

MULTIPLE LIGHT PORTRAIT NOTES

Lighting starts with the main, or key light.

- The main or key light illuminates the primary subject, giving it its shadows and shape.

The second light, the fill light is used to lighten shadows.

- It may be a second light or it may be a reflector
- Either way it is used to lighten shadows and reduce the contrast.

The jump from one light is a big step -using a second light -or multiple lights increases the number of mistakes you can make.

Using a flash meter to determine exposure.

- Flash meters measure both incident and flash from the strobe at the same time -giving you an accurate reading when you blend both.
- When you fire the strobe, you can use a light meter to get the proper f-stop reading for the light produced by the flash head(s).
- But this can make it difficult to determine the output from each head.
- One way to remedy this is to shield the light meter -using your hand from one of the lights and fire the strobe. This gives you an idea of the light output from each head so you can determine the **lighting ratio** between them.

Understanding lighting ratios

Lighting ratios is a term used to describe the difference between the light and dark portions in your photo.

- For example, it may indicate the difference in light levels between the main and fill lights.

Ratios explained

- With a two-light portrait, the main light puts out 2 units of light.
- But you want to lighten the shadows, so you add a fill light making the fill light one stop darker than the main light.
- Logically you would conclude that this is a 2:1 lighting ratio.
- But in reality it is a 3:1 ratio

Why?

- The main light is putting out 2 units of light –but when you add a secondary light to fill in the shadows. That “fill light” that adds another 1 unit of light.
- By adding the 1 unit of light from the secondary “fill”, the spill from the fill is added to the main light, now making the main light’s output 3 units. So the ratio is three to one, or a 3:1 lighting setup.

How important are ratios?

- The ratio number itself is not important, but the look, or how a specific ratio translates visually, is the thing that matters.
- A ratio of 3:1 will be a softer look than a 4:1 ratio.
- For glamour, or to make someone's skin look smooth, use less of a ratio, or maybe even or flat lighting.
- When lighting for a more dramatic look, use a higher ratio.

How do you know how it's going to look?

- Change the settings on the modeling lights
- Meter each strobe individually
- Check the ratio in the camera preview screen