

The Creative Tool Handbook

Ten ways to compose, transform, and present your photographs.



PRACTICAL WORKFLOWS. ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS. REAL TOOL RESULTS.

A visual companion to the free browser-based creative tools at horizons.photos. Includes before-and-after examples, reproducible settings, and advice on choosing the right effect.

INSIDE THE HANDBOOK

Find your next edit.

Pick one tool for a focused change, or follow the sequence on the next page to build an edit in stages.

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[Visit the online guide library](#)

A DELIBERATE EDITING SEQUENCE

Start with the photograph.

A useful edit has a purpose. Decide what the viewer should notice before choosing a tool, and compare every change with the original.

01 Compose

Use Multi Crop to remove distractions and choose the shape your image needs. Keep room around the subject before adding a frame or lettering.

02 Set the light and color

Use Image Filters to establish brightness, contrast, and mood. Check sky detail and shadows before committing to a stronger look.

03 Choose an expression

Try Pencil Sketch, Cartoon Maker, Painting, or Pixelate when the style supports your subject. More texture and stronger outlines are not always better.

04 Finish and present

Add a frame or Glass Type near the end. Use Color Palette to coordinate a design, or bring several photographs together in Polaroid Collage.

Use the guided editor to apply changes in sequence. Individual tools are useful for one specific result. Your original file stays unchanged.

[Open the guided editor](#)

01 / TOOL GUIDE

Multi Crop

Compose eight aspect ratios and adjust each crop independently.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

Square crop, centered on the flower; zoom 1.15.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Open Multi Crop and select your photograph. Start with the largest original you have rather than a screenshot.
- 02** Review each aspect ratio. Move the image within each crop and adjust zoom to keep the subject inside the frame.
- 03** Check the edges for cut-off hands, buildings, or distracting objects. Download the crops you need.

GET A BETTER RESULT

A tighter crop reduces the number of original pixels available. Start with the loosest composition that works, then zoom only when necessary.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If a ratio cannot be exported from a tiny image without upscaling, choose a larger source. Cropping cannot recover parts of a scene outside the original photograph.

[Open this tool](#)

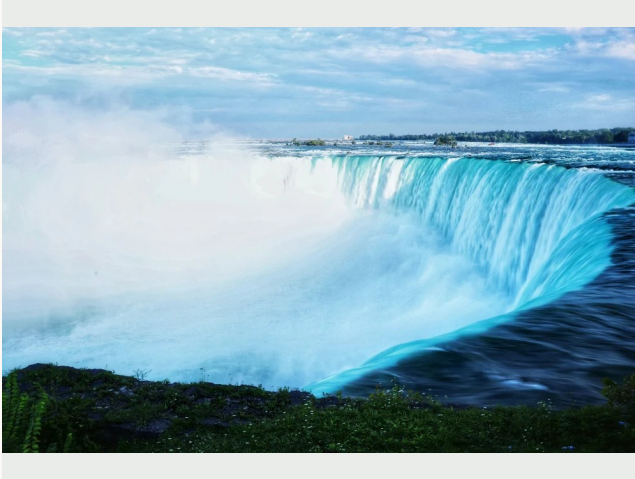
[Explore all options online](#)

02 / TOOL GUIDE

Image Filters

Try preset looks and fine-tune brightness, contrast, and color.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

Golden hour filter; strength 80%, brightness 100%, contrast 108%, saturation 100%.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Select a photograph and try a filter that suits its light and subject.
- 02** Adjust Filter strength before changing the other controls. Reduce it if skin, foliage, or the sky looks unnatural.
- 03** Fine-tune brightness, contrast, and color one control at a time. Use Show original to judge the change, then download.

GET A BETTER RESULT

Check neutral areas such as white clothing or gray pavement. They help reveal a color cast that is easy to miss when looking only at colorful subjects.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Brightening an underexposed image does not restore missing detail and can make noise more visible. If a strong preset hides texture, lower its strength before adding more adjustments.

[Open this tool](#)

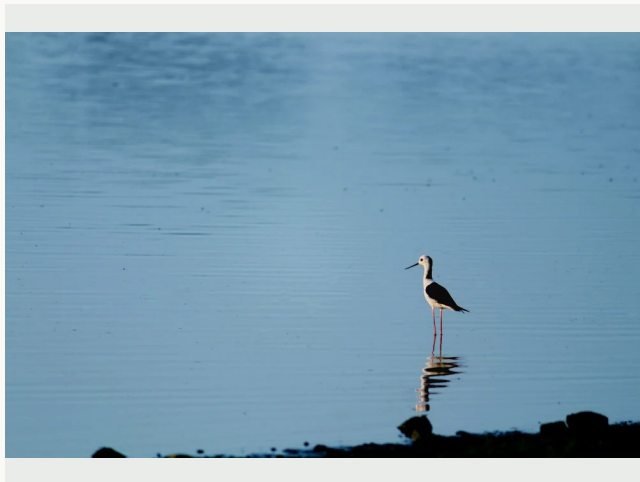
[Explore all options online](#)

03 / TOOL GUIDE

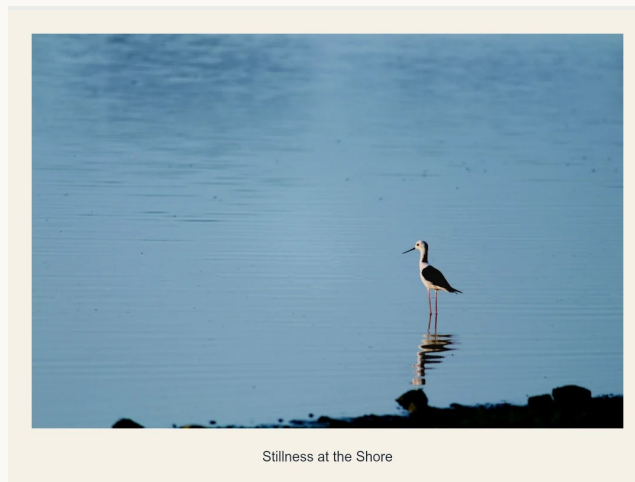
Frame

Add borders and captions while keeping the full photograph.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

Even border, 6% width, warm white frame and a centered caption.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Open Frame, select a photo, and choose a frame design.
- 02** Set the border size and color. Try a color already present in the scene before using a strong contrasting border.
- 03** Add an optional caption and adjust its font, color, and alignment. Inspect the full preview before downloading.

GET A BETTER RESULT

Use consistent frame settings across a series so that changes in border width do not distract from differences between the photographs.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Long captions can crowd the border. Shorten the text or reduce its size and check the exported file at its intended viewing size. A frame is part of the downloaded image, not a physical print border.

[Open this tool](#)

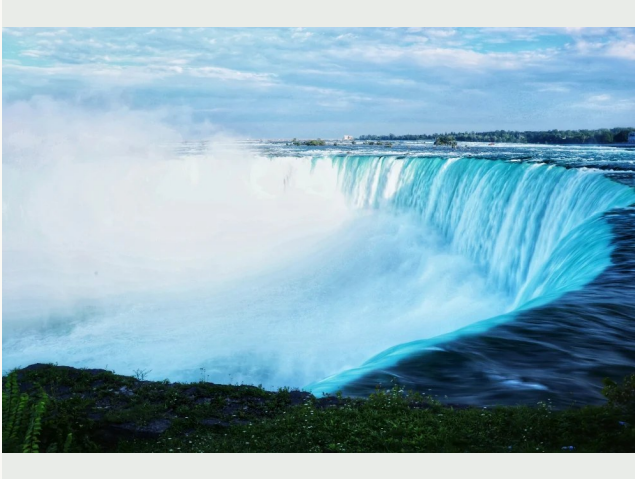
[Explore all options online](#)

04 / TOOL GUIDE

Glass Type

Add transparent 3D text with your choice of font, depth, and lighting.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

"FLOW" in Modern bold, size 22%, centered at 50% / 46%; remaining settings at their defaults.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Choose a photo, enter a short phrase, and pick a font that remains readable over the scene.
- 02** Drag the text to position it. You can also use arrow keys, with Shift for larger movements. Adjust size and rotation.
- 03** Tune depth, refraction, lighting, and shadow gradually. Compare the words against both bright and dark parts of the photo, then download.

GET A BETTER RESULT

Start with restrained lighting and depth. Increase one setting at a time to understand which change improves the sense of glass.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the words disappear, move them to a simpler part of the photograph or change the blend and shadow settings. Strong refraction on a detailed background can make lettering harder to read.

[Open this tool](#)

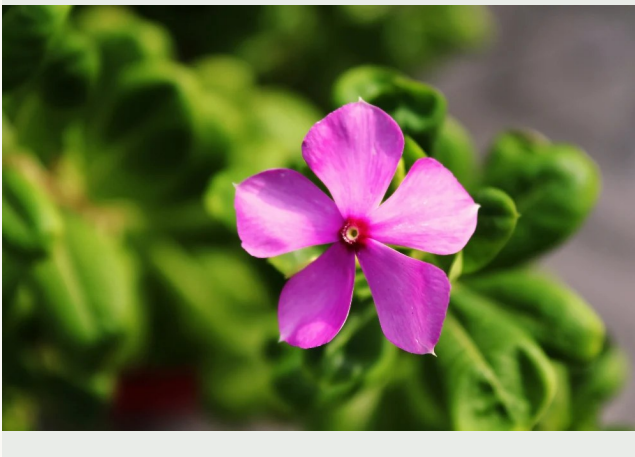
[Explore all options online](#)

05 / TOOL GUIDE

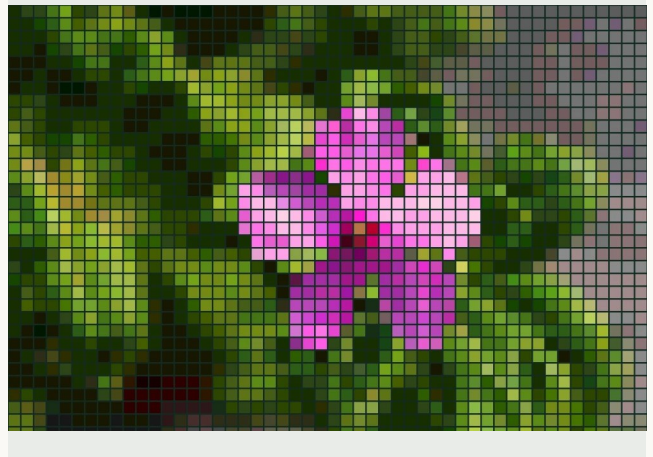
Pixelate

Create a pixel mosaic with adjustable size, color levels, gaps, and blending.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

Square tiles, pixel size 3%, 12 color levels, gap 12%, dark green gap color; Normal blend at 100% opacity.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Select a photo with a recognizable silhouette or clear areas of color.
- 02** Adjust pixel size and color levels. Choose square or round tiles and set the gap size and color.
- 03** Try Normal blending first, then compare other blend modes and opacity settings. Check the original and export as JPG or PNG.

GET A BETTER RESULT

Judge the result at the size where it will be used. A mosaic that looks abstract close up can read clearly as a small thumbnail.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Decorative pixelation is not a reliable way to anonymize a face, document, or license plate. For sensitive content, remove the area or cover it with an opaque redaction before sharing.

[Open this tool](#)

[Explore all options online](#)

06 / TOOL GUIDE

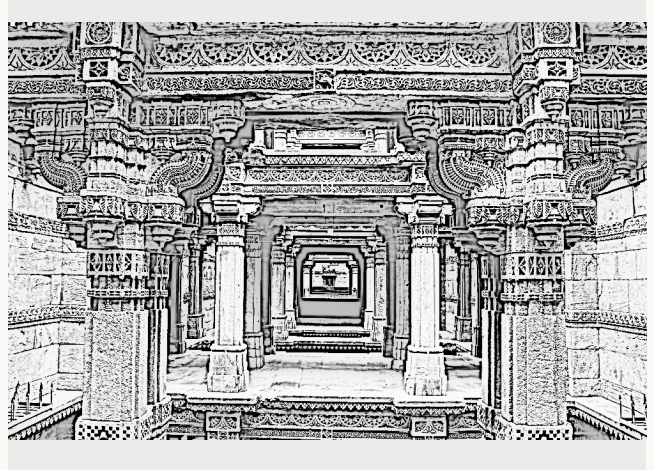
Pencil Sketch

Turn a photo into a pencil sketch with adjustable lines and shading.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

White paper; strength 100%, detail 55%, pencil darkness 65%, shading 25%, texture 15%.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Load a photograph and choose White paper, Warm ivory, or Cool blue.
- 02** Adjust Effect strength, Fine detail, and Pencil darkness to establish the main outlines.
- 03** Balance Shading and Paper texture. Compare the original and check that important features remain distinct before downloading.

GET A BETTER RESULT

For a softer portrait, begin with lower detail and darkness. Add shading gradually rather than making every edge equally strong.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Fine detail can emphasize image noise and busy foliage. Reduce it or crop to a simpler subject first. The full-resolution export may show finer paper texture than the scaled preview.

[Open this tool](#)

[Explore all options online](#)

07 / TOOL GUIDE

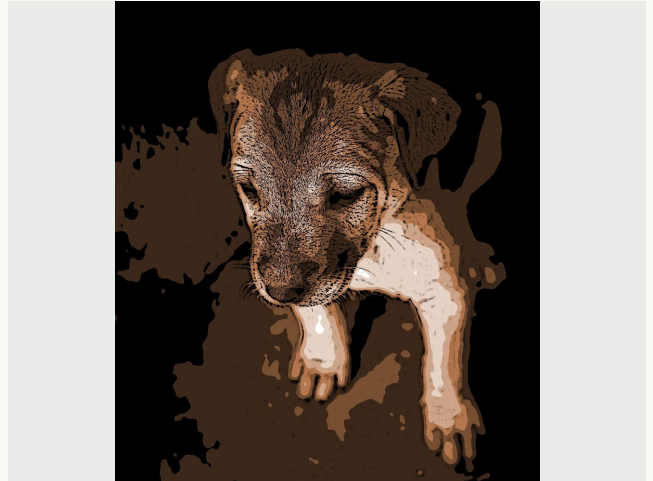
Cartoon Maker

Turn images into cartoons with bold outlines and a consistent tonal shade.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

Tonal shade #b4774d; smoothing 35%, 7 color levels, outline strength 65%.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Select a photograph with clear separation between the subject and background.
- 02** Choose a Tonal shade, then adjust the available outline, color, and effect controls.
- 03** Use Show original to check whether facial features or small objects remain legible. Download when the main shapes read clearly.

GET A BETTER RESULT

Check the selected shade whenever you choose another image: your settings carry over, which is helpful for a series but may not suit a different subject.

TROUBLESHOOTING

A cluttered background can compete with the subject after simplification. Crop first or use a source with a cleaner background. This is an image effect, not a hand-drawn reconstruction of missing detail.

[Open this tool](#)

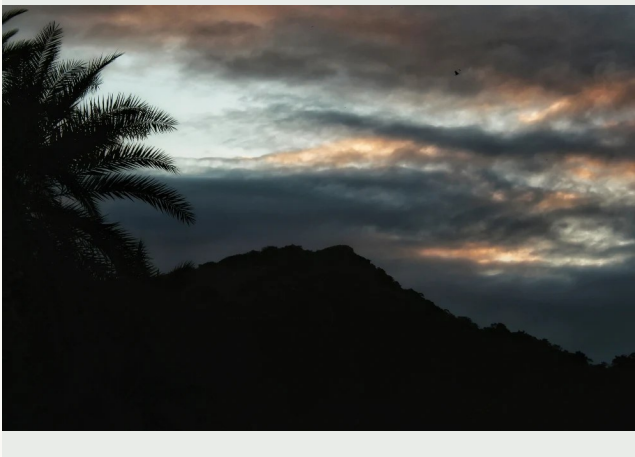
[Explore all options online](#)

08 / TOOL GUIDE

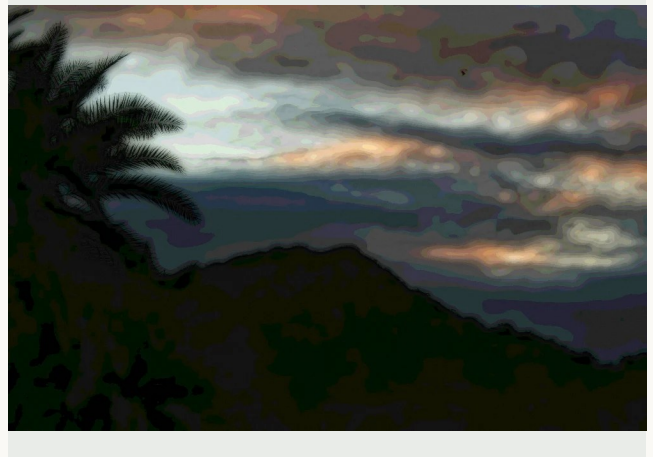
Painting

Explore oil, watercolor, and gouache effects with adjustable texture.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

Oil style; strength 100%, brush size 45%, color richness 115%, canvas texture 25%.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Select a photo and choose Oil, Watercolor, or Gouache from Painting style.
- 02** Adjust the effect and texture controls gradually, keeping an eye on the main subject rather than individual preview pixels.
- 03** Compare with the original. Export and inspect the full-resolution file before deciding whether fine texture needs another adjustment.

GET A BETTER RESULT

Broad light and color relationships matter more than tiny details in a painterly result. A simple composition often works better than a crowded scene.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Small text, thin wires, and fine facial features can lose definition as the effect increases. Lower the strength if those details matter. Export texture can differ from the reduced preview.

[Open this tool](#)

[Explore all options online](#)

09 / TOOL GUIDE

Color Palette

Extract colors from a photograph or generate coordinated tonal shades and related hues. Copy individual HEX codes or the whole palette.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

Five colors extracted from the photo, shown with their HEX codes. Palette output is color codes, not an edited photograph.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Open Color Palette. Select a JPG, PNG, or WebP to extract colors, or leave the image empty to generate a palette.
- 02** For generated palettes, choose Same hue or Related hues, select 3-8 colors, and choose Generate random palette.
- 03** Click a swatch to copy its HEX code, or choose Copy all colors. Remove the image to return to random generation.

GET A BETTER RESULT

A palette is a starting point for a design, not a guarantee of readable or accessible color combinations. Reserve the darkest and lightest swatches for elements that need clear separation.

TROUBLESHOOTING

An image with only a few distinct sampled colors can return fewer swatches than requested. Palette output is copyable color codes; it does not download a JPG or PNG.

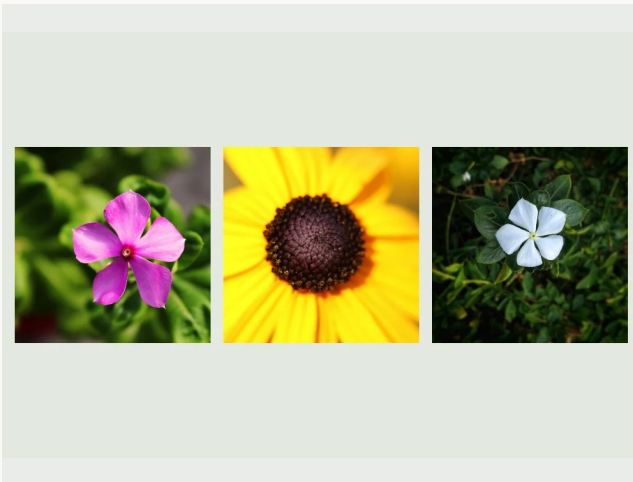
[Open this tool](#)[Explore all options online](#)

10 / TOOL GUIDE

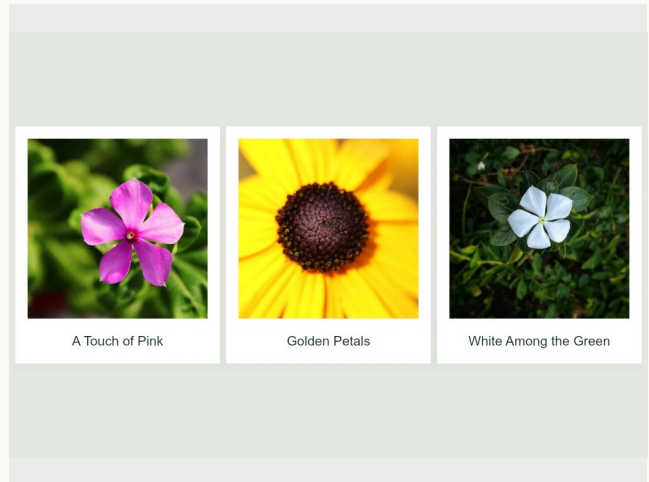
Polaroid Collage

Arrange up to 10 photos, add captions, and make the layout your own.

BEFORE / SOURCE



AFTER / RESULT



SETTINGS USED

Three photographs arranged in a neat grid on a landscape canvas, with white frames and captions.

MAKE THIS EDIT

- 01** Add your photographs and choose a landscape, portrait, or square canvas.
- 02** Start with Neat grid for an orderly layout, or try Scattered or Randomize. Drag photos to move them.
- 03** Select a thumbnail to edit its caption, shape, size, rotation, or crop. Choose a background color and download as JPG or PNG.

GET A BETTER RESULT

Use a consistent caption style and leave some background visible. Filling every gap can make the arrangement harder to scan, especially on a phone.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If a subject is clipped, adjust that photo's crop rather than moving the entire canvas. Small source images can look soft when enlarged. The chosen background color is included in the collage export.

[Open this tool](#)

[Explore all options online](#)

GUIDED EDITS / FROM PHOTOGRAPH TO PRINT

A memory worth keeping.

A natural travel photograph, gentle warmth, and a personal caption: a simple keepsake for a journal or memory box.

**01 / UPLOAD & CROP**

Use your own meaningful photograph. Choose Landscape print 3:2, centered framing, and 1x zoom.

02 / SET THE MOOD

Golden hour at 35%; brightness 100%, contrast 104%, saturation 95%. Apply the change.

03 / KEEP IT NATURAL

Skip Effects so the scene stays recognizable. Undo and Redo compare applied changes.

04 / ADD A FRAME

Polaroid, Solid design, 6% frame size. Use warm ivory #f6f1e7.

05 / MAKE IT PERSONAL

Enable the caption. Classic font, dark text, centered, size 3.5%. Use a real place, date, or memory.

06 / DOWNLOAD & PRINT

Apply the finish; export PNG or JPG. Select Fit when printing so the border and caption stay visible.

For a 6 x 4 inch print at 300 ppi, aim for 1800 x 1200 pixels. Use a full-resolution original for larger prints. The sample is resized.

[Follow the complete walkthrough and download the example](#)

FILES, EXPORT & FURTHER HELP

A good finish matters.

Choose your source

Use JPG, PNG, or WebP. Image tools accept files up to 30 MB, 40 megapixels, and 16,000 pixels per side; limits apply to each collage photo. Color Palette accepts up to 30 MB and 40 megapixels. Smaller images can help on slower devices.

Choose your output

Use JPG for a smaller photo file, or PNG for lossless output and transparency where supported. Collages include their chosen background. Color Palette provides HEX codes rather than image downloads.

Check before sharing

Inspect an export at its intended viewing size. Fine texture may differ from the scaled preview. Confirm the crop, lettering, captions, and background before sharing or printing.

Your images and your account

Creative-tool images are processed in your browser; your original stays unchanged. You can edit and download without an account. Downloads include a Horizons signature by default; sign in and select Remove signature logo to export without it. Palette color codes have no signature.

About the examples

Examples show actual tool results using resized images. Use your full-resolution photographs for larger prints.

[Help & FAQs](#)

[Photo usage & permissions](#)

[Privacy policy](#)