

Photography: Brooke Mason

The Product Photographer's Guide to Tethering

 TETHER TOOLS

Introduction

For many photographers, their main objective is to create beautiful and inspiring photographs. Product photography, however, is not just about taking pretty pictures; there's a lot more to it than that.

It's the photographer's job to help bring both the product's personality out and the client's brand to life with gorgeous imagery. On top of that, there are different factors to consider when shooting lifestyle as opposed to e-commerce product photos. This can make the area of product photography a challenge for some photographers, particularly if they spend too much time distracted by technology and technical details and not enough time creating.

Of course, taking care of all the technical aspects of a product photo shoot, such as monitoring and adjusting focus, lighting, composition, and so on, are just as important as selling the product through a photographer's or client's creative vision. With that said, it's difficult to do so without an efficient workflow solution in place. This is where tethered photography can simplify the technical process, speed up your workflow, and help take your product photography business to the next level.

Common Types of Product Photography

From ads to billboards to print catalogs, product photography is a segment of commercial photography that has existed as part of retail commerce for many years. Most product photography today, however, is more focused on lifestyle images used in marketing and advertising, and then e-commerce product shots are used for e-commerce websites.

✓ Product photography

In product photography, it's common to utilize a white background to direct focus solely on the product itself. However, product photography often requires a lot of trial and error in order to bring the product's personality and the client's brand to life.



The goal is usually to light and capture a product so that a viewer can see it from various angles and perspectives and make a decision to purchase it. When shooting stand-alone images or other styled tabletop shots, photographers may employ a variety of tricks and techniques to help add personality. For example, they might mist the product to create a sense of condensation, add smoke to the background of the image, or implement an array of lighting techniques to capture a particular look or tone.

The quality of images you create can make or break a sale, and now more than ever, the increase in online shopping requires great product photography. People are no longer picking up a product on a shelf, touching it, smelling it, and holding it, so it's the job of the product photographer to make sure that the potential customer can get as close to that experience as possible. This type of product photography can often be more high-volume for which tethering has many benefits to keep you organized during the workflow process.



Lifestyle product photography

Sometimes a model or models will be used in conjunction with a product to show it being used in everyday life or in a particular scenario. This is often done to create images with personality that a customer can relate to and that may lead them to purchase a product. Integrating personality into lifestyle photography images is a little easier than with e-commerce photography because of all of the styling implemented to help sell the product such as models, props, and sets.

Your client and possibly a creative team may be on set with you to ensure that you are achieving the vision the client has for their product's image and to do so timely and cost-effectively. There are little to no opportunities for reshooting, so it's even more important to get things—such as lighting, composition, focus, and more—right during the photo shoot since you have an audience watching before you even deliver the resulting images. This is where tethering while shooting lifestyle product photography can make all the difference.



Benefits of Tethering for Product Photography

There are several benefits to shooting tethered regardless of which type of product photography you work with regularly or the size of your setup.

In other words, tethering is beneficial whether you shoot using a small product setup in your studio, a lightbox in your home, or a fully equipped product studio that has automated the whole production. High-volume product photography studios for major online retailers such as Amazon do this effectively and efficiently at tremendous scale by **maintaining several shoot stations** with more robust setups.

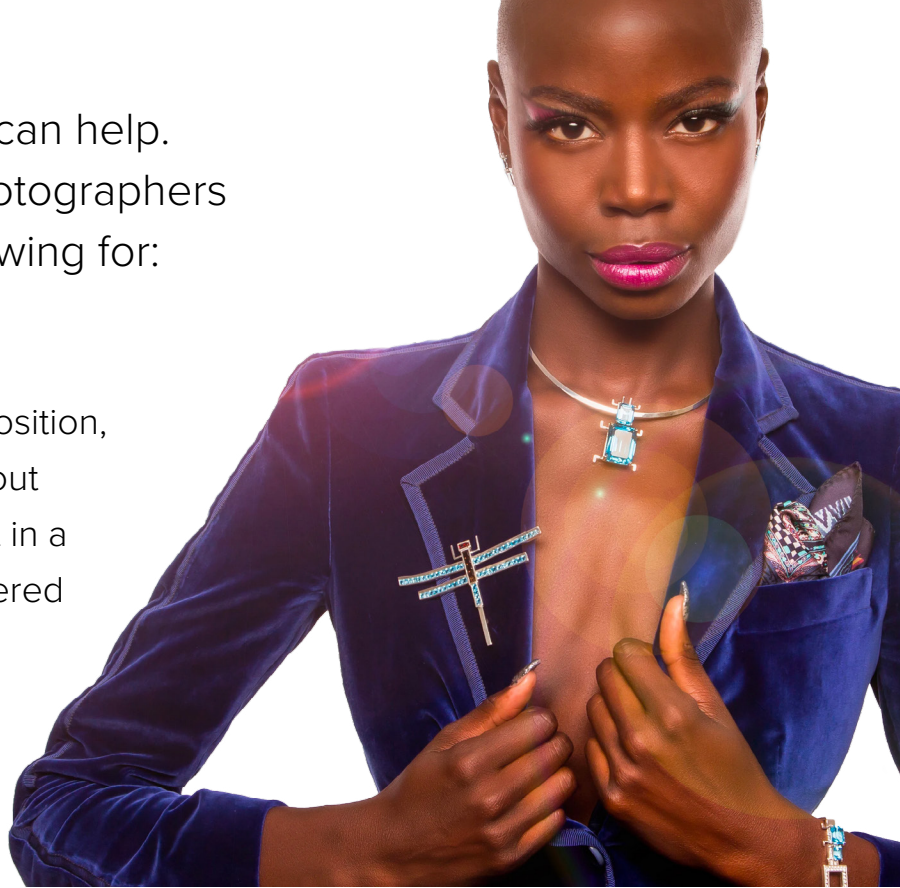


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Either way, shooting tethered can help. Tethering benefits product photographers of all shapes and sizes by allowing for:

Better-quality captures

Elements such as focus, color, composition, exposure, and the minute details about your subject are extremely important in a product shoot. When you shoot tethered in product photography, you can ensure you are getting the results you need from your captures because you can preview images on a larger screen instead of trying to analyze those details on the back of a small camera screen.



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Professional photographer Brooke Mason

Her product and advertising work includes jewelry, baked goods, automotive, and swimwear clients, said, "Nevermore has tethering been more important than when you're photographing jewelry because you have to see and make sure every little detail of that diamond is in focus because when someone goes onto a website and they zoom in on that product to buy it, they can then see the manufacturing and how good the detail is."



When tethering to a larger display, the product photographer also has the ability to share images as they are captured with his or her creative team so, if adjustments need to be made to elements such as lighting, makeup, styling, and so forth, any issues can be spotted by the creative team and appropriate adjustments can be applied immediately. By implementing a tethered photography setup, collaboration can happen in person or even remotely when a client cannot be at the photo shoot. This can be done by shooting into a watch folder which can be accessed by your client as you are shooting.



"Our eye only has a certain amount of vision we can see, so if I have multiple people in a shot, and there's only so much I can see in a shot, I need to tether," Mason said. "There's a couple of different points to tethering for me. First, I need to be able to see all the different elements and see all the models laid out—especially when there's multiple models involved. I also need to understand where the light is hitting each model for lighting, and to be honest, that's where I have my assistant looking at every shot I'm taking and if there's a problem, she's tapping me on the shoulder saying, 'Come look at this.'

"So basically, tethering involves being able to have two sets of eyes on everything I'm doing because my eye can only be behind the camera, so I need the other person there really keeping quality control, making sure I'm keeping on track with what I need."

When you use tether capture software, such as [Smart Shooter 4](#), you also have access to features that will help bring a consistent look among multiple products when dealing with high-volume e-commerce product photography. Features such as [multi-loupe view](#) allow photographers to check multiple points of focus at once. Another feature that is extremely useful in Smart Shooter is the [overlay mode](#), which allows the photographer to get a consistent placement of products on the same background and in the same position from one product to the next.

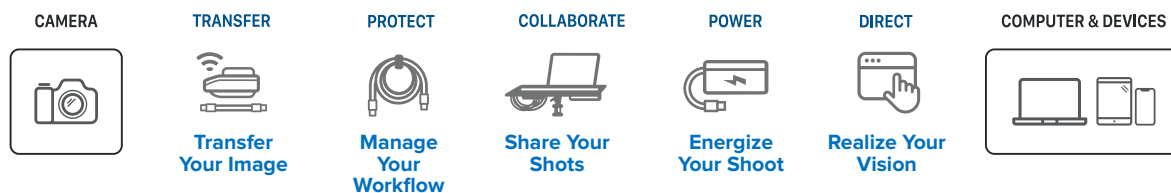
Faster workflows

Tethered shooting speeds up your workflow when shooting product photography by eliminating the time necessary to transfer images from a memory card to a computer since tethering transmits images directly to your computer. This also prevents potential problems caused by a corrupted memory card, which could result in a total loss of images. In addition to saving time on memory card transfers, tethered shooting allows you to simultaneously back up your images to an external hard drive as you are shooting which serves as an added safety precaution to preserve your images.

To accommodate large-volume production, you'll need to adopt systems and processes that create a seamless experience for customers and ultimate efficiency for your business. Automation is key in a high-volume product studio and allows for dozens or even hundreds of products to be photographed each day. It all comes down to how products are received and handled internally between staff, how quickly you can capture the requested images, and how to further streamline the process to finalize the images and deliver them in the shortest amount of time to your clients for their e-commerce and marketing needs.

Perfect Your Process

Tethering simplifies workflows so you can place focus on your subject.



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Tethered shooting allows for a more robust setup where you can utilize [Smart Shooter 4 PRO](#) to fire multiple cameras simultaneously in order to get all of the angles of a product you need at once. The overlay mode in Smart Shooter 4 is a time saver for a product photographer, especially when shooting high-volume e-commerce photos. The Smart Shooter API feature also enables product studios to further automate their processes by connecting it with other software they may use for processing and finalizing their images.

Additionally, e-commerce customers increasingly look for 360 visuals when evaluating products online; however, creating 360 imagery with high efficiency is challenging, especially for product photographers with a smaller setup. Fortunately, companies such as [Snap36](#) distribute product photography kits and rigs that enable photographers to capture 360-degree product imagery with ease and efficiency regardless of the size and scope of their studio.

Better organization

When shooting e-commerce product photography, methodical, efficient organization is key, especially when dealing with high-volume situations. Shooting tethered and utilizing the [barcode or QR code reader](#) within [Smart Shooter 4 PRO](#) offers you the ability to help keep your images better organized by product because the software reads your product's generated barcode or QR code through the lens, and any images shot thereafter are automatically grouped until another code is scanned. Any naming convention you choose gets automatically added and can be transferred between whatever software or system you are using when processing your images.



Smart Shooter 4 PRO



Ways Tethering Elevates Your Experience as a Product Photographer

Tethering can help elevate your experience as a product photographer both inward as it will reflect in your workflow and outward as it can also reflect in your business.

Tethering can save you time and money during a photo shoot because you, your creative team, and your client can review images as they are being captured and, when any adjustment needs to be made, it can be made right away instead of having to spend unnecessary time in post-production fixing things that could have been prevented or having to reshoot.

In addition, since everyone can see what is being photographed during the photo shoot on a large screen, there are no surprises to your client as to the results they will receive from you. Finally, tethered shooting will save you time in post-production because getting more details right during capture can help reduce the need for editing images after a shoot.



In your business

Your image is everything in product photography. It's not just the result you deliver to your client at the end of the day, but when your client is on the set of a photo shoot, the experience they have can also make a huge impact.



"There is an 'ooh-aah' factor about seeing photos tethered and even seeing them on a bigger screen if you bring a monitor like a 27-inch monitor," Mason said about how tethering has affected her client relationships. "It just looks so impressive backlit on a monitor. Your pictures look really beautiful, so I think there's like a Hollywood vibe that a client gets to see their work, or their products, or their images this big, and sometimes this happens for the first time with you, and sometimes clients have worked with other photographers who haven't tethered and they're like, "Oh my. What a difference it is working with you and seeing this because this is exciting." And then they leave 'high' at the end of the day because they've seen it all.

"When they just see the photos online, it's not the same as when I'm tethering in the moment, so they have that memory too," she continued. "So it helps you. It helps your public profile as a photographer because they're sharing with friends and tagging what you're doing and you look like the big hotshot of the day."

When you're on set and your whole setup looks professional, the workflow runs smoothly, and the client is happy, this shows the level of your expertise, which can grow and nurture long-term client relationships. It can be the edge to help you stand out from the crowd.

"When you look the part and you have the gear and you look professional, that client will refer you," Mason said. "That client will use you again, refer you to other people, and push you out to social media. So there's that element of just looking professional and being professional that's going to help get your name out there."

Tools to Get You Started

There are a variety of ways you can set up to conduct a product photography shoot; however, if you demand a more efficient workflow and want to reflect a more professional image to take your product photography business to the next level, there are a few flexible options of tools to help get you started.

The Product Photographer's Tethering Kit

A popular combination of tools among product photography professionals provides a wireless solution for tethering while also offering convenient options for battery power.

A recommended setup involves:

- ❑ [Air Direct Wireless Tethering System](#) lets you tether wirelessly.
- ❑ [StrapMoore](#) secures gear such as a battery, charger, phone, external hard drive, transmitter/receiver, and more to a light stand, tripod leg, pole, chair, or another object to have handy during a product shoot.
- ❑ [Tether Table Aero System](#), [Stand](#), and ["T" Setup](#) provides a place for your laptop to sit while you're shooting. The Rock Solid 4-Head Tripod Cross Bar with the Rock Solid 2-Head Cross Bar Side Arm of the T Setup extends for overhead product shots.
- ❑ [ONsite Versa V-Mount](#) provides AC power and USB charging options (Plus, having [Case Relay](#) on the stand and secured by StrapMoore powers your camera continuously with a battery pack or wall power.)
- ❑ [Smart Shooter 4](#) allows for tethered shooting, remote capture, and advanced camera control.

Create Your System

Configure a tethered workflow with the gear that's right for your high-volume business.



Power Management

Product photography scenarios, such as e-commerce product photography, can sometimes mean a long day of shooting with very little time to stop and change or charge your camera batteries. This is when a system such as the [Case Relay Camera Power System Bundle](#) comes in handy because it offers a way for you to power your camera through an external battery or power outlet.

To ensure that your laptop and other electronic devices that are needed on location stay powered throughout a photo shoot, the [ONsite Versa V-Mount Complete Bundle 110V](#) will have you covered. The battery, which is included, mounts onto your light stand with its clamp, which is also included. This bundle also includes a power supply, which has four fast-charging USB ports and two AC outlets for charging devices, and an AC power supply car adapter.

Software

When searching for tethering software for product photography, [Smart Shooter 4 and Smart Shooter 4 PRO](#) both include a variety of useful features. While both versions offer remote camera control, live view, and previously mentioned features such as multi-loupe view and overlay mode, Smart Shooter 4 PRO also offers TTL barcode or QR code scanning among other features.

Find Your Product Photography Tethering Solution

Tethered shooting is instrumental in capturing higher-quality images all while speeding up your workflow during photo shoots. It assists with better organization of your valuable images and offers safety precautions against potential loss. There are a variety of tethering solutions available to meet your individual product photography needs. Create a solution today that's right for your business.

Need help building your individual **product photography** system?

Call 888-854-6565 or email

customersupport@tethertools.com

Contact Us Today

