

Better  
Photography

EXCERPTS FROM THE MAGAZINE

# STUDIO LIGHTING PORTRAITURE



What Gear Do You Need? • Positioning The Lights  
Professional Lighting Patterns • Basic Posing Guide



# STUDIO LIGHTING PORTRAITURE

## CONTENTS

1. Lighting Equipment
2. Light Quality
3. Broad or Short?
4. The Basic Lights
5. Positioning the Light
6. Four Lights for Portraiture
7. Posing Your Subject
8. Positioning Two Heads
9. What About the Hands?
10. Finessing the Light

# *Studio Portrait* EQUIPMENT

**Kathleen Baxter reviews the equipment and essential technical issues you need to understand before getting into studio lighting. Photos by Peter Eastway.**

**T**he studio is traditionally thought of as the place where portraits are 'created'. Photographers have full control in the studio – over the space, the light and also the subject. Everything is focused on producing a wonderful likeness of the sitter.

However, flash wasn't originally available. Flash in the very early days (being a mound of unpredictable powder on a portable tray) was challenging and instead studio photographers used constant tungsten or incandescent lights – often called hot lights. The famous Hollywood movie portraits of the 1930s and later are thought of as a Golden Age of portraiture because of the style and effect produced by these hot lights.

It wasn't until the 1970s that 'strobe' or flash lighting became more acceptable – and then the norm. However, early flash units relied on some pretty scary circuitry and you had to be very careful not to fry yourself! And with the relatively slow ISO speeds of many favourite portraiture film stocks, you needed quite a bit of power to make things happen.

With the advent of digital photography, the world has changed again and flash is perhaps a little out of favour with the masses, the main reason being the masses don't know how to use it and it requires you to use extra equipment in addition to your smartphone!

This is a pity because in just the same way that photography was revolutionised with digital technology, so has flash lighting been streamlined and improved.

The flash units themselves are generally much smaller, they can put out lots of power without much hardware and using them can be fully integrated with your camera if you wish.

Even better, with faster lenses and higher ISO settings on cameras, you don't need as much power for flash photography, certainly not when it comes to portraiture.

Interestingly, one of the reasons portrait photographers love studio flash equipment is because of the huge range of lightshapers available. We touched on this a couple of issues ago when we quickly introduced studio portraiture. It's not so much the burst of flash that's important, rather the quality of light that is pushed through or across the lightshaper. You can produce harsh, angular light or soft, empathetic light as you choose.

With multiple flash lights, you can design a surround-sound lighting experience to record and reveal your subject. And you don't even need to fire the flash – often there's enough light from the 'modelling lamp' that sits inside the head with the flash tube to shoot by.

So, studio flash can be a lot of fun. It can also be taken out on location or even outside if you want to. But there are a few things that can be useful to know and understand before you hire or buy your first studio flash outfit.

Let's take a look at some of the main issues.

---

## **Dancer**

*A large softbox positioned above and to the left of the subject provides most of the soft illumination, while an umbrella to the right provides fill light – filling in the shadows. Studio lights allow you to design how the light falls on and around the subject and the background. You have complete control. In this case, a soft, low contrast rendition was chosen, along with desaturated colours, to produce a quieter portrait study.*





## TYPES OF FLASH EQUIPMENT

**T**here used to be two main types of studio flash. Originally, it was a power pack (see Profoto-10 below) which contained the energy and you connected flash heads via cables. This was okay if you were working in a studio and the cables were long enough, but a pain to use out on location.



As the electronics improved, the power pack and flash head were combined into a single unit, sometimes called a monobloc (see Elinchrom ELC500 above). These days, the monobloc or 'all in one' is the most popular approach. The self-contained unit may still have a power cable, but otherwise it can sit on its own on a lighting stand.



The big difference between a monobloc or studio flash and the on-camera (speed light) flash units (like the Godox) is

power. On-camera flash units don't pack as much of a punch and this used to be very important. Fortunately, today if you don't have enough flash power, you can increase the camera's ISO to compensate, so lots of power really isn't such an issue.

Another advantage studio flash has over an on-camera flash unit is that it's not on the top of the camera! Probably the worst position for a flash (or any light) is right on top of the camera because it produces uninteresting, flat lighting with no modelling. Think of the light used to take a passport or licence photo – not much imagination.

Of course, on-camera flash units can easily be taken off the camera and so if you don't want to go to the expense of purchasing studio flash, all the studio flash techniques are still available to you with the smaller on-camera or 'speed light' flash unit.

A big advantage for the on-camera or speed light flash unit is portability. You drop in a couple of batteries (or recharge them) and there's no need to worry about mains power or cables. This has been a challenge for studio flash manufacturers who now provide a range of battery-powered studio flash solutions. Some are small power packs with tiny flash heads connected by cables, others are larger, more meaningful versions of the speed light.

Which is right for you? We suggest you visit a specialty camera store (such as Kayell in Sydney and Melbourne) and have a look at the studio equipment first hand, or do a course on studio flash photography. This will soon give you an idea of what type of studio flash equipment will suit you best.

In some ways, it doesn't matter what studio light you choose, because as long as you can attach the appropriate lightshapers, you will have all the control needed for great portrait photography.



**Beauty dish**



**Ring light**



**Square softbox**



**Standard reflector with diffuser**



**Circular soft box**



**Standard dish reflector**



**Umbrella**



**Flat reflector**

## TYPES OF LIGHTSHAPERS

**A** lightshaper is something that sits between the light source and the subject. It acts like a filter or a modifier for the light, controlling the quality of light that reaches the subject. We'll go into lighting techniques in the next issue.

A lightshaper doesn't guarantee you a particular lighting effect, unless you also use it appropriately. However, without a particular lightshaper, you might not be able to replicate an effect that interests you. There is a skill in using them.

Some photographers don't use anything other than a standard reflector dish, or no lightshaper at all. Instead, they rely on the position of the light, flat reflectors, scrims (translucent panels) and 'blacks' (black flat boards that absorb rather than reflect light) to control the light.

Lightshapers will work their best in a dark studio because there's nothing else to affect the quality of the light. However, in practice you're often using more than one light source and so using lightshapers becomes a wonderful marriage of different effects.

Nevertheless, there are some basics that always apply. Most flash units come equipped with a standard dish reflector. This throws a 'hard' light, so called because the shadows have hard or abrupt edges. It is one of the more difficult lightshapers to use for the beginner.

To reduce the hard light, you could put a diffuser over the dish reflector and while this will soften the light, it is not only

the lightshaper that affects the quality of the light reaching the subject, but the size of the light relative to the subject as well. A standard dish reflector with a diffuser is not going to produce the beautiful soft illumination we associate with some styles of portraiture.

An umbrella is the simplest lightshaper and probably the most popular for portraiture. You 'bounce' the light into the umbrella and when it comes back, it provides a soft, diffused illumination that can be very flattering.

There are many variations. Some umbrellas are made of white cloth and so you can shoot through them, also producing a soft light. However, umbrellas can allow a lot of 'spill' light to go to places other than your subject. To keep light off the background, for instance, you might use a softbox. It can provide similar softness with some advantages, but it's bigger and bulkier to cart around and takes longer to set up – generally.

Umbrellas and softboxes produce beautifully soft light, but sometimes it's just a bit too soft. A beauty dish is a large dish reflector and can have different interior surfaces, use a baffle or even have a diffuser over the front. It can produce a soft light with a bit of an edge, something that portrait photographers love and this explains the reason for its name.

The ring light comes in and out of fashion – and is often used by fashion photographers. Research it – it's quite fun!



## LOOKING FOR BACKDROPS

**W**hen we're talking about studio portraiture, we're talking about complete control – and that includes the background.

A traditional portrait studio would have a number of different backgrounds available, depending on the subject and the effect required.

Sometimes the background is a plain white wall or cyclorama (a wall and floor with a curved horizon). By using light and/or coloured filters, this white background can be turned into any colour or shade of the rainbow. Or the white background can be lit separately to produce a completely white background without a hint of tone or detail.

Optionally, the wall could be painted black or the photographer might use a large black backdrop, or a roll of seamless black paper. However, even though the background is black, care needs to be taken not to let any light fall on it as this would produce a shade of grey. (In theory, that white background can also be rendered black in a suitably darkened studio if you keep light from falling on it.)

Pure white and pure black backgrounds have their place, but there are other options.

Rolls of seamless paper come in all colours. Seamless paper is generally from one to four metres wide and you usually combine it with a couple of lighting stands and a roll holder. It's not something we'd generally recommend for portrait

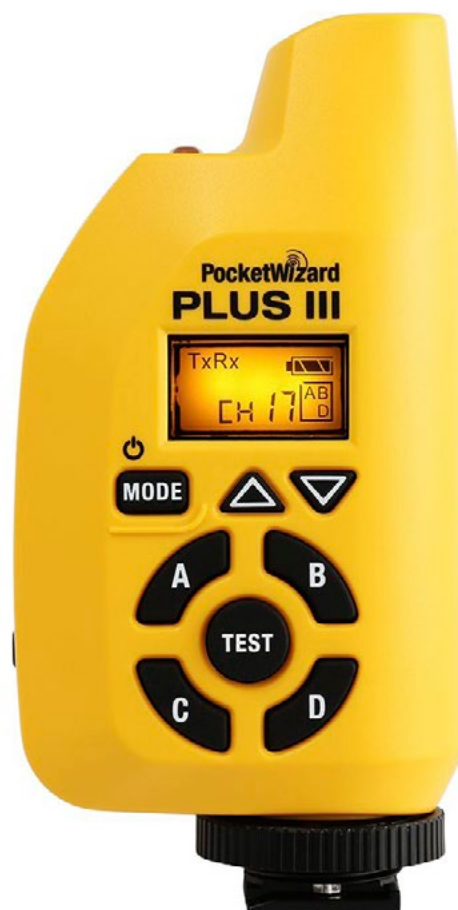
photography, but fashions and interests do change, so we'd never say never.

Of more interest are the painted backdrops. Sometimes this is just an abstract dabbling of colour and tone, darker towards the edges to create a vignette. On other occasions, it's a painted scene or it might even include cartoon characters – you get the idea. Whatever can be painted can be used as a backdrop and prior to digital photography, background artists were in big demand, certainly for advertising and portrait photographers.

And it's still easier today to use a background than it is to drop in a new one. Certainly, you can use a Chromakey colour that makes dropping in a background in post-production much easier – and that's a valid approach too. However, in a busy professional studio, the preference would be to simplify post-production and get it right in-camera, if possible.

Backdrops can be loose lengths of fabric which you hang from a couple of nails in the wall or drape over a background stand assembly. They also come as collapsible backgrounds which are ideal for transporting or if you need to pack them away (your studio might have other uses).

The take-away is that the background you shoot with is important, even in a studio. To some extent you can control it with your light, but often the quickest solution is to have a selection of backgrounds to work with. Your choice!



## FIRING THE FLASH

**T**he way we used to connect a flash to a camera was with a PC (Prontor Compur) cable, but today, you'll be hard pressed to find one.

The PC cable used to attach the flash to the camera or lens and was a de facto standard, but these days, almost every camera and flash has its own dedicated cable connectors. So, when you purchase a flash unit, be sure you also purchase the correct cable for your camera.

Or go wireless! In fact, there might not be a wired option anymore!

But let's step back. What does the cable do? The cable fires the flash at exactly the right time – the time you take the photo. When you press your camera's shutter button, the camera sends a signal to the flash unit (via the cable) to fire the flash when the camera's shutter is opened. This 'synchronisation' is naturally very important.

As cameras became more sophisticated, it was possible for the camera to not only fire the flash, but set the flash output to ensure correct exposure. This marked the end of the old-fashioned PC cable which essentially provided an on or off connection and nothing more. The new cables needed to pass along much more sophisticated information.

On-camera flash units were the first to work automatically with cameras, while studio flash still required manual control, so many cameras had two different flash connections.

Today, few cameras have the old PC connector, but there are invariably adapters if you need one. And even better, a lot of the latest studio flash units will work automatically with your camera if desired. We're thinking that, generally, you'll still want to work manually most of the time, but the auto option is there.

As is the option not to have a cable at all. Most flash units today offer wireless connectivity or, if they don't, there's a wireless transmitter/receiver outfit that will.

The advantage of wirelessly firing the shutter is that you can place the flash unit (or units) anywhere and not worry about how long your cable is – or tripping over it.

Sometimes the wireless control is built into your camera, but usually it will only work with specific flash units. The other option is to purchase an accessory sender/receiver system that you attach to the camera and to the flash (or the flash may already have it built in). Another big advantage for these wireless systems is that you can control multiple flash units, including the ability to change their settings independently, all from the master control unit.

Many photographers have a wireless system and it is only set up for the most basic function of firing the flash – and that's great. However, as you get more involved in studio flash photography, keep these wireless controls in mind as they may make your life much easier!



## WORKING OUT THE EXPOSURE

**D**etermining the exposure for your flash can be as easy or as manual as you want it to be. Some of the latest studio flash heads will provide fully integrated exposure support, so all you have to do is plug in the flash (or connect it wirelessly) and press the button. However, there are some things to understand about flash exposure that can be very helpful.

First of all, flash exposure is independent of the ambient exposure. Imagine you're taking a photo in a studio without the flash turned on. Whatever light is in the studio is the 'ambient' or existing light. If it's a dark studio, there may be no ambient light; if there's a window or an overhead light, this would be producing the ambient light.

The thing to remember is that the ambient exposure is determined by the aperture, the ISO and the shutter speed – how long the shutter remains open.

In comparison, the flash exposure is only determined by the aperture and the ISO. The shutter speed has no effect on the flash exposure (because the burst of flash is so quick, all the light is delivered in a 'flash', whether you're using one second or 1/250 second). However, instead of the camera's shutter speed, we have the flashgun's power setting or output – how bright or strong is that burst of flash.

Don't think the shutter speed isn't important – it is. The shutter speed can be used to stop camera shake or reduce the amount of ambient light being recorded. However, if you're

trying to make the flash exposure lighter or darker, changing the shutter speed will have no effect on the flash, only the ambient light (if there is any).

If you're using the flash in an automatic mode, you don't have to worry too much about this because the camera and flash will set the appropriate settings. They will give you a technically acceptable result, if not an emotionally satisfying one. But if we did want to take control ourselves, how do we work out our exposure manually?

Start by setting your camera to manual exposure mode. Ensure the ISO setting is on a manual setting, say 100 or 400 (and that Auto ISO is turned off). Set your shutter speed to the 'flash synchronisation' speed, usually 1/60 to 1/250 second. If in doubt, try 1/60 second. And then choose an aperture depending on the result you're looking for – if you're in doubt, start with f8.

Now turn to your flash unit and ensure it is on manual control as well. Set the power output to full charge (refer to the instruction manual). Take a photo. Look at the result on your camera LCD screen using the histogram. If it is too light, reduce the flash power and test again. If it is too dark, you can't add any more flash power, so use a wider aperture or increase the ISO. Test again. Eventually, you'll work it out and once you have, every exposure will be the same as long as you, the flash and the subject stay in the same position.



# UNDERSTANDING FLASH SYNC

**T**hese days, the flash 'synchronisation' shutter speed is less important when using special flash equipment, but everything still revolves around the camera's shutter.

Most camera shutters are sequential, meaning they open up from one side of the sensor and travel to the other side. However, there are two shutter 'blinds', for want of a better explanation, and the second shutter blind can begin closing before the first one has fully opened. This is the case with fast shutter speeds, such as 1/1000 second. At no time is the shutter completely open. Why does this matter?

When the flash fires, the duration of the flash burst is incredibly short – from around 1/400 second at high power down to 1/20,000 second at lower power settings.

Let's say we have a 1/3000 second burst of flash and we're using a 1/1000 second shutter. At no time, will the shutter be completely open (because the second shutter blind is already closing before the first shutter blind is fully open), so when the flash fires, part of the sensor will be covered up by a shutter blind – and that area will be dark and underexposed.

The solution is to use a slower shutter speed where the first shutter blind is completely open (reaches the other side) before the second blind starts to close. At the point the shutter is completely open, the flash is fired and the whole of the sensor is exposed.

The flash synchronisation speed is the fastest speed at

which the shutter will be completely open and the sensor wholly revealed. Usually this is around 1/60 second up to 1/250 or 1/300 second - check your camera manual for details.

So, is this a problem? In a dark studio with no ambient light, a slower shutter speed probably doesn't matter because the only light exposing the camera is the flash, and if the flash duration is incredibly brief (say 1/3000 second), then that will freeze any subject movement nicely.

However, if you're not in a dark studio, the ambient light is also being recorded and a flash synchronisation speed of 1/60 or 1/250 second might not be able to freeze a fast subject (such as a dancer in the air). The flash burst creates a nice, sharp subject, but around the edges you can see the blur being recorded by the longer shutter speed and the ambient light.

Camera and flash manufacturers have come up with different solutions, but generally all solutions have compromises.

For instance, most flash units provide a high speed mode designed for fast shutter speeds. Instead of a single burst of light, they emit a series of bursts, the duration of which covers the faster shutter speeds, from when the first shutter blind opens until the second shutter blind closes. The compromise is that the flash unit can't provide as much power this way, but often a higher ISO setting can fix this.



# Light Quality

**Careful use and control of flash or studio lighting can change the ordinary into something extraordinary – and it's easy if you know what to look for.**

**Let's begin with light quality.**

**L**ighting can be described in a number of ways: light quality, light direction and light colour. Each aspect has its uses for creating exceptional photographs – or terrible ones!

## Contrasty Lighting

In the studio, we have full control over the quality of our light, if we know what to look for.

Light quality basically varies from harsh, hard or contrasty to soft. Harsh lighting is very familiar to Australian photographers: the midday sunshine in summer is about as harsh as you'll find, followed closely by an on-camera flashgun. Both light sources are small relative to the subject. Although the sun is huge, its distance from Earth millions of kilometres away makes it relatively small.

Small light sources emit very directional light. The light rays that reach us from the sun are all travelling parallel to one another. This directional lighting throws hard, directional shadows. It picks out detail and reveals every aspect of the subject precisely. It is contrasty and it can make your subject look quite dramatic – like spotlights in a theatre – or pretty horrible if the shadows are left uncontrolled.

## Soft Lighting

In comparison, soft lighting is far more flattering. Light rays do not reach the subject from a single position – they do not travel in parallel. In fact, soft lighting arrives at the subject from a variety of angles and hence to produce soft lighting, you need a large light source.

When we talk about a large light source, the size is in relation to the subject. For a landscape, a large light source could be the cloud cover on an overcast day. The light is still coming from the sun, but the quality is altered by introducing cloud. Although the light waves are travelling in parallel when they reach the clouds, as they pass through the clouds they are bounced around, so by the time they are through, they are travelling in all directions.

If light arrives at a subject from a variety of directions, hard shadows can't form. The effect is very pleasing and, while not necessarily as dramatic, produces a better photograph in many situations.

The shadows formed by soft lighting aren't as deep as those formed by directional lighting. Although shadows are cast by soft, non-directional lighting too, due to its nature the shadows receive some illumination. If you used a light meter to measure the highlights and shadow areas, there isn't as much difference between them when soft lighting is used. Since cameras can only handle a limited range of brightnesses, they are better able to handle the contrast range of soft lighting than harsh directional lighting. This is another reason why soft lighting produces a better result in many (but not all) situations.

## Studio Solutions

Professionals understand the usefulness of a softer lighting source. This is why they use softboxes and umbrellas to change the directional quality of the studio flash. The directional light is fired through the softbox or into the umbrella (collectively called 'lightshapers'), but by doing this the lighting is scattered. The quality of the light reaching the subject is non-directional and a lot softer.

The size of the softboxes and umbrellas is quite large relative to the subject. However, when photographing larger subjects like cars in a studio, oversized softboxes and light sources are needed to keep the same size ratio. Explained another way, a large softbox moved to a great distance from the subject will have a similar effect to a small light source placed much closer.

On the following pages, let's take a look at how different lightshapers and light-to-subject distances can change the quality of the light.

LIGHTING SAMPLE

# Hard or Contrasty Lighting

## SMALL LIGHT SOURCE (RELATIVE TO THE SUBJECT)



Notice the hard shadows that are created by the directional lighting. Not only are the shadow lines sharp, the shadows are very dark too.

Harsh or contrasty lighting can produce specular highlights on the skin - a sheen - which can look ugly in the final image. Make-up can help!

BACKGROUND

**Subject****Dish Reflector**

Harsh or contrasty lighting can be very powerful, especially for subjects of men or women who hold powerful positions. However, it is not usually appropriate for photos of small children. Harsh or contrasty lighting is created by a small light source. A dish reflector is usually used to create contrasty lighting. Dish reflectors are available in a range of different sizes, so the smaller or narrower the dish, the more contrasty the light produced.

LIGHTING SAMPLE

# Soft Lighting

LARGE LIGHT SOURCE (RELATIVE TO THE SUBJECT)

Notice the transitions between highlights and shadows are now much wider and the light appears 'softer'. Compare this with harsh or hard lighting.



Soft lighting works on a micro level as well, smoothing out the skin and making it much more flattering.

BACKGROUND

**Subject****Softbox**

When photographing families or models, it is common to use a softer light source. While shadows are created, these shadows are not as distinct and the depths of the shadows are often not as dark. You create a soft light with an umbrella, a softbox or by bouncing your light off a large surface (like a white wall or white ceiling) or through a scrim (a large expanse of translucent material). The larger and closer the light to your subject, the softer the light.

LIGHTING SAMPLE

# Not As Soft!

LARGE LIGHT SOURCE AT A DISTANCE (RELATIVE TO THE SUBJECT)

Notice how the shadow transitions become harder and the shadows darker as the light is moved further away from the subject. Distance also affects the light quality.



If you can't change the size of your light, maybe changing the light to subject distance can help control the hardness or softness of your light.

BACKGROUND

**Subject****Softbox**

When you move a light further away from your subject, you are reducing its size relative to the subject. And a subject receives more directional light, the further the light is from the subject. So, if you have a soft light, but you want to make it a little harder, move the light further away from your subject.



# Broad or Short?

**Where you position your lights is often determined by your subject and how he or she is posed, but this doesn't mean you can't experiment and search for some different looking results.**

These days, there are no hard and fast rules about lighting, as long as the result works. And the way you determine this is to practise and experiment.

Traditionally, portrait photographers would be trained to use a variation of short lighting for most of their subjects, at least in the beginning. The opposite of short (or narrow) lighting is broad lighting. Here's how you tell the difference.

## Nose to Ear

If your subject is facing the camera front on, then neither side of the face is dominant. They are equal. In this situation, you can have neither short nor broad lighting because these descriptions rely on the face being angled one way or the other towards the camera.

However, generally we have our subject at a slight angle to the camera, simply because the front on pose (in our culture at least) is considered stilted or uninteresting.

When the face is angled, the side of the face pointing towards the camera is the broad side, the opposite side is the short side.

Assuming your subject's nose is relatively straight and their ears normally positioned, you can visually measure the distance between the nose and the ears to determine which is which. The side with the longer distance between nose and ear is the broad side, the side with the shorter distance is the short side.

## Broad or Short

When your key (also called main) light is positioned over the broad side of the face, this is broad lighting. If the light is on the other side,

illuminating the short side of the face, this is short lighting.

If you think about it, your lighting pattern can change from broad to short simply by having your subject turn his or her head to the other side. The terms broad and short are simply instructive – but they can be useful to understand, especially if you read more in-depth texts on portrait lighting.

## Camera Angles

On the following pages you'll see a series of portraits with different lighting patterns. You will probably only like one or two of them – and this is a good start. Learning to be discerning about what you like and don't like is the key to lighting effectively.

You'll also notice we talk about the angle of the light in terms of left or right. However, if our subject changes her pose to the other side, then these lighting patterns all change as well. The lights might not move, but their effect on the subject changes completely.

This is why portrait photographers talk in terms of broad and short lighting, so it doesn't matter whether it's the left side or the right side. Well, chances are not many portrait photographers do talk in these terms anymore, since so much portraiture is shot without studio lighting, but even so, an understanding of these principles can be very helpful, whether shooting by window lighting or using studio flash.

## Lighting Pattern

The example photos use three lights. Two of the lights are just 'padding' or 'fill in' lighting. These are the background light, creating the graduated effect, and the fill light. The fill light is behind and above the camera and its job is to illuminate the subject broadly. The stronger the fill light, the lighter the shadows. If there were no fill light, the shadows would be very harsh, especially when the key light is 90° to one side.

However, the main purpose of these examples is to demonstrate the effect of the key light on our subject, the light that creates the light and shade and dominates how our subject is illuminated.

It's a pretty straightforward lesson, but if you're setting these patterns up yourself, also experiment with how high or low the lights are positioned. We'll cover this in more detail in future articles.

3 LIGHT SET UP

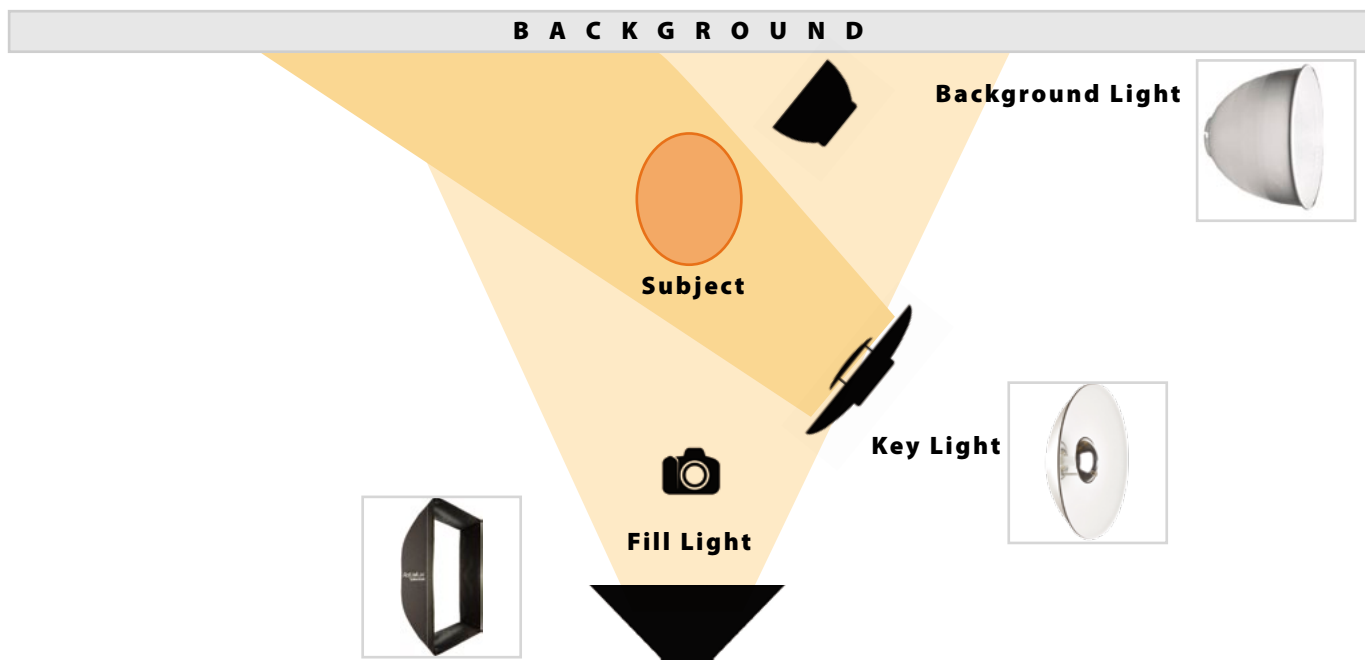
# Key Light 45° Right

## FILL LIGHT BEHIND CAMERA



This is the broad side of the face - the distance from ear to nose is greater on this side.

This is the short side of the face and because the light is on the short side, it is called short lighting..

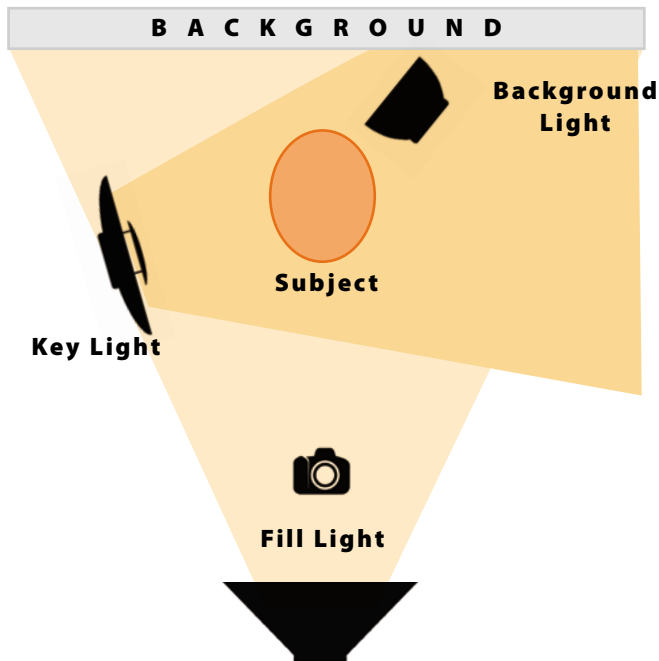


*This is considered short lighting because the key light is on the short side of the face. If you look at the distance between the ears and the nose (even though the ears are hidden, we can guess where they are), you can see that the broad side of the model's face is on the left of the photo, the short side on the right of the photo. And as the key light is striking the model on the right of the photo, we now know this is short lighting. In portraiture, short lighting is a good starting point for determining your lighting pattern.*

3 LIGHT SET UP

## Key Light 90° Left

FILL LIGHT BEHIND CAMERA

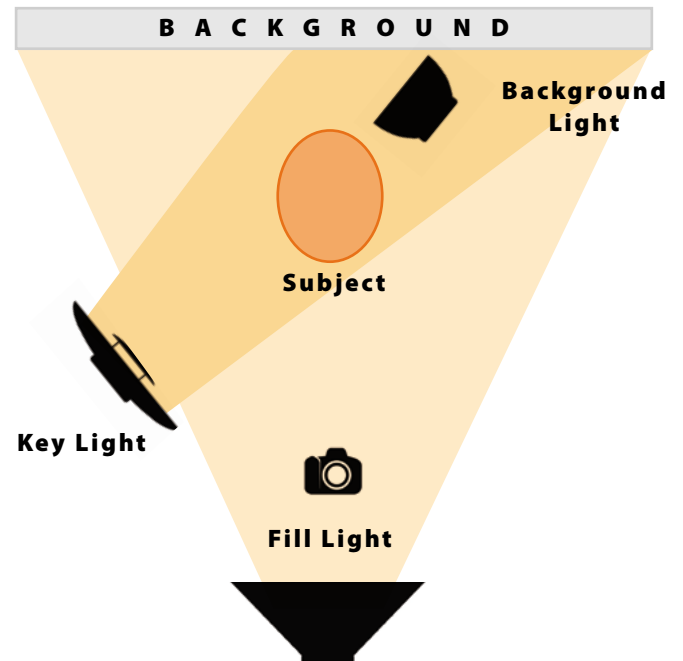
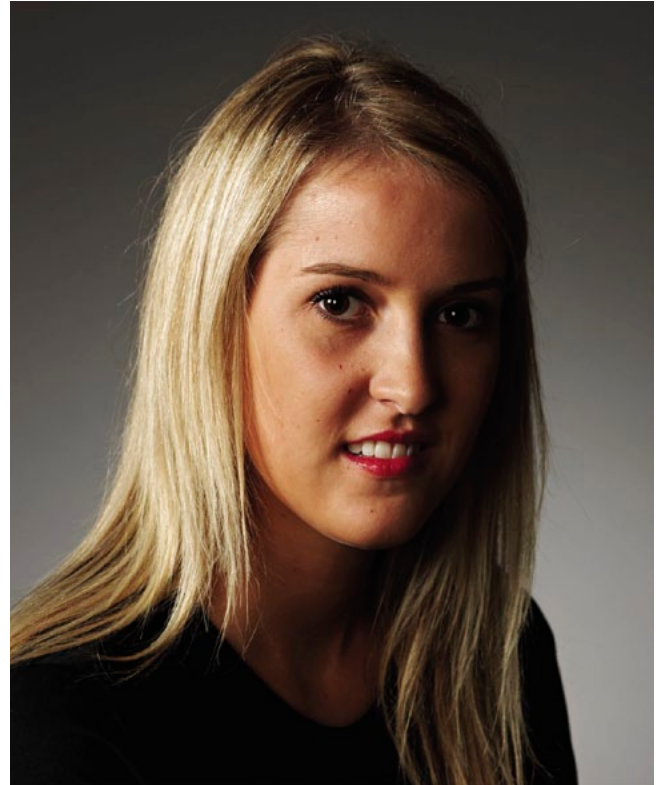


*If you take the key light too far to the side, the result is very dramatic, but not particularly useful. Only the tip of the nose is in the light, the rest of the face in shadow. You are unlikely to leave the key light here!*

3 LIGHT SET UP

## Key Light 45° Left

FILL LIGHT BEHIND CAMERA

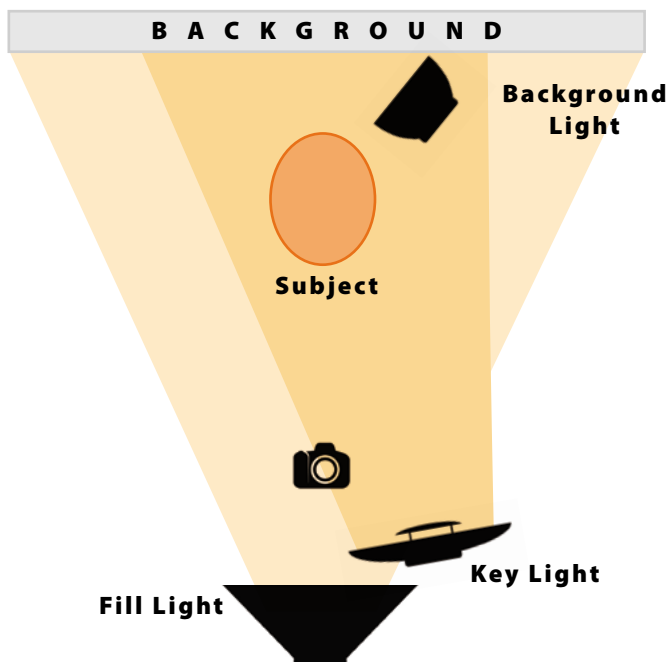


*This is called a 'broad light'. The 'broad' side of the face is the side facing the camera, or the side of the face where the distance between the ear and the nose is greatest. It is camera left, the model's right side, in this photo. When the key light is on the 'broad' side of the face, it is called broad lighting. However, for traditional portraiture, photographers tend to prefer short lighting, as seen on the previous page.*

3 LIGHT SET UP

## Key Light Front On

FILL LIGHT BEHIND CAMERA

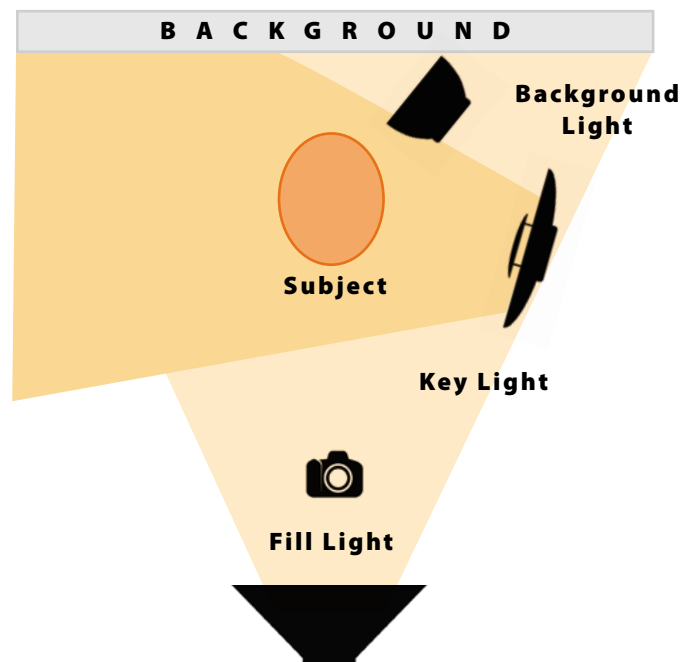


When the key light and the fill light are essentially lighting the subject from the same angle, there is very little modelling in the face. Note that because the lights are higher than the subject, there is still some shadow under the chin, but this could be eliminated by lowering the light a little. Flat lighting is often used in beauty and fashion, but is not so popular for family or corporate portraiture.

3 LIGHT SET UP

## Key Light 90° Right

FILL LIGHT BEHIND CAMERA



As you move the key light around to the other side of your subject, the shadows become more noticeable and the result more dramatic. This probably isn't what you want for a family portrait, but could be good for a theatrical effect. How deep the shadows are can be determined by how much fill light you use.



# The Basic Lights

**When you buy a lighting kit, you are usually presented with two or three light shapers: a dish reflector, an umbrella and maybe a softbox. What do they do and what design features should you look for?**

When SLR cameras were first manufactured, they always came with a standard 50mm lens which was difficult to master. It seems the same applies to lighting kits, with most offering a standard dish reflector as the most basic light.

## Dish Reflector

It's probably the cheapest light shaper as well, but that would be unfair criticism because the dish reflector is an important light to have, especially in a multiple lighting situation where the dish reflector's harsher light can be supplemented by a softer fill light.

With most flash heads, the flash tube is exposed and emits a harsh light in a hemispherical pattern. The dish reflector controls the spill of the light, directing it in a single direction, so instead of light bouncing all around the studio, it is directed towards the subject. However, because the inside of the dish reflector is usually silver and highly reflective, the quality of the light remains harsh and strong.

There are many different types of dish reflector design which alter the shape of the pool of light and the quality of the light. A deeper, narrower dish reflector throws a smaller pool of light with more directional light. A larger, shallower dish throws a wider pool of light, but remains very directional.

## Umbrella

The next cheapest light is an umbrella, although some lighting manufacturers have taken the art of umbrella design to new heights. However, the principle is the same: instead of the flash light being directed straight onto the subject, it is bounced into an umbrella so that

the light that reaches the subject is much softer and less directional.

The size of an umbrella (and they come in different sizes) is much larger than a standard dish reflector, and as we have learnt, the size of the light relative to the subject, the softer the light. An umbrella is the quickest and easiest way to produce soft flattering light, but it does have a downside. The light from the umbrella produces a wide pool of light and so in addition to lighting your subject, it also lights the background and surroundings. Spill light from an umbrella isn't easy to control.

There are many umbrella variations. The inside of the brolly can be white, silver, gold or a combination for different qualities of light. A deep or conically shaped umbrella focuses the light better, or you can use a translucent umbrella and push the light through the fabric towards the subject. However, in the latter case, you might as well use a softbox.

## Softbox

A softbox is better than an umbrella because it contains the light, preventing it from spilling out all over your set. The light from the flash goes straight through the white fabric cover which softens the light.

Of course, light from your softbox will still continue past your subject and possibly reach the background, but the area over which the softbox illuminates the set is more controllable.

Softboxes come in different sizes and shapes. While a square shape is standard, rectangular softboxes are useful because they can more easily control the spill of light elsewhere on the set.

When shooting portraiture, you need to remember that the lights you use will be reflected in your subject's eyes, creating catchlights. The shape of these catchlights will be square or rectangular if that's the shape of your softbox, so some photographers prefer to use octagonal shaped softboxes, or they add a black fabric mask with a circle cutout onto the front of the softbox, so the catchlight is circular.

Softboxes can use extra internal pieces of fabric to further soften the light; they can also use grids on the front to make the light more directional, and the older your softbox, the more likely the light will take on a yellow colour because the fabric begins to colour. Some photographers love this as it gives their portraits 'better' colour, but it's nothing that can't be tweaked in post-production.

LIGHTING SAMPLE

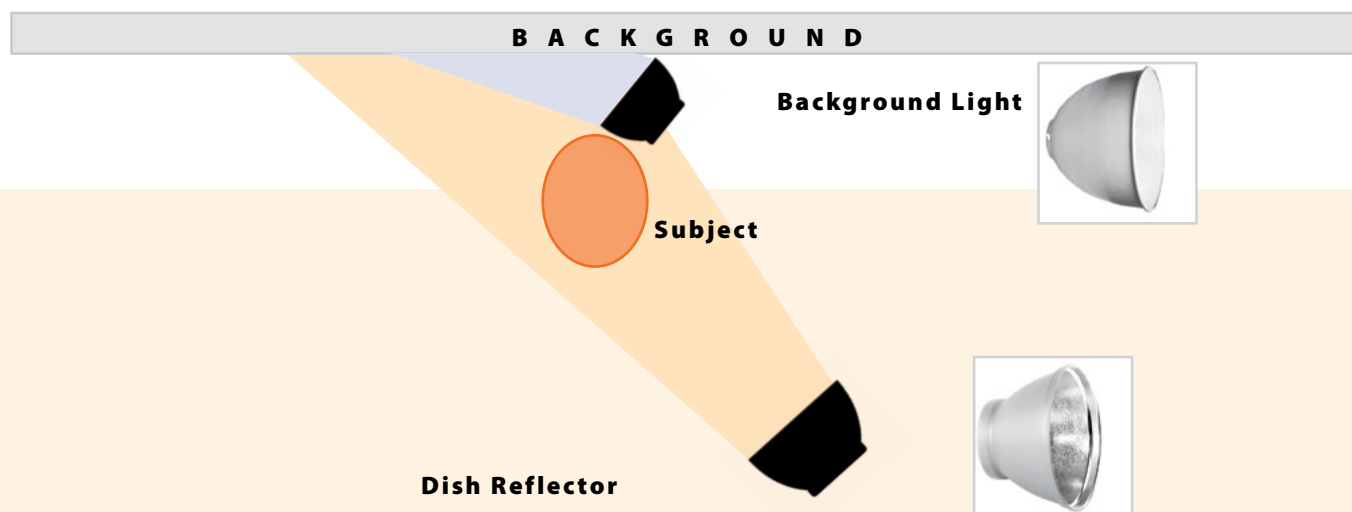
# Dish Reflector

HARD LIGHT FOR CREATING DRAMA, MORE CHALLENGING TO CONTROL



Shadows thrown by the dish reflector are more abrupt and noticeable. Good for strong, dramatic portraiture, care needs to be taken in placing the light.

The contrast created by the dish reflector can mean very bright, overexposed highlights, especially noticeable in the sheen on a subject's face!



A dish reflector is harder to use than a softbox or umbrella because the angles of light and shadow are very strong and they need to be positioned carefully in relation to the subject's pose. So while not a popular light with beginners, expert lighting technicians can create powerful portraits filled with drama, but these same technicians would opt for a softer light for most family portraiture.

LIGHTING SAMPLE

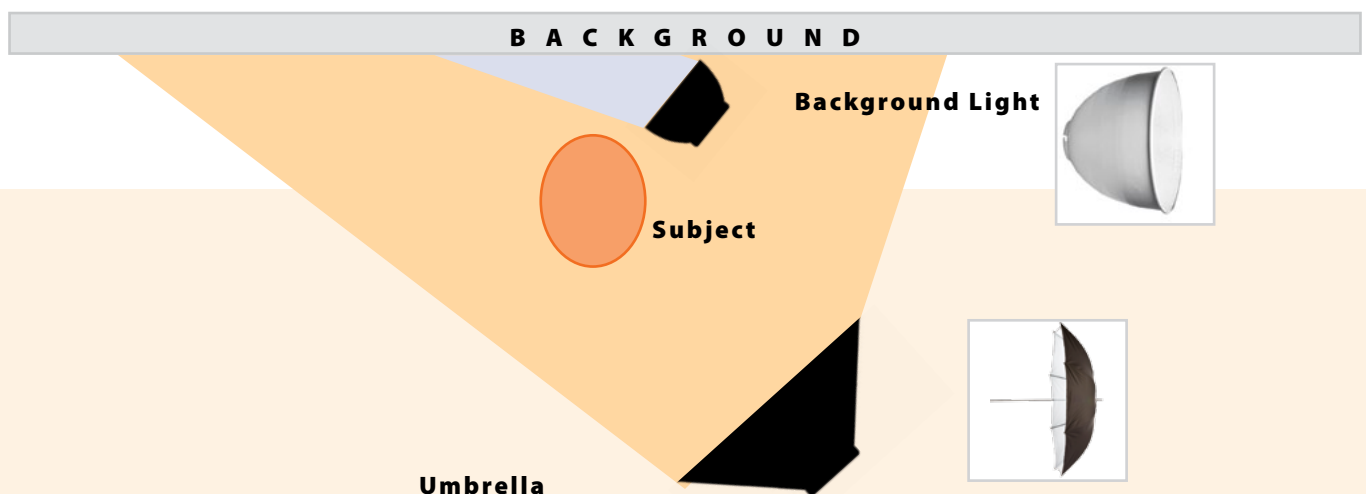
# Umbrella

SOFT FLATTERING LIGHT, SPILLS OVER BACKGROUND

Like all lights, the resulting softness of the shadow lines depends on how close the light is to the subject. The closer the light, the softer the shadows appear.



The umbrella throws a much softer light, but a silver interior can still produce a specularity as shown on the forehead.



An umbrella produces a much more satisfactory light for family portraiture than a dish reflector because the shadows aren't as harsh. You can control the quality of the light by choosing different types of umbrellas (whether silver, gold or white on the inside), different sizes and different shapes. The main problem is that you can't always control where the light spills over onto the background.

LIGHTING SAMPLE

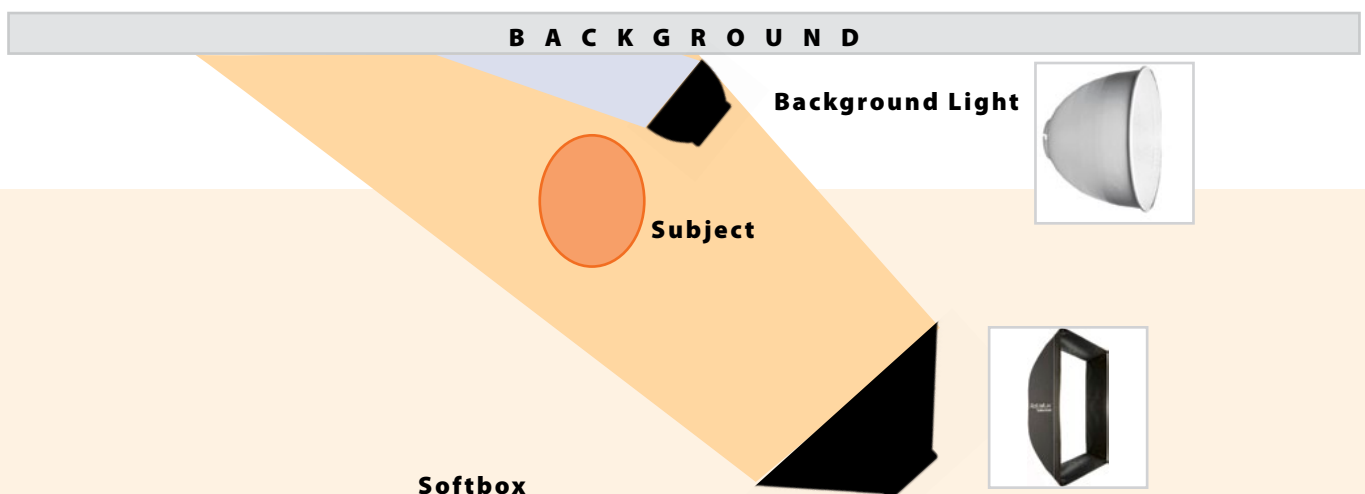
# Softbox

SOFT FLATTERING LIGHT, CONTROL OVER BACKGROUND

Perhaps the most telling characteristic of the softbox is the beautiful gradations from highlight to shadow – soft edged shadows, perfect for portraiture.



While shadow areas are dark, the various angles of the light from the softbox open them up, so they are not deep recesses of black.



As with all light sources, the final quality of the light is determined by how close the light is placed to the subject, and the relative size of the light to the subject. To get a very soft quality of light, move the softbox in as close to the subject as you can, without the softbox appearing in the photograph. However, this may be too soft, in which case, move the light away until the effect is as you want it.



# Positioning the Light

**We all know you position the lights so they illuminate your subject, but exactly where do you place them? The secret is in the shadows they throw on your subject. Here are three lighting patterns to guide you.**

**IT'S ALL VERY WELL** to have studio lights and a model, but where do you place them? At what angle should they light your subject?

There are no hard and fast rules for lighting and many studio photographers have made their names for the way they interpret the fall of light on their subject. However, that's not particularly helpful when starting out and you have yet to gain the experience needed to create perfect lighting.

## Lighting Patterns

Portrait photographers talk about a number of different lighting patterns or positions, such as beauty, butterfly, loop, Rembrandt and split. These lighting patterns are great starting points because they are reasonably generic and work with a lot of different subjects.

But this is one of the keys to great portrait photography: understanding how the light and your subject work together. Different faces require different treatments and a lighting pattern that works well for one subject might be disastrous with another!

New Zealand master photographer Richard Poole said, "Think of studio lighting in the same manner as lighting the landscape: direction and elevation with a moveable light source." In other words, it's not just the angle of the light to the subject, but the height of the light as well.

And just as we observe the effect of light on the landscape, so we need to observe light on our subjects. This is why modelling lights are so important for studio flash, but of course, shooting digitally means you can also use constant light sources.

The point to take away is that you need to look at how the light falls on your subject and how that affects your portrait. You should also

remember that as your subject moves his or her head around, the effect of your lighting pattern will change, which in turn may require you to re-position your lights.

## Light Shapers

At the same time we're positioning the lights, we can't forget about exposure or the quality of the light we are using. For portraiture, we'll probably be using a beauty dish, umbrella or a softbox, rather than a bare bulb.

With the modelling light on (or our constant lights on), we can move the lights and/or the model and observe where the shadows fall. The way the nose shadow falls is key to several lighting techniques and, if you can get the shadow in roughly the right place, you'll have roughly the right light as well.

Don't use these rules fanatically because subjects with different shaped faces may require different approaches. These lighting patterns also assume your subject is facing the camera, more or less.

Lighting patterns are a little like the rules of photographic composition: they are made to be broken, but you need to understand them in order to break them creatively, and not look like you don't know what you're doing.

## Three to Go

On the following pages are three lighting patterns for three types of portrait photography.

Loop lighting is your standard lighting pattern that is suitable for almost any situation. It mightn't create a lot of mood, but it will look professional.

For beauty and fashion, you're probably not looking for character lines or personality, so a flat, frontal lighting with few telltale shadows is required.

And finally, there's Rembrandt lighting. While the feeling created by this lighting pattern is reminiscent of some of Rembrandt's paintings, there are few paintings that actually have the signature triangle of light on the shadowed cheek. Nevertheless, Rembrandt lighting can certainly be a crowd pleaser.

LIGHTING SAMPLE

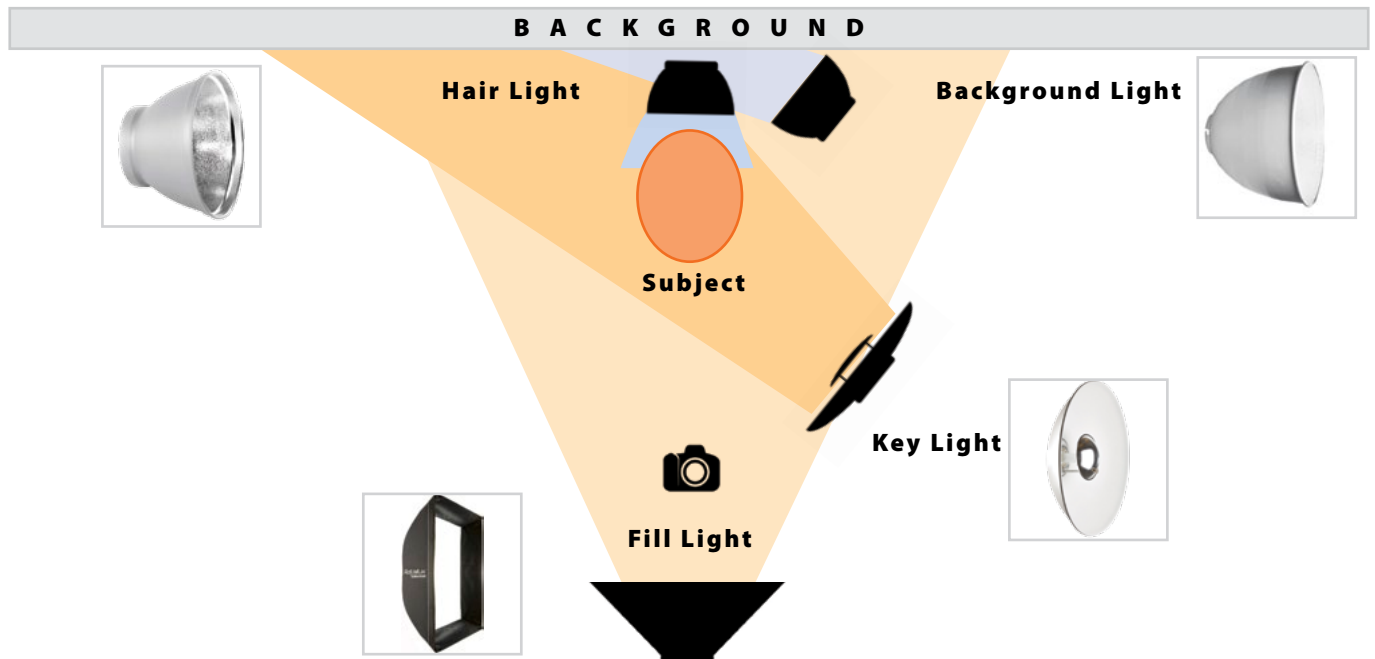
# Loop Lighting

THE GENERAL PURPOSE LIGHTING PATTERN FOR MOST SUBJECTS



The 'loop' is the shape of the shadow under and to the side of the nose, but not touching the upper lip.

The main or key light needs to be above the subject pointing down, then you move it around until the shadow is formed.



Loop lighting gains its name from the shape of the nose shadow – it should be a loop or an oval. You create this shadow by having your key light above the subject so the shadow is thrown down towards the lips, but it should only reach about halfway. You then move the light around the subject (in a half circle) to create a three-dimensional lighting pattern. The background and hair lights are not needed to create the loop, and the fill light reduces the strength of the loop shadow. It isn't needed either, but loop lighting doesn't have to be created with a single light. It's all about positioning the key light and once you do, everything else falls into place. In theory!

LIGHTING SAMPLE

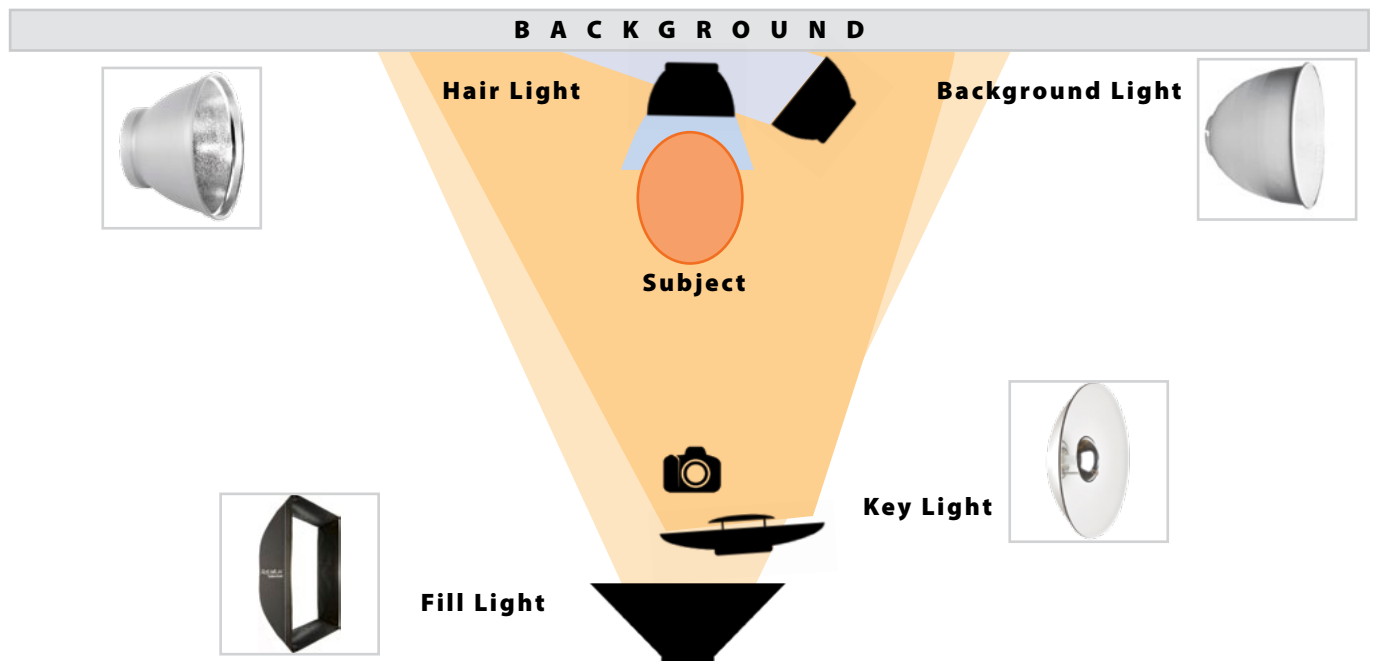
# Butterfly Lighting

## FOR BEAUTY AND FASHION



A light positioned high and in front of the subject can throw a small shadow under the nose that looks a bit like a butterfly. Yes, you need to use your imagination!

If you have both a key and fill light, they need to be positioned in a line as this lighting pattern doesn't want much dimensionality.



Beauty and fashion photographs typically don't have nose shadows floating across the cheek. While there may be shadows under the chin, the idea is to keep the face flat and without creases or wrinkles! To create this lighting pattern, position the key light in front of and above your subject. Your subject is likely to be facing the camera head-on. Watch the shape of the shadow (and, of course, the angle of your subject's head). If you're using a fill light as well, it will be a little lower and very close to the same axis as the key light.

LIGHTING SAMPLE

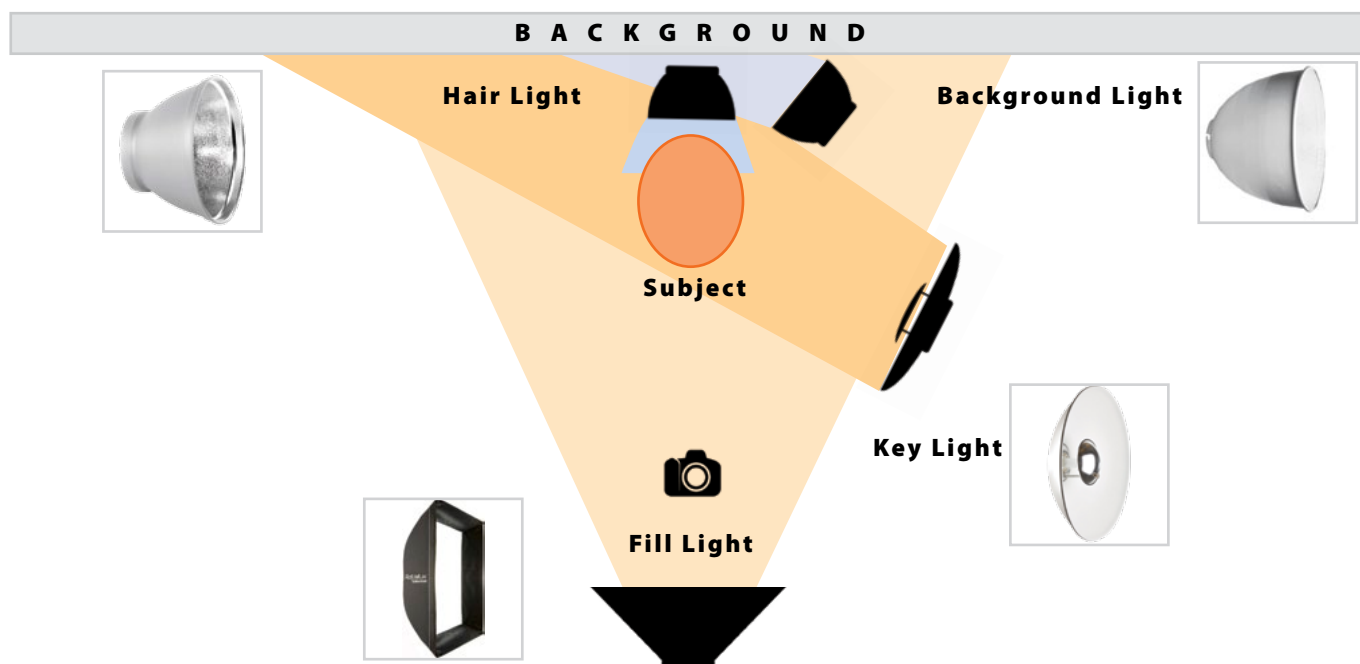
# Rembrandt Lighting

## ADDING DRAMA TO THE PORTRAIT



In portrait photography, the telltale sign of Rembrandt lighting is the triangle of light on the shadow side of the face.

The fill light should be kept low in power so you don't kill the Rembrandt effect, retaining a strong, dramatic light.



To create Rembrandt lighting, begin with the key light slightly on one side of the subject and raise it up until the nose shadow is two-thirds of the way between the base of the nose and the upper lip. Next, move the light in a half circle to an angle of around 45°, or until you see a triangle of light on the opposite cheek. Adjust your fill light to taste, but if it is too strong, you will lose the dramatic Rembrandt lighting effect.



# 4 Lights 4 Portraiture

**Everyone knows the limitations of a single flash on a camera, but this limitation doesn't apply to studio photography. While some lighting set-ups can use a dozen or more lights, most portrait studios can get by with three or four lights.**

As we move into more complicated lighting patterns, we need to make some assumptions. For this lesson, the lighting pattern is designed to photograph a single person, head and shoulders.

We can control the mood and atmosphere to some extent by our choice of background, wardrobe, make-up and the lighting ratios.

Lighting ratios describe how bright one light is in comparison to other light sources and can be used to transform our multiple lighting set-ups from soft and fluffy to strong and dramatic. We're not going to discuss lighting ratios in this lesson, rather we'll concentrate on what different lights do and the angles to consider when setting them up.

## Key Light

The key light (also called the main light) sets the scene. It is the strongest light and it is usually positioned at an angle to the subject and slightly above the subject as well.

Because the key light is angled, it creates the three-dimensionality in the portrait. Sometimes people with longer noses don't appreciate a strong angle, so you may bring the light back around towards the camera for them, with less angle on the light (and less shadow cast by the nose).

A lot of portrait photographers use a beauty dish for the key light. A beauty dish is a large, shallow reflector with a deflector in the middle over the flash tube. The result is a harder light than an umbrella or a softbox, but it is soft and flattering enough to be useful for portraiture. The difference is in the quality of the light, the beauty dish retaining some of the specular highlights that can be flattened by an umbrella or

a softbox. However, there is no rule that says your key light needs to be a beauty dish, you can certainly use a standard dish reflector, umbrella or a softbox.

## Fill Light

The fill light isn't at all sexy. Its job is to fill in the shadows. If you set the fill light with too much power, it will not only fill in the shadows, but overpower the key light as well. This isn't the result you want. Generally speaking, the fill light is one to three stops (EV) less than the key light.

## Hair Light

How do you separate your subject's hair from the background? This can be a big issue when shooting dark-haired subjects against a dark background: there is no difference between the hair and the backdrop and the resulting image is ambiguous.

The solution is to light the hair separately. Again, choose the power output carefully because too much will overexpose the hair, whereas too little and the hair light won't be visible. Fortunately, it's an easy matter to experiment and you'll clearly see when it's working on your camera's LCD screen.

In addition to the hair light, or instead of the hair light, some photographers skim the light around the side of the face. The light is positioned behind and to the side of the subject, creating a highlight which is sometimes called a kicker. If you don't need a hair light (perhaps your subject is bald), you may choose a kicker instead.

The biggest challenge with a hair light is positioning it above your subject, safely. A ceiling mount or a boom arm on a solid lighting stand will work.

## Background Light

The final light is for the background. You might just position this on the ground, using a narrow dish reflector so you can control how the light spills onto the background.

Once again, keep an eye on the power setting, adjusting it so the result looks pleasing on the back of your camera's LCD screen.

4 LIGHT SET-UP

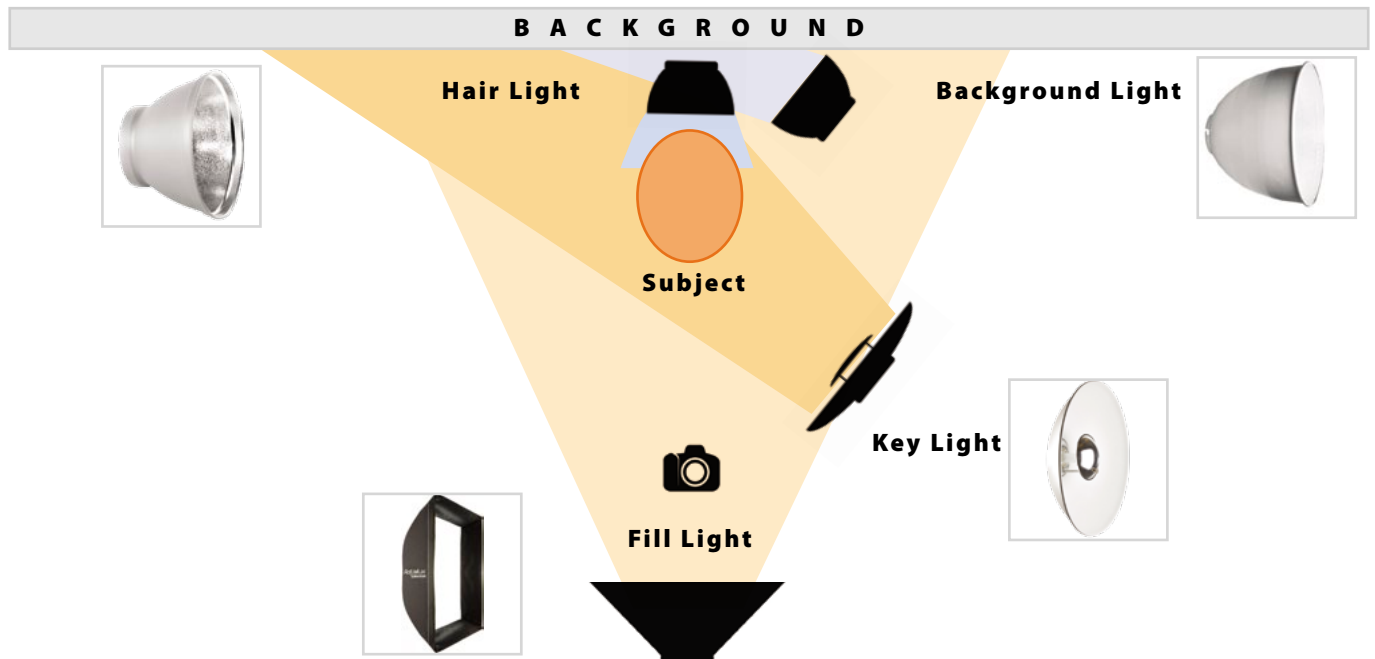
# 4 Light Combination

## STUDIO PORTRAITURE

The hair light is a nice touch which can be best achieved with a multiple lighting set-up.



The background light helps separate the subject and creates shape in a darkened studio.



There are many ways to use four lights for portraiture, but the above lighting pattern is typical for a standard portrait sitting. The result is not supposed to be tricky or super creative, rather it is about ensuring the subject is the most important aspect of the photo. The lighting makes it easy to engage with the subject, without overpowering her.

4 LIGHT SET-UP

# Key Light

## STUDIO PORTRAITURE



BACKGROUND

**Subject****Key Light**

The key light (also called the main light) is usually placed at a diagonal angle, meaning it is not directly in front of the subject, nor directly to one side. This isn't to say you can't position your key light here, but for general portraiture, it is usual to have it at around 45 degrees, and also a little higher than your subject's face, so the light is pointing down, again at around 45 degrees. Try using a beauty dish or an umbrella.

4 LIGHT SET-UP

# Fill Light

## STUDIO PORTRAITURE



BACKGROUND

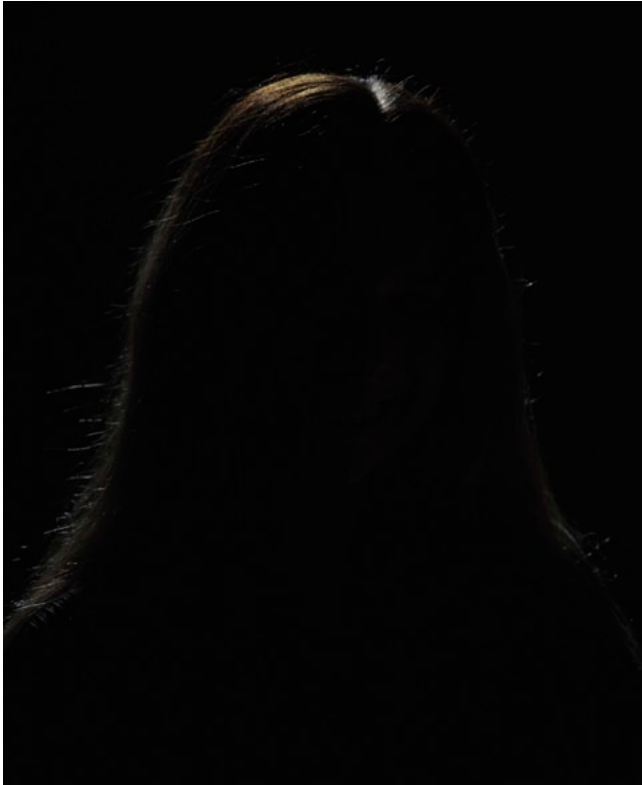
**Subject****Fill Light**

The angle of the key light will create some deep shadows, so a fill light is used to fill in the shadows. On its own, the fill light is quite flat and uninteresting, but it bathes the subject in light, removing unwanted deep shadows. The trick is not to overpower your subject with fill light. Either use a lower power setting for the fill light, or position the fill light further away from the subject. Or both! Try using a softbox.

4 LIGHT SET-UP

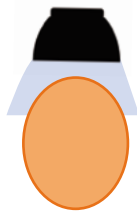
# Hair Light

## STUDIO PORTRAITURE



B A C K G R O U N D

Hair Light



Subject



4 LIGHT SET-UP

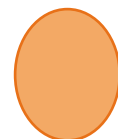
# Background Light

## STUDIO PORTRAITURE



B A C K G R O U N D

Background Light



Subject



On its own, a hair light seems to do very little, but compare the Key Light and Fill Light examples with the 4 Light Combination on the previous pages to see what a difference it can make. It's one of those finishing touches that gives the portrait a professional edge. The hair light requires a ceiling mount or a tall lighting stand with a boom arm so it can be positioned directly above and slightly behind the subject.

The background light is another finishing touch. It separates the subject from her background, adding a more three-dimensional feeling to the composition. It is also useful to give the subject shape, especially where dark hair and clothing can merge with the background. Adjust the power of the background light to give the separation you need. Some photographers place the background light on the floor, without a stand.



# Posing Your Subject

**Positioning your subject within the frame to create an interesting and engaging portrait is part technique and part art. Do you direct your subject into position, let them pose themselves, or something in-between?**

Not everyone likes to have their photograph taken, so while smartphones mean that everyone is used to having a camera pointed in their direction, sitting under studio lights (whether indoors or out) creates a certain formality to proceedings. It's no longer just 'a photograph', but a 'portrait sitting' and there are great expectations!

## Be an Observer

Professional portrait photographers with years of experience pose their subjects so easily, you often wonder if it's the photographer or the subject who is doing all the work! The answer is a bit of both.

AIPP Grand Master of Photography David Oliver (who captured many of the portraits in this series with Peter Eastway) has been taking portraits for over 30 years. His approach is relaxed and easy-going, something that comes from shooting thousands of portrait sittings.

When you meet David, you are immediately put at ease. He is friendly, always smiling and it is easy to feel comfortable when you're in his studio. (Of course, for those who know David, he prefers to shoot in the home or outdoors, in fact anywhere but in a studio these days, but that's another story).

If you're doing a portrait shoot, it's important that you're relaxed and friendly, too.

If it's your first portrait shoot, chances are you will be a bit nervous, in which case, tell your subjects what's happening and you'll all relax a lot more.

If you've been shooting quite a few portraits and you're struggling to get the best poses, check your proficiency with your equipment. Knowing your camera and lights back to front means you don't need to worry about them during the shoot. And if you're not worrying about your equipment, chances are you'll automatically be a lot more relaxed!

The advantage David has is years of experience, observing the human body. He knows what poses work and what ones don't. It has become second nature for him, but when you try to pin him down as to exactly how he positions someone, he says he lets his subjects pose themselves.

## Natural Poses

And to a certain extent, he is right. David will set up his lights and invite his subject to stand or sit in approximately the right position.

In David's view, the best poses are those that look natural, so if your subject stands naturally in position, shouldn't that be a good pose? Yes and no!

For fashion and swimsuit photography, the poses can be quite complex and the line between success and failure can be just a few centimetres. For family and commercial portraiture, however, we're generally looking for a natural pose and so we don't have to work so hard in precisely posing our subjects.

There are some stances that are just plain boring and with experience, you learn what these are. So when David invites his subjects to stand or sit for the camera, he will let them do their own thing and, once they are comfortable, he will move in and suggest some (usually) minor changes.

There are lots of things to consider. First, what is the angle of the body relative to the camera – front on, side on, back on?

Next, what is the angle of the head – front on, side on, tilted?

Now, what about the angle of the shoulders? Are they square or angled? Which shoulder is higher?

And what about the hands and the arms? Are they in view or out of view? We'll look at hands in more detail in a future chapter.

All of these questions may be answered differently depending on your subject's size, shape, clothing and personality. And, then there's that little issue of lighting we've been focusing on. Sometimes a particular pose doesn't work because it doesn't suit the light – so either you change the light to match the pose, or vice versa. Lots of decisions!

Here are a few suggestions for a standing model to consider.

## POSING SAMPLE

# Front On

TO CAMERA



The only thing going for this static pose is the lighting which adds some three-dimensionality.

## POSING SAMPLE

# Angled

AWAY FROM LIGHT



Turning the body into the shadow can help hide the clothing or a larger physique. There's no right or wrong – what works for you or your subject?

While the lighting on the subject might be acceptable, the pose is very static. This is how people stand for their passport photograph to be taken and is really a pure record photograph. Artists have sometimes used this banal pose very effectively, but for successful family and commercial photography, it rarely works.

The easiest change for a standing portrait is to ask your subject to stand three-quarter or side on. This creates a more dynamic composition. It can also hide someone's thicker physique. Think about which way you ask them to turn - towards or away from the light. Here the body is in shadow. Is this what you want?

## POSING SAMPLE

# Angled

TOWARDS LIGHT



To reveal more interest in your subject or his or her clothing, it may be sensible for him or her to turn towards the key light to be better lit.

## POSING SAMPLE

# Use The Hands

TO ADD INTEREST



To strengthen the pose, what can your subject do with his or her hands to make the photo look less like a passport?

When turning your subject one way or the next, experiment with how far they turn. Watch for creases on the neck if they turn too far to the side. It is usual to ask your subject to turn towards the key light so he or she is better lit, but even so, a straight portrait with the hands to the side remains static.

To create more excitement and interest in the portrait, ask your subject to do something with his or her hands. Crossing arms is a good place to start, while putting a hand in a pocket or on a hip (the latter doesn't always work so well for men, of course) can greatly improve the overall feel of the portrait.

## POSING SAMPLE

# Angle Shoulders

TO CREATE MORE INTEREST



Ask your subject to put their weight on one leg or the other, thus tilting the shoulder line. This improves the composition with a diagonal.

## POSING SAMPLE

# Use The Angles

WITH BODY PARTS



The perfect pose is a search for one that matches your subject's expression and personality.

So far, our poses have been relatively static because the main compositional lines - the body and the shoulders are vertical and horizontal. By tilting the shoulder line, you can introduce a diagonal line which is much more dynamic and interesting. Ask your subject to put more weight on one leg.

Watch the angle of the head and counterbalance it with the angle of the shoulders and the position of the hand(s). You can also think of posing in terms of personality and encourage your subject to pose himself or herself naturally – but now you also know what to look for in terms of lines, shapes and composition.



# Positioning Two Heads

**The single head is relatively easy because you have just one subject to pose and light. However, two heads become more complicated because not only do both heads have to be properly lit, the heads should interact with each other as well.**

Posing two people involves the same types of thoughts as posing a single person. Generally speaking, you don't want your subjects to look stilted or uncomfortable, which is exactly how many people feel when they are having their portrait taken.

## Lines & Shapes

If you think of your subjects as two shapes within a frame, it makes the process of posing them a little easier.

Importantly, if the two 'shapes' have a space between them, you effectively have three areas of interest - the two subjects and the space. This is often not what you want with a portrait of two people - the space between them should be of minor compositional importance. Fortunately, fixing this space is relatively easy: ask them to move closer to each other.

Of course, standing shoulder to shoulder, facing the camera, is unlikely to be a great composition either, especially if the two subjects are of significantly different heights.

While a slight difference in height generally looks better in a composition than the same height (there is an implied diagonal line between the two subjects which is more dynamic than a horizontal line), too great a difference simply indicates that the subjects are poles apart. They may lack the interaction that is needed to make a successful portrait.

To make heights more even, you can have one subject stand on a box (if it's not a full length portrait), or if you're shooting outdoors, you might have one stand on a step or on the high side of an embankment.

Then, after you have used your friendly patter to relax and reassure them, ask them to turn towards each other slightly so that there is some interaction between them.

Of course, it may be just as appropriate to have one turn away from the other, but this could send either an antagonistic or a playful message. As with so many aspects of photography, there is no single way to pose two people and your choices will often depend on what you want the portrait to say.

With a couple in a loving relationship, or two females, it is often appropriate to have their heads very close together, even lightly touching each other. If one or both have lots of hair, watch that one face doesn't get confused by the other's hair.

For a male couple, or a couple that are in a purely business or social relationship, having them too close together is possibly sending the wrong message, but you can still indicate they have some shared views by having them turned and tilted towards one another. If the imaginary lines of where they are looking converge, this indicates they are associated with each other and the portrait is more likely to communicate this correctly.

For a tight head and shoulders portrait, keep an eye on the head angles as well as the shoulder angles. You can think of these angles as creating triangles, with the shoulders pointing in towards each other at the bottom of the frame, and the heads pointing towards each other at the top.

For wider shots, be aware of where the hands and arms are placed as you don't want them to be distracting.

## Lighting Issues

When you position two people, keep an eye on the light, especially if it is weighted to one side. The main error to avoid is having one of your subjects in the shadow of the other.

If there is a key (main) light, then ensure both subjects are being well illuminated. If one is in the shadow, have him or her move into the light, or the other subject move back so they are not throwing a shadow over the first. It is for this reason that photographers light couples and groups with low contrast light, so shadows are not so problematic.

POSING SAMPLE

# Heads Tilted In

## AND WATCH THE GAP



When photographing two people, determine how close their relationship is and then look to pose them appropriately. And keep an eye on those hands!

The photographs in this series were shot by David Oliver and Peter Eastway, with Peter gratefully deferring to David's lifetime of experience in portrait photography.

There are a lot of things to consider when photographing two people. Technically, you need to ensure your lighting illuminates both faces and that one is not in the shadow of the other.

In the studio, depth-of-field might not be a big problem if you're shooting at f8 or f11, but these days, people like shooting

with wider apertures to throw the background out-of-focus. If this is the case, you need to ensure both subjects have their eyes in the same plane of focus, otherwise one may be blurred compared to the other. This could be an intentional artistic effect, of course, but more often it's just poor camera craft!

POSING SAMPLE

# Not Side by side

## DON'T ASK THEM TO LINE UP!

Chances are when you photograph two people, there will be a height difference to deal with. Having them stand side by side is not a great idea.



Even if your subjects are the same height (or pretend to be), having a big gap between them is rarely the strongest composition or pose!



Lining up a couple, facing the camera, is no better than having a single subject facing the camera. It's a pose that might work in an arty context, but is rarely of much use if you're trying to photograph two people together. The fact that you have two people in the frame usually indicates that there is some sort of

a relationship between them, so look for poses that show this relationship. Assuming that the two people are friends or family and get on with each other, the gap between them should be reduced or eliminated altogether. That gap separates the subjects. What you want is to show them 'together'.

POSING SAMPLE

# Lean in to Each Other

AS LONG AS THEY ARE COMFORTABLE DOING SO



Angling your subjects towards each other can help reduce the gap between them. Tilt the heads inwards as well, but watch the hands and head position.



Watch getting your subjects too close - you don't want them knocking heads, unless you're also using a closer framing.

Think of diagonals when you are posing your subjects. The first two diagonals can be the angle of their heads: have each subject tilting his or her head towards each other, so their heads have a diagonal angle. You should also consider having the heads at slightly different heights, so there is an imaginary diagonal line between

them. Keep an eye on how close the heads are to each other. A very close position might be appropriate for a loving couple or two girlfriends, but not for two men who are just good friends. The way you pose your subjects will certainly communicate an implied relationship between them.



# What About the Hands?

**Somewhere between the completely natural, relaxed hand posture and the overly posed, formal portrait position is where you want your subject's hands to end up. It's really easy to say they don't look right, it's a lot harder to pose them correctly.**

Years ago, I edited articles written by Australian portrait photographer Ian Hawthorne. Ian would get into trouble for writing long and elaborate articles about posing, but he was incredibly passionate about portrait photography and the art of creating a correct, formal photograph.

I, too, was greatly interested in portraiture and so I didn't mind editing his articles. In fact, I enjoyed them because they were most informative. I wasn't necessarily going to implement all of his suggestions, but I certainly wanted to know the 'correct' way to do things.

Of course, what is 'correct' in one era can be seen as outdated and old-fashioned in the next. On the other hand, stick around long enough and there's a very good chance that the old-fashioned will come back into vogue, such is the nature of our society. I won't be at all surprised to see formal, studio lit portraiture becoming the latest fashion statement, mainly because it is so different to the average photo taken with a smartphone.

## Formal Approach

Thirty or fifty years ago, most portraits were taken in a photography studio. The lights were often bolted into position, there was a small choice of background colours and styles on rollers (so they could be easily changed), and subjects sat on posing stools or stood as the portrait dictated.

As the whole process was formalised, it made sense to have people standing in a formal stance as well. You wouldn't expect to see a formal photograph of the Prime Minister lounging around on his throne in a T-shirt and singlet. This might be appropriate for an outdoor candid shot,

but indoors, in a formal studio situation, he is more likely to be dressed in a suit, standing or sitting regally, looking into the camera.

And what about his hands?

Assuming the photograph is longer than a head and shoulders crop, hands have to go somewhere. You can put them behind the subject's back and that solves the problem to some extent, but generally speaking, hands are important compositional elements and need to be used well. Use them poorly and the whole portrait can fall apart.

## Finger Positioning

Ian Hawthorne and a number of other wedding photographers I worked with, would talk about the hand placement and position as being an integral part of every portrait. My memory of their instructions has no doubt been blurred somewhat over time, but the principles remain with me.

Generally speaking, the hand needs to be relaxed. If the arms are folded, you don't want the fingers of one hand crushing the life out of the other arm. You don't want the fingers in the shape of a fist either, as that is rather aggressive. And you don't want the fingers straight as nails as that looks rather odd as well.

Generally speaking, the fingers and the hand should look relaxed and at ease. There should be slight spacing between all the fingers (I seem to remember there should be a little more space between the middle and ring fingers than the other fingers, but I may be making that up), and don't position the thumb so it looks chopped off.

Similarly, try to keep the wrist slightly bent, but not too much. If the angle of the wrist is too great, it creates unwanted tension in the portrait. If it looks too straight, it's similarly too tense.

We also need to look at how we frame the portrait. Try not to chop off half a set of fingers or half a forearm. The place where the frame ends over your subject is important and it might be better to bend the arm a little to bring it within the frame.

There's a lot to hand positioning in portraiture, but in the end, it all boils down to producing a natural result, even if it's a formal portrait. If you're aware of the subject's hands and the need to make them look good, then that's half the battle.

POSING SAMPLE

# Fingers Apart

TO LOOK RELAXED

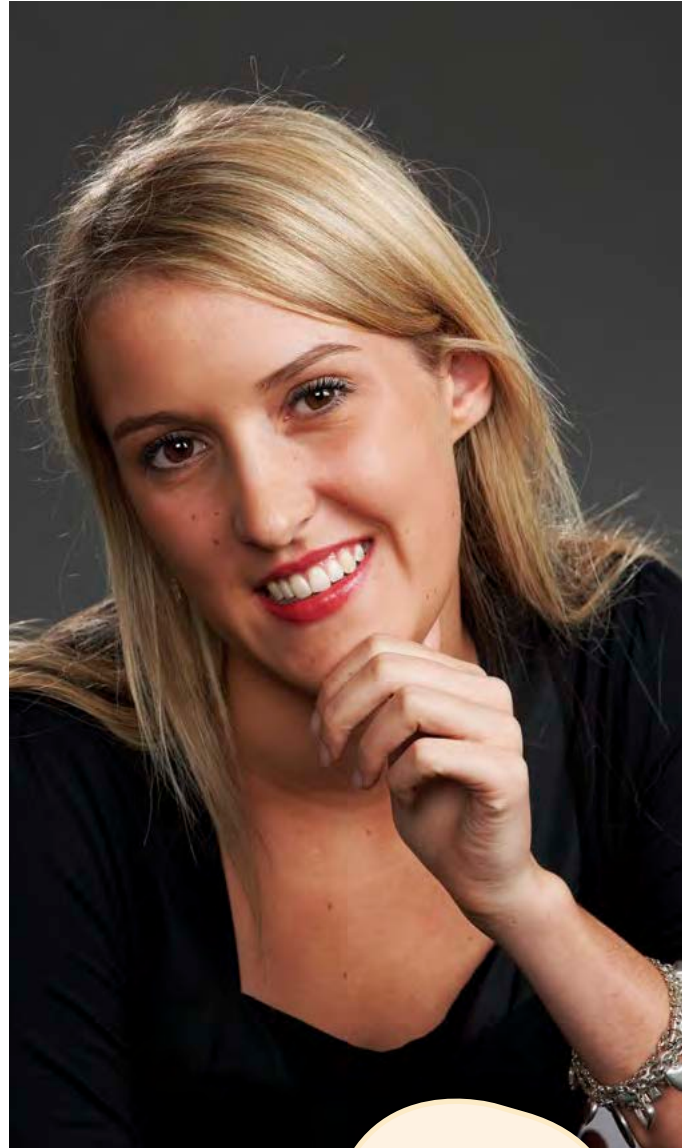


You can put the subject's hands behind her back and the problem goes away. Otherwise, try to ensure the hands look relaxed and natural.

POSING SAMPLE

# Natural Gesture

TRY NOT TO BE TOO POSED



If you direct the subject to bring her hand to her face, ensure the touch is light and as natural as possible.

Sometimes the best way to get a natural hand position is to ask the model to stand up, turn around three times, and sit back down. Often her hands will naturally fall into place and you can take the photo (assuming they don't fall over due to dizziness). Before you press the shutter, ensure the hand position looks natural.

Rather than having the hands crossed or in a pocket, you can ask your subject to bring her hand up to her face. There are lots of different ways the hand can be positioned. When you're not taking photographs, look around at how people pose themselves naturally in everyday life. This is a good way to learn.

POSING SAMPLE

# Big Hand

SIZE RELATIVE TO FACE



Although relaxed, the hand at first glance looks rather large in comparison to the face, and the bend in the wrist could be said to be 'awkward'.

POSING SAMPLE

# King Hit

IS THIS REALLY WHAT YOU WANT?



If your subject is a boxer, perhaps this is an appropriate pose. Watch for clenched fists and suggest they are unclenched for the photo!

While the chin is not deformed because it only has light contact with the hand, the hand itself looks quite large at this angle and so close to the face. The wrist is also bent at an acute angle and is perhaps not the most flattering pose.

Sometimes your subjects will be a little nervous and this can cause them to clench their fists. Usually your portraits will look more relaxed if the hands are also relaxed. This particular pose is definitely not a winner!

POSING SAMPLE

## Pressing Down

DON'T COVER THE FACE



If you ask your subject to bring her hand to her face, ensure she doesn't actually lean on it or she won't be happy with the result.

POSING SAMPLE

## A Light Touch

BUT IT CAN STILL LOOK FAKE



Although lightly touching her face, this pose is still a bit self-conscious because the pose is too perfect.

If you ask your subject to bring her hand to her face or to lean on her hand, don't let her put too much pressure on her hand or the face will be distorted. Similarly, don't let the hand cover up too much of the face – unless this is intentional.

Even when you get all the angles and pressure points right, the final portrait may not look natural or believable. Perfect posing can work for a formal shot, but these days, we're generally looking for naturalness and so this pose looks a little too perfect.



# Finessing the Light

**As you build your lighting and portraiture skills, small but important improvements can be made by noticing exactly where the shadows and highlights fall, and then moving the subject or the light to make the most of them. However, don't do it without understanding the subliminal consequences of your changes.**

Portraiture lighting is more than just the positioning of the lights or the posing of your model. It is the interaction of the two.

## Big Impact

This is an incredibly important aspect of studio lighting. You can create technically perfect lighting for a particular pose or subject position, but move that pose or subject and the perfection falls away.

For instance, the lighting pattern for a person standing front on to the camera may be completely inappropriate for someone standing side on.

It's obvious that big changes in pose or subject position will affect how the lighting interacts with them, but small changes can have just as big an impact.

The question is, do you move the model, or do you move the lights? Or both?

## Moving the Model

When you move the model, you may improve the way a shadow falls across the face or lighten up an area with better emphasis, but this is from a lighting perspective.

What has this movement done to the subliminal messages sent out by your model's pose?

In real life, we are reading subliminal messages all the time as people communicate with us. We generally know when someone is angry,

impatient, happy or bored. It might be the way they look at us, turn their head or tap their feet.

Whatever they are doing, this communication is something we all understand from body posture.

Part of the art of portraiture is posing the subject. Some photographers let the subject pose herself, others like to take more control, but either way, the final pose will, by default, include some subliminal messages about who they are and how they feel.

## Observe & Decide

Now, if you subtly move your subject from this position so she can better relate to your lighting pattern, what are you doing to the subliminal messages of her pose?

Have you changed a message of empathy to one of indifference? Has your model's mood swung from happy to dour?

Sometimes a small movement in your model's pose will make no difference to the subliminal 'body language' messages, but sometimes it will and the skill of a portrait photographer is to observe and decide.

Observe your model under the lights: does the interplay of light and shade correctly emphasise the face and body? Are the highlights controlled and the shadows supportive?

Now observe your model as a person: is her body and head posture sending out the right subliminal message about who she is, or is supposed to be?

Observe and decide.

If you decide everything is working correctly, take the photograph.

However, if some aspect isn't working correctly, take the picture anyway and then work to improve what you have. If you decide it's not right, fix it.

While this aspect of studio lighting and portrait photography might seem to be pretty obvious, it's an aspect that eludes many practitioners until they realise the impact that both lighting and posing have on the success of a portrait.

Observe and decide.

FINESSING THE LIGHT

# Where are the Shadows?

AFFECTING THE STRUCTURE OF THE FACE



With this lighting pattern, the subject's nose throws a shadow over her top lip. Is this a problem?



By asking the model to turn her face slightly, the nose shadow is better controlled, but what does the overall pose look like?

Finessing your lighting technique with portraiture is often a matter of compromise. Changing the lighting pattern can change the interplay of light and shade across the face, but so can asking your model to move her head one way or another. There is no single technique to deal with this, rather it's a matter of being aware of the subtle changes that happen when either the light or the model changes position. In the example above, a slight turn of the model's head has produced a more pleasing nose shadow, but is the model's pose what you wanted? Or should you have moved the light instead? Observe and decide.

FINESSING THE LIGHT

# Watch the Eyes

ARE THE EYES ILLUMINATED APPROPRIATELY?



A front on view to camera can be thought of as overly formal – a bit like a passport. Should you ask the model to give her head a bit of attitude?



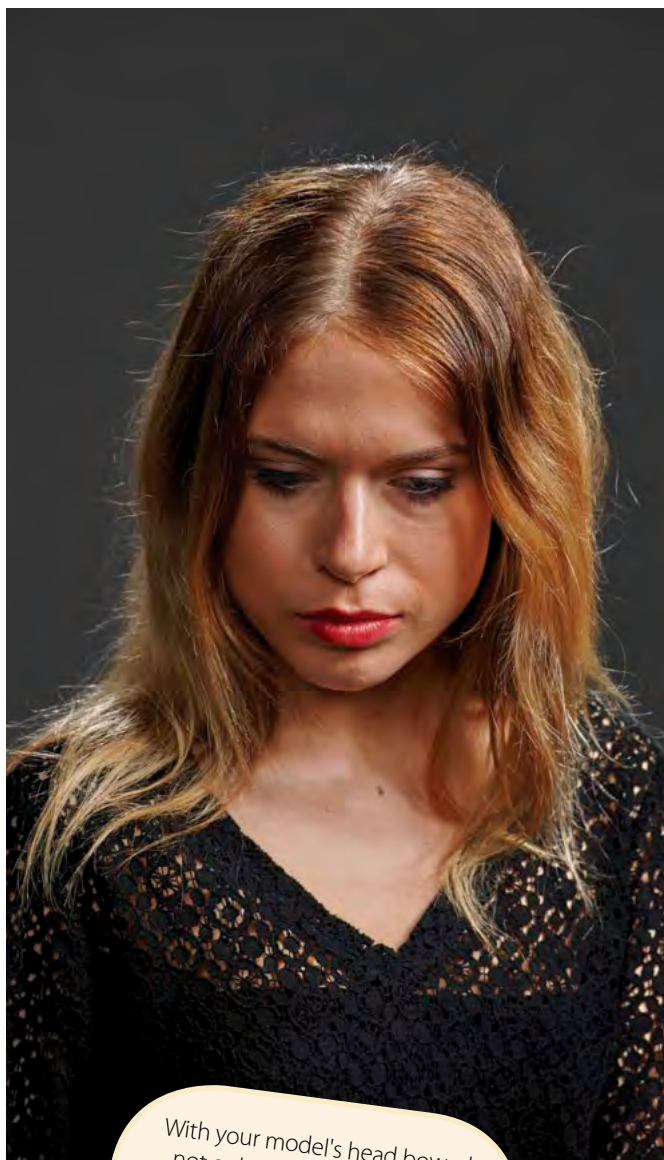
Notice how a slight tilt of the head changes how the shadows fall, and how the eyes move into shadow. Is the pose worth the sacrifice of light quality?

As your subject moves her head around, highlights and shadows move as well. In this example, a slight tilt of the head forwards produces a more engaging pose, but the eyes are thrown into slightly more shadow. This isn't a problem if you have time to increase the fill light or add in a stronger reflector. You can also tweak the result in post-production if necessary. The point to understand is that each change of pose introduces a change in the lighting. It's not just how your lights are set, but how your model sits in relation to those lights. Observe and decide.

FINESSING THE LIGHT

# Personality Changes

WHAT IS THE SUBLIMINAL MESSAGE?



*With your model's head bowed, not only does the interplay of light and shade change, so does our impression of the model's feelings. Is she sad?*



*And while tilting the head to the lights may remove unwanted shadows in the eyes, what does it say about the model's demeanour? Is she arrogant?*

In addition to changing the fall of light and shadow across the face, moving a model's pose or head position can result in subliminal changes as well.

Humans read body language all the time and strong signals such as a bowed head (which may indicate someone is sad or subservient) or a high chin (which could indicate pride or arrogance) may not be what you want to communicate in your portrait.

Observe and decide.



**SPECIAL OFFER**  
**40% OFF**  
As a Quick Reads reader, subscribe to the Lightroom Atelier now and receive a discount of 40%.  
**Use discount code BP40**  
Normal price AUS \$129 - just \$77.40

# Peter Eastway's Lightroom Atelier – Easy Online Learning

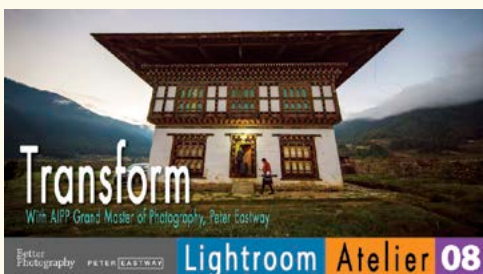
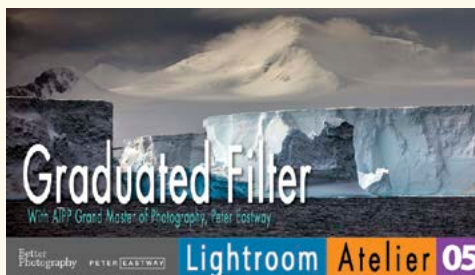
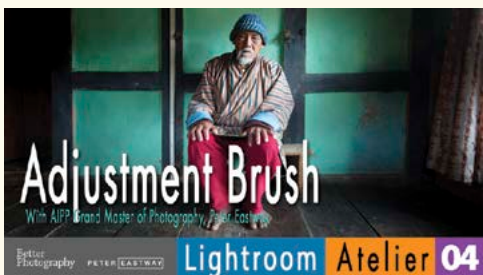
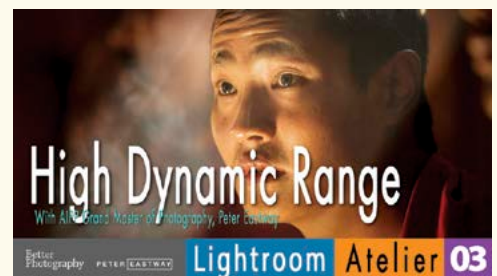
The Lightroom Atelier will quickly turbo-charge your creativity! Don't waste your time using Lightroom the wrong way, subscribe to the Lightroom Atelier now to learn how you can transform your photographs into incredible works of fine art! We know there are lots of free tutorials around that show you how to use Lightroom, so why would you be interested in the Lightroom Atelier by Peter Eastway? Well, if you're really new to Lightroom, you should take advantage of all those free tutorials first - even if they are produced by people with limited photography experience. And maybe that's all you'll

need if you're happy with the average results that come out of your camera. However, as all creative photographers discover, using Lightroom isn't just a matter of sliding controls left or right, it's also an amazing tool with unlimited creativity - if you know how to use it properly. The reason you'll be interested in Peter Eastway's Lightroom Atelier is because you like what you see on these pages and you'd like to achieve something similar with your own work. If that's you, check out the free lesson on our website and follow the links ...

[www.betterphotographyeducation.com](http://www.betterphotographyeducation.com)



Lightroom Atelier – some of the techniques you will learn



**"The best book on photography you will ever buy!" Peter's Mother-in-Law**



Peter Eastway

# The New Tradition



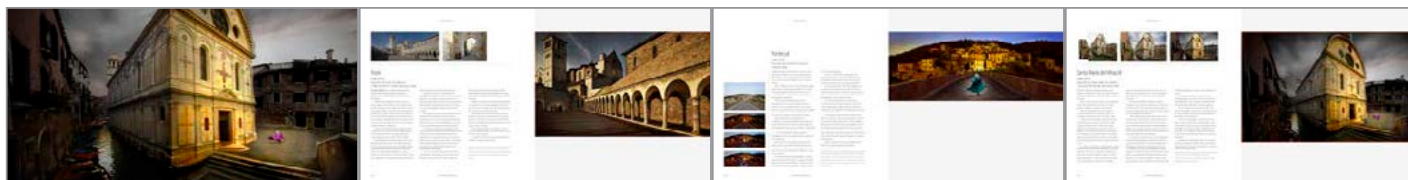
**"This is seriously one of the most definitive photographic books I have seen in the last 25 years. It belongs on every photographer's bookshelf and will change the way you view your own photographic journey!" Tony Hewitt, AIPP Grand Master of Photography**

In *The New Tradition*, photographer Peter Eastway presents a series of 100 photographs that traces the progression of photography from film to digital. For some images, he explains how the photograph was taken and the steps involved in post-production. For others, he simply presents a story, an experience or an opinion on an aspect of photography. So, methods and fables. This is a book written for photographers who are interested in the art and craft of photography – and who are enjoying the ride as technology continues to open up new opportunities for creative expression.

*The New Tradition* has been lavishly produced, sparing no expense in its preparation, printing and binding. Measuring 300x300 mm with 272 pages, the hard cover tome is destined to be a classic in photographic literature – or at least that's what Peter's mother-in-law says! If you like what you see, take a chance and purchase a copy of *The New Tradition*.

**RRP \$120**

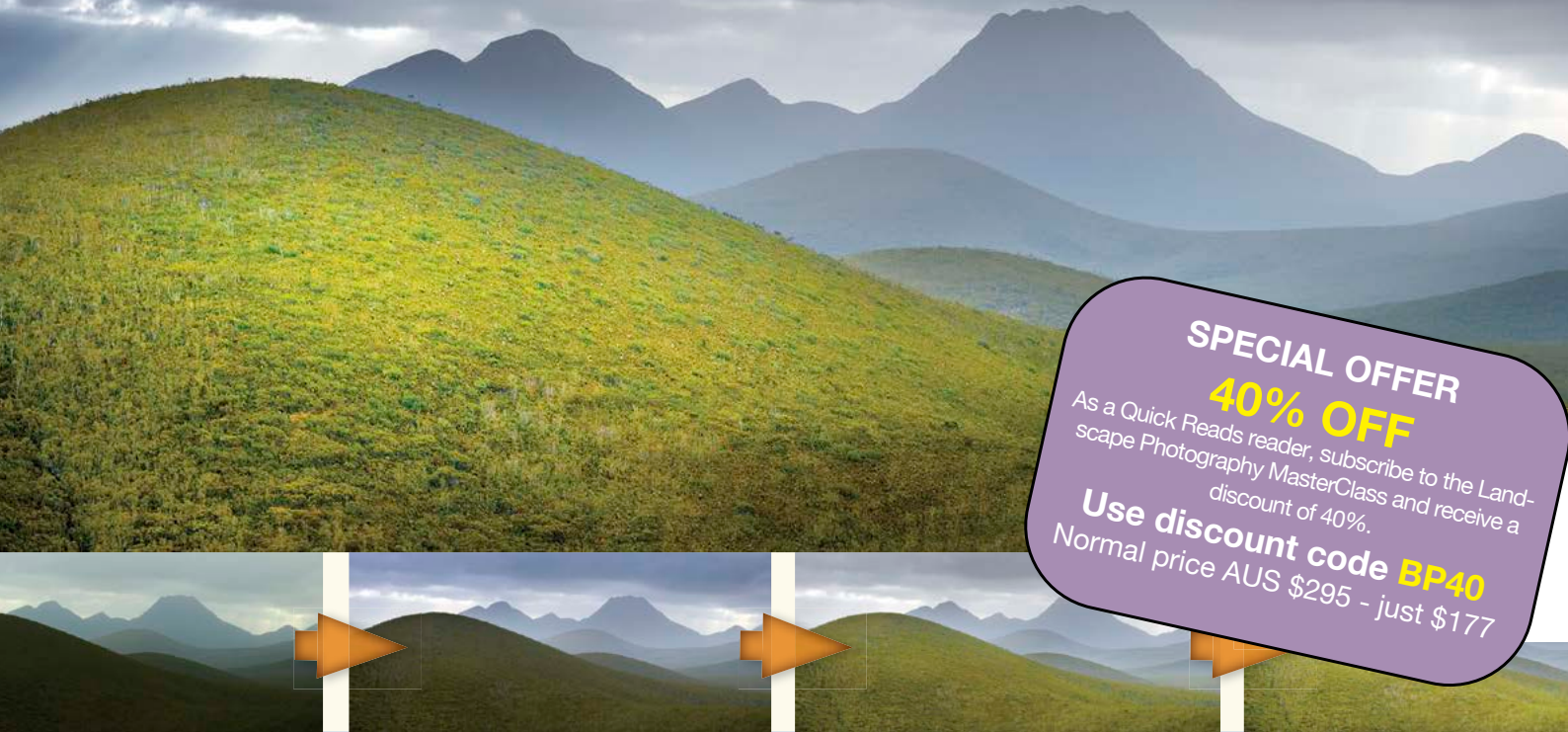
**Special Offer! We will include postage and packaging within Australia - a saving of up to \$20. Overseas deliveries are \$160 including P&P.**



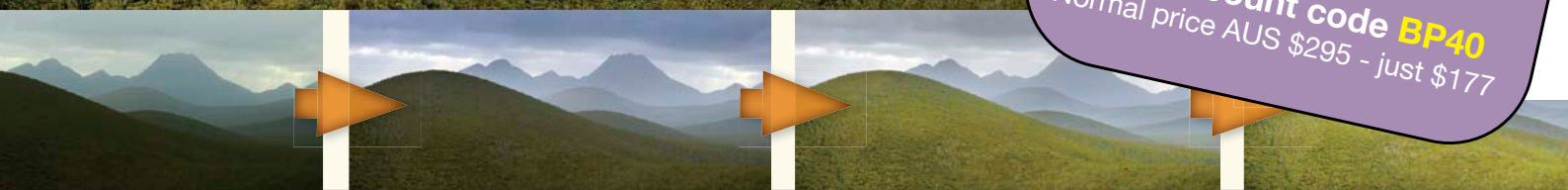
**Purchase the book at [www.betterphotography.com](http://www.betterphotography.com) in the online shop.**

The true beauty of photography is found in the **photographic print** and to celebrate the publication of *The New Tradition*, Peter Eastway is making available 'photographer size' copies of some of the photos

found in his book. You can purchase a **signed, limited edition print** and a book for as little as \$345. Visit the website to see the 10 different prints available and to order online - [www.betterphotography.com](http://www.betterphotography.com)



**SPECIAL OFFER**  
**40% OFF**  
 As a Quick Reads reader, subscribe to the Landscape Photography MasterClass and receive a discount of 40%.  
**Use discount code BP40**  
 Normal price AUS \$295 - just \$177



# Peter Eastway's Online Landscape Photography MasterClass

Learn the art, craft and business of landscape photography with a member-only subscription to Peter Eastway's Landscape Photography Masterclass. The online delivery includes 18 classes (each comprising 3 movies and 3 articles), featuring equipment, techniques, inspiration and Photoshop post-production. Start at any time. Learn at your own pace. Download movies for off-line viewing. There are no exams! Replay and re-read as often as you like. And there's a money-back guarantee if it doesn't improve your photography! To view, read and experience a free sample Landscape Photography MasterClass, please visit our website and follow the links ...

**[www.betterphotographyeducation.com](http://www.betterphotographyeducation.com)**



## Landscape Photography MasterClass - Contents



### FINE ART MOVIES

1. Monte Fitz Roy, Patagonia
2. Mount Nemrut, Central Turkey
3. Cape Palliser, New Zealand
4. Cappella di Vitaleta, Tuscany, Italy
5. Elephant Island (Iceberg At Sea)
6. Pilbara Storm, Western Australia
7. Steeple Jason, Falkland Islands
8. Nevis Tree, South Island, New Zealand
9. Zabriskie Point, Death Valley, USA
10. Oxer Lookout, Karijini, Western Australia
11. Segovia Castle, Central Spain
12. Great Barrier Reef, Australia
13. Western Macdonnells, Central Australia
14. St Gregory's, Ani, Eastern Turkey
15. Weano Gorge, Karijini National Park
16. Clinging Tree, Dales Gorge, Karijini
17. Ishak Pasha - The Mosque Behind
18. Stirling Ranges, South Western Australia

### KNOWLEDGE

1. Which Cameras Are Best for Landscapes?
2. The Best Lenses For Landscapes
3. What Is The Best Aperture To Use?
4. Camera Support For Maximum Clarity
5. Camera Bags - Sensible Approaches
6. Landscape Photography Accessories
7. Colour Temperature & How It Works
8. Correct Exposure And The Histogram
9. Using The Light For Landscapes
10. How To Stitch Panoramas
11. Archival Landscape Prints
12. How To Shoot Aerial Landscapes
13. Composition Part 1: Subject Matter
14. Composition Part 2: Framing & Cropping
15. Composition Part 3: Viewpoint
16. Composition Part 4: Placing The Horizon
17. Composition Part 5: Centre of Interest
18. Composition Part 6: Rule of Thirds

### JOURNEY

1. Patagonia, South America
2. Favourite Places In Turkey
3. Favourite Places in South West USA
4. Favourite Places In Italy
5. Central Spain for Castles
6. The Pilbara, Western Australia
7. Easter Island, Pacific Ocean
8. Niseko, Hokkaido, Japan
9. Shooting The Pyramids, Egypt
10. Hamilton Island, Australia.
11. Queenstown, New Zealand
12. Ancient Ani, Eastern Turkey
13. Amazing Papua New Guinea
14. Karijini National Park, Western Australia
15. Cruising For Landscape Photographs
16. Reaching Your Destination
17. Scotland & The Isle Of Skye
18. Antarctica & The Southern Islands

### ACUMEN

1. Potential Markets for Landscape Photos
2. How To Price Your Landscape Prints
3. Creating Landscape Prints For Sale
4. Publishing A Book of Landscapes
5. Publishing A Book - How Finances Work
6. Presentation: Why It's So Important
7. Setting Up Your Own Website
8. Setting Up An Exhibition
9. Shooting For Books & Magazines
10. Limited Edition Print Sales
11. Computer Power - Do You Need More?
12. Landscape Print Sales Paperwork
13. Print Sizes And Paper Surfaces
14. Shooting Landscapes That Sell
15. Getting Photos Published With Words
16. Do You Need A Business Plan?
17. Which Photo Editing Software?
18. Where To Now That You've Finished?

### POST-PRODUCTION

1. RAW Conversion Technique
2. Darkening & Lightening With Soft Light
3. Multiple RAW Conversion Technique
4. Luminosity Masking Technique
5. Colour Balance - Getting It Right
6. Local Contrast - Two options in Photoshop
7. Vignetting - How It Can Improve Images
8. Lab Color - Full Control in Photoshop
9. Nik Software - Using Viveza Plug-in
10. Photomerge For Stitching
11. Channels for Hue/Saturation Adjustments
12. Making Selections In Photoshop
13. Sharpening In Photoshop
14. Black & White Conversions
15. Focus Stacking (Helicon Focus)
16. Lightroom Catalogs for Landscapes
17. Big Black & White - Punchy Landscapes
18. High Pass Filter For Landscapes With Pop!



## SPECIAL OFFER 40% OFF

As a Quick Reads reader, subscribe to our online edition of Better Photography now and receive a discount of 40%.

**Use discount code BP40**

Normal price AUS \$49.80 - just \$29.88

If you enjoy this Quick Reads, why not subscribe to Better Photography magazine and you'll get access to over 50 back issues!

- We'd love to have your support
- Read online or download to your device
- Four amazing new issues every year
- A huge archive of ideas, inspiration and techniques – subscribe now!

[www.betterphotographyeducation.com](http://www.betterphotographyeducation.com)