APPRAISEITNOW GUIDE

Remote Appraisal Photo Guide: What to Photograph for Vehicles, Boats, Machinery, Art and Household Items

Good remote appraisal photos give the appraiser a clear, complete view of the asset without a visit. This guide lists AppraiseItNow's photo requirements for vehicles, boats, machinery, fine art and household items, and shows how to shoot sharp, well-lit images and which details to record.

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Educational material, not an appraisal.

Key Takeaways

Here is what to know before sending photos for a remote appraisal:

- **Photo requirements:** AppraiseItNow's photo requirements differ by asset type, from the mileage on a vehicle to the signature on a painting.
- **Online appraisals:** AppraiseItNow's online appraisals are built on the photographs and documents the client sends.
- **Sharp, well-lit photos:** Sharp photos taken in even light, with labels that tie each image to its asset, give the appraiser a usable record.
- **Key details:** The mileage, the HIN and engine hours, and the machine hours and running status are details to record alongside the photos.
- **Inspection scope:** USPAP leaves the appraiser to decide how much inspection credible results need, and the report describes that scope.

Remote appraisal photos are the appraiser's view of a vehicle, boat, machine, artwork or household item when nobody visits in person. Sharp, well-lit images and recorded details such as mileage or engine hours make that view complete. This guide sets out AppraiseItNow's photo requirements in one table, then walks through each asset type with advice on light, angles, labels and the details to record.

AppraiseItNow's photo requirements by asset type: for vehicles, the outside and inside, plus the mileage for anything motorized; for boats, the outside with the cover off, the helm, the engine and the inside, plus the HIN and engine hours; for machinery, a few photos of each machine, the hours and whether it runs; for fine art, the front, back, signature and frame; for household items, one clear photo per item or group. The table below lays out the same requirements by asset type:

Asset type	What to photograph	What to record
Vehicles	The outside and inside	The mileage, for anything motorized
Boats	The outside with the cover off, the helm, the engine and the inside	The HIN and engine hours
Machinery	A few photos of each machine	The hours and whether it runs
Fine art	The front, back, signature and frame	Covered by the 4 photos
Household items	One clear photo per item or group	Covered by the photos

Remote Appraisal Photos for Vehicles: Exterior, Interior and Mileage

A vehicle appraisal from photographs needs the outside, the inside and, for anything motorized, the mileage. The outside photos show body condition, paint and wheels, while the inside photos show wear on the seats, dashboard and headliner. The mileage photo records the odometer reading the appraiser works from.

A full exterior and interior set for a car, truck or motorcycle covers these views:

- **Front and rear:** Straight-on shots from about 10 feet away, with the whole vehicle in the frame.
- **Corners:** Angled shots from each of the 4 corners, which show 2 sides at once.
- **Sides:** A full profile of the driver and passenger sides.
- **Wheels and tires:** A close shot of each wheel showing tread depth and rim condition.
- **Interior:** The dashboard, front seats, rear seats and cargo area or trunk, where the vehicle has them.
- **Odometer:** The instrument cluster with the mileage clearly readable.

Light decides whether those photos are usable. Overcast days and open shade give even light without hard reflections, while midday sun throws glare across paint and glass. Parking the vehicle away from walls, other cars and clutter keeps its outline clear.

Damage needs 2 photos: a close shot of the dent, scratch or tear, and a wider shot that shows where it sits on the vehicle. A close-up alone leaves the appraiser guessing which panel it belongs to.

Pro tip: Photograph the odometer with the ignition in the on position, because many digital clusters stay dark otherwise. A separate shot of the vehicle identification number (VIN) on the driver-side door jamb or dashboard plate puts the identifier on record next to the mileage.

What Photos Does a Boat Appraisal Need?

A boat appraisal from photographs needs the outside with the cover off, the helm, the engine and the inside, plus the HIN and engine hours. A covered boat hides the hull, deck and upholstery, which are the areas that show condition most clearly. Owners preparing for one of AppraiseItNow's boat appraisals should remove the cover completely before taking the first photo.

A complete boat photo set includes these views:

- **Hull:** Both sides, the bow and the transom, with the boat on a trailer or lift when possible so the bottom is visible.
- **Deck and cockpit:** Seating, flooring, hardware and any canvas or tops.

- **Helm:** The wheel, gauges and electronics, photographed straight on so the displays read clearly.
- **Engine:** Each engine with the cowling or engine hatch open, plus the make and model label.
- **Inside:** The cabin, berths, galley and head on boats that have them.
- **Identifiers:** The HIN and the engine hour reading.

The HIN, or hull identification number, is the boat's serial number, usually found near the top of the transom on the starboard side. Wiping the area clean and shooting at a slight angle brings raised or engraved characters into relief. Engine hours appear on an hour meter at the helm, on a digital engine display or in service records, and a clear photo of the meter or the record page captures them.

Watch out: Water, chrome and gelcoat reflect sunlight hard. Shooting with the sun behind the camera, or on an overcast day, keeps reflections from hiding scratches, cracks and repairs.

How to Photograph Machinery and Equipment for an Appraisal

Machinery appraised remotely needs a few photos of each machine, the hours and whether it runs. A few photos per machine means enough angles to show the whole unit and its working parts, not a single distant shot of a yard full of equipment.

A useful set for each machine covers these shots:

- **Overall views:** Front, back and both sides, with the full machine in the frame.
- **Data plate:** The manufacturer's plate showing make, model and serial number, close enough to read.
- **Hour meter:** The meter or display showing machine hours.
- **Wear points:** Tracks, tires, buckets, cutting edges, belts or tooling, depending on the machine.
- **Attachments:** Each attachment or accessory that goes with the machine.

Running condition is a plain yes or no, with a short note on any problem: a hydraulic leak, a warning light or a machine that starts but will not move. Writing that note next to the machine's photos keeps the condition tied to the right unit.

Labels matter most on multi-machine jobs. A simple numbering system, such as a card reading Machine 1, Machine 2 and so on placed in the first photo of each unit, lets the appraiser match photos, hours and notes without guesswork. Naming the files the same way, for example Machine-03-dataplate.jpg, does the same job in a shared folder.

Data plates in dim shops read better under a flashlight held at an angle than under the phone's flash, which bounces straight back off the metal. Faded or painted-over plates are worth a second photo from a different angle.

How to Photograph Fine Art for a Remote Appraisal

Fine art appraised from photographs needs the front, back, signature and frame. The front shows the image and its condition, and the back shows labels, stamps and inscriptions. The signature photo shows the artist's mark up close, and the frame photo shows its style and condition.

Each of the 4 required views has its own technique:

- **Front:** Hang or prop the work so the camera is level with its center and parallel to its surface, then fill the frame without cutting off any edge.
- **Back:** Photograph the full reverse, then add close shots of any gallery labels, exhibition stickers, stamps or handwritten notes.
- **Signature:** Fill the frame with the signature and any date beside it, sharp enough to read every letter.
- **Frame:** Show at least 1 corner up close to capture the molding, finish and any chips or repairs.

Glare is the most common problem with art photos. Turning off the flash and lighting the work from both sides at roughly 45 degrees, or shooting near a window with indirect daylight, keeps reflections off varnish and glass. Works behind glass photograph best from a slight angle, which moves the reflection off the image, and removing glazing is a job for a framer.

Measurements belong in the notes for every work: the height and width of the image, plus the framed size. Purchase receipts, gallery invoices and any certificates the owner holds go in with the photos.

Photographing Household Items One Item or Group at a Time

Household items appraised remotely need one clear photo per item or group. A single item is anything that stands on its own, such as a dining table, a sofa or a piece of jewelry. A group is a set that belongs together, such as 8 matching dining chairs, a set of china or a shelf of small kitchen appliances.

Group photos work best when the items share a maker, style and condition. Spreading the items out so each one is visible, rather than stacking them, keeps the photo useful. Items that differ in condition or quality belong in separate photos.

Close-ups help where the value sits in a detail: a maker's label inside a drawer, a hallmark on silver, a signature on glassware or the stamp on the underside of pottery. One extra photo of that mark sits alongside the main photo of the item.

An inventory list ties the photos together. A spreadsheet with a row for each item or group, a photo number, a short description, the room it came from and any known purchase details gives the appraiser a map of the whole household. Numbering the photos to match the rows keeps the

list and the images in step.

Sharp photos come from steady hands and enough light. Wiping the phone lens, tapping the screen to focus on the item and bracing elbows against the body or a doorframe prevent the softness that hides detail. Shooting at full resolution, without filters or digital zoom, keeps the image true to the item.

What Happens When an Appraiser Visits in Person?

Most AppraiseItNow appraisals are completed remotely from photographs and documents; when an inspection is needed, an appraiser visits the asset in person. Of the 1,226 appraisals AppraiseItNow opened between November 8, 2025 and November 8, 2026, 1,137 were done from photographs and documents and 27 in person; the method was not recorded for the other 62.

USPAP does not require an in-person inspection in every assignment. The appraiser decides the scope of work, including how much inspection credible results need, and the report describes that scope.

Donated property has its own guidance on inspection. IRS rules do not require the appraiser to inspect the property in person. Donors who want the IRS's own explanation of valuing donated property can read IRS Publication 561, Determining the Value of Donated Property.

An in-person appraisal moves the photography from the client to the appraiser. On an in-person appraisal, the appraiser identifies and photographs everything at the visit; the client still provides the address and the paperwork they hold, such as titles, receipts, certificates and records.

Preparation for a visit is practical. Clear access to the asset, keys for vehicles and boats, power for machinery that needs to run, and a single folder holding the titles, receipts, certificates and records make the visit straightforward.

Key takeaway: The photography job changes hands on an in-person appraisal, but the paperwork job does not. Titles, receipts, certificates and records still come from the client.

Send a Complete Photo Set Before the Appraisal Starts

A complete first submission means fewer requests for missing details. In 162 requests for missing details that AppraiseItNow sent between August 2025 and September 2026, the median first reply from the client came in 0.1 days; 55% were resolved within a day and 89% within a week. Identifiers such as a VIN or serial number took a median 0.6 days to arrive, receipts 0.7 days, donation documents 1.7 days and photos 2.0 to 3.7 days.

A retake means another trip to the boat, the barn or the storage unit, so a final check while the asset is still in front of the camera pays off.

A final check before sending covers these points:

- **Required views:** Every photo the table lists for each asset type, including the helm and engine on a boat and the back and signature on a painting.
- **Recorded details:** The mileage, the HIN and engine hours, and the machine hours and running status, each written down or clearly photographed.
- **Sharpness:** Every photo checked at full size, with the data plates, odometers and signatures readable.
- **Labels:** File names and photo numbers that match the inventory list or machine numbers.
- **Paperwork:** Titles, receipts, certificates and records scanned or photographed flat and in focus.

A complete set of photos, details and documents covers everything in the table above. When the set is ready, request an appraisal and include the files with your request.

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