

Key Light Position Quick Reference

A starting point for your lighting scheme

Remember to turn off the overhead lights

Rembrandt



- Light is positioned high and just in front, off to one side
- Creates triangle where shadow of the nose meets the shadow on the cheek
- A classic starting point for studio lighting

Split



- Light is positioned next to subject, pointed directly at them
- Splits the face evenly into light and shadow
- Very dramatic starting point to light portraits

Broad



- Light is positioned high and just in front, off to one side, but with the broad side of the subject's face receiving most light
- Inherently brighter, as more face is in light than in shadow

Loop



- Light positioned not quite as high as the Rembrandt, but similarly out to one side and a bit farther in front
- The nose shadow does not connect with the cheek shadow
- A slightly less dramatic lighting scheme than the Rembrandt

Paramount



- Light is positioned high and directly in front of the subject, near the camera
- Creates shadow underneath the nose and chin
- Flatter look, but generally attractive lighting for portraits with some manipulation and fill light

Where do I go from here?

All of these are suggestions for starting positions of your main, or key, light. In most cases, you will want to add at least one other source of light to fill in the shadows created by your main light. This can take the form of a bounce card or reflector, such as the pieces of white foam board, placed opposite the key light to reflect some of it back into the shadows. Alternately, you can use a secondary light set at a lower intensity to fill the shadows, which is useful if you want a more directional light that is not filling the shadows from directly opposite the key light. There is no right or wrong when it comes to lighting, do whatever achieves the look you want.

Achieving separation from the backdrop:

Black backdrop:

You can achieve separation by placing a light high above and behind the subject, off to one side so as not to get it in the frame, but pointed at the subject. This will add a bit of highlight to their hair and give better delineation when using the black backdrop.

White Backdrop:

Light the backdrop with a combination of the floor lights and the lights mounted to the rail on the ceiling, which can be controlled via the controller on the cabinet next to the door of the studio. You just want to achieve relatively even lighting across the backdrop to achieve a solid white background when slightly overexposed in the camera, as it should be when you meter based on your subject.

Guide to accessories:

- **Softbox:** attaches to the front and diffuses the light, as seen in these photos. Best for portraits
- **Barn doors:** create very specific directional lighting, but cannot be used with the softbox, so light will be harsh
- **Diffuser cap:** Not as effective as the softbox, but should be used in every instance where you are not using the softbox, as the bare lights are very harsh
- **Gels:** We have a variety of colored gels in the cabinet