

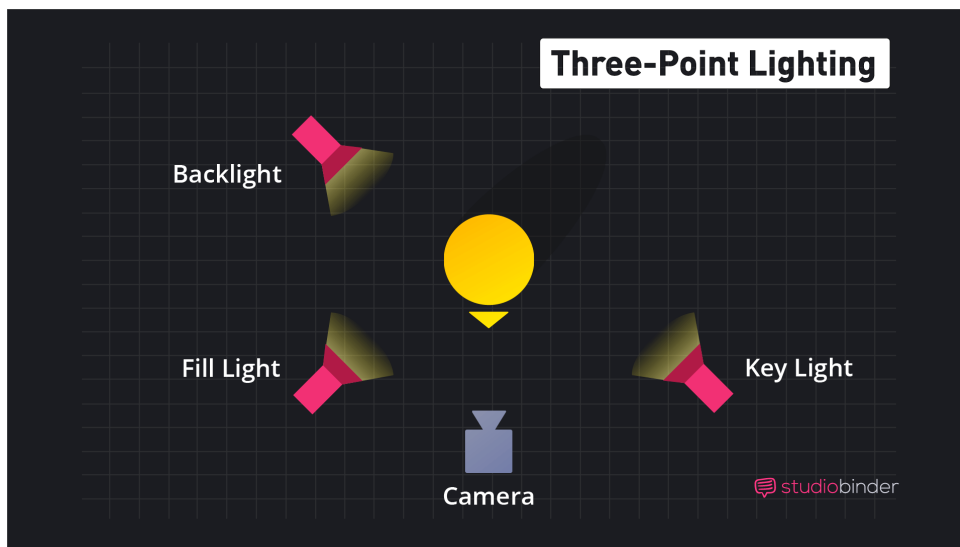
Part 2

Multiple-Source Artificial Lighting

A “regularly used” setup is 3-point lighting.

3-point portraiture lighting is all about creating a three-dimensional look. By placing three light sources at strategic points around the subject, each light source illuminates a separate dimension of the subject and creates an image with greater representation of height, width, and depth.

So far, we have used a single source of light, and occasionally a reflector or fill light.



To be more creative, the use of additional lighting will sometimes bring more to a subject.

The light sources are labeled as such:

- Key Light — Used as a primary lighting point
- Fill Light — Used to fill opposite the key light
- Backlight — Used to extract the third dimension

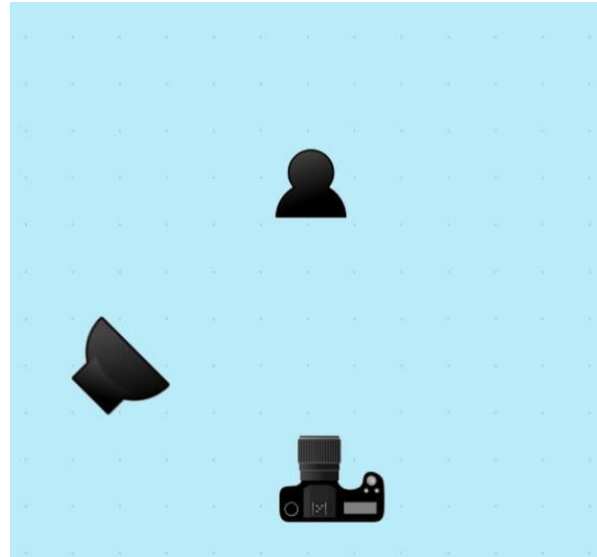
Key Light

As the name suggests, the key light is the main light. It's the primary light source and creates the overall exposure in a scene. Beyond this, its primary purpose is to make sure that one side of the subject is well-lit, while the other side has some shadow.

The key light is often placed at a 45-degree angle to the camera and a bit above the subject. The size and intensity of the light source you use will determine much about where and how the other two lights are set up.

In a studio or other indoor setting, the key light is usually some sort of a specialized lamp like a softbox or a beauty dish with a flash head.

It can also be a camera's flash or even a window. Outside during the day, the sun usually serves as the key light. You can experiment with different lighting modifiers to provide more drama to how the key light looks.



By placing the light in different positions in front of the model, different shadows or shading can be achieved.

Fill Light

Since the key light is usually to one side of the subject, the other side will usually be filled with shadows. This is a good thing, because shadows give both depth and mood, but you still want to be able to control how strong they are and where they fall.

That's where the **fill light** comes in.

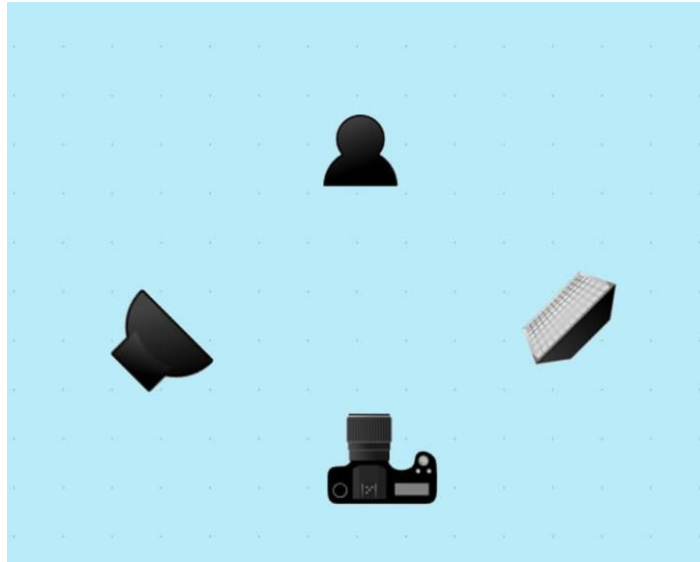
The fill light mellows out any harsh shadows by adding in a bit more illumination where there otherwise would be none.

Without it, the subject's contours will come out starker. This can be fine if you're going for a low-key effect, but for natural-looking photos, you'll need a fill.

You can use a dedicated lamp for the fill light, a reflector, or even a white board.

It's usually placed on the opposite side of the subject from the key light. In portrait photography, it's usually placed at the level of the subject's face.

It's also softer and considerably less bright than the key light (up to half the intensity).





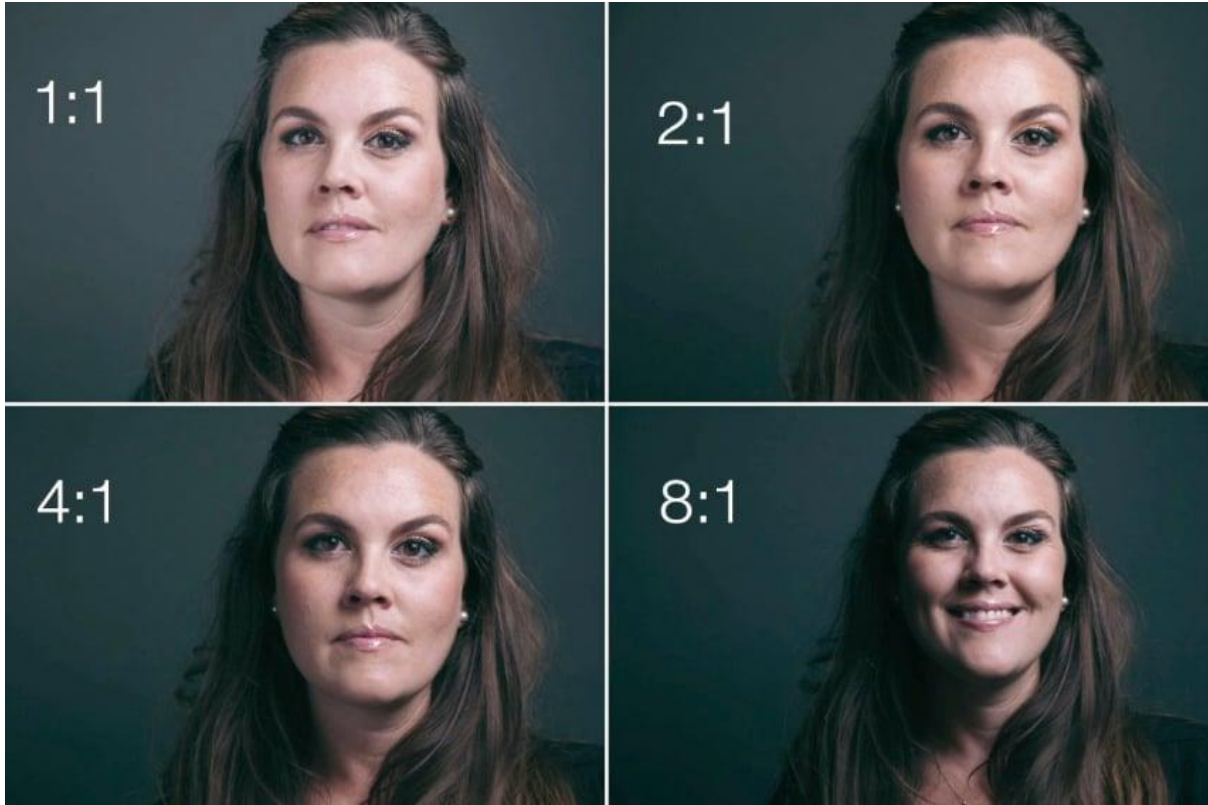
Single or Key Light



Second or Fill Light

Ratio of Light

In this example, the only difference between the key light and the fill light is that the key light is brighter than the fill light. The difference between the intensity of the light on the two sides of the subject is known as the lighting ratio.



If both of your key light and fill light are set to the same power and are the same distance away from your subject, you would have a lighting ratio of 1:1. If you turned your fill light way down, you could get a lighting ratio of around 8:1, which is very contrasty and moody.

The beauty of using lighting ratios in this way is that it gives us photographers a common language that we can use. It also makes it really easy to communicate with lighting assistants, for setting light levels.

Rim or Hair Light

A rim light is a light source placed behind your subject to cast light on the back of your subject, allowing for some spill to leak around parts of their body, creating a “rim” of light or “lighted outline” around their body. This is typically used to separate a subject from a background of the similar color to what the subject is wearing, to separate multiple subjects when they are all wearing similar colors and to give depth to your image.



Positioning Your Rim Light

A rim light should be positioned behind your subject, but can be positioned in a few different ways partly depending on the length of the subject that you are desiring to include.

Behind and to the Side of Your Subject

If you are shooting anything other than waist up, without having to take out your light stand in post-production, it's usually good to position your rim light at a 45-degree angle behind your subject and raise and tilt it at a height that will cast light where you need the separation, without the light hitting the front of your subject. This will create a subtle rim around at least the side of your subject.

Rim-Light

For waist-up portraits and headshots, where your subject's body and head can block the strobe, try placing the light directly behind your subject and you will get an evenly lit outline of light on both sides of your subject's hair and body, depending on angle of placement.



Hair-Light

A hair light is also a light used for separation, but one that is positioned to only light the top of a subject's head to create depth in an image.

A hair light should be positioned directly above and slightly behind your subject's head to put a nice light on the top of the hair. It should not spill onto your subject's face.



Background Lights (for white or pale backgrounds only!)

Background lights illuminate a background and help eliminate unwanted shadow, which is extremely helpful when you do not have the space to bring your model forward 6-12 feet from the seamless.

For an evenly lit background, you can get away with one light to light a background when positioning the background light directly behind your subject. The problem with this is that while your subject can block most of what's behind him/her, you will have to get rid of your light stand legs in post or shoot only thigh-up.



Never try to light a black background!