as possible, but we're human - sometimes we disagree, sometimes we make mistakes. We are constantly reviewing the decisions made by the team and try to evolve with the blogging community to provide the most consistent feedback possible. We truly appreciate all of your submissions!