## Sourcing Stock Photography

Stock photography can be a great way to build out the visual side of your brand when custom photography isn't an option. The key is choosing images that feel intentional and consistent rather than selecting photos individually just because you like them.

Your goal is to create a small collection of images that complements your brand and can be used across your website, social media, email, presentations and other marketing materials.

### Start With Your Brand

Before you begin searching, look at the brand elements you already have, such as your logo, color palette and fonts.

Then choose a few words that describe how you want your brand to feel. For example:

Warm • Natural • Approachable
Clean • Modern • Minimal
Colorful • Energetic • Playful
Sophisticated • Refined • Editorial

Keep those words in mind as you search. They'll help you decide whether an image fits your brand beyond simply liking the subject matter.

### Look for Images That Work With Your Color Palette

Your exact brand colors don't need to appear in every photograph. Instead, look for images with overall colors and tones that complement your palette.

For a warm, earthy palette, you might look for warm light, natural materials, greenery and muted colors. A bright, cool palette may work better with crisp whites, cooler light and cleaner colors.

Pay attention to the lighting and editing style, too. Images with a similar overall tone will naturally feel more cohesive when used together.

*IMAGE: Show a sample brand color palette and 3–4 stock images that coordinate with it.*

### Search With Intention

Broad searches can return thousands of unrelated images. Add words that describe the style, mood, color or lighting you want along with the subject.

For example:

Instead of office, try bright minimal office natural light.

Instead of skincare, try neutral luxury skincare warm minimal.

Instead of coffee shop, try modern warm coffee shop lifestyle.

If you find an image that feels exactly right, look at other work by the same photographer or search for visually similar images. This can be an easy way to find additional photography with a consistent look.

**Build a Versatile Image Collection**

Rather than finding one image every time you need one, build a small collection of brand photography you can pull from for different projects.

Look for a useful mix of:

- Horizontal images for banners, headers and wide layouts
- Vertical images for social media and narrow layouts
- Images that can easily be cropped into square or other formats
- Close-up details as well as wider scenes
- Images with open, uncluttered areas where text can be added
- A variety of subjects that make sense for your business, such as people, products, spaces or lifestyle details

When choosing images with open space, look for simple areas such as a wall, sky, tabletop or other uncluttered background. This gives you flexibility to add a headline or other text without competing with the photograph.

*IMAGE: Could show an image with white space or a group of different size or layout images.*

**Look at Everything Together**

Before finalizing your selections, view the images as a group.

- Do these images feel like they belong together?
- Do they fit the overall look and color palette of my brand?
- Do I have enough variety in subject, orientation and composition to use them in different ways?

If one image immediately feels out of place when you see everything together, leave it out.

You don’t need dozens of photos to get started. A smaller, well-curated collection will be much more useful than a large folder of unrelated images.

**Avoid the “Stock Photo” Look**

Choose images that feel natural and believable for your brand and audience. Be cautious with photography that feels overly posed, heavily edited, or dated.

The best stock photography shouldn’t call attention to the fact that it’s stock photography. It should simply feel like a natural extension of your brand.

**Check the License**

Before using any stock image, make sure you have permission to use it for your intended purpose. Free and paid stock libraries have different licensing terms, so always check the usage rights before using an image in your brand or marketing materials.