

Objective:

To help you understand how to use the camera in your smartphone to obtain high quality images of documents and photographs in environments typically encountered by genealogists.

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Overview

- **When You Should NOT Use Your Phone**
- **Why is a scanner so good at digitizing images?**
- **The Basics of Digital Images**
- **What is a digital image?**
- **How a Digital Camera Works**
- **Digital Image File Formats**
- **Digital File Formats: TIFF, JPEG, PNG, RAW and PDF**
 - Metadata
 - Good Software: <https://www.xnview.com/en/>
 - Resolution
- **Camera Basics – how a digital camera works**
- **Steps to Follow to create optimal images**
 - **Make Sure You Have Memory Available**
 - **Clean The Lens**
 - And the screen!
 - **Choose the Best App**
 - Camera+ (runs on iOS & Android) gets best reviews
 - Avoid using “scanning software” as you cannot be sure what they are doing to “optimize” the image
- **Optimize the App Settings**
 - Resolution
 - File Format
 - Compression
 - Flash or no Flash
 - Adjust white balance
 - HDR
- **Get Good Light**
 - Sunlight (move the document near a window or take it outside)
 - Bright single light source (lamp)
 - Light from multiple directions (minimizes shadows and glare)
- **Minimize Surrounding Glare**
 - Dark, non-reflective background
- **Keep the Document Flat**
 - Coins, Books, Keys, Rulers, Coasters, Hands, etc...

Using Your Smart Phone When a Scanner is Not Available

- **Fill the Frame**
 - Utilize as many pixels as possible to capture the image (not the background)
 - Orient the phone to maximize resolution
 - Do NOT use Digital Zoom
- **Keep the Camera Parallel to the Document**
 - Avoids distorting the image
- **Stabilize the Camera**
 - Use the App's anti-shake mode if available
 - Mono-Pod or Tri-Pod (Suggested: [Qualiassu Cell Phone Tripod](#))
 - Brace the phone against something solid
- **Set the Focus/Exposure area**
 - On most phones: tap the center of the screen
- **Large Documents**
 - Overview Picture – Entire Document
 - Overlapping closeups (top left, top middle, top right, bottom left, bottom middle, bottom right)
 - Keep the camera at the same height
 - Keep it parallel to the document
 - Closeups of “important areas” (lets you zoom in with high level of detail)
 - How close is “too close”?
- **Does all of This Really Make a Difference? Yes!**
- **What About Wand Scanners**
- **What About a Flip Pal?**
- **Why Not Use Scanning Software?**
 - Google PhotoScan – <https://www.google.com/photos/scan/>
 - PhotoMyne – <https://photomyne.com/>