

Quick Start Guide: LIGHTING BASICS

Video runs: 11:58

Light can be broken into two broad categories:

- Direct light
- Diffused light

Light becomes diffused when it gets bounced. Tell the difference by looking at shadows.

- How dark are the shadows?
 - How distinct is the line of the shadow?
 - The more blurry the line of the shadow the more diffused the light.
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- Room light is usually fairly diffused because it is easier on the eyes.
 - Lamp shades and the inside of light bulbs painted white both diffuse light.
 - Diffused light is what you want nine times out of ten when making video.
 - Tools in a professional light kit either direct light or diffuse it.
 - Barn doors are used to direct the light and point it at a small area. Black aluminum foils are also used for that purpose.
 - Photographic umbrellas are used to bounce the light. An umbrella gives you a moderate level of diffusion.
 - A soft box gives you a higher level of diffusion than an umbrella.
 - All kinds of filters and cloths to provide diffusion, measured in percentages.

- Easy way to achieve diffused light without having ANY special equipment is to point the light at the ceiling or a wall. It will bounce against the ceiling or wall and hit the face as diffused light.
- Diffused light is softer. Wrinkles, bumps and other imperfections show much less under diffused light.
- Direct light for faces is usually reserved for when you want people to look scary.

Direction of Light

- The direction the light is coming from makes a big difference
- Biggest mistake I see is talking head videos with light coming from BEHIND the person, creating a silhouette.
- Position yourself so the light is not behind you. Get it in front of you, ideally off to the side a little bit, not directly in front of you.
- Good lighting is really all about positioning and of course the level of diffusion.

3-point lighting or triangle lighting

- Professional technique for photographing faces.
- Flattering look to the face.
- 3 points of light in a triangle shape surrounding the person's head.

Make lighting as easy as possible by learning to make use of natural light, which is any light streaming in through the windows or doors and any light coming from any lamp available in the room.

You can also keep it easy by using home light fixtures, you don't have to use professional lights.

- I like to use gooseneck lamps because they are easy to point exactly where you need the light to be.
- Clip on lights are very handy and can be tucked in anywhere.

There can be problems with using light from different sources, like sunlight vs. incandescent.

- White balancing your camera adjusts for these different light sources

Color temp and the Kelvin measurement scale.

- Sunlight is blue at about 5700 kelvin (Changes during the day)
- Incandescent bulbs are orange in comparison to sunlight and is measured at 3200 degrees Kelvin.

Modern cameras do not have much problem with mixed light. In fact, some of them are designed for mixed light because that is what so many people have.

- If your shot looks too orange or too blue, you should look more into color temperature

Most video looks best with very bright, but diffused light. That's what brings out the crisp color images. The brighter the better.

Diffusing light makes you lose intensity. A highly diffused 100 watts worth of light will not provide as much intensity as the same bulb hitting the subject directly. So take this into account when figuring out how much light you need.