

# THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO 360 PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY



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# Introduction

A 360° view is surprisingly simple. It's just a bunch of photos of your product shot at different angles.

When making a 360° view of a product, your camera does not move around the product. Instead, the camera is mounted on a tripod and takes pictures while your product rotates on a **360° turntable**.



Once you're done shooting and editing your images, it's time to find a good **360° viewer**. Wait... what's a 360° viewer? You can think of it as a highly specialized video player, purpose-built for displaying your images in an interactive 360° view. It's like a glorified slide show player — but better.

So, congrats! You now know more than 99% of your friends about 360° product photography! Next — let's check out some equipment for making a professional-looking 360° view.

# The necessary equipment



## Camera

You can probably use the camera you already have! It just needs to have “manual mode.” Why? Because all of the camera’s settings need to remain fixed throughout an entire 360° view shoot. For this guide we’ll use a Canon Rebel T2i with a Canon 50mm f/1.8 lens.



## Tripod

The goal here is to keep the camera perfectly still while you shoot a 360° view of your product. So any sort of tripod will do nicely. I’ll use my trusty Manfrotto 056 3-D Tripod Head.



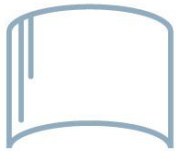
## Lights

There are two types of lights: Strobe lights and continuous lights. Strobe lights flash really bright for a fraction of a second (think lightning bolt). Continuous lights simply stay “ON” the entire time without flashing (think really bright desk lamp). Because this is a beginners tutorial, we’ll use some inexpensive continuous lights that I picked up from a hardware store for about \$20 each. I bought three (two 200 watt lamps, and one 150 watt lamp).



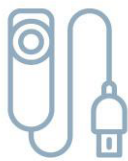
## 360° Turntable

Any kind of rotating turntable with a circular plexiglass top will work great. For this tutorial I’ll use this turntable called “**Simple Spin**” that’s purpose-built for 360° product photography. It has these small indentations etched around the outer edge which makes it really easy to keep each 360° shot evenly spaced.



## Background paper

This might be the least expensive thing you get. If you're shooting something small (like jewelry) then you can pick up a sheet of white paper from an arts and crafts store for a couple of dollars. Cheap! But good. Need something bigger? There's a company called [Savage](#) which makes some really great background paper of all sizes!



## Wired remote shutter release

It's super important that your camera does not move at all for each shot of your 360° view. If it does move – even just a little – then it'll make your 360° view jitter around like it's having a terrible epileptic seizure. Yikes! So use a remote to fire your camera.

By this point your friends should be pretty impressed with your setup!

# Studio setup

Now that you have all of your 360° product photography equipment, it's time to set it up!

You don't need a big space if you're not shooting anything larger than, say, a loaf of bread.

A small room or an office is usually more than enough for an affordable DIY 360° product photography studio. Be sure to turn off any other lights in the room, and also close the blinds if your room has windows with natural light coming in.

## Step 1: Set up your background paper



Because this is a true beginner's guide, we're going to go with a cheap and simple background setup.

I'm going to use a simple piece of paper I picked up from an arts and crafts store, along with some spring clips and a cardboard box to hold the background paper in place.

## Step 2: Document your studio setup

It's rare when I find a website that has ultra-consistent product images, so it really stands out when I see a website that does this well.

This is why shooting product images consistently gives your website a professional look and feel to it. It also helps your customers better compare your products! With that said, here's a simple trick of the trade that will easily keep your 360° views looking consistent without much effort.

This is a link to a free PDF of my comprehensive [360° Product Photography Studio Setup Template](#) that you can download, print out and use for your own photography studio.

If you have different studio setups for different types of products, you should print out a few of these templates and use each for every major studio setup you have. Your settings will vary a bit compared to mine, but here's the exact setup I used for this learning guide:

- Shutter Speed: 1/8 sec.
- Aperture: F8.0
- ISO: 100
- White Balance: “Tungsten” (about 3200K)
- Lens focal length: 50mm
- Product Platform Height: 36 inches
- Camera Height: 51 inches
- Distance from Camera to Center of Turntable: 40 inches



- Distance from Left Light to Product: 48 inches
- Distance from Right Light to Product: 48 inches
- Distance from Background Light to Product: 24 inches
- Power setting of Left Light: 200 Watts, Full Power
- Power setting of Right Light: 200 Watts, Full Power
- Power setting of Background Light: 150 Watts, Full power

## Tips for setting up your studio

**Tip #1: Turn OFF “image stabilization” if your camera has it**



This is also called “vibration reduction” if you shoot with a Nikon camera. Definitely turn it off.

Why? Keeping it on will cause problems.

First, it can make your product appear to drift around the frame, and second, it can cause your images to look slightly blurry if you're shooting with continuous lights. It's subtle, but noticeable.

### **Tip #2: Switch off Auto White Balance (AWB)**



If you use AWB, the color of your product may change as it rotates.

So what do you do? Simple — turn it to a fixed white balance setting that makes your white background paper look white (not too orange, not too blue).

Here are a few test shots I took while finding the perfect white balance setting for my camera:



*Too warm*



*Too cool*



*Not bad! (White Balance set to “Tungsten” ~ 3200K)*

### Tip #3: Set the “ISO” of your camera to 100



Your camera’s “ISO” controls the digital sensitivity of your camera’s sensor (just like the retina in your eye!).

The higher the ISO value, the faster it can absorb light, whereas the lower the ISO is, the slower it can absorb light (like putting a pair of dark sunglasses in front of your camera lens).

Using a high ISO value (beyond, say, 200) might make your images appear “grainy.” However, using a low “ISO” value will keep your images looking nice and crisp with virtually no “noise” or “grain” whatsoever.

Also, avoid “Auto ISO” — we need to keep all of the camera settings fixed for every shot.



#### Tip #4: Set your camera to “Manual” mode



*This is usually the “M” mode on most cameras.*

If doing this causes a mild panic, then take a deep breath and don't worry because you will feel like a pro after reading this little tip.

But, you need to use manual mode because your camera's settings must stay fixed.

Why? It's the only way to keep the brightness perfectly consistent for each and every frame of your 360° view. Trust me now, thank me later.

If you are using continuous lights: turn on all the lights for lighting your product and background paper.

Now set your camera's ISO to about 100, and then set your camera's

“aperture” setting to around f/8 (the aperture setting controls the size of the “hole” that lets light in through your camera’s lens).

Setting it to about f/8 will not let much light in, but interestingly, it changes the optics within your camera lens to make your product photo appear more sharp overall (cool, huh!). So, now take a test shot.

Too dark? Too bright? No worries — keep adjusting the shutter speed (this controls how much time you give your camera to let light in). Keep adjusting it until the background paper is bright and white. Once you have that set, put your product on the turntable and take another test shot. If the product is too bright, move the lights (the ones that are lighting the product) further away.

Too dark? Move them closer. Keep moving them until your product is perfectly lit. Here are some test shots I took so you can see how I adjusted the shutter speed and lights:



*Shutter Speed: 1/50 sec | Aperture: F8.0 | ISO: 100*

...a bit too dark. Let’s slow down the shutter speed so it stays open longer.



*Shutter Speed: 1/8 sec | Aperture: F8.0 | ISO: 100*

...better! The background is white and the turntable is not visible, but the product is overexposed. I'll move the lights back from the product to make it darker.



*Shutter Speed: 1/8 sec | Aperture: F8.0 | ISO: 100 | \*\*Moved lights back\*\**

Much better! The product is perfectly exposed, the background is almost pure white and the white balance is good.



*A quick peek at my camera settings*



# Tips on shooting your first 360° view

## Tip #1: Clean your product

Touching up that speck of dust can be a tedious job when you have to Photoshop it out of every single frame. This is where a lint roller and an air puffer come in handy.

## Tip #2: Center your product

If your product isn't placed in the center of the turntable it may appear to “wobble” when spun. I use a special trick for quickly centering products. This technique is especially helpful for centering circular objects, like wine bottles. Here's a link to my handy [guide on how to center your product](#).

## Tip #3: Choose how many shots you will take

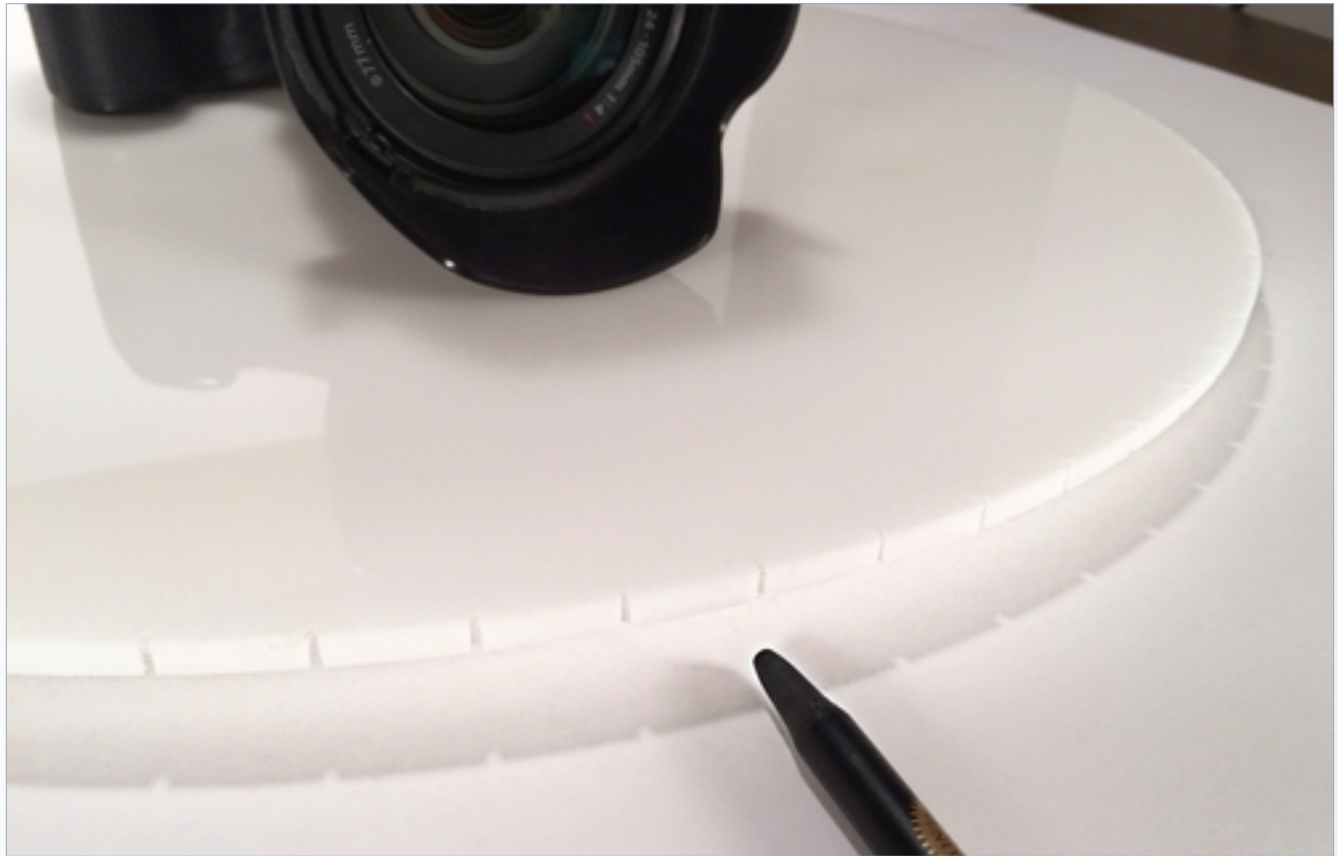
Not sure? Most people shoot 24 frames. That's a good balance between loading speed and spin smoothness. If you want to research this topic on a deeper level, check out this in-depth guide we made on [frame count and image dimensions](#).

## Tip #4: Be careful not to shoot the starting frame twice



If you do, your 360° view will have two of the same frames, causing it to have a slight “pause” at that angle when it spins.

**Tip #5: Make sure each angle is evenly spaced**



Our Simple Spin turntable has small laser-cut notches around its outer edge. Our [Spin Ninja](#) is our fully automated 360° turntable that’s designed for pros who shoot thousands of products.

**Tip #6: Shoot the first shot of the product facing forwards**

This makes consistency easy and simple. Our 360° viewer at [www.imajize.com](http://www.imajize.com) lets you change the starting angle through the software at any time, so it’s got you covered.

**Tip #7: Rotate the turntable clockwise**

Why? It's just an industry standard, so this is more of a strong recommendation than anything else. Most software and hardware for 360° product photography is set to clockwise as default. This will just make life a little easier for you, that's all.

**Tip #8: Shoot in JPG**

Sure, you can shoot in "RAW" and there's nothing wrong with that. As a general rule of thumb, shooting in JPG is a bit easier overall. Shooting and editing go by faster, and the file size is much smaller (remember, each product gets a lot of shots for the 360° view).

# Editing your 360° Images

You’ve shot your first 360° view and you’re ready to clean up the images. The key thing here is “batch editing,” where you will apply your edits to a bunch of images all at once.

For this tutorial I’ll use Adobe Bridge. It has a simple batch edit feature, it’s popular and it’s relatively easy to learn. Photoshop is my top choice, but it requires a basic knowledge of how to use “ActionScripts.”

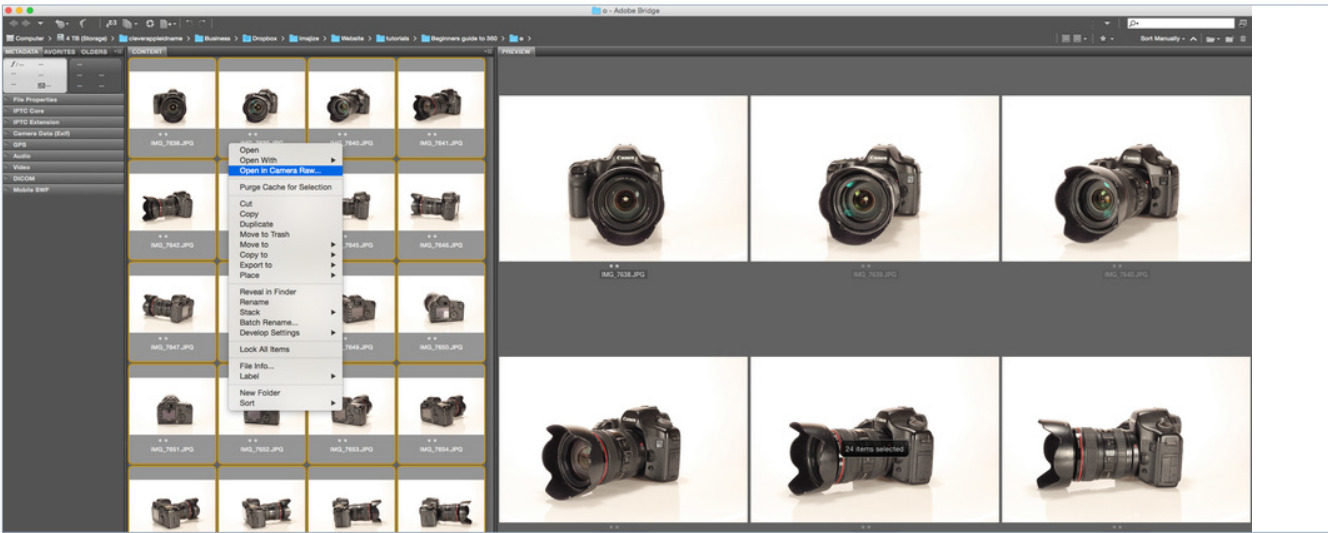
While ActionScripts almost literally give you unbound superpowers, they have a steep learning curve. So Bridge it is!

Let’s take a look at the before and after so you’ll have an idea of what the finish line looks like.

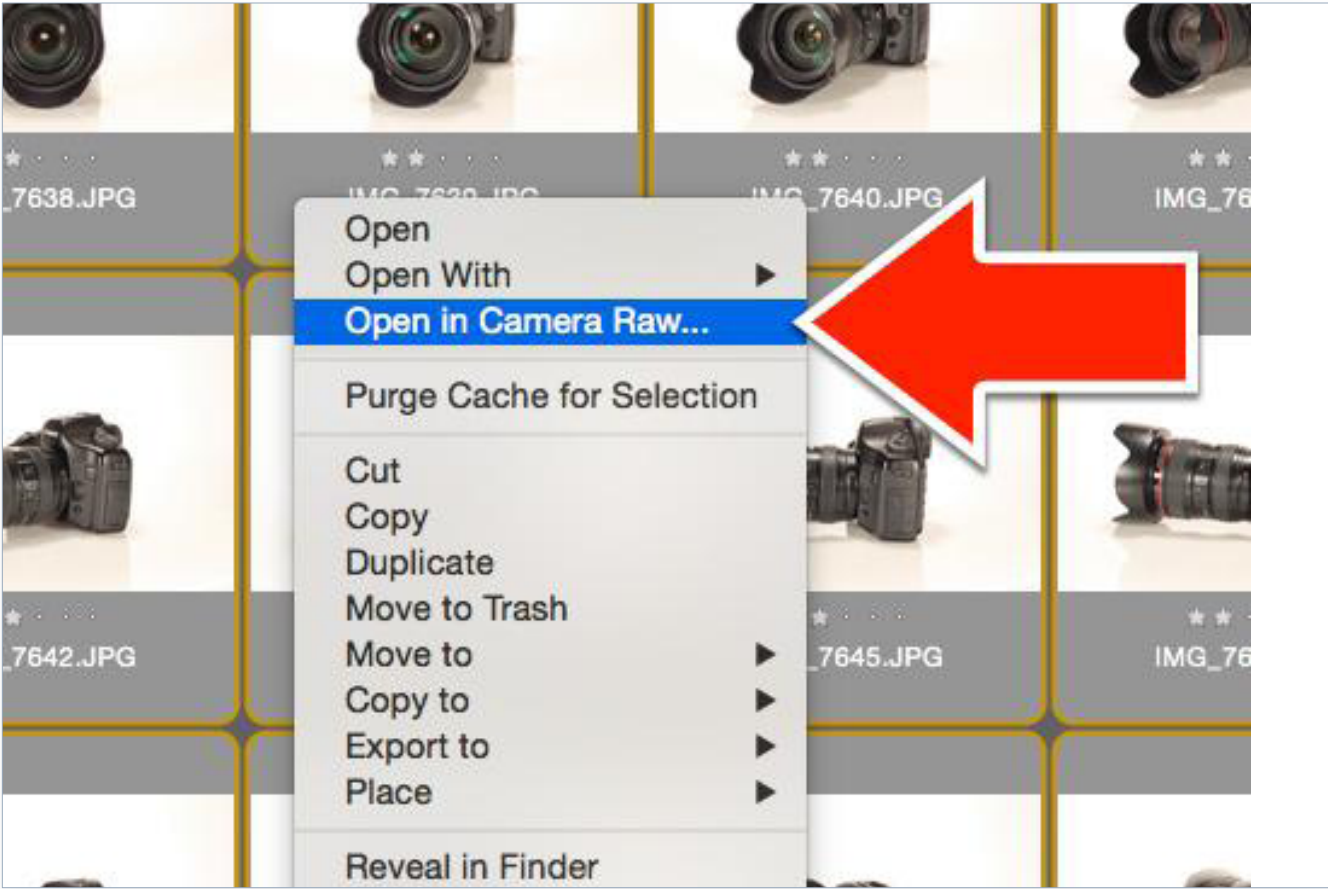
## **What did we do?**

- We made the background pure white.
- We adjusted the white balance.
- We cropped it.

Ready? Alright, let’s open the images in Bridge. This is what it should look like:



Now select all of the 360° images for one product. Right click with your mouse and select “Open in Camera Raw...”





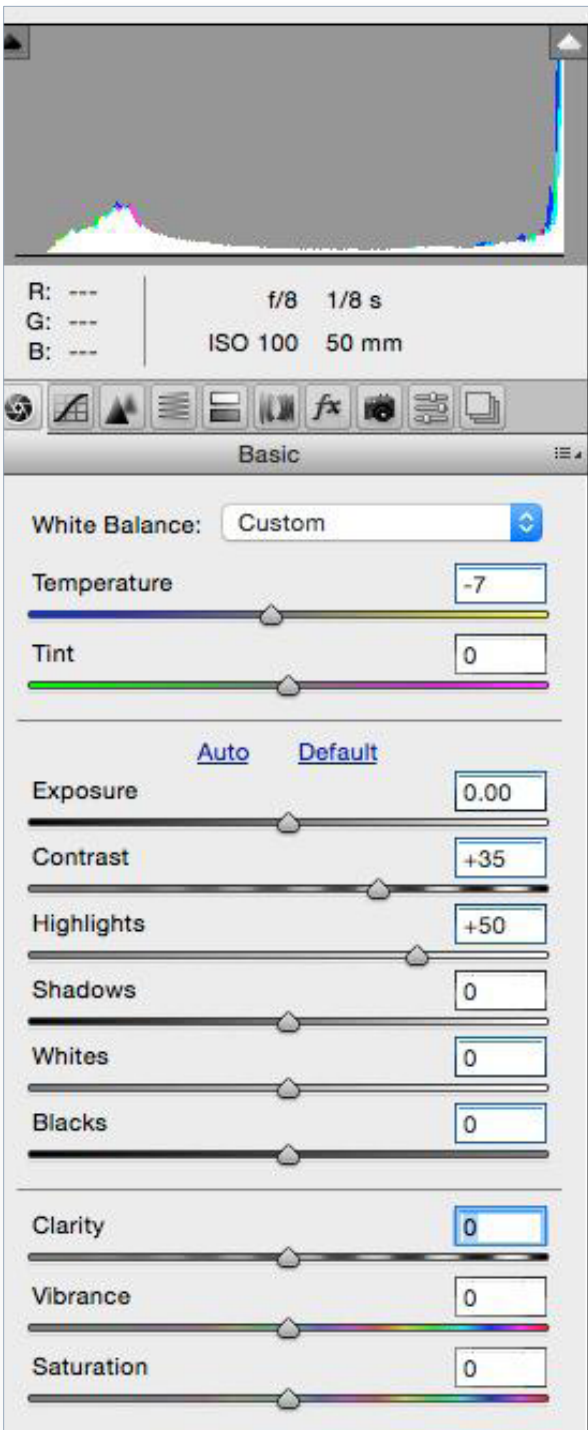
Welcome to Camera Raw. The key thing here is to batch edit. Very important. To batch edit, select all of the 360° images for this particular product (you can do this by clicking on the first image, holding down “Shift” on your keyboard, and then clicking on the last image).

Have them all selected?

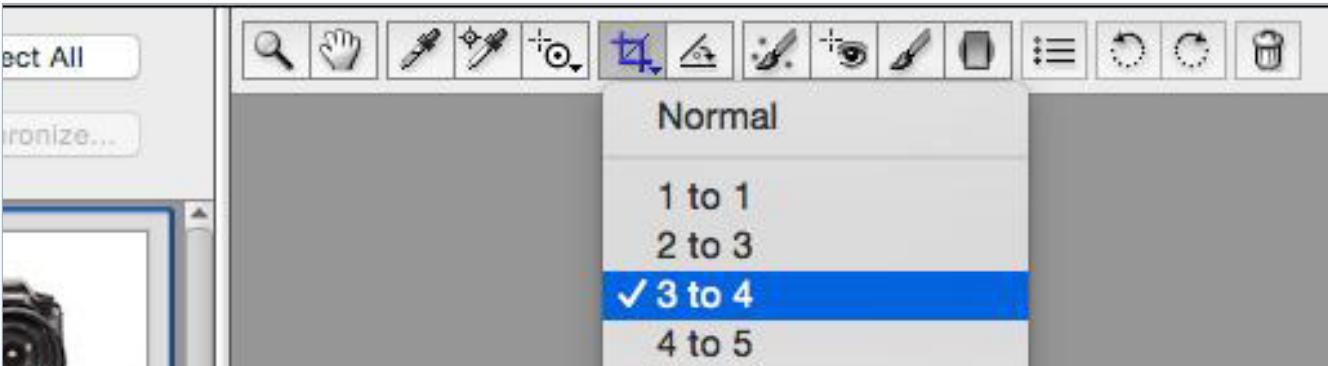
Awesome, now when we make adjustments, it will apply them to all of your 360° images at once!

**These are the adjustments I made:**

- The white balance on the camera is good, but not perfect. It's a bit "warm" or "orange." Let's fix that. I made the Temperature -7, so now there is no orange tint at all. Perfect!
- Next, we need to make the background white. I bumped up the Contrast (+35) and Highlights (+50) so now the background is pure white. So far so good.
- There's a lot of extra space around the product, so we can crop it a bit. I'm going to hover my mouse over the crop icon, and then I'm going to click and hold so a nifty dialog box appears!



This lets me choose the aspect ratio. I'm going to go with an aspect ratio of 3:4 (see below):

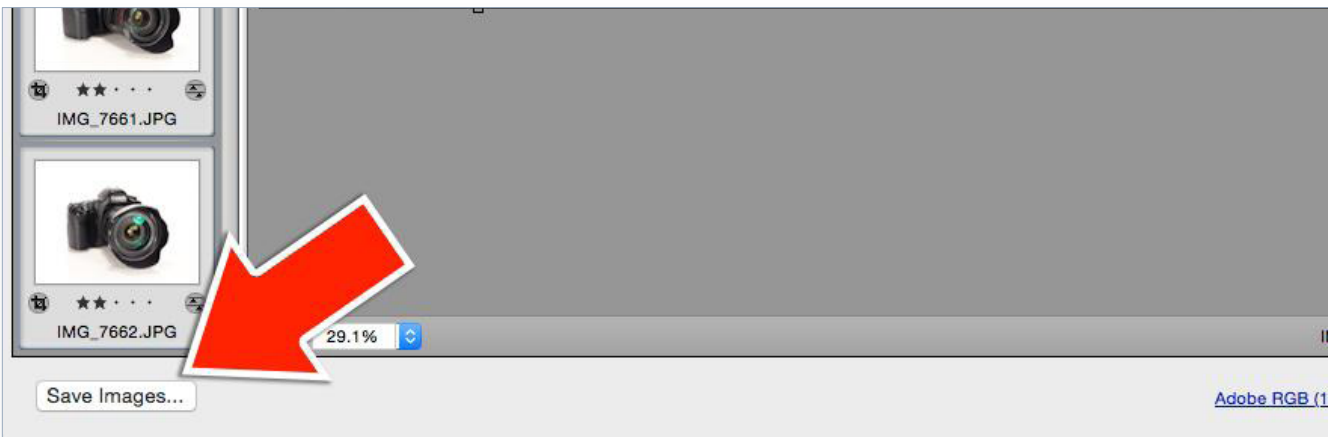




Now I can simply click and drag to set the size of the crop I want. Be careful it doesn't cut off the product at any of the other angles!



Looks good! Now all we have to do is save our images...



*Click the “Save Images...” button. It’s in the bottom left corner.*



# Uploading your 360° images

A 360° viewer will display your images and make them interactive. It's basically the software that lets people spin your awesome product on your website!

The company I co-founded, [www.imajize.com](http://www.imajize.com), makes a professional 360° viewer that loads fast and looks sharp on any device in the whole wide world. However, there is one problem — most e-commerce platforms only partially support 360° views! Crazy, I know, but there is good news.

Fortunately, many e-commerce platforms are catching up, albeit slowly. We've built 360° view Apps for other e-commerce platforms, but most platforms were hesitant to let us build a deeply integrated App that works perfect.

And then, there's Ecwid.

**Ecwid** is the first e-commerce platform that made an enormous effort to have 100% compatibility with our 360° viewer at Imajize. We worked with the software engineers at Ecwid to build the most polished and deeply integrated 360° view App I've seen so far. With this App installed, you can easily add our 360° viewer into your Ecwid product page.

Ready to take it for a spin? Click here to [install our App for Ecwid](#), or click here to [learn more about our 360° viewer software](#).

## **From the author**

*If you're as passionate as I am about making awesome  
360° views, feel free to drop me a line. It's easy  
to reach me via the support email on [our website](#).*

*I hope you enjoyed this tutorial. Good luck!*