Just say CHEESE

SMILE! Here are my 12 top card photography tips & tricks (updated). Good photography is critical for engagement on blogs, Pinterest, Facebook, Instagram, etc. and it doesn't have to be difficult or expensive.

1. I use my iPhone, not a special camera. If you prefer a camera, use it!

2. My "stage" is a desk mat from Amazon that has a wood look background. I also use a "concrete" version. The trend for a wood background is lovely but remember, plain white, black, or a coordinating color background can be beautiful, too.

3. Keep the "stage" fairly clean - a few products can be an upsell if displayed artistically but be sure it's your project that shines!

4. Good lighting can be a challenge but is critical. You can get inexpensive photo lamps or use indirect daylight (my first choice). Direct sunlight can be harsh and cast shadows.

5. At the suggestion of Brian King (and inspired by Shawn de Oliveira), I use a small block below the card when it's laying flat to give it a little depth.

6. I like the look of both flat and upright photos.

7. Look your card over closely before photographing to be sure everything is straight, no adhesive or "runaway" ink marks are showing and remove any stray kitty hairs.

8. I take photos from several angles, usually 5 to 10.

9. Include an envelope (lined or outside flap covered in coordinating designer series paper) in one of the photos for interest and it can help sell other products.

10. Photo software (I use Photos on my Mac but PicMonkey and others are free and easy) allows me to crop and add a touch of highlight to brighten, if needed. Don't go too crazy with adjustments and have the colors become wonky.

11. Be sure to leave space around the card to "frame it." A common mistake I see is cropping too closely.

12. My text-only watermark functions as advertising more than a protection of work. I don't recommend layering the watermark over your project if it's going to "obstruct the view." Be sure at least your web address is on your photo and prominent. A branded (design) watermark works as well. Add "Images © Stampin' Up!" if you are using Stampin' Up! products (that's advertising, too).