

Brand Expression: Visual Guidelines

Photography

Choosing the right photography not only helps build brand identity, but can further deliver the message of the copy.

Photography is available for download from the University image library. Existing photography may not meet brand photography standards, but may be usable when cropped or color corrected. If new photography is to be shot, Creative + Communications offers a list of approved photographers. Many of them are familiar with these image guidelines.

Photography is organized into three main categories: **portrait, environment, and artifact**. Each should build a story about the type of people one might meet, the places one might go, or the things one might do at the University. The tone of the photography should always be powerful, human, smart and natural.

Art Direction

Overall, photography should be highly saturated and have bright, vibrant colors. Black and white imagery is good to mix in, as long as it too is saturated and has high contrast. Images should be composed with areas of clear space so there's room to place copy and graphics. Avoid using photos that are overly busy or are dark and gloomy.

Composition and color

Whether it's a person or an item, allow the primary subject of the image room to breathe. Avoid allowing the subject to fill more than half of the total image area. Also, keeping the background simple — either through depth of field and selective focus, a solid color, etc. — will help the subject of the shot stand out, and allow clear space for graphics if necessary.

Again, whether the image is color or black and white, photography should be high contrast, with dark blacks and white whites. Avoid photos that depend on mid-tones. Colors should be saturated and bright.

Content

Regardless of subject matter, photography should be honest, spontaneous and authentic. Avoid using images that are overly staged or slick, or that feel cliché. Keep in mind, we're trying to portray the Washington Way — not the Madison Avenue or Sunset Boulevard Way. Experiment by varying the crop or scaling of an image to add interest and energy — this may be preferable to using a more polished but far more typical stock photo. (Make sure the resolution of the photo is sufficient to allow enlarging and recropping.)

Brand vs. secondary imagery

As a general rule, images that appear on brochure covers, section dividers and spreads, or as a full or half-page should be sourced from the brand photo library which was specially commissioned for this purpose.

This does not apply to images intended to play a more supporting visual role: Certain images may be required to illustrate specific content, or to meet budget constraints. In these cases, stock photos or other supplied images can be used, but they should be a secondary element at best. Give more space and prominence to images that best represent and reflect the brand.

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Portrait photography should be genuine, spontaneous, authentic, honest
Our photos of people should capture them in a manner that seems candid and real. When shooting portraits, try not to over-stage the shots. Try to capture the subject in his or her natural environment, doing something they would normally do. This will make them feel more comfortable, and the photo will feel more honest and authentic as a result.



Environment photos should have an surprising composition, a unique point of view or some other treatment to add interest.
When shooting environmental imagery, make it clear who/what the hero of the shot will be: a tree or a leaf within a landscape can be more evocative than a more literal wide shot. Think about depth of field as a way to isolate or highlight your subject. And when shooting exteriors, try to shoot in early morning or late afternoon for the most dramatic lighting.



Artifact photography should have texture, detail, hidden interest, be provocative.
This style of imagery is intended to help convey an abstract concept, tell a story or set a mood. When shooting or selecting artifact photos, keep it simple. Use a shallow depth of field to add interest to the composition and highlight your subject. Patterns work well, especially those with a more monochromatic color palette.