

How-to guide for media pictures

Taking pictures for media use is somewhat different to general photography – it isn't rocket science at all but there are a few things to bear in mind.

If you're not too technical, don't worry too much – you don't *have* to do everything in this guide, but hopefully some of these tips will prove useful.

Stay informed

Before attending an event such as wreaths being loaded on a train by veterans, or dignitaries etc, try to get the basic information and times in advance.

Exactly where will it happen, what time is the presentation, how long will it last (ie how long will you have to get your pictures), is there anyone notable who should be in the photos?

It is not always possible to get such information in advance, so arrive early if you can and try to speak to someone who is co-ordinating the proceedings.

Don't be shy! It won't take long at all and will be immensely useful. Simply ask a member of staff (or whoever appears to be involved with things) who you should speak to and say 'I'm taking pictures for The Veterans Charity, please can you tell me when, where, etc?'

Get a good position and be ready

If for example you are taking pictures of a wreath being presented at a train station, make sure you are where you need to be, without being in the way or obstructing other media. But be firm about claiming your spot!

It's no good when the actual event happens if you are at the back of a crowd or off to one side and barely able to get the shot.

You are as entitled to be there taking pictures as the photographer from The Sun (!) so make sure you stake your claim!

Remember, the actual newsworthy event may only last a few seconds and there won't be time to do it twice.

Pose your subjects

Usually there is time to put people where you want them. Presentation pictures don't just happen, they need to be staged, exactly the same as wedding pictures!

This is really just common sense, but for example if four people are posing with a wreath, ensure you can see everyone's faces, the tallest are not standing in front of the shortest, etc.

It depends on the event, but if other media or comms people are there, they will be doing exactly the same thing, so you can often let someone else do the work and piggyback their photo! They won't mind, especially if you say it is for the charity. In any case, there would not be time to organise half a dozen different group poses.

BUT, let them take their picture first, then stand where they were and take your own – otherwise you will have four sets of eyes looking at someone else's camera, not a good look!

Landscape, landscape, landscape

Try and ensure every picture is a landscape (horizontal) one. This is mainly because websites and social media are geared towards landscape shapes and a portrait (upright) image, will not fit well.

Sometimes the subject simply won't fit that frame so if you must take an upright, do so, but avoid it if you can unless the image will suffer if you don't.

Keep it in perspective

You want your subjects to be in the foreground of the picture. So don't stand them against a wall on the other side of the room.

It may be that what is on the wall is relevant, or perhaps it is a train, in which case you must bring the people right out to you, so they're framed up close and personal and the other aspect of the picture forms the back drop.



For example....



And not....

The mural on the above picture is important and needs to be included, but the people should have been stood just in front of the photographer, as far out as needed until the whole wall could be included behind.

Frame your photo and avoid zoom

Again, it sounds obvious, but ensure your subjects are framed up close in your view finder or on your screen and not appearing as if they are half a mile away.

Some zoom is okay, but it is better to use your legs as the zoom and not zoom in on your subjects from a fair distance. This is because the more zoom you use, the more the image will distort or blur and details will be lost.

This is *especially* the case with a mobile phone, try not to zoom with these at all, if you can. You may need to go quite close to the subjects to get the correct framing.

Framing: For example, if you have two people, a wreath and a train, ensure the people and the wreath are framed up close in your viewfinder – don't worry about the train, it's essentially a backdrop.

If time allows, by all means place your subjects at the front of the train, such as in these images, but don't get sidetracked by trying to include the entire train, or the view behind, or the pigeons in the station rafters!

People are important

Just to reiterate this point! In this context, pictures are nothing without people. The most important things in your photo are the people and the wreath, so they need to be up close and in focus.

An image of a wreath laying against a memorial may be poignant and by all means take those sort of pictures too, but in the press context, they are highly unlikely to use it, because for want of a better adage – 'people sell papers'.

Keep it light-hearted

Chat and communicate with your subjects. Please move left a bit sir, can the lady with the large hat move a step to her right? Etc etc.

A bit of patter puts people at ease and helps them relax, making for a better photo. If the occasion warrants it, it brings out a few natural smiles too.

But try not to be TOO funny! This photographer has had to wait before while people compose themselves again after collapsing in gales of laughter...

Rapid fire or semi auto?

Take several pictures of the same scene, just in case. Otherwise when you actually get to look at them you might discover two people have their eyes closed, one has their tongue out and the other has fallen over...

But don't overdo it! Generally three or four shots is fine but if it's the one shot you *absolutely* need, hit the button a few more times.

If you have too many of the same shot, it will make sorting out the images more tedious and time consuming, especially if you are photographing multiple different subjects, so try and minimise the amount of work you have to do.

Light it up and flash if you must

Another obvious one but try and ensure your subjects are in a well-lit area. Most devices these days will compensate for lighting fairly well, but if you have a choice, aim for the best lit spot you can.

Use the flash if you need to. It can sometimes be counterproductive as people will blink more, but if you need it, you need it.

Top tip: It sounds daft, but the flash can also be useful in bright sunlight, because otherwise the image may become washed out or too dark as the camera tries to compensate. Use of the flash can bring out flesh tones well on a bright day.

Take down their particulars

If you can (and this may not be possible), try and get the names and basic info of the subjects in the photo. For example, the Mayor of Penzance with WW2 Normandy veteran John Smith, aged 92.

Take a pen and paper or note pad or make a note on your phone.

This may well be information you can gather before taking the picture, or afterwards.

If the subject is no longer there and has left the area, try and find out who they were ie any dignitaries will have staff with them, or others there may well know.

This is useful information, but the picture is more important and depending upon the event, it may not be feasible to get names, but if you can, it will help.

Don't get technical!

Whether you have an expensive camera or are simply using your mobile phone, the best setting is usually the auto point-and-shoot.

Modern cameras and phones are very good at automatically adjusting lighting levels, so unless you really know what you are doing – *and* have the time to do it – don't worry about fiddling with exposure, apertures and all the rest. Leave it on auto!

Mobile phone photography

So many phones have great cameras these days. If you feel you can get a better image on your phone than your camera, use it.

Often phones are particularly good for static group shots in good light.

But make sure you hold it in the landscape position!

The best way to hold the actual phone is to grip it around the corners of the case, as show below.

This method is also very good for shooting video, because the camera will be stable and you can pan easily without getting jerky footage.

Of course, ensure there's no part of a finger obscuring the actual camera.

And ensure the camera lens is clean before you begin. This applies to any camera, of course. The glasses wipes available cheaply in boxes from Lidl make good lens cleaners!



Get them to the press on time!

You've taken your pictures, time to go and lie down in a darkened room? Not quite yet!

The final, and most crucial, job is getting those pictures to whoever is co-ordinating them for the press as quickly as humanly possible.

Speed is essential, bearing in mind November 11th is a Friday this year and any images from the day will be needed by the press on the day. There will be fewer working Saturday, Sunday is Remembrance and then that's it.

Please note: You **MUST** send the original files and not reduce them in size because it 'makes it quicker' to send from your phone or computer.

Smaller, low-resolution images are of poor quality with fewer pixels and may well not be good enough for press quality – and definitely not for the print media.

A *minimum* image size if at all possible is 1MB.

Ideally send your pictures from the location, even if you need to take a laptop with you. If not, when you get home, but please go straight home and send the images as a priority before anything else (you are allowed to put the kettle on first!)

First, please sort your photos if time allows. Some 300 images, many of them duplicates, will make extra work for someone.

If they are on a camera card and need to be put on a computer, download them all to a folder, create another folder for the ones you want to send, then skim through and put the best in there.

Some modern cameras can send direct from the camera, but if yours doesn't, or you're not sure how, don't worry about it.

Once you have selected the images you will send, select them all, right click and choose 'rename'.

Give them all a file name. An ideal basic example would be RoR Paddington 2022 credit John Smith.

If you were able to get details such as names, add that to the individual file names as a caption. This can be time consuming so it's not necessary for every image, just where relevant.

Mobile phones: Unfortunately, naming and captioning pictures of a phone screen is awkward and even more time consuming. In this case, it's probably better to select the ones you are sending from the photo album and just send as they are.

Please **DO NOT** waste time photoshopping and trying to beautify the images. If they look fine, send them, someone the other end can always tweak them if needs be.

If they definitely need extra brightness or whatever and you can do it quickly, that's fine, but don't waste hours editing them, because by the time you send them, it will be too late for the press.

How to send

The email to use is remembrance@veteranscharity.org.uk.

The easiest way is via <https://wettransfer.com> It is a very simple way of sending pictures from a computer without having to sign up to anything or create an account.

Simply put your email in the send box, the recipient email, a message if relevant ie 'Routes of Remembrance images from Leamington Spa station this morning as wreaths were loaded onto the London train, please credit John Smith' and upload your files.

For mobile phones, there is an app called Collect by WeTransfer which can be used in a similar way. You create a board, upload the pictures by selecting them in bulk from your phone photo album and share the link with the recipient. This is a little slower as it takes a short while for the board to be 'populated' by the images, but from the sender's point of view it is very quick.

Don't worry if you are not too technical and all this sounds baffling, just do the best you can with whatever format you are used to.

You don't *have* to use WeTransfer or apps, but the main thing is to get the pictures sent in quickly in their original sizes.