

Tips on Working with Lighting Equipment

- When working with artificial lights, use gloves — they get very hot very quickly.
- Don't touch bulbs with bare hands when changing them. The oil from your skin may cause them to shatter.
- Pay attention to the wattage of your lights and the capacity of the electrical circuits in the location you will be using. The common household electrical circuit supports approximately 1500 watts. Unplug appliances, et cetera from the outlet before plugging in your lights. Check how many circuits are in a space before setting up, either by checking the breaker or asking someone who knows. Run an extension cord into another room for multiple light set-ups if you're unsure about capacity.
- Keep cords away from high traffic areas if possible, and tape down your cords with gaffer tape to avoid knocking down lights and/or injuring people on set.
- Explore the use of gels, filters and diffusion materials to achieve interesting lighting effects.
- Keep bounceboards (pieces of white foamcore will do) with you, whether shooting indoors or in sunlight. They are tremendously versatile tools — you can use them to reflect light into shadow areas, cut down on bright sunlight, create 'softening' effect by lighting your subject with reflected light from the bounceboard, et cetera.

Three Point Lighting

One of the most common and versatile lighting designs is Three Point Lighting. It provides a sense of 'three dimensionality' to the subject while separating it from the background. This consists of three lights:

- **The Key Light** is the main light illuminating your subject from approximately 30° from your camera position. It is the strongest light.
- **The Fill Light** is a secondary light, less powerful than the Key Light, used to fill in and 'soften' the shadow area on the subject created by the Key Light. The Fill Light is positioned approximately 30° from the camera on the opposite side from the key light.
- **The Back Light** is positioned behind the subject to create a sense of separation of the subject from the background.

A note about light sources

Whether you're working with artificial lights or sunlight, the physics of light is the same. Hard light from either source will give you hard-edged shadows and pinpoint highlights on reflective surfaces. Soft light (bounced or diffused) will give you more flattering 'wrap around' light and more gradual transitions into shadow. Flat or non-directional light will minimize shadow thereby limiting a sense of three-dimensionality in your scene.