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How to Photograph an Image on a TV



“How do I take a photograph of my TV screen without getting the black stripe across the shot?” - Brad

Thanks for the question Brad. Taking photographs of your television while it's on isn't too difficult and because you're shooting in digital it should be something that you can get right with a little experimentation (keep taking shots until you get it right - it won't cost you anything but a little time).

[Image by tripu](#) The major factor that you'll need to

consider is what type of TV screen that you have. If you have an older CRT screen it's a slightly different ball game to if you have a newer flat panel screen.

CRT Televisions

All televisions have what is called a 'refresh rate' (or the rate at which the screen replaces images on the screen pixel by pixel each second to make it a moving image). With older CRT screens this refresh rate is 24 times per second (on newer screens this rate is faster). As a result you'll need to choose a slower shutter speed when photographing a CRT TV. Otherwise you'll get a shot with a black band across the TV (as pictured) - something that is often referred to as 'banding'.

With a CRT TV you'll probably need a shutter speed of 1/25 second or slower. As a result of this you'll also need to have a tripod to keep your camera secure and you'll want the image on the screen to be a fairly still or slow moving one (or you'll get movement blur). To select this slower shutter speed switch your camera to shutter priority mode and the camera will select an appropriate aperture to get a well exposed shot.

Newer Televisions



[Image by mjp3000](#)

As I mention above, newer screens have a faster refresh rate and will allow you to use a faster shutter speed. This will vary a little between screens so you'll want to experiment a little. To do this, switch to shutter priority mode and try some different shutter speeds (you'll probably be able to get reasonable shots at 1/125 or even 1/250 depending upon your screen). As a result of

this faster shutter speed you'll be able to capture faster moving images (but still not anything that is too fast like sports).

Lastly - keep in mind two more things which apply to both types of screens:

1. Sharpness - taking a photo of the image on your TV will result in a fairly un-sharp image - even on newer TV's. The quality is never likely to be high.

2. Color - the light coming from your TV is not likely to be accurate when captured by your camera and you'll probably need to do some adjusting either in post production or by changing the white balance settings in your camera before shooting.

Keep in mind that your settings will vary from television to television so keep experimenting to get the best results you can.

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6 Responses to “How to Photograph an Image on a TV”

- Tim [Says:](#)

Some newer computer also have “video-in” ports that allow connection from a video source (DVD, VCR, TV, etc.). With the right software, you can take a screen shot of the video source just like you would take one of your computer's desktop.

It will create a perfect digital picture of the screen - perfectly sharp with the correct colors.

- [Andrew Ferguson Says:](#)

If you want to capture something from a television, it's *much* better to use a tv capture card for your computer. I'd recommend doing that ten times out of ten vs taking a photo of something on tv.

If there's just a tv in the background and you don't want a band, these are great tips.

The refresh rate/frequency of electronics is important, particularly with TV's, monitors, and fluorescent lights. Fluorescent tubes run at 60 hz, so in order to get a uniform distribution of light you need to shoot at 1/60th of a second to get a full wave or 1/30th to get two full waves.

- [Puplet Says:](#)

Ditto...

- [Darren Says:](#)

you're right Andrew and Tim - much better results with those approaches if you've got the resources to do so.

Unfortunately the reader who asked the question just had a TV and a camera to capture the shot so actually photographing the TV was his only option.

- [Julián Rodríguez Orihuela Says:](#)

And many times you'll want that pixellated effect in a shot, it can look really cool.

e.g.: <http://flickr.com/photos/ceralin/309215223/>

- [Dave B Says:](#)

Question,

I was reading about copyright, that you can't copy the original works of something, like a photo. You need to add a new dimension to what was copyrighted in order for it to not be a violation. Now DVD's, burning a copy is a recreation of the original work so it's violation, but is taking a still snap shot off your TV from a DVD violating copyright? The original works was a motion picture, not still snap shots. Is doing this (creative enough) creating another work outside the original works of the copyright owner? If it is considered a creative new work it is not a copyright violation.

This is why parody, like drawing a beard on a Madonna picture is not copyright violation, it added a new feature outside of the original.

I have read another article on the net that one guy took hundreds of shots off his TV to be published in books and magazines.

I have looked for info on this and I can't seem to find any legal information.

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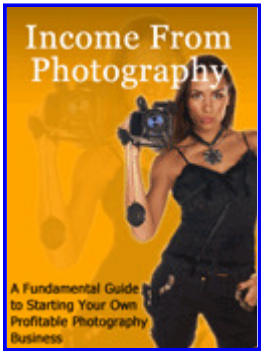
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