

Photos: Don't You Care Enough to Send the Very Best?



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Editor's Note: The Horsemen's Corral wishes to thank Michelle Farnham of the Post Newspapers for granting permission to reprint her article on photos for publication. This is without a doubt the best piece we have ever read on the subject. The article will appear in the December issue of the Corral.

The Post Newspapers asks for photos from readers on a regular basis. Whether in the form of a photo contest, youth sports, congratulations announcements and even obituaries, digital picture quality is a big concern.

We realize that not everyone is a trained photographer and for some users, submitting a photo can be a real test of one's technological knowledge.

Whether you are rocking a high-end digital SLR, a basic point-and-shoot or even a camera phone, anyone is capable of producing a high-quality image that will print nicely. Read on for a quick overview of problems and solutions.

- **The Facebook Swipe.** We get many pictures that have clearly been pulled off a Web site, like Facebook. When a photo is uploaded to the Internet, it undergoes a major reduction in quality. Simply put: online images don't need to be the same quality as printed images, and Web pages load faster if the photos are smaller. That transformation is not so great for the print side of things, however. When it comes to submitting photos to a newspaper, users should send in the original unedited photo, straight off the camera.

- **Size does matter.** On a related note, some readers will intentionally

downsize the size of the picture they send because they think it will e-mail/upload faster. That extra couple of seconds you're saving is causing a significant loss in photo quality!

For example, when I e-mail a photo from my iPhone, a message pops up, "You can reduce message size by scaling images to one of the sizes below," and then gives options of Small, Medium, Large and Actual Size. If I had my druthers, this option would be eliminated. Please, please, please send us the "Actual Size!" I promise you, with today's computers and Internet speeds, the 3MB full-size photo is no problem at all.

To throw out some numbers: the "actual size" photo sent by an iPhone is 36 inches wide; the "small" just 3.3 inches wide. Which do you think will look better in print? Answer: the big one.

- **The Instagram Insta-mess.** I sometimes daydream about what future generations will think when they take a look back at photos from this decade. Rather than being impressed at how far digital photography has come, I fear they will judge us by the drivel that is being churned out by apps like Instagram.

Never mind the fact that the telephone/computer/camera hybrid I carry in my pocket can crank out a poster-size image; the filters and effects being used to edit images today are practically taking us back to the stone ages. Why would you want your picture to look old/grainy/dark/blown out? What you think might look "cool" today is losing a lot of detail, making it less of a treasure for the future and a real nightmare to try to print on newsprint. And for Pete's sake, who wants a square picture? Again: we prefer the original image to print, please.

- **Light fright.** For the average photographer, a camera's onboard flash can be a blessing or a curse. A properly used flash can improve lighting, reduce graininess and help prevent motion blur. A curse because if your subject is

too close to the camera, he or she becomes a washed out mess. Too far away, and it has no effect. A general rule of thumb: your camera's flash is useless beyond about 8 feet. Watch out for reflective surfaces in the background, too; and if your camera offers red-eye reduction, fire up that baby!

- **Collage barrage.** I'll keep this one brief: please do not submit a collage of pictures created by that nifty app on your phone. We can only print one picture, so pick your favorite and send it on in.

- **Better dead than embed.** In short, don't embed a photo into a Word document and e-mail it in. Just don't. Send the JPG file and we'll all be happy as a clam.

- **Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.** You may have some kind of photo editor on your computer or smart phone, but when it comes to submitting photos for print, leave it to the pros. We have professional-grade software and years of experience with correcting lighting and color issues, so just send us the original and let us work our magic!

- **Pro tip: tap to focus.** Most smart phones today offer a tap to focus function. When you're preparing to shoot a picture, simply tap the area on the screen that you want to be most in focus (usually someone's face), give it a second and press the shutter. This will prevent those pesky snapshots where the background is crystal clear but your subject's face is blurred.

- **No room to zoom.** One more for the road: don't zoom with your camera phone. Zoom = junk.

Just remember: when it comes to submitting photos for print, "Don't you care enough to send the very best?"