

Studio Lighting Notes

How Light is Measured: We measure light in stops, but what is a stop exactly? Simply put, if you take a given amount of light and double it, you are moving up one stop, if you cut the amount of light in half then you have gone down a stop. So a stop isn't a specific amount of light, instead it is a measure of difference between the amount of light. Because the only real camera control you have to use when using studio lighting is the Aperture control (ISO and shutter speed will remain constant) the light is measured using aperture values.

Standard full-stop f-number scale

0.7 1.0 1.4 2 2.8 4 5.6 8 11 16 22 32 45 64



Two Lights White Background: Just because you have a white background it does not mean it will appear white in your photographs. If you light your subject, your background will appear darker than your subject unless you light it as well. For your background to appear white in the shot, it needs a lot more light than your subject, in fact it should be 2 stops brighter than your subject.

You will also have to set your camera to manual mode and dial in the settings. Set your shutter speed to your camera's flash sync speed, you can find that in your camera manual. Next adjust your ISO speed to 200 and make sure your light meter is set to the same ISO (you can use any value so long as camera and light meter match). Set your aperture to the value of the light which is lighting your subject, in this case f 11. Meter and adjust each light separately and check with a reading with both lights on.

For portraits on a full frame sensor you should be shooting at between 85 - 100mm, cropped sensor at between 50mm - 70mm. Try and shoot at your subject's eye level.



Up and Over Soft boxes (clamshell):

For This set-up I switched to a black background because this set-up requires two lights, as I didn't want a grey background I switched to a black one. The lights are set-up one above the other, the top one pointing down at 45 degrees and the bottom one up at 45 degrees. The photographer then shoots through the gap between the soft boxes.

The top light is the main light and it was set to F22. The bottom light is the fill light and was set to F16. This set-up reduces shadows and makes for high key fashion / glamour look. With this set-up you set you aperture to F22, the same as the main light.

Working with a model:

Build a rapport. One of the quickest and easiest ways to shoot with a model is to talk with them like they are a real person, because they are.

Establish expectations. There are two main reasons you shoot, either for yourself (building a portfolio, for fun, for your client, etc.) or for the model (to build their portfolio, for their fun, for their client, etc.). Going into the shoot with a well thought out plan will allow you to utilise time and be efficient.

Your model is co-creating with you. Don't forget that! They are not a prop, they should be interacting with the camera based on the desired outcome of the photo. Allow them some freedom for input and your end result will benefit.

Clearly explain what you need them to do without being condescending. While a model co-creates with you, they still rely on direction.

Compliment and give reassurance models need to be told they are doing a good job and that they are giving you what you need and expect.

Pay attention to details. Look for things that may be out of place, such as rings or earrings that don't match the outfits, or necklaces that shouldn't be in the shot.

Take a breaks. Shooting isn't a five minute job, there is a lot of time put into and executing quality work. Taking a few five minute breaks so everyone can drink water, relax for a minute and unwind will not only help your model perform better, but give your arms a break from holding the camera up for hours on end.

Never touch the model!

Stay professional. A photo set is never supposed to be doubled as speed-dating. Be polite, eliminate swear words and casual discussions of politics and religion too, just to be safe.

Get shot yourself.