



Code of Ethics Standards 12-10

Lens Choices Guidelines

Avoiding Violations

SUMMARY

The purpose of this guide is to address one of the major complaints by clients. Images they see of residential properties presented by real estate companies frequently exaggerate the sizes of the rooms/spaces. That has been and continues to be a long - standing problem. That practice is not only a client complaint but a violation of the code of ethics Standards 12-10. That standard clearly states images must not misrepresent properties. There also are other issues with image manipulations that are not in keeping with truth in advertising however, *this document will confine itself to the faithfulness of room /spaces sizes.*

Fortunately, the technical solution to this problem is not only simple but may be implemented instantaneously. The technical cause of the problem is the use of lenses whose optical design provides extremely wide views but does so 100% of the time at the expense of greatly exaggerating the volume of a subject – in this case properties. These lenses are generally referred to as super and ultrawide-angle lenses. These are easy to identify. They begin just below 24 millimeters.

In phone cameras, the “normal” lens size is typically around 24 to 26 millimeters. That is borderline but acceptable. Phone cameras with multiple lenses tend to offer a super wide angle lens which is numerically less than 24 mm – usually about 13 mm. That lens is in a range unacceptable for residential real estate images. For the lenses available for “traditional” cameras any lens numerically less than 24 mm is also not acceptable. To stay within the code of ethics, these lens sizes must not be used. This guide will provide explanations about the lenses, camera types and the obligations of real estate professionals to restrict their usage.

The most challenging problem is to educate real estate professionals that this simple solution exists and needs to be complied with. It is also their responsibility to make sure any photographers that may be hired will also adhere to this lens size limitation. Both real estate and professional photographers have used these lenses for years to enhance the visual reality of properties. This guide provides factual rationale as well as specific lens measurements to correct those practices and avoid violation of the code of ethics.



GSAR provides New York State accredited photography classes for real estate professionals. The information in this document is included in those classes. Truth in advertising and the code of ethics were the basis for the State approvals.

GSAR New York State certified photography instructor: Bill Storm. Questions in this area may be sent via email. billwsre@gmail.com Please put *GSAR Photo* in subject line.

Standards of Practice with Respect to Photographic Images and Lenses

Lens Selection Code of Ethics

• **Standard of Practice 12-10** Realtors®' obligation to present a true picture in their advertising and representations to the public includes Internet content, images, and the URLs and domain names they use, and prohibits Realtors® from: 1) engaging in deceptive or unauthorized framing of real estate brokerage websites; 2) manipulating (e.g., presenting content developed by others) listing and other content in any way that produces a deceptive or misleading result; 3) deceptively using metatags, keywords or other devices/ methods to direct, drive, or divert Internet traffic; or 4) presenting content developed by others without either attribution or without permission; or 5) otherwise misleading consumers, including use of misleading images. (Adopted 1/07, Amended 1/18)

The purpose of this document is to provide all licensed real estate professionals with:

1. *Guidelines to correct one of the most egregious practices that create images that misrepresent properties. This unacceptable practice is the use of lens choices that distort the sizes of rooms/spaces.*
2. To select an acceptable lens for residential real estate images, you must identify its size. Lens sizes for traditional cameras are engraved/marked on the lenses. That number denotes the focal length of the lens. That number is measured in millimeters. For Phone Cameras lens sizes are provided in the specifications/ literature that comes with the phone or may be found on the internet.
2. By simply looking at that measurement you will immediately know by the information provided in this guide if it is a focal length that may or may not be used for residential real estate photography. In other words meets the Standards of Practice 12-10.
3. This guide provides real estate professionals with non-ambiguous documentation to what sizes lenses will always create images that unacceptably misrepresent properties - a violation of the code of ethics.
4. The reality is many real estate professionals and photographers commonly use and advocate focal lengths that enhance property images. That is not acceptable. A major reason for this is that prior to this guide there has been no readably definitive measurements of lenses that clearly and scientifically will 100% of the time create images that misrepresent properties.
5. It has always been the responsibility of all real estate professionals to stay within the Standards Code of Ethics 12-10, as well as, oversee that any external photographers comply with them.
6. The distortion of properties by the use of inappropriate lenses has been a long-standing issue. One that is among the greatest complaints by complaints. This guide addresses that ethics violation.
7. The solution to which lenses are appropriate is simple – read the size of the lens and check the enclosed guidelines.

Unacceptable Lenses

PROBLEM ONE: There is a range of lenses that by the nature of their optical design capture a wider field of view greater than is normal for our eye sight. That is very useful in purely creative/subjective situations. They do so however at the expense of creating two major distortions of their subjects. One is they *always* make the volume of spaces look much larger than they are. Two they most often cause “barrel distortion “ that creates a curvature of the shapes. The latter problem may be somewhat mitigated after the fact with software or professional rectilinear lenses. The exaggeration of space sizes however remains. That does not meet the Ethical standards of 12-10. The nominal range of these lenses begins just less than 24 millimeters decreasing numerically downward toward roughly 10 millimeters.

*** The lower the number the wider the view and the greater the distortion.

Truth in Advertising re: Code of Ethics 12-10

Images from iPhone 15

Gross misrepresentation of property below 24 mm



50 mm



35mm



28mm



24mm



13mm

Lens view increases as mm number decreases.

50mm **normal**. 35mm & 28mm **moderate changes**

24mm **borderline**. 13mm **unacceptable** = below 24 mm

A 24 mm lens has a moderately wider view than what is seen live. However, while there are some changes to the live perspective, they are moderate. The 24 mm lens provides realtors and clients with sufficient representation of a property that reasonably adheres to Practice-12-10. By design all lenses lower in number than 24 mm significantly distort the reality of spaces and sizes. Please note that lenses that are numerically higher than 24 mm such as 35 mm, etc. are all acceptable with 50 mm being the nominal "as seen live view."

SOLUTION: The technical solution is very simple – education. The lenses that are the offenders have a name – *super or ultrawide angle lenses*, They also have designated numbers that identify them. This guide will illustrate their issues and it will provide the identifying measurements of those lenses.

PROBLEM TWO: Images taken for the purpose of accurately representing residential properties must comply with Standards 12-10 and truth in advertising. By definition super and ultrawide angle lenses are unacceptable. A major shortcoming in the code of ethics is that there is currently no inclusion in that standard that outlines the specification of these lenses. This guide provides the correct missing information. All real estate professionals need to be provided with this documentation,

SOLUTION: Educating and providing all real estate professionals with this information, as well as, adding the technical details outlined here to the Standards 12-10 in the code of ethics.

PROBLEM THREE: Perhaps the most difficult problem is to address the long standing use of super and ultrawide angle lenses by both real estate professionals and photographers engaged in providing real estate images. Taking advice from camera stores and online real estate photography tutorials is not always a good idea. They generally do not understand the standards that must be adhered with respect to these lenses relative to the code of ethics. There are numerous online tutorials and books by excellent photographers that actually promote the use of these super wide angle lenses for real estate. *They make a living by hyping up reality. Enhanced photos can look amazing – however, they produce a misrepresentation of a property. At the same time, there is a lack of any oversight of this issue. Real estate professionals need to be advised that they will be subject to ethical violations in these regards.*

SOLUTION: Provide all real estate professionals with the information being provided here. Bring this up in general discussions and classes regarding the code of ethics. Make it clear that continuing use of these lenses will be a violation of the code of ethics and truth in advertising - and will be subject to charges.

OTHER: It is the responsibility of real estate professionals to make sure any party that they engage in taking or editing images complies with the exclusion of super/ultrawide angle lenses.

How to know your lens sizes and field of View

1. Full frame camera: ***The full frame camera lens field of view 24mm is the standard by which all other lenses are being compared to.*** inscribed
2. Phone Cameras for example may have about a physically small 24-26 mm lens but with a very similar field of view as a 24 mm lens on a full frame camera.
3. Phone cameras generally do not indicate the sizes of lenses on the body of the phone. You need to look at the specifications sheet that comes with the phone, ask the sales person or look it/them up on the internet. Most of the time a phone camera will include a “normal lens” about 24 mm.
4. APSC - Cropped cameras are a bit confusing. In order to know their “full frame equivalent” size, you need to multiply the inscribed or painted on number on the lens itself by 1.5. For example,
 - a. A cropped camera lens of 18 mm is approximately 27 mm relative to full scale. ($18 \times 1.5 = 27$) That is relatively close to 24 mm. Most “kit” zoom lenses start around 17-18 mm. *No need to buy another lens.*
 - b. A 10 mm cropped lens however ($10 \times 1.5 = 15$ mm) below 24mm - the unacceptable range.

All other camera types follow the same guideline with respect to 24 millimeter as the widest field of view.