

Lighting Techniques

Basic Portrait Lighting

One light either side of the sitter (placed near the camera), one to light the background, and one to light the back of the sitter. This helps lift the sitter out from the background, especially if against a dark background.

High Key

High key is usually bright, white background, with high contrast. High Key images are usually predominantly white.

With a white background, 2 lights on the background, usually set at least 1 stop lighter than the lighting on the subject. This bleaches the background completely, so reducing the power slightly will include detail.

No lights?

Doesn't mean you can't take portraits. Available light is always there, and as long as you have a tripod, it's ALWAYS available.

With the subject near the window, fill in the shadows with a reflector between the camera and subject. For a more advanced look, a second reflector BEHIND the subject, this will help separate the subject from the background.

This is easy to practice, have a look at each image you take, and adjust the reflector to suit.

Low Key.

Low key images are usually dark, predominantly black images. The simplest low key image is so simple. Sit someone down, light them using a table lamp, or a candle. There, low key portraiture.

I do it differently I have used several lights in the past to produce a low key image.

Firstly.

I use this set-up to produce skin texture nudes. The light reflecting off of the skin produces a fabulous texture.

Alternatively.

The light above the camera is very low powered. The idea is to just lift the front,(facing the camera), side of the subject out of the deep black of the background. The lights either side from behind provide a rim lighting effect. In each case the background is black.

Thirdly, and possibly more conventionally.

Dark background, NONE of the lights are on at particularly high power. Each is set to separate the subject from the background.

Character.

For a character shot, (just take a look at the images on the covers of all the Christmas Biographies in WH Smith), the lighting couldn't really be simpler.