Challenging Property Shoots Field Guide

Practical decision routes for the moments that need more thought on location

---

Matthew | The Property Photo Guy

Contents

1 Use the simplest credible solution 1
2 Small or awkward rooms 1
2.1 If the room feels cramped 1
2.2 If fixtures dominate the frame 1
3 Bright windows and dark interiors 1
3.1 If a single exposure loses either the view or the room 1
3.2 If the edit starts to look flat 1
4 Mixed colour and artificial light 1
4.1 If daylight and bulbs disagree 1
4.2 If you decide to add light 1
5 An unprepared property 2
5.1 If there are small distractions 2
5.2 If the issue changes the agreed scope 2
6 Weather, access and outside space 2
6.1 If exterior light is not ideal 2
6.2 If access is limited 2
7 Final five-minute check before leaving 2

1 Use the simplest credible solution

The aim is not to make every room look like the same bright studio. It is to help a viewer understand the property clearly and truthfully. Pause, identify the actual problem, then choose the smallest intervention that improves the image.

A reliable sequence: check the brief, level the camera, refine the composition, look at the light, then decide whether exposure, bracketing or modest added light is necessary.

2 Small or awkward rooms

2.1 If the room feels cramped

Start from a doorway or useful corner. Keep enough floor and an obvious route through the room in the frame. Do not use an extreme width simply to force every wall into one picture. Take a second angle only if it explains something different.

2.2 If fixtures dominate the frame

Move the camera rather than accepting the first available position. A small change in height or distance can remove a distracting door edge, radiator or large furniture item from the foreground. Check the image at the edges before moving on.

3 Bright windows and dark interiors

3.1 If a single exposure loses either the view or the room

Lock the tripod and composition. Make a sensible bracketed sequence where the room genuinely has too much brightness range for one exposure. Review for movement in curtains, trees, people or screens before planning a blend.

3.2 If the edit starts to look flat

Bring back believable depth. Windows should read as windows and shadows should still have some character. Compare the finish with the room you saw, not with an unrealistically bright reference image.

4 Mixed colour and artificial light

4.1 If daylight and bulbs disagree

First identify the source. Remove or switch off a distracting lamp only where the brief and client allow it. Keep connected rooms consistent. A neutral-looking wall that changes colour from frame to frame is usually more distracting than a little natural warmth.

4.2 If you decide to add light

Use it to improve clarity, not to announce itself. Watch shiny surfaces, television screens, mirrors and window reflections. Work carefully and do not turn a simple shoot into a complex lighting setup unless the image needs it and the job allows time.

5 An unprepared property

5.1 If there are small distractions

Tidy the light, portable items that can be moved safely and respectfully. Do not rearrange heavy furniture, remove valuable personal items or make a client feel criticised. Explain what will help the photograph rather than treating preparation as a complaint.

5.2 If the issue changes the agreed scope

Pause and communicate. Confirm what can be achieved during the booked time, what needs client input and whether a return visit or additional work is appropriate. Record the agreed decision in writing.

6 Weather, access and outside space

6.1 If exterior light is not ideal

Look for an honest usable angle, then decide whether the exterior needs to be revisited. Do not promise weather-dependent images without a clear contingency. A stable client expectation is more useful than a rushed, compromised frame.

6.2 If access is limited

Recheck the brief, photograph the accessible key spaces and notify the client quickly of anything missed. Avoid guessing about locked areas, tenant privacy or permissions.

7 Final five-minute check before leaving

- Confirm the intended hero image exists and is sharp.
- Check main rooms, connecting views, exterior and agreed features against the brief.
- Look for missed lights, reflections, odd colour, soft frames and leaning verticals.
- Confirm the delivery expectation and any agreed follow-up with the client.
- Back up files before formatting or reusing any card.

Boundary reminder: This guide is a practical working prompt, not a substitute for safety training, drone regulation, client contracts, insurance or professional legal and tax advice.