



*How To Set Up*  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
LIGHTING *for a*  
HOME  
STUDIO

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# How to Set Up Photography Lighting for a Home Studio

*By Amber Richards*

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## Introduction

This book is intended for the beginner or hobbyist photographer, wanting to learn more about lighting, to include perhaps setting up a small home studio. When I was just starting out and a total newbie to photography, at times I found the learning curve quite frustrating. Although there are many excellent resources out there, I found personally at the very beginner levels, that many of the books, resources and tutorials, were simply over my head. Once I got more basic knowledge under my belt, I could then understand what they were communicating. The authors seemed to assume I knew more than I did, and key building blocks were missed.

You'll find early on in this book that there will be images of lighting components as well as what each piece of equipment is called, with a short description of what it is. If you already know this, you may want to skip that portion. When I started out, it would be very helpful for me to see these in order to visualize what technology specifically was being referred to, so my hope is that it will provide value to some readers.

In the past few years or so, there have been many people who have gotten into photography as a hobby. One reason for this is the DSLR or the Digital SLR cameras, which are easily available, affordable and take great quality pictures. The shutterbug can be quite contagious as one begins to master new techniques. It is also a challenging hobby as well since there is always more to learn.

Social media venues such as Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, and Tumblr, have made it

simpler than ever to share your photos with others.

Taking beautiful photos, (some of which may even be considered professional) has become easier than ever, many photography enthusiasts are considering taking their passion to the next level by turning it into a business. Nowadays many simple birthday parties have a photographer covering the event. Gone are the days where your Uncle with the cheap film camera is the official photographer. Today, semi-professional and even professional photographers are being hired to cover family events.

A few years ago, no one had ever heard of an engagement photo shoot, or a postnup shoot, a debut shoot, a baby bump shoot, and a new born shoot, toy photography, product photography, etc. But now all these shoots (and so many more) are part of everyday life; this goes to show that the demand and need for the services of photographers has gradually increased these past years.

You might already be considering bringing your passion for photography to the next level, whether you will be pursuing it professionally or as a serious enthusiast, you may want to consider setting up your own home studio.

If you've gotten to the point in your hobby or small business that you want to set up your own photography studio in your home, you might be asking yourself how you should go

about it.

You might possess most of your equipment, except for the lighting. This can be tricky because it all depends on the room size, the natural and artificial lighting already available, not to mention the color of the walls, carpet and/or flooring. So first things first, let's go over some basics.

## Advantages of Setting Up a Home Studio

There are definitely many advantages in setting up your own home studio, the main benefit being that you can save a lot of money, because you have your very own home studio. There are many commercial studios that will allow you to rent their studio and equipment for a certain amount of money, but if you have your own home studio then you no longer have to spend extra to rent a studio and the required lighting equipment.

If you don't have your own studio, aside from having to pay to rent for the use of a commercial studio, you would also need to schedule your photo sessions around their schedule. When you have your own studio you don't have to work on someone else's schedule. You never know when inspiration will strike and having a home studio ready for you to use at any time, will definitely be beneficial to your growth as a photographer.

One of the benefits of studio photography is that you are in absolute control of all the elements within that space, and this is because you control all lighting aspects in that environment. People often have this idea that working in a home studio, or other photography studio means being in a controlled and formal environment. That is not always the case since there is still a lot of room for creative situations that you can try out in your home studio. You may in fact, discover some very dramatic effects that are stunning in your studio work.

When setting up your own home photography studio, you might want to consider that some photography studios have glass areas or windows, that allow natural light to spill in. Other studios known as 'blackout studios' do not have any natural light coming inside the room and they rely solely on the lighting equipment being used in the studio. Whether you would choose one over the other, would depend on how you would want to work with lights, natural or artificial.



## [The Importance of Lighting for Your Home Studio](#)

Any budding photographer knows the importance of lighting when it comes to taking photos; it is basically why we can capture images on film or in a digital sensor. Light is our means of communicating and translating what we see from our view finder to our images or photos. It directly affects the subject and the image. Without it, you'll have to raise your ISO to 1600, 3200, or even 12800, use a tripod, slow down the shutter speed, and open your aperture all the way to a decent exposure.

Lighting will give you flexibility and control in whichever area of studio photography you would like to explore. Unlike natural light, which varies depending on the time of day or weather, it changes, even during the same shoot, forcing the photographer to continually adapt to the shifts in light. Studio lighting will allow you to place the light where you want it, where you want the light to fall, and how much light you want. That is why when you are setting up your very own home studio you have to make important decisions when it comes to lighting, so that it is done correctly. It also allows for a greater degree of creative lighting in many situations.

When you have the right lighting equipment you will be able to try and experiment on a lot of different photographic techniques and experiments. This is especially good for the creative photographer that gets bored easily; the possibilities are endless!

## **Investing in getting photography equipment and what to do if you are on a budget**

The choice of what equipment to start buying for your home photography studio will be like mapping out your journey before you take the trip. Before laying out the path, we have to find out what we need, to travel in order to get from point A to point B.

A few things that will cross your mind will be whether it would be advisable to splurge or be thrifty with your investment for lighting equipment for your studio. It's all going to depend on the budget that you are working with, what type of photography you plan to shoot, and what your future plan with the equipment is.

If you look around the internet, you might read a lot suggesting investing more on expensive equipment. This may set you back and have you thinking twice about setting up your own photography studio at home. But you must consider in the long run whether you'd be benefiting from the better performing equipment. Sometimes the saying, "you get what you pay for" is very true in photography lighting equipment.

It may be wise and advisable to invest in more expensive lighting and photography equipment if you can, but it is not necessarily required. Now if you don't have the budget at the moment, to purchase expensive lighting equipment, you should not lose hope and give up on setting up your own home photography studio. It is still possible to have your own studio, even while working on a tight budget. You can purchase less expensive starter

equipment to begin with and upgrade as soon as you can. Sometimes you can also find good quality lighting that is used, from a photographer who is upgrading their equipment.

You have to remember that whether you will be purchasing expensive equipment or looking at cheaper models, it is important that you do the necessary research in order to ensure that you buy equipment that is stable enough, and made of good quality to meet your basic photographic needs. If it doesn't, no price is a good one, and it will hurt your work. If clients aren't happy with the work, your studio won't grow.

Now going back to working on a budget for your home photography studio, you can start with a one light set up at first. There is no need to go crazy and buy a whole photography store if you are working on a tight budget. Even if you are purchasing photography lighting equipment one piece at a time, you can still get the most out of it by mastering all possible photography & lighting techniques, exploring the possibilities, and studying the limitations with your one light set up.

After you have mastered your one light set up you can then move on to purchasing your next piece of photography and lighting equipment, which might be a two light set up. From there, acquire the same mastery before moving on to your next lighting purchase.



## Looking at the Business Side

Whether you are looking at using your home photography studio as a place to practice and perfect your craft in studio photography, or are considering using your studio in your own business, you have to be realistic and look into the business side of having your own home photography studio.

In the long run, you would definitely want to start earning with the photos that you produce from your home studio, but while you are still learning the ropes of lighting and studio photography you can actually start earning income from your studio by renting it out to other budding photographers. Keep in mind however, that renting out your home photography studio to other photographers also means renting out your studio equipment. That is why it is important to make sure that you invest in studio equipment that will also be good enough for other photographers to use. This is another reason why it is ideal that you invest in equipment that would be enticing for other photographers as well.

By renting out your home photography studio to other photographers you can start getting a return on investment with the lighting and photography equipment you have purchased immediately. Just make sure to have procedures and policies in place to ensure that your equipment is handled with care.

## Getting Started with your Home Studio

Before you get started in building your home studio, you have to first identify the room in your house that you will be using for your studio. Ideally choose a room which is not being used. Make sure that the room is big enough to accommodate photography and lighting equipment. Think of it as an office where you can work and focus on your photography. It would be ideal if you can have the computer that you use for storing your photos on, as well as post processing set up in that room. It would be more convenient to be able to immediately transfer files to your computer from your camera after each photo shoot, instead of having to run back to your bedroom from your home studio just to transfer and work on your photos. You will definitely be able to save yourself a lot of running back and forth when you have your computer set up in your home studio.

Once things get going with your home studio you can also start decorating, perhaps get a couch and a coffee table, so that you can also entertain guests and clients. To add a personal touch, you can also decorate your home studio with your past works and photographs. Make sure to choose the best and have them framed, these will be great conversation pieces and will also a good opportunity for you to show your talent to guests and clients.

After choosing your room and thinking about some of the interior design elements, you need to consider how the room will function as a photography studio. You can do that by

blacking out any light coming from the outside (if you decide on having a blacked out studio). You can use black garbage bags to cover the windows, no need to spend money on anything expensive, as long as it gets the job done and covers the light from the windows, then you are good to go.

Get a white backdrop (fabric or paper) and place it at the back of the room, make sure that it runs from the ceiling to the floor and try to get a white backdrop that does not have any creases in it. You can then place your lighting equipment in front of your white backdrop and you can start experimenting with effects, and start shooting! If you are financially able, there are backdrop stands with either paper or fabric that can be ordered at fairly reasonable prices online.





## Continuous Lighting or Flash Systems?

One of the decisions you have to make while setting up your home photography studio is whether you would want to work with continuous lighting, or flash heads. Like everything else, there is always an advantage and disadvantage to both; it really boils down to how you will make the most of it.

Continuous lighting costs relatively less than flash heads and also offers a good option for a budget, if you need to work with one. Because the light is always on, you can easily assess and examine a scene to see where the shadows are and what the lights are doing in relation to your subject. From there you will be able to work on manipulating the light in your studio.

Now the biggest disadvantage when using continuous lighting is that it actually emanates and produces a lot of heat compared to flash systems, and this can actually heat up your studio and the models or subjects you are working with. Sometimes it can get hot and uncomfortable under these lighting circumstances.

If you will consider or opt to use a flash system instead, you will get to work with greater power and have more control of your lighting settings in your studio. Flash systems will also have more consistency. If you are just starting setting up your studio and purchasing

equipment it is actually ideal to start with a lighting kit which will be discussed throughout the ebook.

### **Your Three Basic Studio Lighting Choices**

Now that you have already chosen a room to be your home studio and are starting to research the first few items of photography lighting equipment to purchase, you might want to consider the three basic studio lighting choices. Because there are so many out there we will be discussing what you should consider investing in.

When it comes to your photography lighting, you will have three basic choices. These will be the hot lights, cool lights, and of course, the flash or strobes. Every one of these has their own characteristics, so before you figure a lighting source as being good no matter what; you need to keep some important points in mind like control, power output, and area of coverage, as well as quality of light. All of these will be discussed further on.



## Cool Lights

Cool lights, are not necessarily “cool” but it refers to the temperature emitted from the light, which is almost none compared to hot lights, which warm up within minutes of use. Cool lights use fluorescent light, which is why the light doesn’t heat up. While being the less versatile of the choices, they tend to be a safe choice. These lights are fluorescent and have some adjustability by turning off and on the bulbs as you need them; however they cannot be adjusted like hot lights. Being about the same color as daylight, they can be used easily if natural daylight is present.

Using this form of lighting in conjunction with bright natural daylight creates an intensified effect, creating beautiful photographs with natural tones and colors nicely accented. Unfortunately, the problem with this form of lighting is the lack of power it offers. If you are taking a full room shot, you may need to have several of these lights in place, and this can get incredibly crowded very quickly. This will help with cameras that have high ISO settings and a slow shutter speed. If you find that the camera continues to struggle, you can always use the flash in combination with this form of lighting.





## Hot Lights

You will sometimes see these listed as tungsten lights. Their nickname of hot lights comes from the fact that they burn *extremely* hot. These are usually 500 & 800 watt quartz Halogen bulbs that will deliver a solid, continuous light source. This is the reason that this lighting source is so very popular among photographers. It generally requires far less to achieve a very polished look, providing that you are working with scenes that require a consistent light source, like still life and video. Should you desire to be successful with this form of lighting, you need to have a very high ISO and then have your shutter at a very slow setting, hence the restrictions on subject type.

Another advantage of the continuous light is that you can meter it as is, and you can use your camera to meter to get the correct exposure.

**\*Note:** Both cool and hot lights have an odd color that you have to consider since it directly affects your output and the color of your exposure will be too blue, too orange or yellow. Ensure that you set your white balance to the correct setting, or plan to adjust that during the post production of your work flow of your images.





## Flash

This can be a photographer's best friend or constant nemesis depending on how you choose to utilize it. Like any other piece of equipment you choose to use, it is a tool and nothing more. This can be a decent choice because they are easier to use, can allow pictures to be set up faster and remove all the limitations one may encounter with hot or cold lights enabling you to take the sorts of photos you would prefer, rather than being tied down to one style.

The first type of flash that you should look at is the hotshoe, sometimes called a speedlight. This is the piece that attaches to the flashguns on the top of your camera. While this can take a quick, easy picture, you will find that 90% of the time, the image isn't going to be what you are looking for; it's just not meant to work like that.

## Hotshoe Flash (or Speed light) Mounted on Camera



In fact, the best way to use the hotshoe flash is to remove it from the camera entirely and set them up as you need to on fitted stands. This will give you far more portability and many more options. Then you can add umbrella stands in order to create more diffuse effects. For many, this makes a good choice since they are inexpensive, portable, and can be operated on batteries when you are on the go. Make the battery power go further by adding rechargeable batteries and a charger that you can take with you on location.

Some studio photographers find that they have nothing but problems with the hotshoe flash. For example, you have a limited range of power; it will only deliver a maximum of 60 Joules. At the same time, you can't limit the amount of flash power (higher quality hot

shoe flashes can be adjusted) and since the flash needs to be individually triggered, you might not get quite the picture you are looking for. In addition, some use a product called a slave flash, which when set up to other flash units, triggers a signal which causes the other flash units to fire. There can be quite a lot of success with this type of system, but it does require a very precise setup.

Because of how problematic they can be, many professionals will use this form of flash for journalism photographs on the go, as it's the best possible use for this common lighting option.



## Studio Lighting

Most new photographers often wonder if all studio lighting will work for them in the same way. The easiest response is yes, each piece of equipment will do what it was designed to do with the adjustments that are natural to its function. However, the different types have different ways they are going to be used. This includes the following lighting types:

Main Power Self Contained

Main Power Separates

Battery Powered



Mono Light

The cheapest is the monolights or main powered separates. Sometimes called Pack & Head lights, this is a battery-powered solution that will have a pack that rests on the floor. From it, you can put as many flash heads into the device as needed to deliver the right image quality for your project.

Let's go over what these terms mean, both types can be searched for at amazon.com or other suppliers as well:

## **Main Power/Self Contained**

Main powered monolights are the most popular with people just starting out, probably because they're much less expensive than the other choices. These will contain all of the "works" within the flash head itself. Just plug it in, and off you go! The new photographer could do far worse than to get several of these when they are starting out since they are so versatile.



## **Main Powered Separates**

Main powered separates also called Pack & Head lights have several advantages over monolights, not the least of these being that they are far more powerful, however are also more expensive. All of the controls are set on the pack itself, which is always much easier and more convenient than when they are on the head, and will offer more choices for set up.

## **Battery Powered Pack & Head**

Battery powered pack & head lights are useful because they can be used for location shoots where there is no power available, including outdoor use where high power (not available from hotshoe flashes) is needed to overwhelm the daylight and create different effects. If coupled with rechargeable batteries, then they become a wonderful “Pack and go” solution.



## [Looking at Packages for Beginners](#)

You might be relieved to find out that there are packages on the market which are ideal for beginning photographers. You would just need to do your research so that you can find a package ideal for beginning photographers setting up a studio. Some of my favorite suppliers are [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), <http://www.bhphotovideo.com/> and <http://www.adorama.com/> although there are many excellent suppliers out there. I list the three here simply because I have personally purchased from them with good results.

You don't have to get discouraged when you see the expensive lighting packages out on the market, for there are some really great ones available for reasonable prices.

## Understanding Hard Light and Soft Light

When you are looking into setting up your photography studio in your home, it is important to understand the concept of lighting, and with that comes knowledge of hard light and soft light, and the difference between the two.

Hard light creates shadows and transitions from light to dark and is very stark. Basically, it is light in its truest form without any form of diffusion. Hard light is ideal for textures since it casts hard shadows and high contrast. Hard light would usually come from a small source if you will be comparing it to the subject. Bright, mid-day sunlight typically creates hard light, the shadows being very strongly defined with hard lines.

On the other hand, soft light comes from a larger source than the subject and is more complimentary to people. The effect of soft light is achieved because soft light wraps light around the subject which fills shadows and lowers contrast. In natural daylight, a cloudy day casts soft shadows (if at all) with soft, blurred lines if shadows are there.

Working in your own home studio would mean that you should understand how hard light and soft light works. Now whether light that is falling on a subject or object that you are photographing is hard or soft, would depend on the size of the light source and of course

your subject. A large source of light will wrap light around a small subject filling the shadows and lowering the contrast while a small source of light will direct light on a large subject (or object) and create hard shadows and high contrast. By understanding how soft and hard light work, you should be able to manipulate your light source in order to compliment your subject and get the desired effect you are aiming for.

Now there are two ways to soften light indoors. The first is moving the light source closer to your subject (remember the first rule however, this light needs to be bigger than your subject), and the second is using reflectors and diffusers. These are other photography lighting equipment you might want to consider purchasing or investing in. When shooting subjects, a softer light gives them a more complimentary and natural glow, and this can be achieved through light modifiers.



Here is an example of one type of light diffuser / reflector panel, but there are many types available, some of which are to be set on your speedlight flash units.

In order to get a harder light, you would then have to move the source of light farther from the subject, and instead of using reflectors and diffusers, you would need to use a bare bulb or a bare bulb flash. To understand this better, picture a bulb that is mounted in a reflector. It is actually the larger reflector that becomes the light source. This happens because a bare bulb actually has no reflector, so the light is then much smaller. Because it is more of a point source it then casts a harder light on the subject. It lacks a reflector to focus light since the range is shorter than other kinds of light.

## Manipulating Light

Light coming from your equipment may seem hard or fall in places where you don't want it. Lucky for us, we have ways to control light or make it work the way we want it to. This ability also allows a photographer to play with different settings and effects for more creative shots.

**Light Modifiers** - Nifty tools to use with light, they are often attached to lighting equipment or on a light stand to make the light manageable. They can be purchased in your local photography store. Each of the light modifiers are used for a purpose but mainly these are used for supporting your lighting equipment and complimenting your photography. This is also where it can get really fun. I'll show images in this section as well, to give an example what these light modifiers look like, although there may be other versions out there as well.

**1. Softbox** - Ideal light modifier that softens light, giving your subject a smooth and even look. Often used when shooting portraits. The softbox has 2 diffusers, inside and out. These two layers not only soften the light, but they also give out a nice even wrap of light towards the subject. It is made of plastic, which makes it light and easy to bring anywhere (if you have electricity available). It is also collapsible, which makes it easy to bring along for location shoots. Not recommended if shooting in windy conditions. If your soft box is a large one, it may be more difficult to transport than the smaller ones.





This softbox is a very popular choice for using continuous lighting in a studio setup.

**2. Umbrella/Brolly** - It may look like the same thing that we use to protect ourselves from rain, but these are mainly used to soften the light. The expanse of fabric disperses light, thereby softening its effect. There are 2 types of umbrellas:

**a. Shoot-thru umbrella** - light passes through the umbrella.



**b. Reflective umbrella** - light bounces off of the umbrella, these might be white, gold or silver. Sometimes black is used as well to strategically block light in certain areas.



Umbrellas cast a nice soft light; however, light often falls through or leaks into unwanted areas. The best way to work around light falling into unwanted places is to fold the umbrella to limit the light going through or bouncing off it. Alternatively, you can add boards, or black fabric draped to block the light from going to unwanted places. Umbrellas are a common light modifier because they are easy to navigate and to shoot with.

**3. Snoot** - another attachable equipment where it limits your light to cast a spot light. Often used for background light, or creatively in portraiture. Sometimes it is pointed at a person's hair to light it up and make it shine.



**4. Beauty dish** - It actually looks like a UFO but it is also a light modifier wherein it acts like a softbox, but with the dish there is one layer to bounce the light from the source towards the dish. It is also heavier compared to a softbox or an umbrella, and is often used for fashion photography. Beauty dishes are also known for the dramatic round catchlights in the subject's eyes that they produce. The beauty dish is a modifier that does not reflect light but rather directs and thus gives the more dramatic effect it is known for.

A beauty dish is of course shaped like a dish and the light comes from the bottom center of the dish. When the light is on the dish, it funnels it directly on the subject with little diffusion and a high falloff rate, this may create a light that is difficult to master but once you master it, it is definitely worth it since you will have great photos.



In order to control the harshness of the light from the beauty dish you can add modifiers on top of the beauty dish. Most beauty dishes come with a cover for the tube so you can use it to improve the light falloff, and is often fitted with a grid in order to provide added light diffusion.

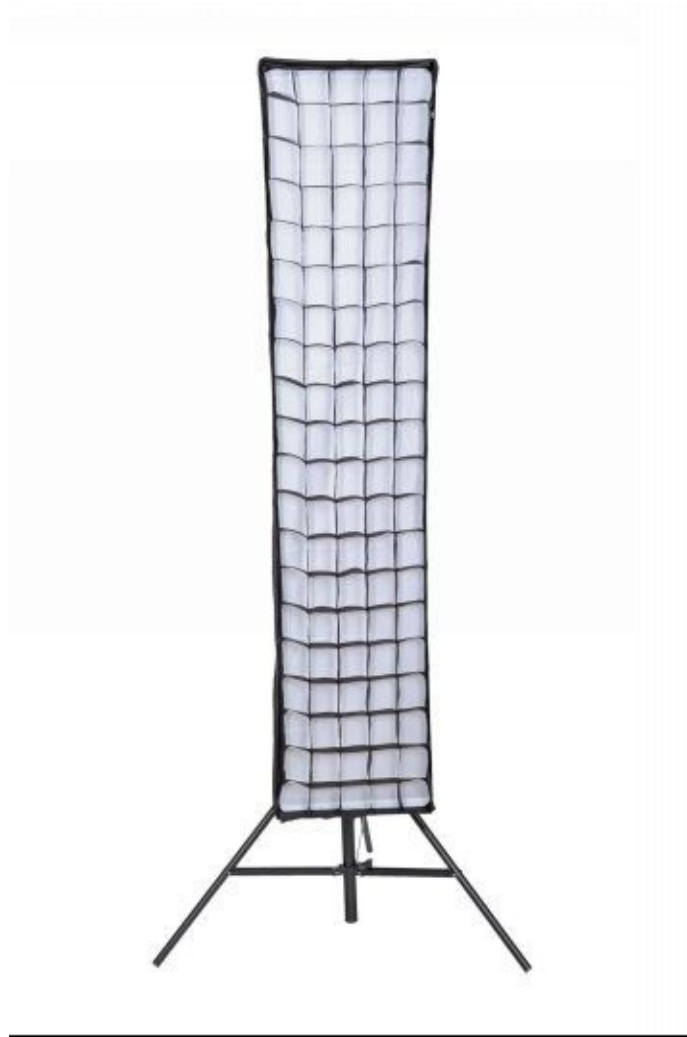
**5. Ring flash** – A ring flash is another light modifier that directly attaches to a flash mount on the camera (around the lens) or can be attached to a hotshoe. It acts as a flash. Ring flash was originally used for macro photography, but it is used in fashion and portrait photography as it gives a flattering soft light and a high fashion look.



It may seem like the flash came from the camera flash, but it goes beyond the bounds of a typical flash, since it covers below or the underside of the camera. Some ring flashes need the camera flash, and some are made with their own flash units and can work with other strobes or flash units.

### **Other Modifiers:**

**Grid** - this equipment can be attached to softboxes and beauty dishes only, it limits/restricts the light passing thru it, to prevent light falling in unwanted places in the frame of the photo.



**Barn doors** - are often attached to hot lights, very much like the grid but it has 4 doors wherein it prevents the light from falling into unwanted places and offers a good deal of creativity to its use.





**Board reflectors** – are common types of light modifiers. They are a flat surface constructed to reflect or light the photographer's subject. Simple to use, they offer great effects when used inside or outside of the studio.

They come in different shapes, sizes, and colors and of course each type of board reflector will have a different effect on your image. There are board reflectors that come in silver, gold and white. When you are choosing what type of board reflector to use (or purchase), you need to remember that a warm toned reflector (gold) will give your photo a warmer effect, a silver reflector will bounce cool light on your subject. The white ones typically soften and filter light coming through to the subject, for instance, in bright sunlight, or if an area of a studio light is too bright. Conversely, there are also black ones that can be used to block light from certain areas of the subject.

Other factors you need to consider when shopping for board reflectors would be if it is double sided (if both sides of the reflector are made of the same material) and collapsibility (how easy it is to fold and put away to store).



Board reflectors are used to bounce light from the main source to the subject in your photography in specific areas. It is also used to reflect light to another part of the subject to get fill lighting onto the other side, this is especially important if one side of the subject is too dark, and if you want to light up the eye area, or under the chin where sometimes shadows get too dark.

Sometimes they are held by a lighting stand, or sometimes an assistant will hold them in the position the photographer wants.



## Using Off Camera Flash

Most people who work in a photo studio and use strobe or flash as their lighting source, typically do not use the camera's flash, due to its harsh and unflattering effect. In camera flash has its limits of how much control the photographer has through flash exposure compensation, and (more often than not) cannot trigger other flash/strobe units.

So how does a photographer signal the flash to fire when clicking the shutter button on the camera? Answer: **Wireless trigger**.



An electronic device that can be attached to the camera's hot shoe, signals the radio receiver to fire flash units attached to them, allowing the photographer freedom to move around and the flash units as well (if desired).

Wireless triggers comes in different shapes, sizes, and costs. You can find them at your preferred photography equipment supplier.

The only downside to wireless triggers is that they are prone to interference, since they utilize radio signals. You may have to toggle your trigger to get the best channel without any interference during important shoots.



## Controlling Light

Now that we have discussed light modifiers above, it's time to discuss how to control the lights. Light modifiers are tools of controlling light, where you can get softer flattering light, or you can direct the light to fall on to specified places on the subject or near the subject, depending on the effect you are going after.

Shutter speed, aperture and ASA/ISO; each setting affects the exposure of the film or sensor. Shutter speed dictates the duration of the film or sensor's exposure to light. Aperture is the opening of the lens that allows how much light comes in. ISO or ASA is the sensitivity of the film or the digital sensor to the light.

Now we'll be adding a few more variables into the exposure triangle. Power output for flash/light. Each type of lighting equipment that we have elaborated here, has a switch or toggle that allows you to increase or decrease the power output from your steady light or strobe. This is where studying the manual of each piece of equipment will come in to play, in order to maximize full control of your lighting equipment.

If you have a limited way of controlling your lighting equipment, another way to intensify or weaken the light on your subject is distance. Moving your light or strobe closer increases the light on your subject, moving it further away from your subject will decrease

the light falling on your subject.



## *Background and Backdrops*

We should also look into using background and backdrops. Aside from just getting backgrounds you should also consider a support system on how to support or hold up those backdrops.

Aside from using paper as material for your backdrops you can consider using vinyl backgrounds that can be cleaned up after a shoot. Some shoots can get really dirty and messy, thus having the option to be able to wipe it clean can be a big advantage for you in the long run.



You might also want to consider looking into hooks to hang your backdrops to the wall of your home studio.

Aside from paper and vinyl you can also consider fabric backgrounds, muslin being a popular choice. There are many creative and beautiful options out there. When choosing however, keep in mind your subject, you don't want a backdrop that will be so busy that it distracts from your subject.



## [Putting it Together - Setting your Lights/Flash](#)

Now that all has been said and done, it's time to start setting up your lights and taking photos! You may be overwhelmed with how to get your photography lights set up, but there are some surprisingly easy techniques to try out before experimenting on your own, which we'll cover shortly.

Keep in mind that this process is a bit of trial and error. You'll need to experiment with both the distance your subject is from the background, as well as the distance of the lights to your subject. Moving either the subject, or the lights closer or further apart will change the lighting effects. Another factor that can be tested, is when using flash lighting to try different power settings (such as 25, 50, 75 or 100% power) to see how that effects your results.

You'll also want to gain experience with your camera and the settings as well, as what you choose will impact your images. A rough starting point to try is on manual mode, setting the ISO to 100, the shutter speed to 1/125th of a second, and aperture at F11.

You'll want to set up your backdrop, or whatever you choose to use as a background. Place your subject about 3 feet in front of your background. After you've taken a sample or two pictures, if you find you are getting unwanted shadows of the subject on the background, try moving your subject even further away from the background, until that shadow disappears.

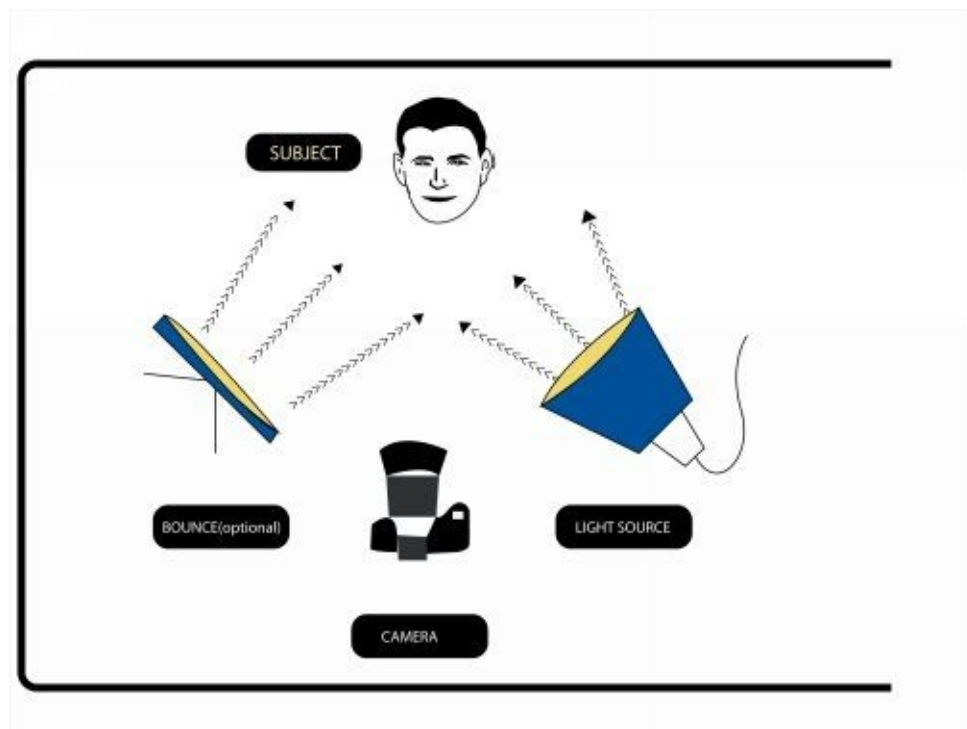
## *The Rembrandt*

What you will need:

One Flash Head /continuous light

One Reflector

Two Light Stands



### **Rembrandt Lighting**

The Rembrandt is excellent for artsy shots with depth, it tends to have a more dramatic effect. The famous artist used this type of lighting for many of his paintings. The main characteristic of this lighting set up is an inverted, small triangle of light on the person's cheek that is on the opposite side of the light source. This triangular shadow created should not be wider than the eye, nor longer than the nose.

Try to get ‘catch lights’ (that is a reflection in your subject’s eyes of the light source), so the eyes look alive. This lighting is flattering for people with round faces because its slimming and adds dimension. At the same time, it’s not a good choice for someone with a narrow, angular face shape.

The basic set up for Rembrandt lighting is to place your main light source 45 degrees from the subject and slightly higher than eye level. You want to be lighting the side of your subject’s face that is furthest away from the camera. Place a reflector (sometimes a smaller fill light is used instead, at 50% power of the main light), 45 degrees from the side of the face that is in shadow. This lights areas of hard light for a softer effect.



Here is a portrait done of Rembrandt lighting.

## Clamshell setup (one light)

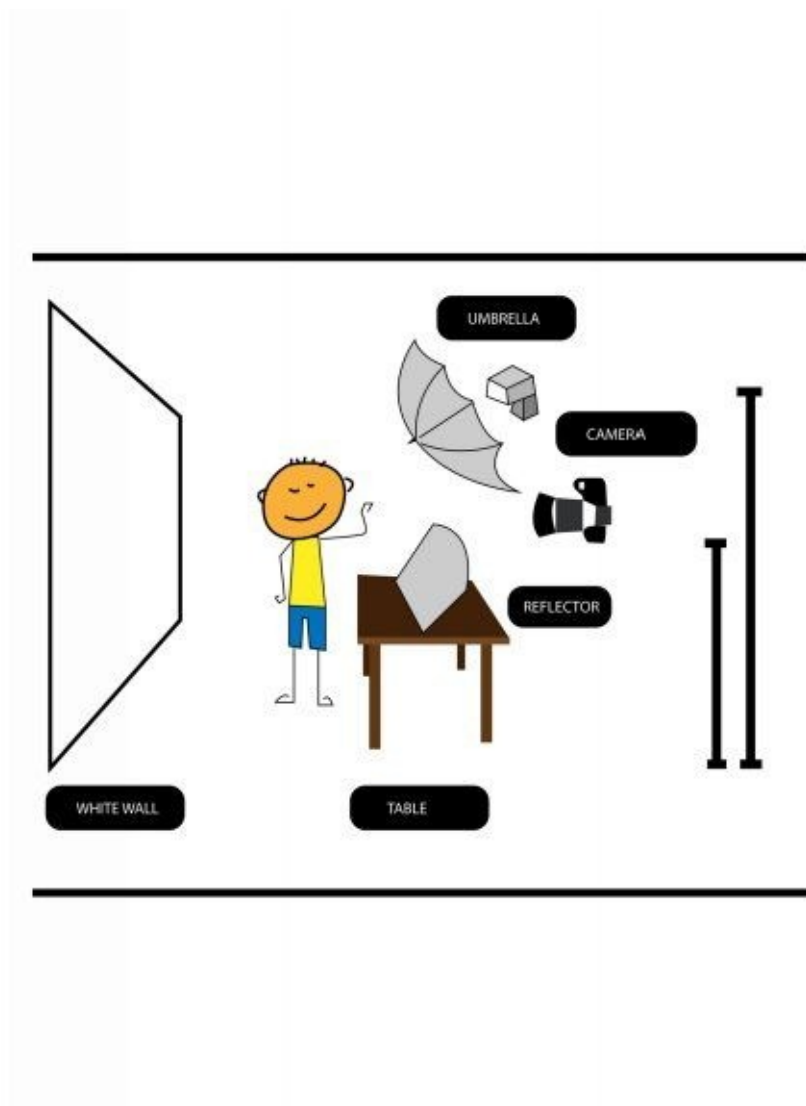
What you will need:

One flash head /continuous light

One reflector

One softbox

One light stand



### **One Light Clamshell Set Up**

Similar with the Rembrandt set up, but this time your key light will be placed in front and

above your subject. Tilt the softbox to face your subject and position it about 4-6 feet from your subject. This will be lighting up your subject from the top of his head and will be casting strong shadows under the nose, lips, and chin. To minimize the hard shadow, place the reflector below the face.



Clamshell 1 Portrait



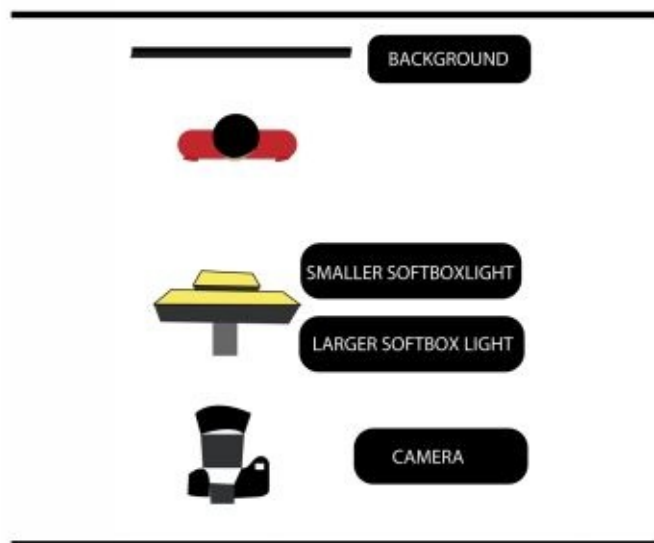


## *The Clamshell (2 lights/strobe)*

From a one light set up, we will now move on to a two light set up.

What you will need:

Two softboxes & stands (one larger than the other)



## **Clamshell 2 Light Set Up**

The Clamshell lighting technique is used to capture every detail in your subject using even light.

The Clamshell lighting technique is sometimes used for glamour images due to flat and even lighting it provides.

Place a large softbox light to the front of your subject and somewhat higher in height. The second softbox light should be smaller and placed underneath the first softbox. Consider this one your fill light and it should be tilted slightly upwards. The goal is to light up the shadows the top light will produce, in order to give very even lighting.

The tricky part of this setup is getting your lights in proper proportion to each other. The smaller fill light should be on at considerably less power output than the main light. Experiment starting at about 1/4 the light power as the large softbox, then adjusting from there until you get the effect you are looking for. You will also need to try different options concerning how close the lights are to your subject.



Clamshell 2 Portrait

## *Rim Lighting*

The Rim Lighting technique (sometimes also called Profile lighting, Backlighting, Edge, or classic 3 point lighting) is used to create an exciting style with good definition of the sides of your subject. This lighting technique separates your subject from the background while giving the silhouette a gleaming light.

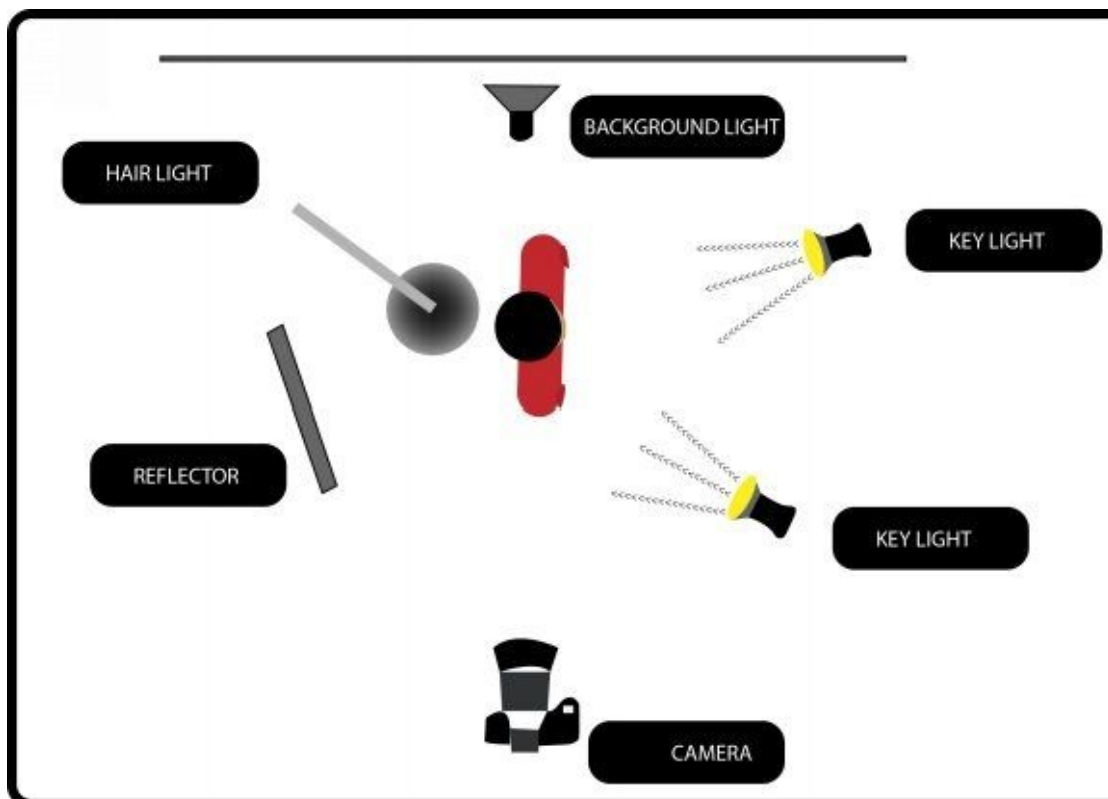
What you will need:

2 Flash heads or continuous lights

1 Background light

1 Reflector

1 Hairlight or Snoot



**Rim Lighting**

You'll first want to set up your back light. It shines behind your subject toward the camera. Most often there's a 90 degree range where this light can be set, depending on where in the silhouette you want the lighted edge to appear. You'll most likely need to adjust this, until you get it right for the effect you are going for. Keep in mind height when setting this light, many times this light should be set slightly higher than the rest.

Lens flare could be an issue with this method, so using a lens hood or a shield is an easy fix. Your subject should block this light with their body.

Next you will set up your key light. Essentially, this is your main light and should have the most intense light of all of them. It is set up usually to the right of the camera at a 45 degree angle.

When the main key light has been set up, then add a smaller fill light on the opposite side of the subject. The purpose of this light is to slightly add soft light to the deep shadow areas.

Optional if needed, is a reflector behind the subject across from the main keylight if that area needs a bit of a boost.

If you want to use a separate hair light, or snoot; now is the time to set it up behind your subject to light their hair. Play with the height on this.

A couple of things to keep in mind, if your subject is bald, you will want the back light to be lower in height. Watch to see how much edge lighting you are getting, whether it is just a side gleam, or a full blown body halo. Adjust the back light in either intensity (if it is adjustable), or distance in relation to your subject to get the desired look.



## Rim Lighting Portrait



## Paramount or Butterfly Lighting

What you'll need:

Background

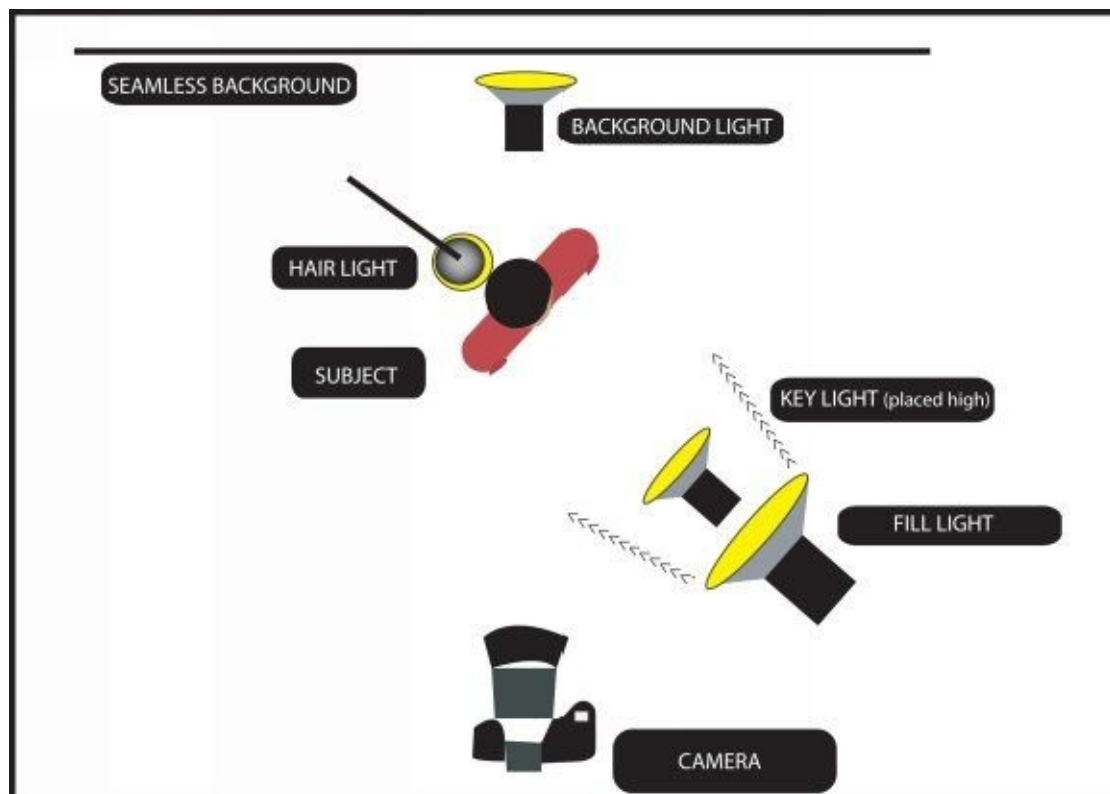
Background light

Key light

Fill light

Hair light or snoot

Reflector



**Paramount or Butterfly Lighting Set Up**

Paramount lighting is sometimes also called butterfly, or glamour lighting. It is considered mostly a feminine lighting pattern. It creates a butterfly type shadow underneath the model's nose and emphasizes good skin and high cheekbones. It should not be used for people with deep set eyes as it will not be flattering in those cases.

Once you have setup your background, you'll need to shine a light towards the background. This is placed low. This will help create a separation between the background and your subject.

Seat or allow your subject to stand, at least 3 feet away from the background. You may need to adjust this distance later.

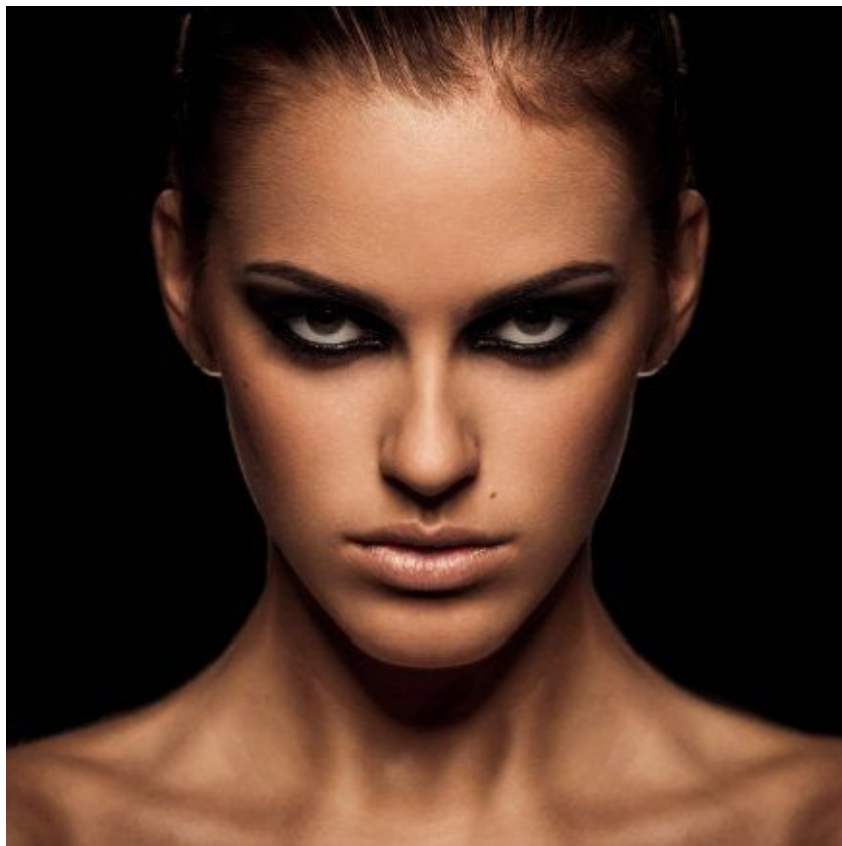
The key light is set up next. It is placed directly in front of your subject's face and is placed high and fairly close to the subject.

The fill light is then put in place. It is placed directly under the key light (at less power output), pointing at the subject's face.

A reflector will need to be used opposite of these lights, and close to your subject, so the bounced light can lighten and fill deep shadows that are produced on the shaded cheek and neck areas.

Place the hair light in an opposite position as the key light. It should only light the hair and not spill onto your subject's facial area.

As with all the set ups, test and re-adjust to get the lighting just right.



Paramount Lighting Portrait

## Loop Lighting

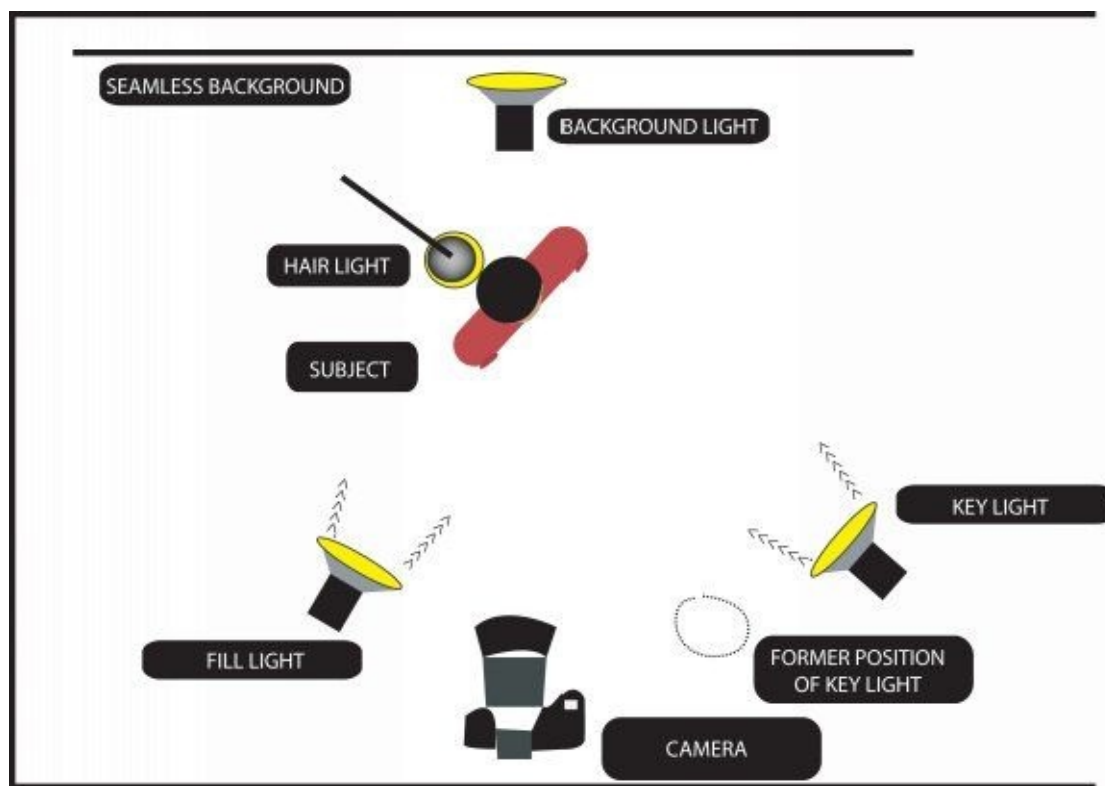
What you'll need:

Background and background light

Key Light

Fill Light

Hair Light



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### **Loop Lighting Set Up**

The lighting technique known as loop lighting, is a small variation of the paramount set up. It is widely used, due to its being flattering for people with oval shaped, or average faces.

First set up your background and point a light to your background, set low.

Your subject should be placed at least 3 feet away from your background. This distance might need to be adjusted later.

Set your key (main) light slightly lower and more to one side of your subject than that of the paramount. The shadow produced under the nose looks more like a small loop than a butterfly, on the shadow side of the subject's face.

Next place your fill light (lower power output), on the opposite side of the camera from the key light. Ensure that this fill light is not casting its own shadow, as the overall effect should still have the characteristics of a one-light portrait. The place to check this is in the camera. The fill light should only be softening and lighting up the darkest shadow areas.

Place the hair light in the opposite position as the key light. It should only light the hair and not spill onto your subject's facial area.

Test, test and re-test. You may need to adjust distance of light to subject, subject to

background, and height of light to get the desired effect.

All lighting set ups are a creative process, so don't be afraid to make adjustments and try new things. It all boils down to the visual appearance that is pleasing to you as a photographer, and that of the person you are photographing.



Loop lighting portrait

## *Taking Care of Your Equipment*

Anyone setting up their own home photography studio knows the cost investment that goes in to purchasing all the studio equipment. That is why it is imperative to take proper care of that equipment to ensure keeping it in pristine working condition.

Keep in mind that shooting in the studio can mean working for long hours and at the end of the day, you may be tempted to just leave your photography and lighting equipment lying around. No matter how strong the temptation is, make sure that you take the extra time to pack up your photography equipment after using it. If it is dusty, wipe it down before packing away, keep it clean with a dry, soft cloth.

You need to make sure to keep all of your equipment in a clean and dry environment, as this helps improve the condition and lengthen the life span of your photography equipment you worked hard to own. In the long run, you are protecting, and making the most of the investment that you made.

If you are photographing children or animals (or anyone), do everything you can to keep them from tripping over cords or knocking equipment down. Enlist the aid of parents or other adults responsible, to help keep things calm, enforce a no running rule and any other suggestions to keep both them and your equipment safe.





## *Things to Remember*

Now that you've read about how to setup your own photography studio at home, you might as well start getting yours done right? Just remember not to get frustrated along the way, especially when you are working on a fixed budget for your studio. There is a very real learning curve to this and it does take practice to master.

A home photography studio would rely greatly on lights and lighting equipment, remember to master each lighting equipment before giving up due to lack of experience. Keep on trying out different techniques to ensure that you make the most of each piece of lighting equipment that you have, have fun and experiment also, to find new and creative effects.

You should also look into the growth and development of your home studio; only then will you be able to grow as a photographer as well. The world of photography is constantly changing and in order to remain relevant, you have to keep up with the changing times.

Setting up your own home studio does not happen in an instant; work hard and make sure that you keep your passion to learn and grow in your photography skills, and pretty soon you'll be creating beautiful photographs in your very own studio!

By Amber Richards

If you enjoyed this book or received value from it in any way, would you be kind enough to leave a review for this book on Amazon? I would be so grateful. Thank you!