



Photography Startup Guide

All you need to know in order to shoot high quality product photographs *yourself* using an MK Lighting System.

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Version 2.0

1. Introduction

Thank you for purchasing a complete photography lighting system. You have taken the first step for shooting high-quality photographs yourself, by acquiring one of the most important pieces of equipment that will allow you to produce professional images of your products. Our lighting systems provide you with the necessary lighting environment for illuminating and photographing your products. Learn more about the [benefits of our lighting systems](#)

The other necessary piece of equipment you need is a quality digital camera that you will use to shoot your photographs. Learn more about what [specific features you should look for in a digital camera](#), or read what [essential features your digital camera must have](#) to be compatible with our systems

"A picture is worth a 1000 words", and having quality images that present your products in the best possible way is the key to successful marketing campaigns which lead to sales.

High-Quality photos can mean the difference between making a sale or not. Whether you use photos for [Advertising](#), [Catalogs](#), or [Sell on the Internet](#), Natural Wrap-Around Lighting is the key to bringing out the best in your products. As you may already know, your product's photographs can become your most important selling tool. Therefore, having high-quality photographs increases your sales potential. In short, better photos = better sales.

In the following steps, we'll show you what you need to do to achieve high-quality and professional photos of your products using the MK Photography Lighting Systems



2. The Photography Lighting System

The MK "Photography Lighting Systems" are complete product photography systems that allow you to produce professional high-quality photographs of your images. All of our models provide you with continuous wrap-around natural daylight lighting. This eliminates shadows, glares, reflections and hot-spots; while allowing you to maintain clean white backgrounds. Learn more about [our products](#) or [compare the various photography lighting systems](#)

Before photographing with your photography lighting system, there are several important things you should know that will help you achieve the high-quality photos you need.

- The photography lighting systems are built to be used in countries with 110 Volts (50/60 Hz), so make sure you only plug them into electricity outlets that use 110 Volts (50/60 Hz). If you fail to do so you will damage the system and void your warranty. Use an additional power step-down converter to connect the system in countries that use 220 Volts.
- If you have a system with dual lighting (fluorescent and halogen), make sure you never turn on both types of lights at the same time. The combination of two different lights will not allow you to take high-quality photos.

Steps to follow:

1. [Initial setup of the MK Photography Lighting System](#)
2. [Attaching your camera to the lighting system](#)
See "Support | Lighting Systems"

3. Setting up your digital camera

Setting up your digital camera correctly is an essential step in achieving professional high-quality product photographs. Adjusting your camera will ensure that you'll get the best results possible.

Learn how to [set up your digital camera in 10 easy steps](#)

4. How to shoot high quality product & jewelry photographs

Please read the following instructions very carefully. To view each step click on "Show"

4.1 - Making sure the Macro Mode is turned ON

Turn on the macro mode on your camera in order to correctly focus objects that are at a close distance from the camera's lens (4-12 inches). This feature increases the camera ability to focus closely. Turn OFF the macro mode when you are photographing a product that is more than 12 to 14 inches away from the camera.

[Learn how turn on the Macro mode in your Canon camera](#)

4.2 - Zooming In

Use your camera's zoom features to get a closer look of your item. We recommend that you use only your camera's optical zoom which maintains the quality of your photos, rather than using your camera's digital zoom which greatly reduces photo quality.

Optical zooms vary depending on your digital camera, although most point-and-shoot cameras have a 3X to 6X optical zoom. Note: If you zoom-in too closely, you might not be able to focus the item you are trying to photograph.

Photo with No Zoom
Click image to enlarge



Photo with 4X Zoom
Click image to enlarge



4.3 - Choose the correct shutter speed (To choose the correct lighting amount)

Cameras need to control the amount of light so that an image is not too bright (over exposed) or too dark (under exposed). Similar to our eyes, light enters through the lens and strikes the inside of the camera. Digital cameras use a charged coupling device (CCD) to capture the light of an image. Think of a CCD as 'film' in a conventional camera. Therefore, term exposure generally refers to a combination of aperture and shutter speed control to obtain the correct amount of light. To view examples of over and under exposed photos - [Click here](#)

Prior to this step, make sure that your camera is set to the correct settings, including being in manual mode, having done a custom white balance (for fluorescent or halogen lighting), ISO at 50 or 80, and having the biggest possible F-Stop - like F8.0 to F16.0 (depending on your camera). [Learn more](#)

Once your camera is set to the correct settings, and the macro mode is turned on (Step 1), the only setting that you will have to adjust is the camera's shutter speed. This feature is usually represented by a fraction (like 1/100, or 1/250) . This represents the amount of time that a camera's lens will open when shooting a photograph. 1/100 means the camera will open for one hundredth of a second, 1/250 means one 250th of a second, and so on.

The longer the lens opens the brighter the photos will be, as it allows more light to get into the camera's lens. The opposite is true, the less time the lens opens the darker your photo will be, as less light is allowed to enter the camera's lens.

In order to shoot beautiful photographs that contain the correct colors and a white background you need to make sure you choose your digital camera's correct shutter speed.

Steps for choosing the correct shutter speed (Make sure you are in manual mode)



1. Select the option for modifying your camera's shutter speed.

On Canon Powershot cameras (Specifically the A640): Enable/Turn-on your LCD screen and make sure that the fraction number at the bottom of the screen (Example: 1/60, 1/150, etc) is surrounded by the two small green arrows. This means, you are now ready to modify the shutter speed. [View photo 3A](#) and [photo 3B](#) .

2. Adjust the camera to find the appropriate shutter speed.

Look at the LCD screen of your camera to modify the shutter speed so that you get an image on your screen that contains the correct balance between being too dark or too light ([View photo 3C](#)). Find this balance by increasing or decreasing the speed (fraction) of your camera. A smaller fraction of time (e.g. 1/500) will make the photo darker; a bigger fraction of time (e. g. 1/80) will make the photo lighter.

The goal is to find the appropriate light balance (shutter speed number) so that you achieve photos that contain white backgrounds, while avoiding your products to fade against the white background.

On Canon Powershot cameras: Adjust the shutter speed by pressing the right or left side of the round wheel on the back of your camera. This will increase or decrease the speed until the live preview of the item is the right balance between being too dark or too light. [View photo 3B](#)

3. Experiment by photographing 2 more samples, one that is slightly darker and one slightly lighter.

After you have chosen the most appropriate shutter speed with your eyes (let's say 1/80 - although this number is up to you) move the shutter speed one level below the original (like at 1/60) and take a photo (this will be the slightly lighter photo - [View photo 3D](#)), and then one level above (like at 1/100) and take another photo (this will be the slightly darker photo [View photo 3E](#)).

4. Once you have shot a total of 3 images, transfer them to your computer

Once you transferred the photos, open them and view them in full screen.

Note: Remember to make a note of what shutter speed was used for each photo.

5. Now once again - in your computer, choose the best looking photo that is just the right balance between not being too dark or too light.

Then remember what shutter speed you used for that shot. The shutter speed that you have now chosen, after viewing the photos in full screen, will be the recommended shutter speed to be used for photographing the rest of your products.

Note: We recommend you to use the slightly darker photograph.

6. Edit your photographs - Your photographs may be perfect to begin with, but when they are not you'll need to edit them to transform them into perfect photographs. You can easily do this by ONLY edit your image's brightness and contrast. [Read Step 6 on "Editing your photos" for complete information](#)

Photos

Canon A650 Screen Shoot - Photo 3A



This photo shows two green arrows (triangles) surrounding the number 1/80, which means that the shutter speed is selected and ready for modification.

Canon A650 Back Side - Photo 3B



This photo shows the back of the Canon Powershot A650. The yellow shows you the button for selecting the shutter speed or aperture. The orange sections show the buttons for adjusting the shutter speed.

Photo 3C

Photo using the most balanced shutter speed by looking at the camera's LCD Screen -



This image is the best one out of the three, although the background is not completely white, you can easily adjust this photo by ONLY editing the brightness and the contrast. [See correctly edited photo \(Photo 3F\)](#).

Photo 3D

A slightly lighter photo



This image is too light and although the background is completely white, you can easily see that the actual ring is fading into the background. Even if you edit the brightness and the contrast, you wouldn't be able to correctly bring back the parts of the ring that are faded away.

Photo 3E
A slightly darker photo



This image is too dark and the background is dark. If you edit the brightness and the contrast of the photo in order to get a white background, the actual colors of the ring will change, and the photo will not look natural.

Photo 3F
The Perfect Picture, after slightly editing the brightness and contrast of [Photo 3C](#)



This photo is perfect. It is the edited version of [Photo 3C](#). We took Photo 3C and ONLY increased its brightness and its contrast using the [Catalog Producer Software](#) that is included with our lighting systems

4.4 - Focusing your photos

In order to shoot a high quality photo, you need to make sure your camera can properly focus the item you are photographing - otherwise, your photos will be blurry. To do this, you first need to make sure that you have turned on the Macro mode ([learn more](#)) of your camera, and if needed, have a close-up (macro) lens attached ([learn more](#)). Make sure you are using Auto-focus (rather than manual focus). *Note:* most cameras use auto-focus as a default.

There are various cameras out on the market and each one of them has different characteristics to inform the user whether or not the camera is able to successfully focus an item. Most cameras (including the Canon Powershot cameras) usually make a sound when the item is being focused and at the same time show you a small green square on the LCD screen over the item that the camera is mainly focusing ([Photo 4A](#)).

Tips to make sure you focus your item correctly:

- Always remember to turn on your camera's Macro mode (Flower symbol).
- Use a close-up (macro) lens. You can use a +2 or a +4 lens (switch between them to see which one gives you the best focusing).
- Do not zoom in too much, just far enough so that the camera can still focus. Remember you don't need to get the item to cover your entire camera screen; it is OK if the item looks far. You can later edit your photo (crop it/cut it) to make sure you only have the part of the photo that includes your item.
- Move your camera AWAY from the item. If you are being unable to focus your item at the distance you currently use, your camera might be physically too close to the item, to fix this simply pull back your camera and then just zoom a little.

To properly focus your item:

1. Press your camera's shutter button half way until you hear a beeping sound and see a green square on your LDC screen, this means the camera is focusing properly. ([Photo 4A](#)).
2. If you get a yellow square it means you're too close to the item and the camera is unable to focus properly ([Photo 4B](#)). Move the camera back (away from the item) or zoom out a little.

Focused Photograph - Photo 4A



This photo shows a green square in the middle of the photo, which means that the camera is focusing on the ring.

Unfocused Photograph - Photo 4B



This photo shows a yellow square in the middle of the photo, which means that the camera is NOT focusing the ring. To correct this, zoom-out or move the camera away from the item.

4.5 - Setting the Depth of Field

Setting the depth-of-field in your camera is an important element of the product photography of small items (like Jewelry). The first thing we need to do is to take advantage of the maximum depth-of-field that any camera has to offer. Some of the following steps have already been mentioned, but it's important that we emphasize what they mean.

Steps for setting the depth-of-field of your camera:

1. The camera should be set to manual mode so that the smallest aperture (For commercial consumer cameras use F8.0, for professional camera use F16.0) setting can be selected.
This will allow us to focus the entire item, rather than only parts of it.
2. Go to your camera's settings under the "Focus" options. Then select "Spot" focusing rather than "Evaluative" focusing. This setting may not be available on all cameras, but is available on Canon cameras. See your manual on how to do this.
3. The second thing we need to do is to focus the lens to get an image as clear as possible. Most digital cameras have an auto-focus option which can be used, please select this.
Note: If you zoom-in too much, you're more likely to lose some of the depth-of-field. Take advantage of a high mega pixel camera to enlarge the image once it is in the computer.

Steps for achieving depth of field in your photographs:

For focusing the entire item being photographed, rather than only part of it.

1. Rather than focusing on top of the item ([Photo 5A](#)), you need to focus the item 1/3 belowand at the side of the item ([Photo 5B](#)).
2. To achieve this, you'll need to slightly tilt/move the camera so that the item being photographed is located towards the edge of your camera's LCD screen - then press your shutter button half way (as explained above), so that it will auto-focus at the side of the item. ([Photo 5B](#)).
3. Then, while still holding the shutter release button half-way move the camera back so that the item is once again at the center of the camera's screen ([Photo 5C](#)).
4. Finally, continue to press the shutter release button all the way down until the camera takes the photograph.

Photo 5A

Focusing at the center of the item
(No depth of field achieved)



This photo shows the green square in the middle of the photo, which means that the camera is focusing the ring. When using this setting, you might not get a depth-of-field and your item might not be focused evenly.

Photo 5B

Focusing at the center-side of the item



This photo shows the green square focusing the side at about half-way down from the top of the ring. This will allow you to achieve a depth-of-field, and for the ring to be focused everywhere correctly.

Photo 5C - Focusing at the center of the item
(Depth of field achieved)



This photo shows the green square in the middle, which means that the camera is focusing the ring. This photo shows the ring correctly focused everywhere, because we made the focal point the center-side of the ring ([Photo 5B](#)). We then moved the camera back so that the ring is in the middle of the screen, and then shot the photograph by pressing the shutter button all the way.

4.6 - Editing your photos

The last step in order to get high-quality images, is to edit your photographs' brightness and contrast. When using an MK Digital Lighting System, you'll be able to shoot photographs that will be perfect or nearly perfect. At times, some of your photos may contain a slightly gray background that you will want to get rid of.

The reality is that photographs with a slightly gray backgrounds (and we mean only slightly gray, not gray) are ok, and can be easily edited to become a professional high quality image. Although possible, it is very unlikely that you'll get a perfect photograph directly from your camera that will contain a 100% white background while showing your product at its best. For this reason, once you shoot your photographs, you'll most likely need to edit them.

In order to turn the slightly gray background into a perfect white and transform the image into a professional photograph you'll need to add some brightness and contrast to your photo. Please read the following steps to find out how you can achieve this.

NOTE: The following steps are intended for editing a photograph that is almost perfect and only needs minor adjustments to become a high-quality professional image. Make sure you've read and followed all the steps in "Shooting High-Quality Photographs" to make sure you shoot photographs that are almost perfect and ready to be edited.

ONLY images with slightly gray backgrounds should be edited. If photographs are too dark or too light, editing their brightness and contrast will not turn them into quality images.

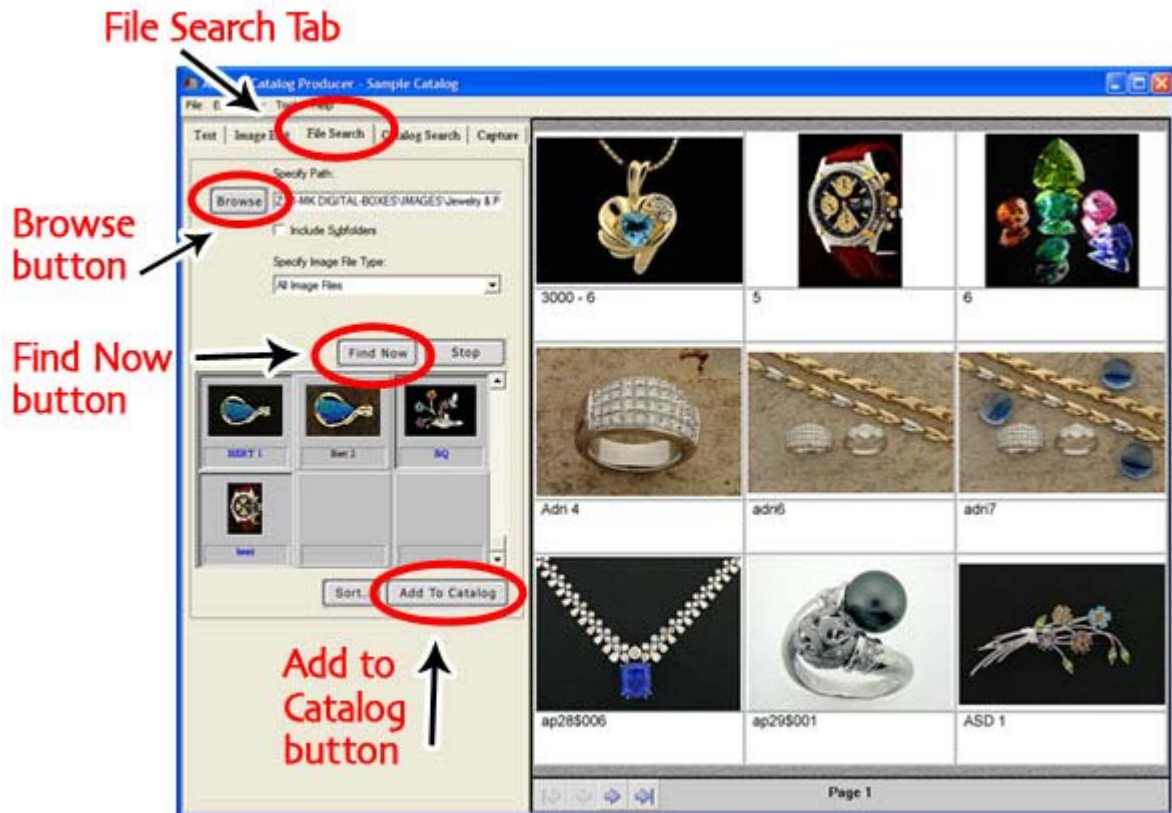
Steps for editing your photos to transform them into high-quality images.

[Adding images to the editing software](#) | [Selecting a photograph](#) | [Editing a photograph](#)

I. Loading images to the Catalog Producer Software

1. Open the Arcsoft Catalog Producer Software
2. Press the tab called "File Search", to search for the images you want to add to the Catalog Producer software. [See Photo 6A](#)
3. Press the "Browse" button. A window will pop up allowing you to choose which folder you would like the software to look for photographs. Select the folder where you saved your photos. (Example: C:/My Documents/My Photos/Rings). [See Photo 6A](#)
4. Press the "Find Now" button to search for all of the images located at the folder which you selected in step 3. [See Photo 6A](#)
5. Select the photographs you would like to add to the catalog producer software. Then press the "Add to Catalog" button. The images will be added to the software. [See Photo 6A](#)

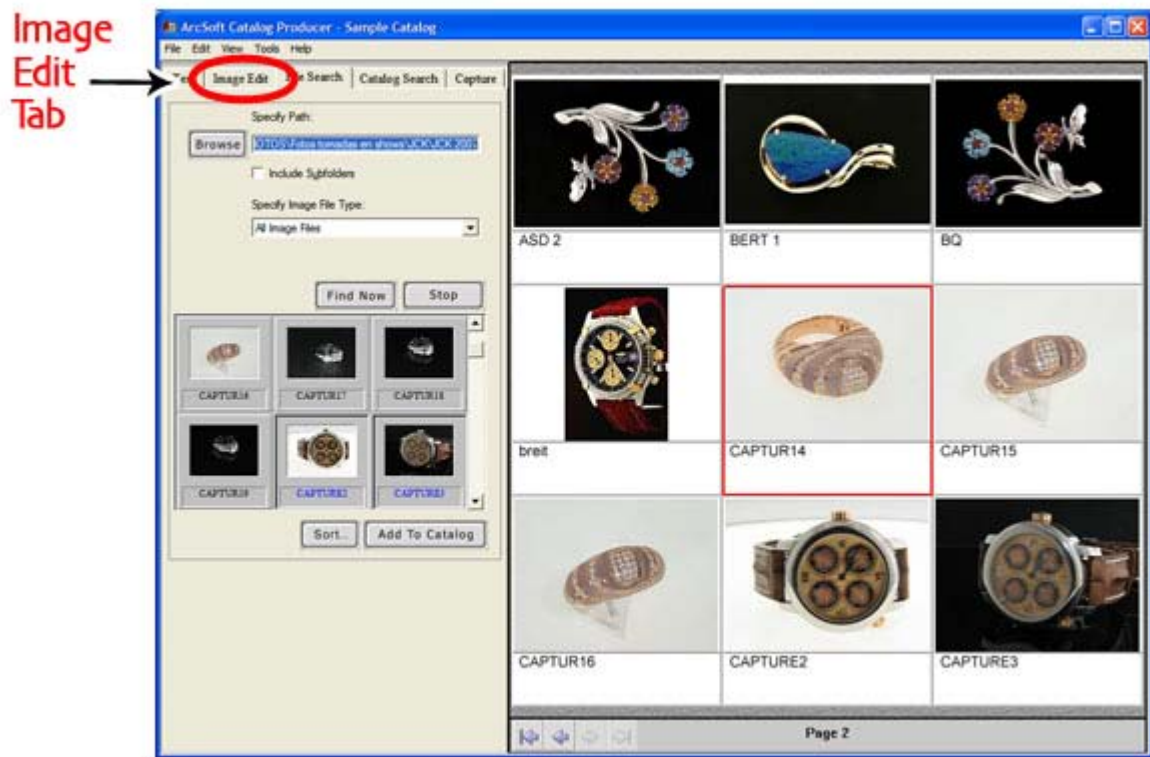
Photo 6A



II. Selecting a photograph

1. Once you've added photographs to the Catalog Producer software, click on the image that you would like to edit (select a photo with your mouse). The photograph selected will appear surrounded by a red square. [See Photo B](#)
2. Once you selected a photo, press the "Image Edit" tab on the Catalog Producer Software. [See Photo B](#). This will allow you to see the tools for editing your photo.

Photo 6B



III. Editing a photograph

1. The image you selected should now appear in the "Image Edit" tab.
2. Crop your image: Press the CROP button ([View Photo C](#)), then - with your mouse - select the area of the photo you would like to crop. The selected area will appear in a red square, then in order to complete the crop simply right-click your mouse. The cropped image should appear as in [Photo D](#)
3. Add brightness: Press the "Brightness" button and then move the intensity bar to the right (add brightness). Add brightness to the photo until you see that the slightly gray background turns to white or close to white without affecting the image of your item drastically. (Most of the time adds 15 to 20 points of brightness). View the brightness button and intensity bar in [Photo D](#)

4. Add contrast: Press the "Contrast" button and then move the intensity bar to the right (add contrast). Add contrast to the photo until you see that the slightly gray background turns to perfect white without affecting the image of your item drastically. (Most of the time add 15 to 20 points of brightness). View the contrast button and intensity bar in [Photo D](#)
5. Picture ready: You should now have a professional high-quality photo that contains a perfect white background and a beautiful representation of the item photographed. [View Photo E](#)
6. Save your image: You may now save your image by pressing "Save" (which will replace the original image) or press "Save As" to save the image as a new photo with a new name.

Photo 6C

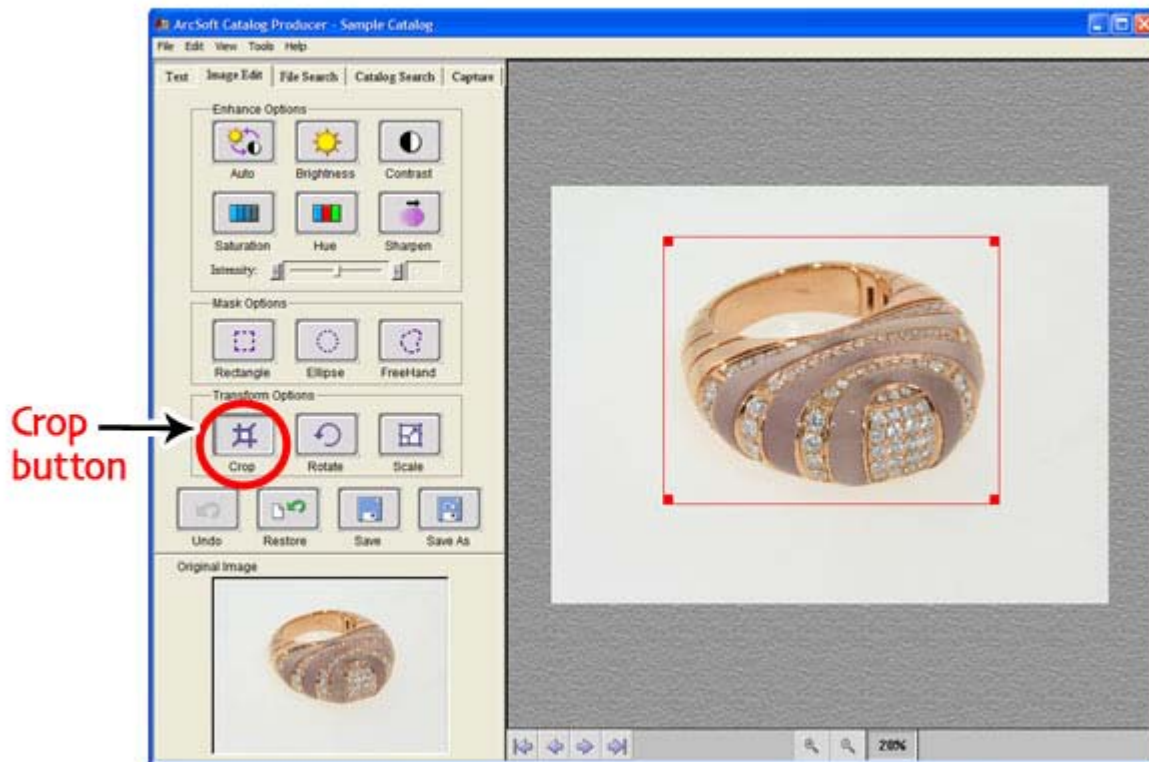


Photo 6D

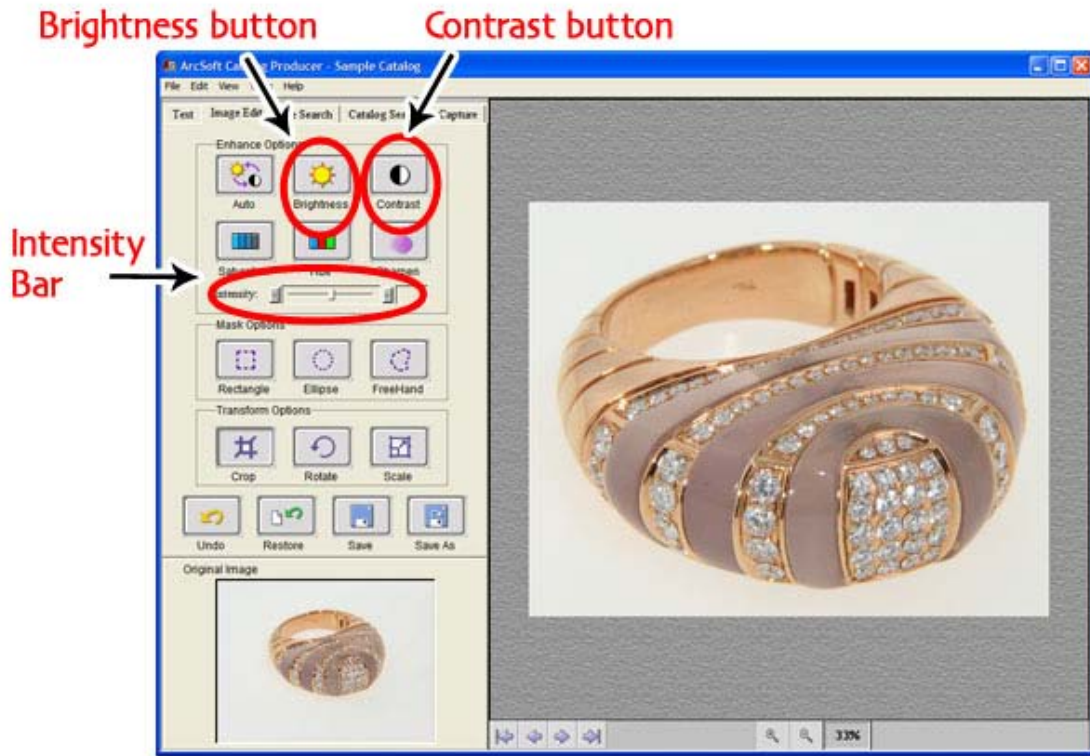


Photo 6E

