

Basic Studio Lighting

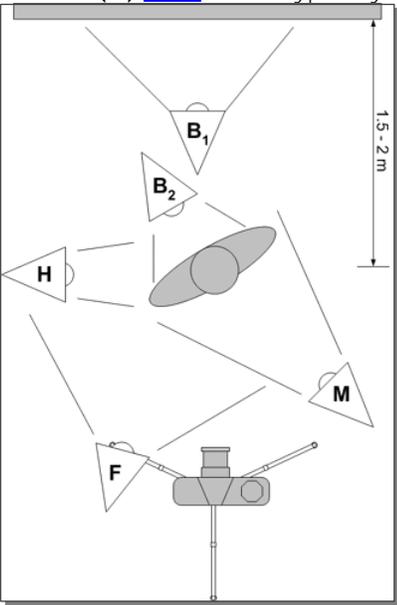
Recently I started to learn studio portraiture, and here I want to share what I learned:

- [Basic Lights Setup](#)
- [Using an Umbrella](#)
- [Umbrella and Reflector Board](#)
- [Umbrella as Fill-in Light](#)

Basic Lights Setup

In the studio you have basic lights, which you may use to create a professional portrait.

As you see, here are five light sources. Each of them has its own purpose:

- **(M) Main** - This type is your main source of light, it is most powerful light in the whole set. It is used to light the person and create mood of the portrait.
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- **(F) Fill-in** - This light is less powerful and is used to soften the shadows, which are created by the main source of light. Usually the ratio of main light to the fill-in is about from 1:2 to 1:9. The weaker the fill-in the more prominent the shadows. Use the light to create three dimensional feeling (the ratio is about 1:3).
 - **(B₁) Background I (Optional)** - You will use this light to remove shadows on the background and create a bright spot on the background, which will help you to separate the head of the person from the background.
 - **(B₂) Background II (Optional)** - This light usually used to create a nice halo around the person's head and is another way to separate the head from the background. The light is usually good for women because they have fabulous haircuts and the light will add "air" to it.
 - **(H) Hair Light (Optional)** - Actually there are two types of this light. One of them (*Hair Light*) is to enlighten the hair generally and usually placed above the head. Another one is to create a small beam of light placed upon a shoulder or side of the head and is called **Accent Light**, this light source will create a small highlight on the hair or shoulder to give some accent to it.

I cover the lights and their purposes in more details on page "Basic Light Patterns"

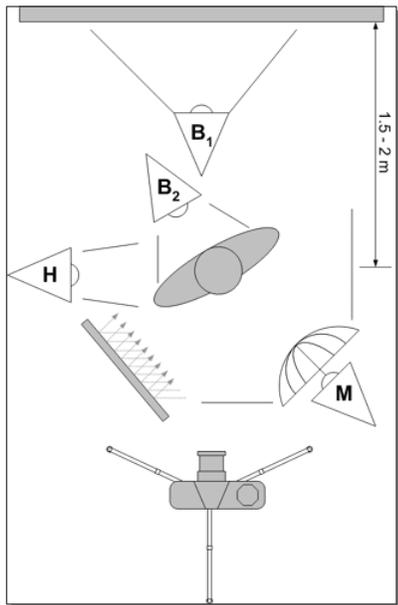
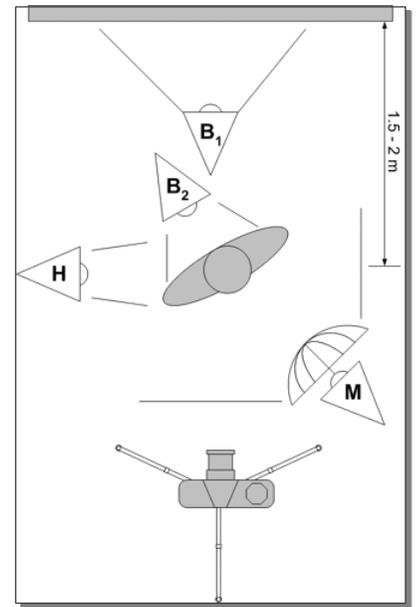
Using an Umbrella

A photographic umbrella is very useful tool for creation a soft, broad and pleasing light. Sometimes you may use only one light with the umbrella to create a good portrait. Usually the umbrella is used for photographing kids, they could move easily without restrictions and you don't have to adjust the lights every minute.

Here the umbrella is used as the only front light source, you may even remove the rest of lights. It will be the simplest setup, but you will still produce good portraits.

Umbrella and Reflector Board

You may upgrade the previous setup with a reflector board to soften the shadows as shown below:



Moving the reflector board to and from the subject will change the power of the reflected fill-in light falling on the subject. You even use a black reflector to remove some light from the subject and create more depth. A black reflector is a good tool for location session in a cloudy day, when the light just envelopes the subject, by using the reflector use remove some light and give it some direction.

Umbrella as Fill-in Light

You may prefer to broaden the fill-in light and use the umbrella for it. The following diagram shows the setup:

