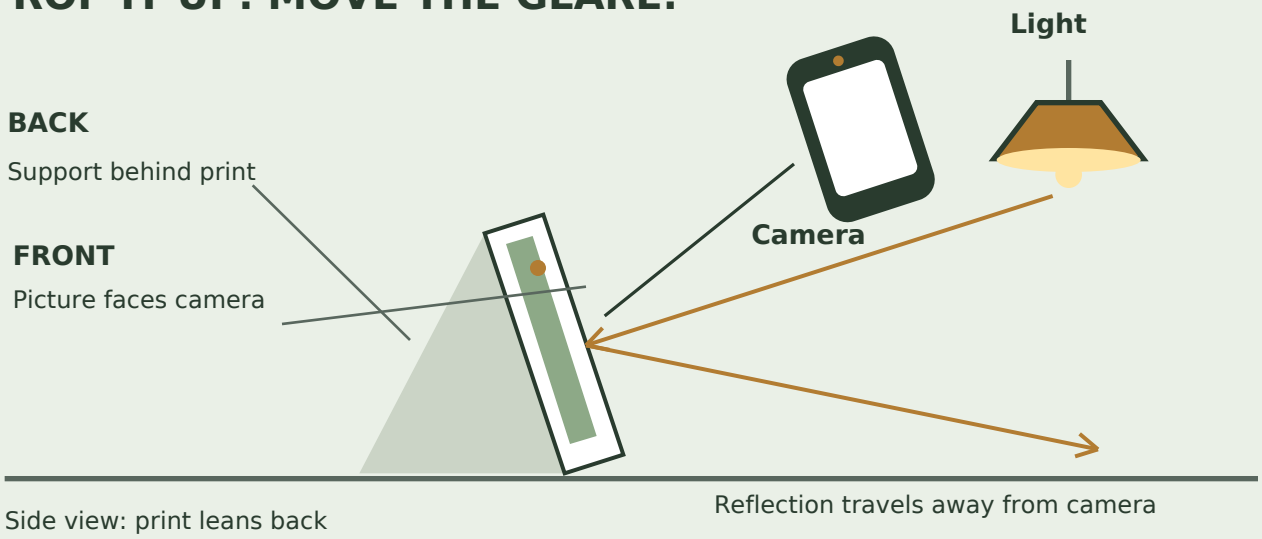
A clearer scan starts with light

A simple setup for your phone, webcam, or handheld camera scanner.

PROP IT UP. MOVE THE GLARE.



Lean the photo against a stable book, small easel, or other clean support. Change the tilt until overhead glare disappears from the camera preview.

Then move or tilt the camera so it faces the photo squarely. The camera and photo should be parallel, even when both are tilted. This reduces distortion.

- [ ] Turn off the flash. Try soft window light or a lamp off to one side.
- [ ] Avoid direct sun, bright ceiling reflections, and shadows from your hands.
- [ ] If glare remains, move the light, photo, or camera and check again.

Protect the print: use clean, dry hands and hold the edges. Do not bend it, tape it down, or spray cleaner on it.

Scan with your phone

One photo at a time is the easiest way to get a sharp, readable copy.

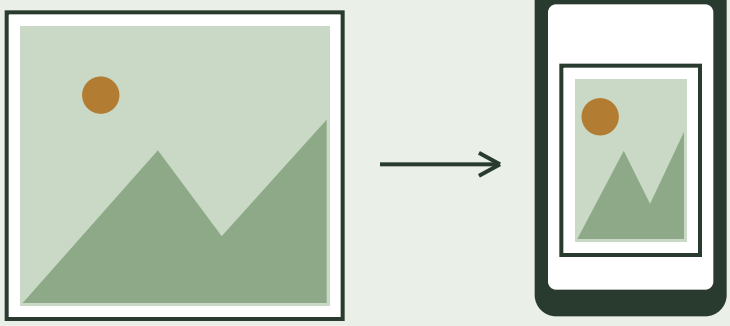


Photo + soft light

Camera preview

Before you capture

Show all four corners. Fill most of the frame. Keep a little space around the print.

1 Prepare the photo

Gently remove loose dust with a clean, soft brush. Use a plain, matte background that contrasts with the photo.

2 Position your phone

Use the rear camera or the photo-scanning feature in your app. Prop up glossy prints if needed. Keep the camera parallel to the print.

3 Focus and hold steady

Wipe the camera lens with a clean microfiber cloth. Tap the photo to focus if your camera supports it. Avoid digital zoom; move closer instead.

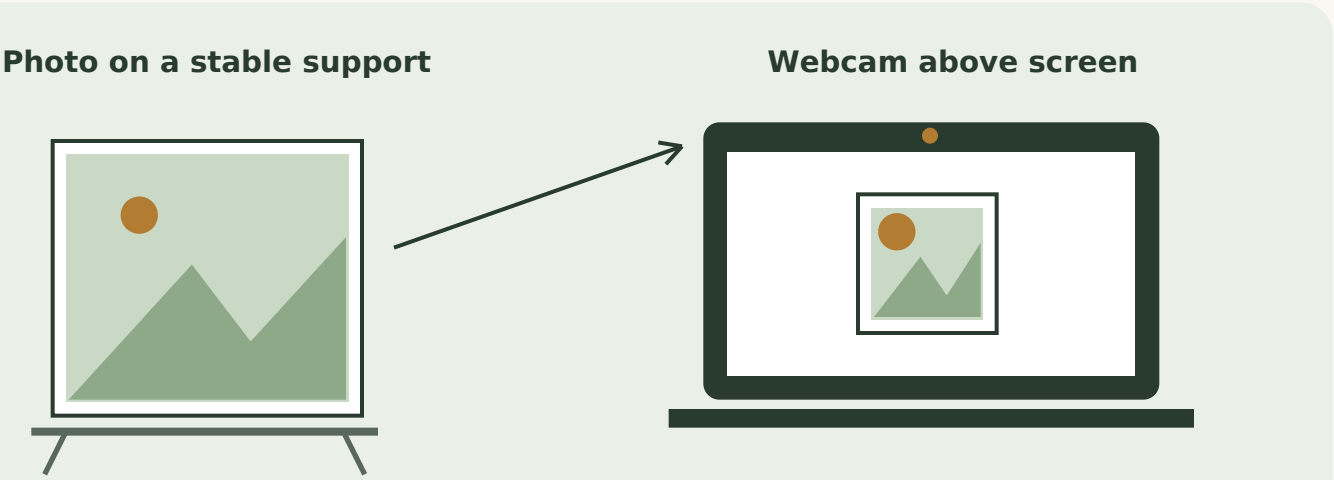
4 Capture, then check

Use automatic edge detection and straightening if available. Review the corners and adjust the crop if needed. Retake a blurry or shiny scan.

Quick check: zoom in on a face or small detail. Is it sharp? Are the edges complete? Is there any glare covering the picture?

Scan with your webcam

Use your computer camera preview to position the photo before capturing it.



Front view: keep the photo centered in the camera preview.

1 Open the camera preview

Choose the webcam option in your scanning app and allow camera access when prompted. Select the intended camera if more than one is connected.

2 Set up the print

Place it on a small easel or lean it against a stable support. Move the support, laptop, or external webcam until the camera faces the photo squarely.

3 Watch the light and focus

Use soft light from the side. Tilt the photo and camera together to remove overhead glare. Turn down screen brightness if the screen reflects on the print.

4 Capture without moving the photo

Keep your hands out of the frame. Capture the still image, check sharpness, then crop and straighten. If the webcam cannot focus clearly, try your phone.

Handheld scanner tip: for a camera-style device, use the same lighting setup. For a contact or wand scanner, keep the photo flat and follow its instructions; do not scan a propped-up photo.

Check it. Save it. Repeat.

Use this page beside you as you scan a shoebox of memories.

MY SCANNING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Clean lens; loose dust gently removed from the print.
- ☐ Soft lighting; flash off; no bright glare over the image.
- ☐ Photo supported safely; camera faces it squarely.
- ☐ All four corners visible; no fingers or shadows in the picture.
- ☐ Faces and small details look sharp when I zoom in.
- ☐ Crop and straightening checked; nothing important cut off.
- ☐ Original capture saved before enhancements or restoration.
- ☐ File named and backed up in a second location.

COMMON FIXES

Glare	Move the light or change the photo and camera angle.
Blur	Hold steady, add soft light, and check focus.
Skewed edges	Face the photo squarely; then adjust crop and corners.

ADD THE STORY WHILE YOU REMEMBER IT

Who is in the picture?

Where / about when was it taken?

What was happening?