



What you need to know when looking for a commercial photographer

This is not meant to be a comprehensive list but as a starting point to help you decide on what you need in a photographer.

1: Texas State Sales Tax Certificate –If your photographer does not have one, what happens when they get caught right before your shoot and the State seizes their accounts leaving them unable to access any monies? Will they have gas to get to your shoot? Will they be able to process the images if they do get there? If they are not a legitimate business it is not worth the risk.

2: Capabilities – Do they have the expensive lenses (typically called “fast lenses”) to make sure your indoor shots are captured without redeye and washing out everything with on camera flash and are as sharp as possible? If indoor lights are required, do they have them? Do they have backup cameras in case of a failure?

3: Experience – Have they shot products before? Do they know whether to deliver your images in RGB or CMYK? Professional photographers will not will not have a problem answering these types of questions.

4: Products – Does the photographer provide the prints, keychains, shirts, mugs, mounts and frames that you will want after the shoot is complete? Are they running to Wal-Mart to make your prints?

5: Make sure there is a contract – A contract will protect both sides by spelling out not only the exact cost, but also exactly when, where and what will be shot. The contract should be completed at the booking and with most photographers must be accompanied by at least one half the full cost of the shoot as a down payment. The remainder is usually due before the shoot.

6: Down payments and refunds – Generally, you may book a shoot by putting up a down payment consisting of at least one half the total shoot cost. This guarantees the date and time with the photographer. Should something happen you will need to know the refund policy. It is standard practice to not refund one half of the total price should you cancel as it is generally too late for the photographer to book another shoot on that date. Some photographers will allow you to switch dates with no penalties if you let them know far enough in advance.

7: Mileage charges – Some photographers will charge mileage to and from a shoot even though the shoot is relatively close to their business as an extra way to make money. Make sure that you know of these charges if they exist. Almost all photographers will charge extra if the event is a great distance away, either built into their price, or as a separate line item. Always ask.

8: Online ordering – Does the photographer put images online for you and others to order prints etc from or do you have to meet them in person to see proofs and order?



9: Macro capabilities – Some shots for smaller items are considered “macro” or “micro” and are best taken with a dedicated lens built just for that purpose. Some lenses have “macro” capability but are almost always inferior to a dedicated lens. Which does the photographer use?

10: Does the photographer use a Professional lab? – Make sure to ask if the photographer uses a professional lab for prints. You would be surprised at the number of photographers running around delivering Wal-Mart or Walgreens final prints.

11: Equipment – Some product and facility shots are best accomplished with a “large format view camera”. This is the old style large camera that the photographer gets under the black cloth to focus and compose the shot. These are still useful today because they offer a resolution and tilt/shift capabilities that are all but impossible to match with a Digital SLR. Does the photographer have a large format view camera?

18. Does the photographer backup images on site? What if you only have the item you need images of for a limited time and there is an accident with the images? If he backs up on site he will know before it is too late to take more photos.

Below is a couple of pages for comparing photographers. Feel free to print them out and use them when you meet with photographers to find the one that is right for you.



Photographer 1

Photographer name:	Allan Hall Photography		
Sales Tax Certificate	YES	Down Payment	½ total price minimum
Fast Lenses & lighting	YES	Mileage	None within 75 miles
Experience	Product/Macro/Facility	Online Ordering	YES
Products	Over 370 products	Macro Lens	YES
Contract	YES	Pro Lab?	YES
Quoted Price (plus taxes)		Equipment	Digital & Large Format Film
		Backup on site?	
Notes:			

Photographer 2

Photographer name:			
Sales Tax Certificate		Down Payment	
Fast Lenses & lighting		Mileage	
Experience		Online Ordering	
Products		Macro Lens	
Contract		Pro Lab?	
Quoted Price (plus taxes)		Equipment	
		Backup on site?	
Notes:			

Photographer 3

Photographer name:			
Sales Tax Certificate		Down Payment	
Fast Lenses & lighting		Mileage	
Experience		Online Ordering	
Products		Macro Lens	
Contract		Pro Lab?	
Quoted Price (plus taxes)		Equipment	
		Backup on site?	
Notes:			



Photographer 4

Photographer name:			
Sales Tax Certificate		Down Payment	
Fast Lenses & lighting		Mileage	
Experience		Online Ordering	
Products		Macro Lens	
Contract		Pro Lab?	
Quoted Price (plus taxes)		Equipment	
		Backup on site?	
Notes:			

Photographer 5

Photographer name:			
Sales Tax Certificate		Down Payment	
Fast Lenses & lighting		Mileage	
Experience		Online Ordering	
Products		Macro Lens	
Contract		Pro Lab?	
Quoted Price (plus taxes)		Equipment	
		Backup on site?	
Notes:			

Photographer 6

Photographer name:			
Sales Tax Certificate		Down Payment	
Fast Lenses & lighting		Mileage	
Experience		Online Ordering	
Products		Macro Lens	
Contract		Pro Lab?	
Quoted Price (plus taxes)		Equipment	
		Backup on site?	
Notes:			