



A SIMPLY BUSINESS GUIDE

How to Start a Photography Business



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Simply Business

MAY 2019

Congrats on Starting Your Photography Business!

Whether you're planning on becoming a freelance photographer or specializing in wedding photography, deciding to start your own photography business is a big deal.

After all, you're about to embark on an exciting journey — one where you'll use your photography skills to start and grow your own business. Plus, you'll be doing more than making money with your camera; you'll be helping clients capture memories they will treasure for a lifetime.

Here at Simply Business, we're all about helping entrepreneurs to get their hands on the tools and knowledge they need to start and run their businesses. That's why I created this handy how-to guide on starting your own photography business. It's chock-full of advice, tips, and techniques that are needed to not

just monetize your photography skills, but also to:

- **Understand the qualifications needed to start a photography business**
- **Get licensing and insurance for your new biz**
- **Know how much money you need to get started**
- **Find your first customers**
- **Set the right hourly fee**
- **And more!**

Plus, this guide is peppered with advice from real photographers who were eager to share their hard-earned knowledge with us (and you!).

So how do you know if you should make that leap to starting your own business?

Keep in mind that this guide isn't dedicated to the specific photography skills you need to be a professional photographer. This guide has been created from the perspective that you already have a good eye for photography and you've been mulling around with the idea of starting a business — you just don't know how to do it.



Top tip!

6 Questions You Should Ask Before Starting Your Photography Business.

There's no denying that you've always had a knack for taking beautiful photographs. From landscapes to portraits, your unique talent and eye for details make your photographs stand out from the crowd.

In fact, your photographs are so good that you've had friends and family tell you that you should start your own photography business.

But are you actually *ready* to start a business?

While there's no one right way to determine if you're fully prepared for the entrepreneurial journey, these six questions can help you better understand what you're getting into.

What will be your speciality?

Being a photographer could really mean anything. You could specialize in wedding photography, sports photography, nature photography, or anything else of interest. But if you want to start a successful business, it pays to narrow down what your specialties are so that you get the customers — and projects — you actually want.

If you have just a few specialties, try to resist expanding your offerings to include everything under the sun. Some of the best photographers are highly specialized, plus customers may feel more comfortable with you if they know you're the master of a specific niche.

Once you've identified those specialties, make sure you're marketing them in a way that makes sense to your customers. For a little inspiration, check out the websites of a few top-rated photographers in your area to see how they approach this challenge.

Is There a Market for Your Services?

One of the most common mistakes that photographers make is that they don't get a good sense of market demand. And if you don't know how many other photographers you're competing with or if there are enough customers for the services you offer, you're running the risk of making that mistake, too.

So how can you tell if there's a good market for your photography business? You could do some online research, but we'll cut the learning curve down for you. Take a look at this article, which calculates [the best cities for photographers](#) based on opportunities, cost of living, and entrepreneurial appetite.

Keep in mind that this isn't an exact science and definitely should be coupled with more online research.

So what's the bottom line here? Simple: Make sure you understand if there's an appetite for your photography services. Otherwise, you might spend too much time trying to get noticed by customers who are inundated with other offers.

Are You Prepared to Run Your Business?

Becoming a successful photographer means you're going to fill a lot of roles. You'll be a bookkeeper, a lawyer, an office manager, and a marketer — and that's just what you should expect on a daily basis. Many photographers run into the danger of not anticipating all the extra work, which is just as important — if not more so — than actually doing photography work.

If you want a photography business that will stand the test of time, you'll need to account for all of this extra work. During your first few months of business, you'll rarely spend an eight-hour day just taking photographs and editing them. Just consider all the tasks you'll need to complete in order to tackle your first job:

- **Find and market to clients**
- **Create invoices**
- **Register your business**
- **Build a website**
- **Open a business bank account**
- **Save receipts and invoices**
- **Buy additional equipment**

This information isn't meant to dissuade you from starting your photography business; it's designed to help you prepare for the most successful start possible. Expect and plan to put in a lot of admin work now, rather than fitting it in after a long day of working. That's when you could potentially run into trouble.

Do You Have Seed Money to Start With?

Starting a professional photography business can be expensive, even if you already have a few cameras, lenses, and other equipment at hand. Between registering your business, setting up your marketing plan, and buying additional equipment, you might need to track down a source of funding to get your business off the ground.

Is There a Photography Business That You Admire?

Make sure you understand where your main costs are coming from, especially during the first few months of starting your business.

If you're using personal funding or a line of credit to finance your business, map out your expenses so you don't inadvertently overspend. Save all your receipts and track all business-related expenses, as many of these will be tax-deductible.

Don't forget that you'll need funding for any fees associated with starting your business, like licenses and insurance (we'll cover this later in this guide).

Starting a small business can involve a steep learning curve — unless, of course, there's a photographer out there who is already doing what you intend to do. That's why we encourage you to figure out what it is about their business that works so well.

Just think of it as competitor research!

Successful photography businesses have, for the most part, figured out those crucial first steps for starting a business, so it's worth seeing if you should follow in their footsteps. During your competitive research, don't forget to:

- **Take a look at their websites to see what their specialties are, as well as how much they charge.**
- **Check online how they're marketing their business across Google and social media.**
- **Grab a coffee or beer with a photographer who's willing to share their hard-won advice with you.**

It's worth noting again that you should be keeping an eye on how many photographers are in your specific area. If you're finding a lot

of photography businesses, you might want to return to the second question in this section (“Is there a market for your services?”) and analyze your competition.

Do You Have a Plan?



The most successful photographers have a strong idea of where they want their businesses to be in five or ten years. That means if you’re building a business for the long-term, you need a plan in place, too. For example, do you know if and when you want to start hiring employees? How will you fund your business?

Don’t worry if you haven’t thought about your plan yet; we have a section in this guide on how to build your business plan (plus a FREE plan template you can download).

What Do You Need to Start Your Photography Business?

Wondering what you need to start
a photography business?

Let's take a look at the absolute essentials you should have,
including a few surprising qualifications that can help
set you up for success.

A Business Name and Structure

Picking out your business name can seem daunting, as it sets the tone for how you should market your business. Plus, if your business name doesn't resonate with your customers, you may end up making it difficult to get customers.

Fortunately, we have some great content that can help you [pick out the perfect business name](#), so definitely check it out if you don't have a strong idea of what your business's name should be.

Once you've chosen your business name, you'll need to determine what you want your business structure to be. There are a few questions you should ask yourself before you start looking into which business structure you should choose, including:

- Are you starting a full-time business, or are you doing this as a side business or money-making hobby?
- Do you want to be personally liable for any business debts, or do you want to protect your personal assets?
- Are you starting this business by yourself, or working with someone else?
- Are you willing to learn more about any corporate obligations you might have?

Don't worry if you're not sure of the answers to all of these questions. The main goal here is to figure out how much time you're going to devote to your

photography business and how much you want to protect your personal assets. If you're starting a business with someone else, that could affect the type of tax structure you should choose.

In general, you'll be asked to structure your business as one of the following:

- **Sole Proprietorship:** This is an unincorporated business structure with one person running the company.
- **General Partnership:** This is an unincorporated business structure with two or more people running the company together.
- **Corporation:** A corporation is an incorporated business structure that limits a business owner's personal liability, as the corporation is its own legal entity.
- **Limited Liability Company (LLC):** A limited liability company (LLC) combines the benefits of a corporation with those of an unincorporated business. In other words, business owners have limited liability for debts and aren't required to pay separate corporation taxes.

For the best guidance on how to structure your photography business, check out this [handy article from the IRS](#) — it can help streamline your decision process.

Your Business Plan.

Whether you want to create an official plan to get funding or just want to create a document that can help you track your goals, a business plan can play a crucial role in setting you up for success.

In a more traditional sense, the business plan is absolutely crucial for nabbing any funding you may need. Even if you're planning on raising money from family and friends, a business plan can show you what success looks like, and if you have a solid plan for getting there.

Creating the actual business plan can be a pain, but we've cut down on the learning curve so you won't waste time with formatting or plan research. Just download our [FREE business plan template](#) and follow the step-by-step instructions to create the type of plan you need.

A business plan can provide guidance and feedback regarding whether you're on track for achieving your own personal goals. For example, if you want to grow a certain number of clientele or be named one of The Knot's Top Wedding Photographers by 2022, your plan can suggest milestones you should be accomplishing along the way.



Top tip!

Your Business License.

It's not exactly the most exciting topic in the world, but trust us, getting your business license early can help you acquire customers much faster.

Here's why: Whether you want to be a wedding photographer or a freelance photographer, having a business license is key for getting prominent names to hire you. Wedding venues probably won't allow you on their premises if you're not licensed and insured. Prominent brands may be cautious about hiring you for projects if you don't have a business license.

And you may even find yourself getting into legal trouble if you don't have your business license, depending on which state you're in.

Here's a step-by-step guide on how to determine if you need a business license for your photography business:

- The best way to find license requirements in your area is to head to the Small Business Administration's website and [search for your location](#). Doing so will allow you to see any state and city requirements around the business license.
- If you are required to apply for a business license, make sure you already have your business's name and tax structure established before you apply.
- Complete and submit all forms required by your state.
- Pay your license fee; this could range from \$40 to \$400, based on where you're located and the fees associated with obtaining your license.
- Once you've applied for your license, you should receive it within one to two business weeks.

If you've checked if your state requires a business license and nothing comes up, you could always check with your city or town hall just to verify it.

Business Insurance for Photographers.

Once you've applied for your business license, we recommend shifting gears and looking for [photography business insurance](#).

Insurance for photographers is a type of small business insurance policy that specifically protects your photography business from claims of third-party damages, accidents, or even negligence and copyright issues.

For example, let's say you're hired to take several family portraits in a very nice home. During the course of the project, you accidentally knock over and break an expensive vase. Without business insurance, you'd be required to pay for that vase out of your pocket, which may end up dipping into your personal finances.

Or let's say a customer accuses you of plagiarizing another photographer's work. Even if the claim is baseless, it will still cost money to go to court and defend yourself. That's where your insurance policy can come in handy, as it can pay for your legal costs, as well as any claims you may be ordered to pay. Business insurance is no joke, and if you want to own a successful photography company, you have to have it.

Don't worry, you don't need anything too complicated when you're starting your business. Most photographers should opt for a professional liability policy and a general liability policy, especially if they work at properties other than their own.

You can [find and compare quotes for both types of policies](#) at Simply Business. We specialize in small business insurance for photographers, so you can get personalized coverage at affordable prices. All you have to do is provide a few details about you and your photography business — we'll take care of the rest.

If you're nervous about choosing your policy, check out our advice on [how to pick the right insurance coverage for your business](#).

Photography Equipment.

Here's where things get a little tricky, because photographers are so different; you may have more equipment, or you may have only a camera because you're just starting your business. There's no one right answer for the exact photography equipment you'll need before you consider yourself "a business"; in fact, a lot of photographers say that all you need to start your biz is a good eye for photography and a camera.

Take a look at what equipment photographers recommend purchasing if you want to [establish your own studio](#). If you're looking to go into the field as a wedding photographer or sports photographer, check out our next section, which has more detail on which equipment you should have, as well as how much you can expect to spend.

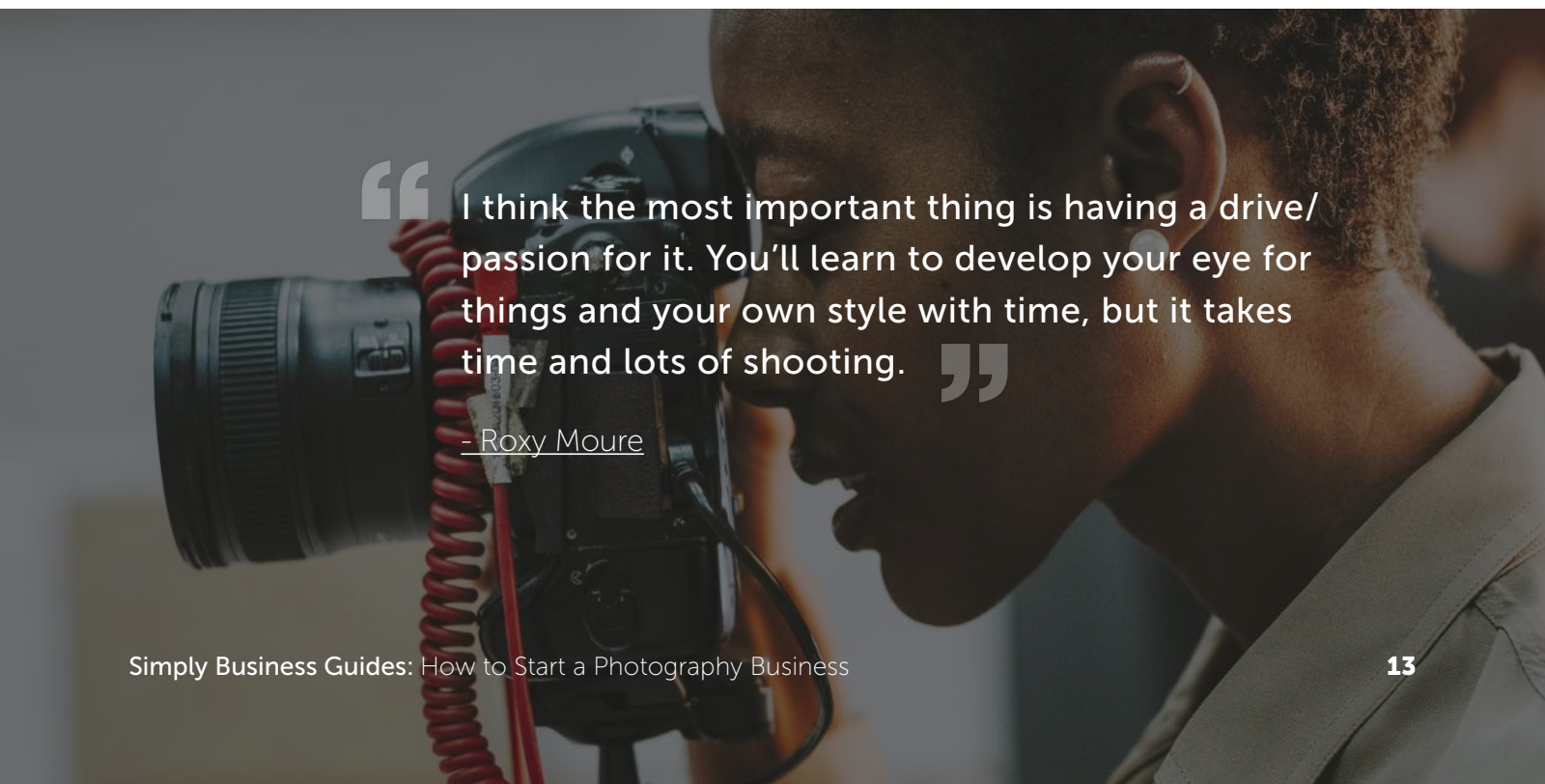
A Sense of Humor and Tenacity!

Most of the photographers we interviewed for this guidebook didn't have proper training before starting their business. Instead, these were the qualifications that they said helped them set up for success:

- The willingness to shadow other photographers and learn from them directly
- The tenacity to teach yourself how to shoot
- The will to nurture the "eye" you have for the job
- The ability to work well with people — especially customers
- An eye for detail
- Kindness and compassion

Notice how having the best camera or specific training from an elite school didn't come up?

That's because, according to these photographers, having both people and business skills is crucial for starting and growing your business. It makes sense: If you're not necessarily great with people or you tend to ignore admin work, it might be tough building a business over the long term. This photographer sums it up best:



“ I think the most important thing is having a drive/passion for it. You'll learn to develop your eye for things and your own style with time, but it takes time and lots of shooting. ”

- Roxy Moure

Getting funds: The Cost of Starting Your Photography Business

One of the most popular questions about starting a photography business boils down to figuring out how much it will cost.

And unfortunately, it's also one of the most difficult questions to answer. That's because the response can vary depending on:

- **Your photography niche**
- **The equipment you already own**
- **Whether you already have a business license and insurance**
- **Your existing software**
- **And more**

So while we'd love to be able to give a single answer to this ever-popular question, the truth is that it's more realistic to say that there's a broad range to how much it will cost to start your photography business.

To help answer this question, we reached out to photographers who were happy to share their own insights into how much they spent to start their business. We've also included some advice on how to reduce your startup costs, which can help trim your expenses in case you're working with a tight budget.

The Average Cost to Start a Photography Business

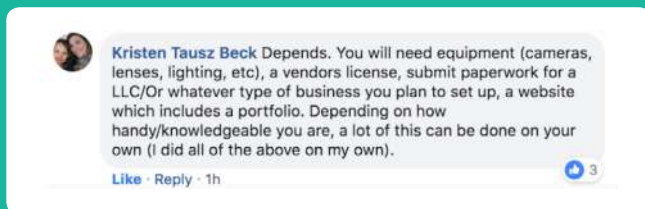
When we asked our photographers about the average cost of starting a photography business, we got a WIDE range of answers. Some said they were able to start their businesses for as little as \$1,000. Others said they spent over \$10,000 to get their businesses off the ground.

Below are just a few of the answers we got from professional photographers.

One of the more prominent themes is that there's no standard cost for starting your photography business; instead, it's more reliant on what you're willing to work with and what you already have.

For example, if you're just starting the business and don't have any equipment, you're probably going to need more money to start your business than someone who already has a few pieces of equipment, like a camera and editing software.

But whether you already have equipment or are starting out with nothing, you probably have this question on your mind: "How can I start my photography business without spending too much money?"



[Kristen Tausz Beck](#)



[Maribel Kent](#)

“**[\$5,000]**. This includes one camera body (**\$1,500**), one lens (**\$400**), LR for editing (**\$100/year**), a computer (**\$2,000**), and various misc things like gas to and from sessions -- that's the **VERY** basics, but that is what I started with, and then as time went on, I added more items to better my business.”

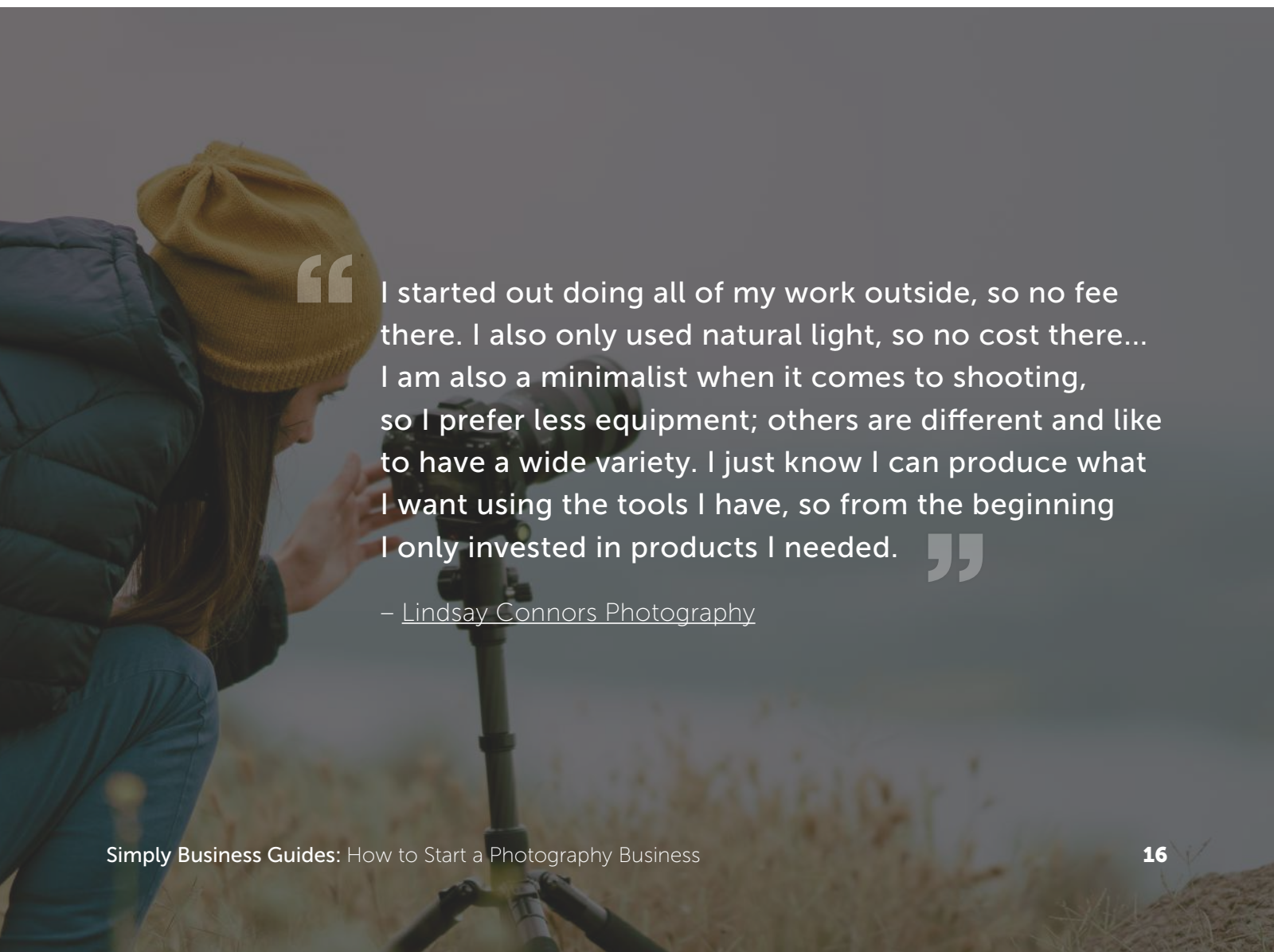
[Lindsay Connors Photography](#)

How to Reduce Costs When Starting Your Photography Business

Work With What You Have.

One photographer said that she mastered the art of using natural lighting to make her photos look good:

Even if you don't specialize in using natural lighting, you shouldn't be afraid to get creative with what you have. All you need is a few strong photos to help bolster your portfolio; from there, you can start landing the kind of projects that can help you earn the money you need to buy additional equipment.



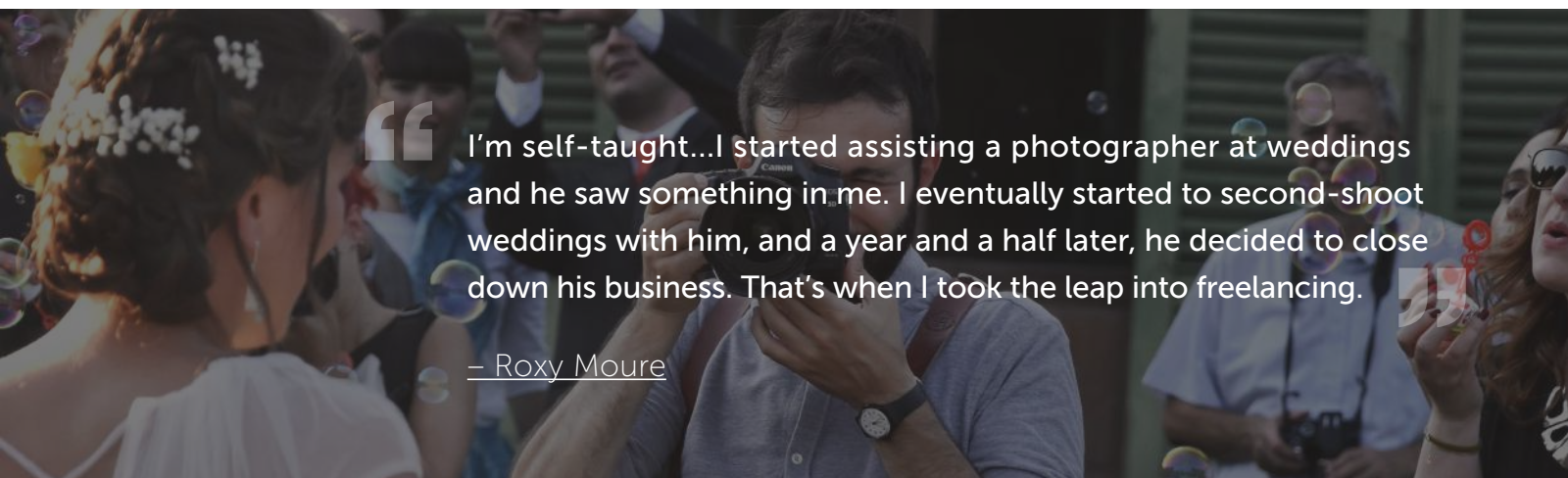
“ I started out doing all of my work outside, so no fee there. I also only used natural light, so no cost there... I am also a minimalist when it comes to shooting, so I prefer less equipment; others are different and like to have a wide variety. I just know I can produce what I want using the tools I have, so from the beginning I only invested in products I needed. ”

– [Lindsay Connors Photography](#)

Embrace Being Self-Taught.

A lot of people think that in order to have your own photography business, you need a certification or degree from a school. But, as many photographers pointed out, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, all you need is a good eye for photos, a willingness to build your business as you go, and the ability to have good interactions with your customers.

A few photographers mentioned that the best way to gain experience without spending money on school is to shadow another photographer.



I'm self-taught...I started assisting a photographer at weddings and he saw something in me. I eventually started to second-shoot weddings with him, and a year and a half later, he decided to close down his business. That's when I took the leap into freelancing.

– [Roxy Moure](#)

Don't Be Afraid to Build As You Go.

Many photographers emphasized how much they cut costs by adding their equipment as they went along. For example, this photographer noted that when you're first starting out, you only need a camera and some software.



Kayla Leigh Gregory I started off with a camera. And editing software.
Buy your equipment a little at a time.
I bought on the cheaper side because I didn't understand/know the difference.
I'm still learning BUT it's ok the go a little cheaper. Save your money and invest and build your business.
I'm currently saving from sessions for a new camera.
Personally, it feels good to buy things from sessions saved money and not have a loan to pay or worry about bills!

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[Kayla Leigh Gregory](#)

How to Get Funding to Start Your Small Biz

OK, so the big question here is: What do you do if you need money to buy necessary photography equipment or obtain a business insurance policy?

That's where small business funding comes into play. From traditional bank loans to investments from friends and family members, there are a lot of options to help you finance your photography business. The problem is, how do you know which one is right for you? And what should you expect from the process of funding your business?

Before you begin to consider applying for a loan or asking a friend for money, consider talking to other photographers or reach out to them online. Other photographers can be essential in giving you a better idea of how to obtain funding, as well as what to expect from the process. There are plenty of Facebook groups, LinkedIn networks, and forums that are filled with people who are happy to point you in the right direction.

Here are a few other options for funding your photography business:

Small Business Loan

A small business loan is probably one of the most traditional ways of securing funding for your company. This type of loan can give you the instant equity you need to rent office space, gather supplies, start hiring

employees, and develop marketing materials.

However, there are notable drawbacks to a small business loan. One of the biggest is if your company doesn't make it, you'll end up repaying the loan out of your own pocket.

[Learn about how to get a small business loan here.](#)

Small Business Grant

Like small business loans, grants are forms of funding that you can apply for. Unlike loans, you don't ever have to pay them back. Grants can be hard to find and tough to get, but if there's a strong possibility that you could get one, they're definitely worth looking into.

As an extra bonus, we've compiled the places where you can start the process of applying for a small business grant. They include:

- [Grants.gov](#): You can search for thousands of federally funded grants designed to help small business owners launch their entrepreneurial dreams. Just click on the "Search Grants" option and enter a keyword to find relevant grants (the keyword could be your photography niche, your location, or even grants for women and minorities).
- [USA.gov](#): This is another federal website where you can search for small business grants. You'll

also find advice on how to apply for small business grants and even a list of lenders that offer loans.

- **Small Business Development Center:** Each state has a Small Business Development Center, which provides low-cost training, mentoring, and resources to help entrepreneurs start their own companies. Many SBDCs can even help business owners find and apply for state business grants.
- **Competitions:** Many larger companies hold competitions where they provide winning businesses with generous grants. For example, FedEx holds an annual competition where they award 10 small businesses with grants of up to \$25,000. The National Association of the Self-Employed (NASE) offers \$4,000 in monthly grants to small business owners (must be a member to apply). For more examples of small business grant competitions, or to apply, check out this NerdWallet article.

Grants aren't always the fastest way to obtain funding, especially if you're applying for a competitive one. However, some entrepreneurs may want to try this financial option, as it can be freeing to get a large sum of money without repayment restrictions.



Personal Finances

Some photographers may find themselves with enough money to fund their new business entirely, or at least part of it. Using your personal

finances can be an excellent way to avoid the costs associated with paying back a small business loan. Plus, you have more freedom to do what you like with your money!

Of course, there are some disadvantages that come with using personal finances to fund your business. For example, if you use a credit card to pay for supplies but your business fails, you'll still have to pay back that money. If you're using personal money to fund your business, make sure it's money that you'd be OK with losing.

Not all photography businesses become successful, so don't put yourself and your family in a hole by maxing out all of your personal finances for your entrepreneurial dreams.

Making Money: How to Set Your Photography Prices

Determining how to price your hourly fee is a crucial step, and one that a lot of photographers tend to mess up.

Here's why: A photographer knows they are going up against some competition. So in order to attract customers, that photographer decides to set a very low hourly rate.

Here's the thing: It's a lot harder to raise your prices

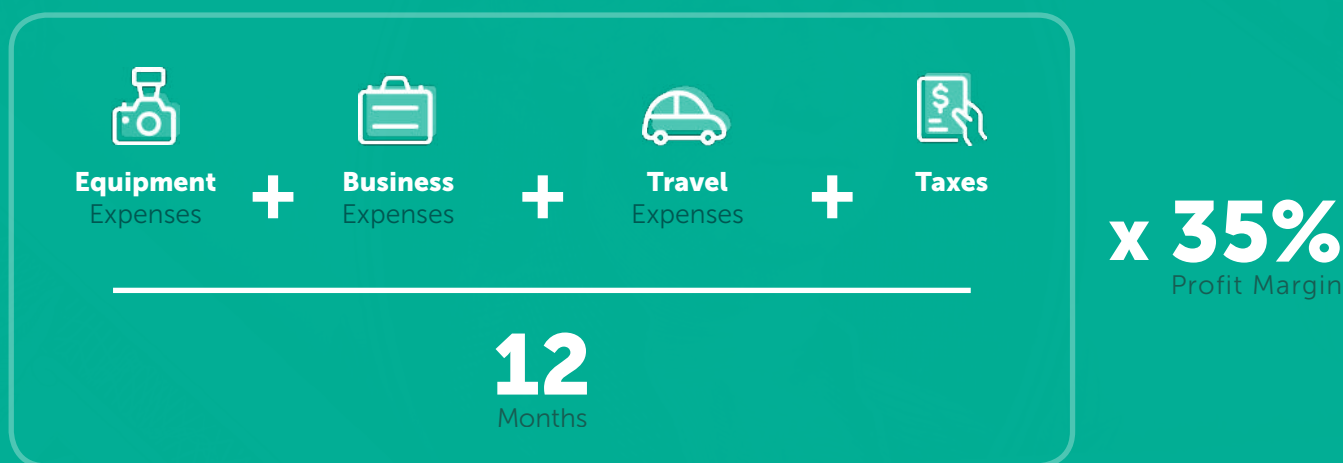
than it is to lower them. Customers will already be used to your prices, so if you raise them, they'll definitely be unhappy about it. But think about the reverse; if you lower your prices, you'll have some very pleased customers.

So how do you figure out how to set your hourly fee so you don't get stuck in that trap of earning less than you deserve?

How to Set Your Hourly Fee

Your hourly fee should cover your expenses (equipment, travel, utilities, etc.) while still providing you enough overhead to make a profit. Plus, if there's a goal salary amount you're aiming for, it's important to factor that into your calculations so you know what you're working toward.

While each photographer's specialties may influence how much the hourly fee will be, here's a basic formula for determining how to ballpark your hourly fee:



Once you've calculated how much you need to make each month, divide it by the number of days you want to work, and then divide further by the number of hours you'll work each day (for the sake of argument, say 8 hours, aka the typical work day).

There's your hourly rate!

You should return to this formula on an annual basis, as you may find that your expenses have changed over time. In fact, we recommend examining it every three to six months when you're starting out in your business, as you'll probably need to adjust your pricing as you go.

That's definitely a lot to throw at you, so let's break it down so you're getting a more realistic idea of what you should charge...



Equipment Expenses

Get a good idea of how much you're spending on photography equipment every month (or every year), whether it's replacing existing equipment, spending money on lenses, or even just purchasing new equipment to help bolster your business.

Don't forget to include the monthly or annual costs of any photo-editing software that you use.



Business Expenses

From studio rent and utilities to website fees, list all of your business expenses every month and add up how much you're spending. You should also include any marketing costs you've incurred (we'll talk more about that in the next section).

Don't forget to keep track of receipts/invoices, as most of these expenses are income tax deductible.



Travel Expenses

If you're not setting up your own photography studio, you're probably doing a lot of traveling to client sites and vendor destinations. Be sure to include travel costs in your hourly fee, as this is the money you'll spend for wear-and-tear on your car. For 2019, [the IRS calculates the standard mileage rate at 58 cents](#), but don't forget to include costs associated with hotels and meals, especially if you're traveling out of town for a client's wedding shoot.



Include Your Profit Margin

Once you've added your expenses to determine how much you need to make to cover them on an annual basis, multiply that number by 36%, which is the [average profit margin](#) photographers typically use in this formula. This profit margin is essential, because this is where you'll make money that you can spend on yourself, as well as investing into the business.

So don't forget to include it!

Divide by Twelve Months

Once you've finally added your expenses and included your profit margin, you'll want to divide that final number by 12 months. The end result will be how much money you'll need to make each month in order to make your ideal photographer salary. From there, you can calculate your daily fee, or even your hourly fee.

Don't Know Your Expenses Yet?

Not to worry — you can figure out what your hourly fee should be by shooting for a target annual salary. It's a bit more basic than the above formula, but it can still give you a better idea of how much you need to make in order to achieve the lifestyle you want.

For example, let's say you want to net **\$90,000** a year, which is enough to moderately grow your photography business while paying your bills.

Using some quick math, you'll discover that you'll need to net about **\$7,500** a month (**\$90K/12 months**). You're planning on working about five days a week (20 days total) at about 8 hours a day. That means in order to achieve your **\$7,500** monthly figure, you'll need to earn **\$375** a day, with an hourly fee of about **\$47**.

But What About Larger Projects?

If you're pricing a larger project — like working a wedding — you can use your hourly fee or your monthly figure to set your project price.

Let's go back to that **\$7,500** figure to achieve that **\$90,000** annual salary. If you're a wedding photographer and you want to work a certain number of weddings per month, your math would look like this:

- **One wedding per month — \$7,500 per wedding**
- **Two weddings per month — \$3,750 per wedding**
- **Three weddings per month — \$2,500 per wedding**

This basic math can help you get a good idea of what you should be charging for larger projects, based on your target annual income.

Take a Look at Your Competition

If you're *just* starting out and still feel uncertain about calculating your hourly fee or project rate, there's no harm in getting a better idea of what your competition is charging and modeling it after them.

To that end, do a little online research and gather a pricing list for

photographers who work in your niche and in your location. Most photographers have prices on their websites, or at least are willing to email price packages if you reach out to them. It can feel a little sneaky, but this technique can really cut the learning curve in half if you're worried about setting the wrong project fee.

Don't "Set It and Forget It"

Play around with your pricing as you grow your photography business, but remember to overestimate how much you should charge. Underpricing your photography services might leave you struggling to pay your business's bills.

Plus, what's to say that another photographer won't offer even lower prices and take a chunk out of your clientele base?

As you grow in experience and demand, don't feel bad about raising your prices accordingly. While you're doing what you love, you still have bills to pay — plus, you should reward yourself if you become a top photographer in your area!

Getting Customers: How to Market Your Photography Business

When it comes to finding customers, new photographers might feel like they're coming up against a lot of obstacles. For example, you're probably competing against other photographers who offer a similar product or service as you. You might not have the biggest marketing budget, so it feels like a challenge getting your name out there.

And you might feel pressured to start being profitable right away — how else are you going to pay your bills?

Take a deep breath! These challenges are easy to overcome. All you need is a little imagination, some elbow grease, and the tips you'll find in this section.

Know Your Customer

You know you need to get customers, but have you taken the time to understand who exactly is your customer? Identifying your customer can be helpful for your marketing efforts, because then you can tweak your messaging to really hit their emotions.

For example, let's say you're a photographer in a suburb where houses are selling like hotcakes. With a little research, you may discover that your average customer is a growing family with young children. With this information, you can start tailoring your marketing message to their situation. Instead of just listing yourself as a local photographer, you can talk more about your family portraits and the importance of capturing these precious years.

Finding out who your customer is and what they respond to can be a huge win for your photography business. When researching, look for the basic information about your average customer, including:

- **Gender**
- **Age**
- **Location**
- **Income level**
- **Behaviors**
- **Interests**

You can get more specific with your customer research, but the above characteristics will tell you a lot about how you should approach your marketing, as well as the places where you're more likely to find your customers.



Build Out Your Portfolio

You don't need to wait to be an established photographer with tons of customers to start building a great online portfolio. Gather the photos that best represent your talent, as well as photos that apply to the niche you want to specialize in. For example, if you want to become a wedding photographer, include photos you've taken at a friend's wedding.

Your goal is to showcase your talent and your eye for detail, which can happen regardless of whether you got paid, or not, to take those photos.

Develop a Memorable Logo.

Every business should have a logo, which will add some personality to your marketing materials and branding. If you have a knack for graphic design, [try designing your own logo](#); otherwise, it's best to hire an expert who can quickly capture the essence of your business.

In general, your business's logo should:

- **Be clean**
- **Be simple**
- **Be recognizable**
- **Be professional**
- **Be associated with your business**

Your logo should be a seamless part of your business. That's why it's important to avoid large, messy, or complicated logos that need more than a second to interpret. If you're looking for inspiration, try checking out the logos that your competitors are using, or search for images online. Remember, don't use a logo without permission or payment; instead, have a professional designer create one for you.

Once you have your logo, add it to everything with your business's name on it, including:

- **Website**
- **Business cards**
- **Company vehicles**
- **Clothing**
- **Marketing materials**
- **Social media**
- **Email signature**



Network, Network, Network.

Don't underestimate the power of word-of-mouth marketing. If you want to get business out there, go to local events, fairs, and any other place where you can reach out to potential customers. Be sure to have professional business cards with your contact information that you can hand out to prospective customers. Pretty soon, your networking efforts will build up the momentum you need to start bringing in customers.

Of course, word-of-mouth marketing techniques can be difficult to capture in just a single paragraph: that's why I encourage you to [check out our FREE guide on word-of-mouth marketing](#). It's especially helpful for photographers, as it will show you how to use your first few customers to build a stream of new customers — all without lifting a finger.

Offer Discounts and Free Trials.

Even as a photographer, free trials and discounts can do a lot to help you attract new customers to your business. For example, you could offer 25% off family portraits for first-time customers, or a \$500 off deal for customers who book off-season weddings with you.


In order to make discounts and free trials work for you, ensure that the photography service you're offering is so indispensable that your customer can't live without it. If you're offering a "meh" service, you'll lose a lot of potential business after your free trial or discount period ends.

Use Social Media — Wisely.

Your potential customers are probably spending a lot of time on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, so if you want to reach out to them, consider investing in paid social campaigns. Each platform is different, but in general, paid social campaigns place your ads in front of customers while they're scrolling through their feed. Social campaigns provide great opportunities to offer free trials and first-time customer discounts, but be warned — it can be easy to overspend on social campaigns. Make sure you have enough money to engage in a campaign, plus be aware of when you should stop.

Want help running your first few social campaigns? Check out our article on [how to master Facebook advertising](#).

This photographer also has a great tip for photographers who may not have a lot of money to market but are happy to hop on social media:

A woman with a flower crown is taking a photo with a camera. The image is dark and serves as a background for a quote.

“ Do your best to stand out and develop your own style in photography. Try to keep away from the trends or what’s getting likes. If you don’t have any money to market, Instagram is your best friend. ”

- Roxy Moure

Get Noticed on Google.

Google listings are often a trusted source for customers, especially if they're checking out a company that they're interested in doing business with. Think about the last time you looked up a restaurant or a local store — chances are Google listings (including website information, phone number, and reviews) helped you make your final purchasing decision. To get noticed on Google, make sure you have a website (you can set one up inexpensively on [SquareSpace.com](https://www.squareSPACE.com) or [Wix.com](https://www.Wix.com)).

From there, create a free Google Account for your business, then search for your business name on Google. When it appears, you should see a "More Info" option that appears in the top-right corner of the map listing. Click on that link, which will take you to a page where you can manage your business listing, as well as add your website address, request reviews, and more.

Try Out Google AdWords.

Google AdWords — those ads featured at the top of every Google results page — is a great way to let the world know you're open for business...

But only if you know what you're doing!

AdWords involves some monetary savvy, as it can be easy to spend too much money on online traffic without actually gaining any customers. If you're interested in trying it out, [check out our fun infographic](#) on how to use Google AdWords for the first time.

Sometimes it can feel like it's taking forever to find your first customer, but keep your head up! The work you're putting in now is creating momentum for your business for years to come.



Top tip!

Ready to Get Started?

Starting your own photography business will be tough, but it will also be one of the most rewarding things you could do.

Think about all the freedom you're about to enjoy and having the ability to make your own decisions without a boss telling you what to do.

You'll be able to take on your own projects and work with the clients you choose. You can set your own schedule so you can decide what time you want to take off.

Maybe that means more time at home with your family or actually having an excuse to travel more.

Whatever your reasons, starting your own photography business is going to be life-changing. So take this moment to appreciate where you are right now. Because if you follow the advice in this guide, there's a good chance you'll be running a successful photography business in the near future.

About Simply Business

Simply Business is an online business insurance brokerage that specializes in one thing: protecting the business our customers are working hard to build. We make it possible for our customers to choose the exact insurance coverage they need, so they can get back to growing their businesses.

You can learn more about our insurance products [here](#), or check out more great business advice at our blog, [Simply U](#).

Don't forget to connect with us on [Facebook](#), where you'll be able to share advice and chat with other photographers and small business owners like you!

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