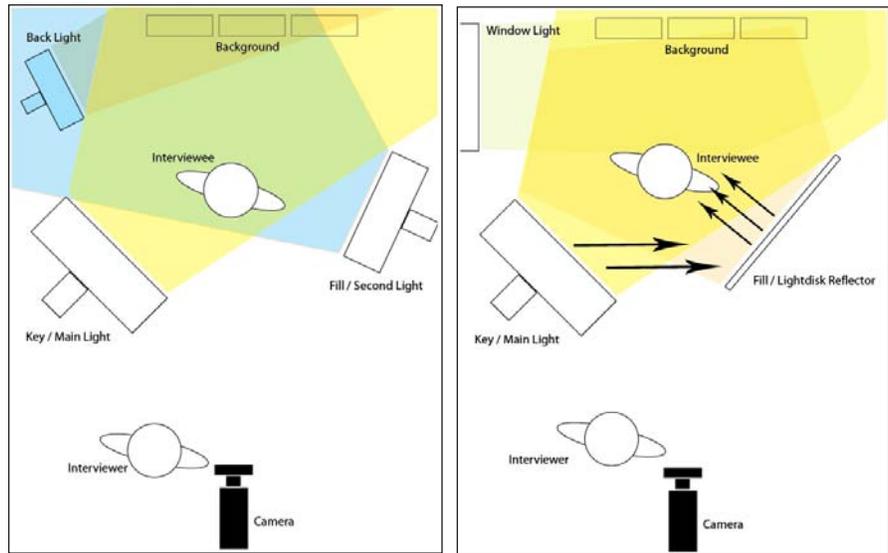


STUDENT GUIDE

Working with Light

In Latin, the word *photography* means “the writing of light.” You need light to be able to write with it; without light, photography cannot exist. An important part of the moviemaking process is making sure that you are shooting in good light. This handout explains the effective use of both lighting equipment and natural light.

The following diagrams show two different lighting setups:



The first diagram shows how you would typically set up a three-point light system. The first and key light is the main light, which ensures that the person being interviewed is clear and bright. You can adjust the amount and distance of this light to create different moods.

The second light is a dimmer light. If this light doesn't have a dim control, you can pull it farther away from the interviewee. Shadows may be unflattering for some people. The purpose of the second or fill light is to fill in the dark areas of only the person being interviewed. If you do not have a secondary light kit, you can use a reflector to bounce the light from the key light. Reflector kits usually include a white surface to diffuse light and keep it the same color, a gold surface for warmer looking light, and a silver surface for a brighter, cooler light. You can experiment with what reflector works best for a given subject.

Color gels, diffusers, and other filters can also alter the look of an interview. The interview in the following photo was shot at night with a bright main key light and a backlight with a red color gel that was used to pick up some of the detail from the old tree behind the interviewee.



In the next example, the movie crew had to make do with what was available—diffused and reflected sunlight. This is a creative way to get nice, even, warm light. Instead of going out into the sun and having a harsh top-down light that cast ugly shadows and made the interviewees squint, the moviemakers found that a well-lit corridor did the trick. Each interviewee was placed at an angle facing the brighter side of the corridor. The color of the walls acted as a reflective surface and filled in other areas of the interviewee's face.



The next photo shows where light was coming from. Many schools have breezeways or outside hallways that are great places to conduct interviews. These locations diffuse and reflect most strong lights so that subjects are not lit with a harsh light. Not being outside in the sunlight makes it easier on everyone.



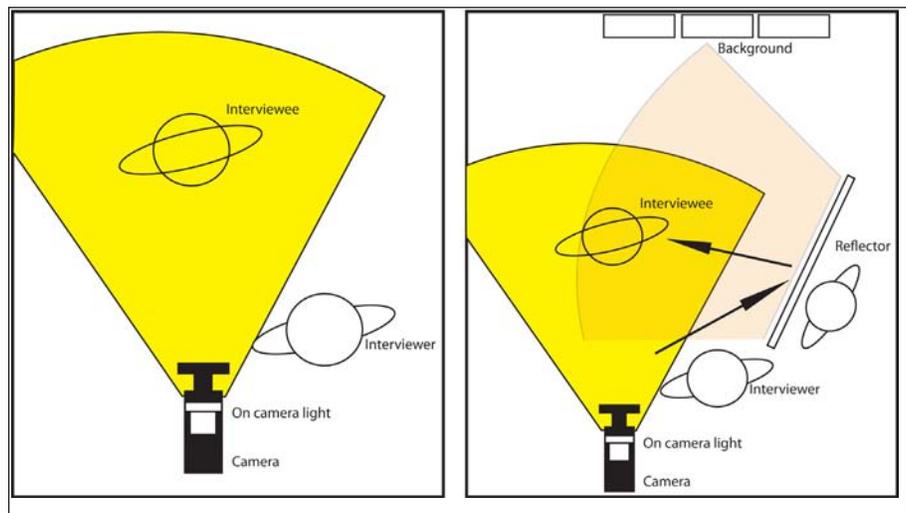
Practice

Now it's your turn. Use the examples in the photos to draw top-down diagrams of where the light is coming from.

Using Mobile Lights

If you're using a mobile solution for lights, you can either use it directly on the person or bounce it off a reflector for more subtle lighting. You can diffuse the light with either a standard diffuser or make your own with diffuser paper that can be purchased by the sheet size at any camera shop. You may need an assistant to help you control the light from the mobile option.

The following diagrams show setups with and without a reflector to bounce the light from the camera:



As shown in the second diagram, you can remove the mobile light from a camera and the lighting assistant (gaffer) can bounce the light off the reflector for more subtle light on the subject.

Practice

Try this with all of the surfaces in a reflector kit—the warmer gold surface, the cooler and brighter silver surface, and the white surface. Shoot 10 seconds with each surface and evaluate as a team which one works best.