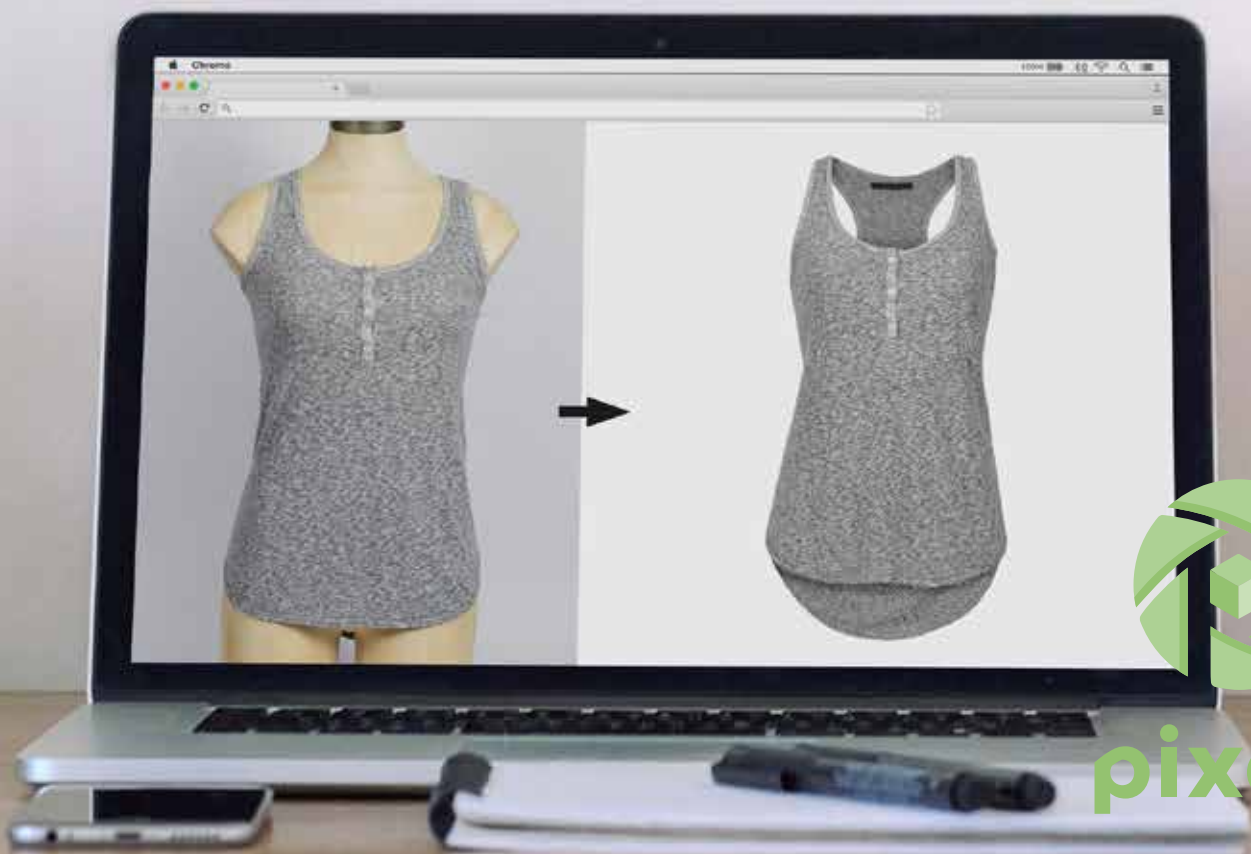


PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

PRODUCT IMAGE SOLUTIONS TRUSTED BY LEADING ONLINE RETAILERS

Invisible Mannequin Photography: Increase Apparel Sales With This Post-Production Technique

“ The result is a lifelike image that keeps the focus firmly on your product



pixelz



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Invisible Mannequin Photography: Increase Apparel Sales With This Post- Production Technique

If you're in the apparel business, you've faced the challenge of demonstrating a product's fit without breaking the bank or distracting your customer. Customers need to see the shape of a product; flat or folded displays don't provide the necessary level of detail. Your product photography must show the products being worn, but models are expensive and mannequins can be alienating.

The "invisible mannequin" effect, also known as the "ghost mannequin," is a simple and powerful post-production technique for apparel product photography that solves the showcase problem. The invisible mannequin effect allows you to take multiple photographs of a product on a model or mannequin, and then combine the photos to remove the model or mannequin in post-production processing. The result is a lifelike image that keeps the focus firmly on your product.

All it takes is a plan and Photoshop instructions. We'll show you how.



The "Invisible Mannequin" effect creates shape without distraction.

The principles are simple, but the execution can be time-consuming and requires practice to perform efficiently. We'll cover the entire process in this guide,

from studio setup to finished product image, and by the end you will have a complete understanding of the invisible mannequin technique.

Photography Assets and Examples

In its simplest form, an invisible mannequin image is a combination of two or more images. The first image is on-body. The second and any additional images are flat views of any part of the interior of the garment that was blocked by your model or mannequin, usually shot on a white foam board.

Most invisible mannequin images are made from only two other images, but sometimes it's necessary to use more. It all depends on the shape and cut of your product, and how much detail is covered by the model or mannequin in the on-body shot. In rare instances, like with bracelets and watches, you may not even be concerned with a mannequin and only want to combine

images to manage difficult lighting. The best way for us to explain how the effect is created is to show you, so take a look at some invisible mannequin product images and the photos that went into their creation. Pay extra attention to the foam board shots and how the inner areas of the product are opened for the camera.



Bikini

Be sure to tie any uncovered straps.



Bra (front)



Clip the straps at about shoulder height.



Bra (back)



Open the bra and clip the straps at about shoulder height.



Women's Underwear (front)



Capture areas that were covered by legs and torso.



Women's Underwear (back)



Use the same lighting conditions in both shots.



Men's Underwear



Off body is focused mostly on the waistband.



Shorts



Unzip and unbutton the waist, and pin up front hems if needed.



Skirt



Expose the waistband while keeping it flat



Tee Shirt



Capture the neck area, turning the shirt inside out if needed.



Tank Top



Be sure to capture both the lower hem and the neck area.



Button Up Shirt



Unbutton the top several buttons to fully expose the neck area.



Pants



Unzip and unbutton pants to expose as much of the waistband as possible.



Vest



Open the vest as much as possible, turning it inside out if necessary.



Open Front Top



Pin the top wide open. You want to capture a flat unwrinkled back.



Blazer



Clip the jacket to expose the full interior. You can turn it inside out if necessary.



Watch



Give the watch shape on an easily removed background, then hold it to expose the wristband.



Hat



Hold the hat at the same angle as when worn on the mannequin.



Bracelets

*Objects can be stacked in post-production.*

By now you should have a pretty good grasp of the invisible mannequin concept and its principle photography requirements. Keep reading to learn the ideal way to set up your studio and capture the necessary images.



Planning Your Photography



In order to create the invisible mannequin illusion, you will need to first photograph your product being worn by a model or a mannequin from the front and back.



Static: Good



In motion: Bad

If you decide to use a real model, make sure to use a static pose, as shown above. Your model should be styled minimally, and long hair should be tied up so that it does

not obstruct viewing of the product. These details will make image editing much easier.



Use a lifelike mannequin.

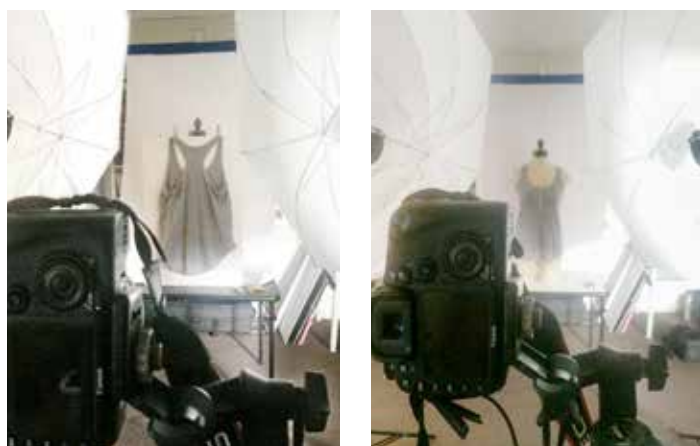


White mannequins tend to be non-reflective and can be made to blend into white backgrounds, which will make editing the mannequin out of the image a much easier task. The best mannequins are lifelike and static, as shown above. If your mannequin has arms and hands, then make sure that the limbs can be positioned out of the frame.

Make sure that your product fits your mannequin or model by using the right size or [tailoring the garment to fit correctly](#). If your product has sleeves, make sure to position the sleeves so that the viewer can't see down them.

In order to execute the invisible mannequin technique, you need to be able to create high quality

photographs in a studio setting. The lower the quality of your photographs, the less appeal the invisible mannequin effect will be able to add to those images. Camera and lighting techniques, equipment, and placement all come into play here, depending on each particular product that you're shooting.



Both of these studio setups require two studio lights and umbrellas.

When photographing tops, it's important to position the camera to be directly level with the chest area, whereas the camera should be positioned across from the hip area to photograph bottoms. Photographing a product from an angle that is either too high or too low may cause the garment to look "tapered" or inaccurate.

Below are two example photographs of a tank top on a mannequin. The first image was taken below chest-height, resulting in an unappealing view of the product; the second image was taken at chest-height, resulting in a flattering view of the product.



Shooting at chest level provides an appealing view of the product.

Using a telephoto zoom lens to capture your images can help to minimize distortion and provide you with the flexibility to move closer to smaller objects and move farther away from larger objects. Make sure that your studio shooting space is large enough to accommodate your camera and tripod, two studio lights and umbrellas spaced evenly apart on either side of the product, and backdrop.

To create a 3D image with the invisible mannequin technique, you will first need to capture a front and back view of your product being worn by your mannequin or model. After that, you should style and hang your product on a piece of white foam board and photograph both the front and back views again; these foam board shots will allow you to include the inner areas of the garment once you combine the images together, as shown below. For category specific instructions and sample images, please refer to the Product Category Examples given earlier in the guide. The necessary internal shots will be different for every product, and not all garments will require two internal shots.



Front view showing inner portions of back and hem covered by the mannequin during on-body shot.



Back view showing inner portions of shoulders and chest covered by the mannequin during on-body shot.

Make sure to use the exact same [lighting conditions](#) for both the mannequin/model shots and the foam board shots. The easiest way to do this is to mark the mannequin's/model's location and make sure to place the foam board in exactly the same spot and at the

same height. When the mannequin and back images are combined together in post-production, the result is a 3D invisible mannequin effect that demonstrates shape and fit at a fraction of the cost of a model.



Completed invisible mannequin images.

Post-Production Processing

After you have captured the necessary views, it's time for some Photoshop magic. You have two options for creating the invisible mannequin effect: do it yourself, or outsource to a professional product image editing company like Pixelz.



Option 1:

DIY Step-By-Step Photoshop Instructions

Creating the invisible mannequin effect is relatively simple, given that you own the proper post-production software (e.g. Adobe Photoshop) and that your products have been photographed correctly.

Outsourcing this work may save your company a great deal of time and frustration, but if budget constraints require you to make the edits yourself, follow these seven simple steps to create your own invisible mannequin effect in Photoshop:

1 Open your files in Photoshop and create layers

First, you will need to open the mannequin image and the foam board image in Photoshop. Select your mannequin image and create a new background layer. Fill that layer in with white; it will serve as your overall background when you're finished. It's also helpful to label your layers so that you can tell them apart and remain organized.

2 Use a selection tool to select the product in the mannequin image

Now it's time to select the product in your mannequin image. Zoom in tight and choose your favorite selection tool: quick selection, lasso, or magic wand. All three can help you to accomplish your desired selection. Keep in mind that, in most cases, using a white background when shooting allows you to remove the mannequin easily because of the color separation between the product and the background.

3 Refine and place your mask

Once you have selected the entire product, refine your mask so that it is nice and tight, eliminating all of the background and mannequin. This can be accomplished using the Refine Edge tool in the Select menu. Click OK in the Refine Edge dialogue box and place a mask on your shirt layer. At this point, you should see your product floating freely on the white background that you created in the beginning. If necessary, refine the mask slightly more and/or refine the product's edges again to give it a nice, clean look.

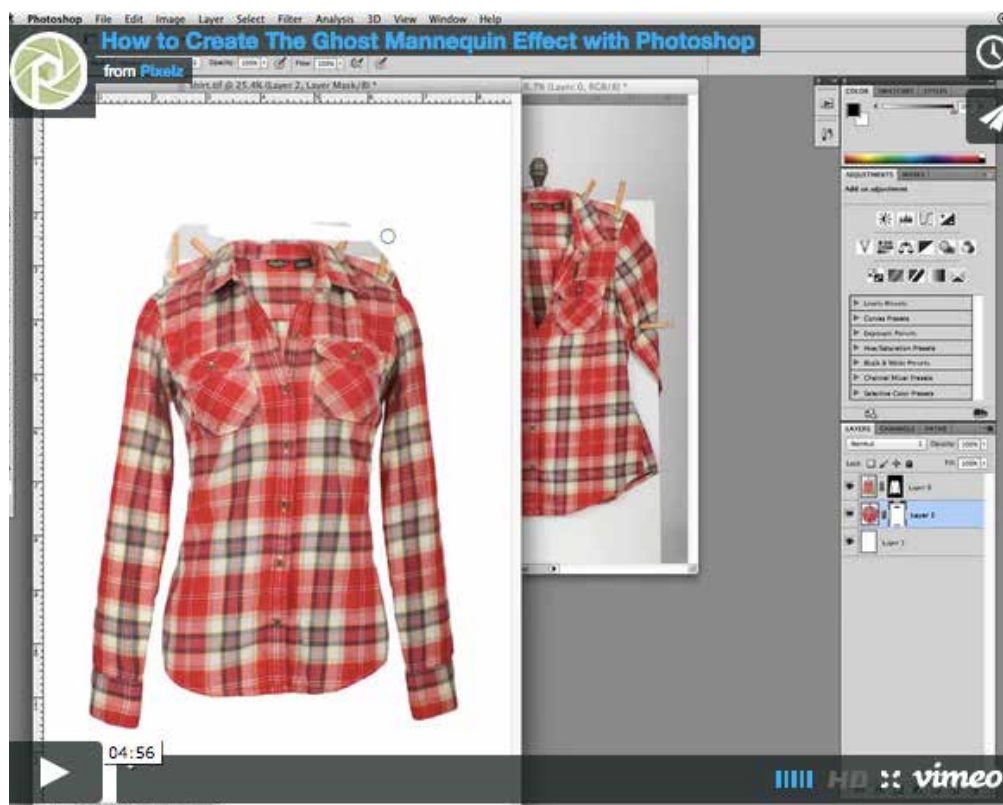
4 Rinse and repeat previous steps with the foam board image
 Now it's time to switch gears and repeat Steps One, Two, and Three on your foam board product image. This type of product image may seem a little odd at first, but having one to work with is important; photographing the product inside-out will allow you to show the inside back of the product, completing the mannequin illusion. We promise that it will look great in the end! Create a new layer, select out the product, and create and refine your mask.

5 Combine the images
 When both images contain tight, clean masks, drag the mask from your foam board image over to the image of your invisible mannequin product image. Organize the layers so that the foam board image is lower than the mannequin image. Then, adjust the positioning of the foam board layer and adjust its proportions so that it fits perfectly behind the mannequin layer, just below the shoulder in a rounded curve.

6 Remove unnecessary parts of the foam board layer
 At this point, it's a good idea to "hide" your mannequin layer and brush out the unneeded parts of the foam board layer. You really only need to keep that neckline triangle between the shoulders. In the video below, notice how the string across the back is showing as well. It's important to remember to remove that piece in the foam board image because it's already in place in the mannequin shot. Once you've done this, double check that your layers are clean and that nothing is out of alignment.

7 Add shadows and save
 Finally, add a shadow between the two layers to give the product some depth, and save a copy of the Photoshop file with all of the layers intact, just to be safe. Once you've saved the layer file, flatten or merge all of the layers together and save the image again as a different file. This final step will make your image look professional and realistic.

Want to see all seven steps in action? Watch the tutorial below for a step-by-step guide to the process.



Option 2: Integrate Pixelz Into Your Workflow

You may be capable of editing images yourself to create an invisible mannequin effect in Photoshop, but it is often cheaper and more efficient to use outsourced

professional image editors like Pixelz. We've made it quick, easy, and affordable to add the invisible mannequin effect to an order.

To place an order for the invisible mannequin service, you need to create an [order specification](#) containing the "Invisible Mannequin" add-on. You can do that by logging into your account, clicking "Specifications" from the left menu, and then pressing the "Create New" button. Follow the wizard and select "Invisible Mannequin" as an add-on in step 6.

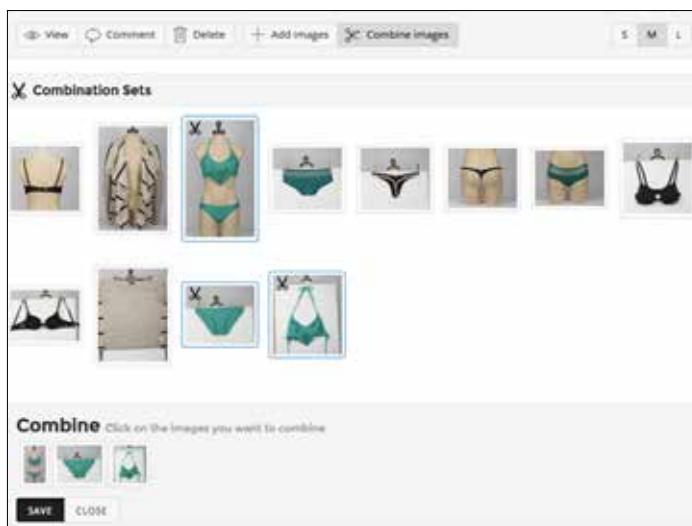


Add "Invisible Mannequin" to your specification in step 6 of the wizard

Next, you'll need to create an order and pair and upload your images. You can create an order by clicking "Orders" from the left menu in your account, and pressing the "Create New" button. You will then be prompted to upload your images.

Invisible mannequin images need to be sent as sets of images rather than on their own. There are two ways of connecting, or "pairing," images. You can either pair them manually, by uploading them from your compute and checking some boxes, or you can upload via FTP and pair them by naming convention.

If you're pairing them manually, it's as simple as point and click. After uploading, click "Combine images" and then click on the images you wish to combine into a single set. Press the "save" button each time you have selected a complete set.



Add "Invisible Mannequin" to your specification in step 6 of the wizard

If you have a high volume of images, you should use FTP and simply make sure all your images have the same root name and a different suffix, like this:

myimage.jpg
myimage_2.jpg
myimage_3.jpg

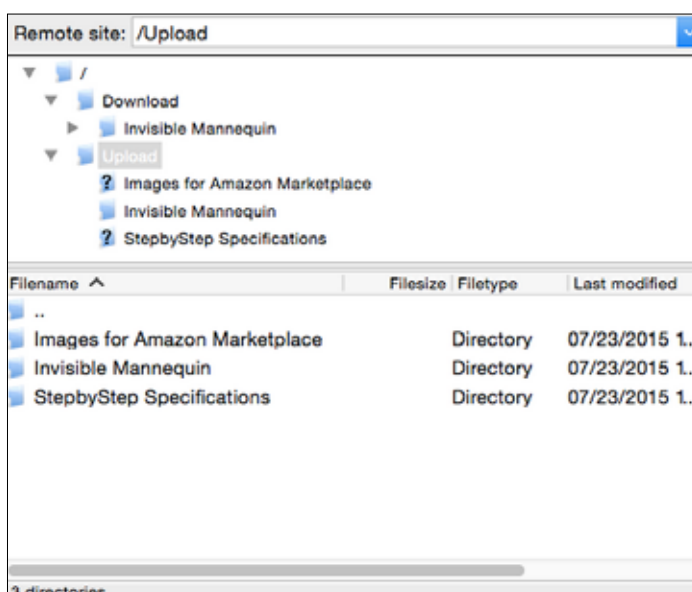
The above will be combined into **myimage.jpg**.

imagename-main.jpg
imagename-insert.jpg

The above will be combined into **imagename.jpg**.

You are given your FTP credentials when you select "FTP" as your upload method during order creation. Every order specification has its own FTP folder within the "Upload" directory, and uploading images to that folder is considered to be placing an order. No action is needed to initiate the editing process with Pixelz beyond uploading images to the folder.

Finished images are returned via FTP in addition to being made available within your account. You will find them in the "Download" folder.



Use FTP if you have a high volume of images to process

Get Your Images Back in 24 Hours or Less

After your order has been placed and your images are uploaded, your work is done. Our expert image editors will complete your order in [24 hours or less](#).

When it's ready, you will receive an email from us letting you know your images have been edited and are ready for download. You can review and approve or reject them using our [Quality Inspector](#), which gives you side-by-side before-and-after comparisons.

eCommerce is fiercely competitive. You may only have a few seconds with a single image to catch a customer's eye before they move on. Maximize that opportunity with effects like the invisible mannequin. Give yourself the best possible chance with professionally edited product photography that is clean, consistent, and distraction free.

RELATED GUIDES

- [Quickly Adjust The Color Of Your Images Using Adobe Lightroom](#)
- [Save Time and Money Using Photoshop Actions!](#)
- [Best Practices in Apparel Product Photography](#)
- [Best Practices in Watch Product Photography](#)
- [Best Practices in Footwear Product Photography](#)
- [The Minimalist's Guide to Outfitting your Professional Studio](#)
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