

# Essential Photos

This guide covers essential candidate photos, with examples to replicate and tips on how to take them.

Most shots are versatile and suit various stories - add extras for specific campaign issues.

## Key pointers for every shot:

- » **Make your candidate as comfortable as possible.** People can discern even the slightest discomfort in a facial expression, so if your candidate feels awkward it will show.
- » **Take lots of photos.** Interaction and group shots are hardest to get right. On a full photo day you will likely take more than 1000 photos and get 50 really good ones.
- » Don't move on until you've checked what you've taken and you're happy. **Don't be rushed.**
- » Some of these photos are easier to get with a proper camera. **If you use a phone camera**, things closer to the camera will be enlarged so if you're shooting over someone's shoulder, stand further back and crop in later.



# DIAMONDS/TEAM



Ensure all signs are upright and held as diamonds.

Frame shots tightly - avoid excess floor, sky, or legs. If visible, adjust your position.

Position people and signs carefully.

Use large "super signs" over small correx.

The candidate should stand a few feet in front of the signs.

Check the camera view, not just by eye. Take test shots, adjust signs and people to fill gaps, and create depth with overlapping signs.

For larger groups:

- Remove distracting items (bags, shades, hats).
- Use super signs as a backdrop.
- Prioritise depth over width - avoid long lines.
- Ensure group demographics reflect the electorate.



# SMILING HEADSHOTS



Standing alone for a photo can feel awkward - help your candidate relax and ease into it.

Position them at a 45-degree angle, turning slightly toward the camera for a more flattering look.

Frame waist-up with their head in the top third. Avoid low-angle shots.

Natural smiles work best - keep the energy up by chatting and moving between shots. Check results and adjust as needed.

For phone cameras, use the longest (most zoomed-in) lens. Avoid obvious fake background blur.

If they're moving, their hands will too - start with arms naturally at their sides or in pockets.



# LANDMARK SHOTS



Follow the standard headshot advice.

Position the candidate with a recognisable local landmark behind them.

The larger the landmark, the further back you'll need to be. Keep it roughly at head height to minimise empty space.

Ensure the landmark is identifiable, even if cropped just above the candidate's head.

In high street shots, watch for distracting background signs.



# LISTENING



Get a variety of these shots - they're some of the most useful to have.

Position the candidate like a headshot but off to one side, framed from roughly waist height. Arms should be relaxed - no 'listening hands.'

Shoot over someone's shoulder as they talk to the candidate. Keep them close together and similar in size to avoid awkward gaps.

Encourage eye contact and a natural smile - saying "now say something hilarious" often works. Show examples to guide expressions; aim for engaged, not vacant.

Ensure the candidate is in focus, as auto-focus may lock onto the person in the foreground.

Phone cameras are wide-angled, which can distort proportions. If you lack a longer lens, step back and crop later.



# SITTING & LISTENING



Set up as you would for standing and listening shots, focusing on the candidate.

Eye contact is key; remind both people to maintain it naturally.

For seated shots, crouch to the same level - don't shoot down at them.

Using someone the candidate knows helps them relax.

Check for awkward bulges in clothing when sitting.

Capture both a smiling shot and a neutral one for serious topics - just avoid looking glum.

Facial expressions make or break these shots.

Have a cup to hold is useful to give people something to do with their hands



# DOORSTEP



Again, the set up is similar to the listening shot above, just on or near a doorstep.

Avoid a big height difference. Beware of doorways that have a big step up to them. If this is an issue, set it up just in front of the house rather than in the doorway.

If you are shooting in the doorway, go inside the house and take the photo from over the other person's shoulder.

The risk is that it can often be dark in the entryway and using a flash risks lighting up the person near to you and not the candidate. Again, if you can't get the lighting to work shooting like this, move it outside.

Avoid a large shoulder and a small candidate. Don't use a wide lens if you can avoid it.

Focus on getting a nice, open smiling face.

Try some with and without a rosette/clipboard.



# SHOP OR MARKET



Shoot from behind the shopkeeper, ideally from behind the counter.

Have the candidate buy something, focusing on eye contact and a smile rather than the item.

Capture the exchange naturally - freezing midair can look staged. If needed, have them pause at the moment of handover.

Position the window behind or beside you to avoid shooting into the light.

Keep the candidate close to the shopkeeper - large stalls can create too much distance, making them look small.



# ISSUES TO AVOID



A very common issue with phone cameras or wide lenses, is the candidate looking small.

- Bring the candidate closer to the people in the foreground.
- Stand a bit further back to take the shot and then crop the image later

**- If your phone has multiple lenses, shoot with the most zoomed-in one.**



Group shots with a long line of people are hard to fit in leaflets. Having the candidate stood in the group means they don't stand out.

- Make your crowd deep rather than wide.

Make sure your candidate is stood forward of the group by 5-6 feet as a starter. Or right at the front if you're shooting closer to them.



If possible, try and avoid harsh, bright midday sun. People will be squinting and the contrast can cause unsightly shadows on their faces.

Slightly overcast days or moments when the sun goes behind a cloud are ideal. Or try and find some shade, eg under a tree. Or buy a reflector.



If you're too close to a landmark like this building you will either have to crop it out or have a small candidate in your shot. The road signs right behind his head are also unsightly.

For photos with buildings, set up much further away. And always keep an eye on backgrounds



Without clear direction, you'll end up with photos with no message and people just randomly standing.

Have a clear idea of what the photo is trying to achieve and make sure someone is in charge and proactively telling people where to stand and look.