

Taking Motorcycle Pics for Facebook

This is an abridged version of the notes provided to members who attended the workshop on shooting club photos for Social Media.

What Do We Post?

First up club posts to [Facebook](#) should reflect friendliness, mate-ship and responsible riding with a big emphasis on fun. We also want to emphasise the club is inclusive and all historic machines are welcome, along with new bikes.

Importantly the club appeals to all ages and is the opposite of the “outlaw style” in other words a place where any rider can find a home and group of like minded folk to share their interest.

It may seem obvious but posts must not promote illegal or potentially illegal activities, political perspectives that have nothing to do with the club, unsafe riding or speeding on public roads.

Importantly we don't post anything that attacks other clubs, other members or population groups.

Guidelines For Social Media Posts

Text should be succinct, try to keep the words to a sentence or three, if you have something to add that requires long form information paste a link to take readers to that information. For example: The Club Magazine or documents that are available on the Clubs Website or an online article etc.

If a post is to inform of an event or ride, make sure you include date, meeting time, location, core event details, who is invited and costs if applicable.

Stick to say 4 to 6 at most photos and ensure each photo is different in content and keep descriptions succinct, including, what, where, when, who, why.

Don't post unedited photos and at the very least crop photos to exclude information that detracts from the photos message, if the colour is poor, edit to correct it and if the photo is too dark or light adjust the tones to even this out.

Preference is colour photos but if the subject matter is suitable, monochrome or sepia versions may work well.

Where possible include people/riders in the photo, readers are fundamentally interested in other people and what they do, a pic of an owner standing behind their machine will have greater public appeal than the machine by itself. Social media is about telling stories, so before you post, ask yourself, “does this post tell a story or is it just filler?”

Finally when taking pics for Facebook or social media let the subjects know what you intend to do with the item and make sure they agree to it.

Photography Guide:

General Principles

Almost any photo or video you need for social media can be taken successfully on a smart phone, even an older 3 megapixels pic may be enough.

Make sure your lenses of the phone are clean, a dirty lens will ruin clarity and flare badly when you point the camera towards any light source or bright elements.

All smart phones provide solid editing tools for photos, no need to offload the images to a computer. There are many additional apps you can add to your smartphone for more control, in particular **Snapseed** is recommended, it's easy to use, powerful, free and works on any smart phone. Facebook and Instagram have inbuilt editing tools if you wish to use them on the platform but Snapseed is far better.

It's a good idea to copy your club pics to a folder on your phone so they can be easily accessed or edited when you need them.

When convenient email the pics/vids you used to the club secretary and magazine editor so they can be stored on the clubs back up server for future use.

Shooting Photos

Location Info: Make sure you have location services turned on for your camera, it allows you to easily link to maps and find other pics in your library from the same location.

The phone will record the date and time and focal length used for the shot/video, which is also very helpful from an archiving point of view for the club.

Message: Before you shoot take a moment to think about the message or story you are trying to convey. I often think of it this way, "I want to create a movie but I have to do it with single frames" so what do I need those frames to include.

Exclusion: Get in close, in other words **exclude** visual information that is not helpful to the message, just allow for a little bit of cropping room around the edges. It's helpful to consider the final aspect ratio needed, for example if you're shooting for a square you can crop a little closer but if you're aiming for 16:9 you will need the entire frame width.

It's possible to choose the aspect ratio when you shoot yet still capture the full frame in editing if you need to reverse track, on some phones there is a setting in the camera app to allow for this option.

Most people tend to shoot much looser than they need, they just look at the middle of the screen and fail to notice what is going on around the edges. Scanning your eye across the frame and then up and down prior to shooting can help you both improve composition and exclude stuff that's not needed.

Backgrounds: Try to keep the subject clear of close background elements. Watch for items that may confuse the message, for example the classic telegraph pole growing out of someones head.

Additionally photographing against a darker background will help your subject stand out, light backgrounds tend to overpower the subject unless you are really aiming for a "high key" effect.

If you have the space to step back you can limit interference from background elements somewhat by shooting with the telephoto lens, basically the camera will see a narrower background area.

Focus: Tap on the screen at the location where you actually want the focus to be rather than rely on the camera to simply focus wherever it sees fit, this is especially important as you go in closer.

Subtle changes in where the focus sits can change the entire feel of the image, it's not something that can be changed in the editing phase.

Telephoto Lens: When photographing people, especially for head and upper body shots use the telephoto lens, it will render a more natural look, going close with a wide angle distorts features and creates unflattering renditions, in particular making noses appear much bigger and ears smaller than in real life.

Telephoto lenses also provide a more natural perspective that flattens out the subject matter, where as wide angle lenses tend to emphasise depth and make the elements closer to the lens appear more dominant.

Portrait Modes: If your smartphone has a portrait mode you can use this for photos of people and also close ups of motorcycle elements and even overall motorcycle portraits. This tool allows you to give the image depth of field effects similar to what can be achieved with a DSLR, importantly the effect is adjustable post shooting.

Even if you shoot with the portrait effect turned on you can turn it off in the editing phase if needed. The only downside in using portrait mode is that some functions may not be available, for example on the iPhone you cannot shoot in RAW if portrait mode is selected.

To a certain degree shooting in portrait mode does allow you to shift the point of focus post capture but it is not exactly the same as locking the focus point when shooting, especially if you are shooting reasonably close up.

Portrait mode is generally available with both telephoto and wide angle lenses, though not the ultra wide lens if your phone has one.

Exposure: All smartphones have a way of adjusting the exposure of the image at shooting time, use it, this provides much better images than you will achieve by editing an image that is too dark or light to start with.

HDR: Your smart phone probably has a HDR option (high dynamic range), this helps prevent blocked up shadows and bleached highlights, unless you are shooting in very flat overcast lighting or aiming for a high contrast rendition it's a good idea to use this most of the time.

There are only two downsides to HDR: a) for technical reasons it may cause some ghosting in photos that contain high speed action and b) in very flat lighting the image may lack punch and contrast.

Resolution Options: Most smart phones these days simply shoot at maximum resolution but a few and some older ones give you the option to go for lower pixel counts....don't! Max resolution will give you far better options when it comes to cropping and editing.

Note that on most phones the standard lens has much higher resolution than the telephoto and wide angle lenses, additionally the standard lens normally works best in low light. As an example the current iPhone offers 48mp for the standard lens and 12mp for the telephoto and ultra wide units.

Macro: Most smart phones can focus down to about 10 cm, some even 5cm using a specific macro function. Close-up shots of smaller elements of a motorcycle, like carbs and hand controls, brake calipers etc can help tell the story more convincingly and in many cases it's those little details that give a bike its character, like the bevel cam drive on a Kawasaki W800 for example.

Once you go really close getting everything in focus can be difficult, it's often easier to pull back a little and simply crop the final image, you won't see any loss of quality on social media.

The 2 most important factors with macro shots is to a) make sure you lock the focus to the exact point you are needing peak clarity and b) adjust the exposure to give the best overall look that does not burn out the highlights on shiny surfaces.

You will often get sharper results if you use a selfie stick and remote release as a grip to help steady the camera.

Shoot Low Shoot High: Just because you stand 180cm tall and hold the phone at chest height doesn't mean all photos work best from that perspective. Explore ground level, mid level and overhead perspectives.

For many, ground level can be hard on the knees but using a selfie stick and the camera's self timer will solve the problem. High viewpoints are also easier with a longer selfie stick and self timer release, just make sure you don't get your own body parts in pics in spots where they can't be cropped out.

Finding the Angle: Before you shoot walk around the subject, kneel down near it, try holding the phone up high, in other words take the time to find the optimal vantage point for that particular subject and the message you are trying to impart.

For example taking a pic of a bike from just above ground level from the front is going to make the machine look powerful and imposing. Every machine, and indeed person has a shooting angle/location that works best, it just takes a little time to find it.

Selfie Stick: Selfie sticks come in bluetooth and regular forms, ideally a bluetooth version is better because you can trip the shutter remotely when you want.

You can also get longer and short versions of selfie sticks, both are useful, the short stumpy ones are great to use as camera grips to help you get sharper results in low light the longer ones great for overhead or high viewpoint work.

Some shorter ones come with a built in tripod, which can be more help than you might imagine. They are all cheap just buy one of each type!

RAW/DNG: Shooting in RAW or DNG provides an image with better editing capability when the lighting is tricky or you need to heavily crop the image, the file size is much larger so don't use it as a "go to" option.

In particular RAW will allow you to recover highlight details and deep shadows better than the standard file format, you can also print much bigger but that doesn't matter for social media use.

Varied Viewpoints: If you are doing a story about a particular machine take several pics from different perspectives, i.e. overhead, low side view, close up of the engine, close up of hand control, a close of a part that is typical and defines that machine, a pic with the owner sitting on the bike. Remember you are creating a visual essay.

There's no point taking 10 shots that are the same in the hope something will work, I call this the "machine gun approach", generally I take one shot for each set-up and just make sure I pay attention to getting everything set right. In other words slow down and shoot smarter!

Additional Lenses: Generally they're not needed and usually degrade the image quality, they're also inconvenient to carry and use.

If you need a wider shot than your phones' lens offers, shoot a panorama and if you need a more telephoto look just crop the image more, as said, social media images do not need a high megapixel count to be successful.

Editing Photos

Cropping: Just because you shoot the image in a 3:4 aspect ratio doesn't mean the final image will work best in that ratio, it may be you need a square or letter box format or something else in between looks better. Crop as needed removing anything that detracts from the image message.

Even extreme crops can work with modern smartphones, most have at least a 12 megapixel sensor and social media only needs about 2 megapixels so crop away. This is particularly helpful if you couldn't get any closer with the telephoto lens.

Most apps also give you option of correcting converging verticals but more importantly the option to correct image tilt, which is a common problem that can look pretty annoying on images posted to Facebook. Correcting image tilts will crop the image somewhat, supporting the idea that you need to leave a little cropping space around the frame when shooting.

Tone adjustments: Assuming you correctly exposed the image in the first place you shouldn't need to make any wild tonal changes.

The core adjustments are exposure, brightness, contrast, highlight and shadow recovery. Just play with them on a few pics to get a feel for how they work.

A curves tool combines most of the above in one tool but it is generally harder for the beginner to use, again have a play if you have one available.

Colour adjustments: Most smartphones these days are quite good at getting the "white balance" close to perfect straight out of the camera and will only need a small amount of tuning, usually only needing a slight warming adjustment.

There are typically two adjustments, warm/cool and magenta/green tint. The later will only need to be used rarely, always try to correct with warm/cool first as it has a flow-on effects on the tint.

Occasionally if you are shooting a scene that is dominated by a particular colour, especially red or yellow you may get a colour shift towards blue or cyan which will need correcting. Cyan colour casts are particularly awful and make people look like they have just died and gone cold.

You may also have problems when photographing red or yellow motorcycles close up.

There are options to correct the white balance at the time of capture on most Android phones, but for iPhones you will need an additional app such as ProCamera.

Sharpening: Most times the photo will need a little sharpening, this gives the pic a bit of a 3D look and makes finer details clearer on the small screen image, be subtle with this adjustment as when overdone your pics will look crunchy and fake.

The easiest way to avoid overcooking the tool is to pinch zoom the pic before adjusting and only adjust until the zoomed image starts to look suitably sharp.

Some apps offer a radius and amount option, keep the radius low and push the amount up for social media usage, note that too high an amount can cause the highlights to clip, watch out for that.

Removing blemishes: Sometimes there are items in the pic that distract, like rubbish on the ground, telegraph wires etc, these are pretty easy to remove on late model smart phones. Ideally of course we try to shoot clean in the first place.