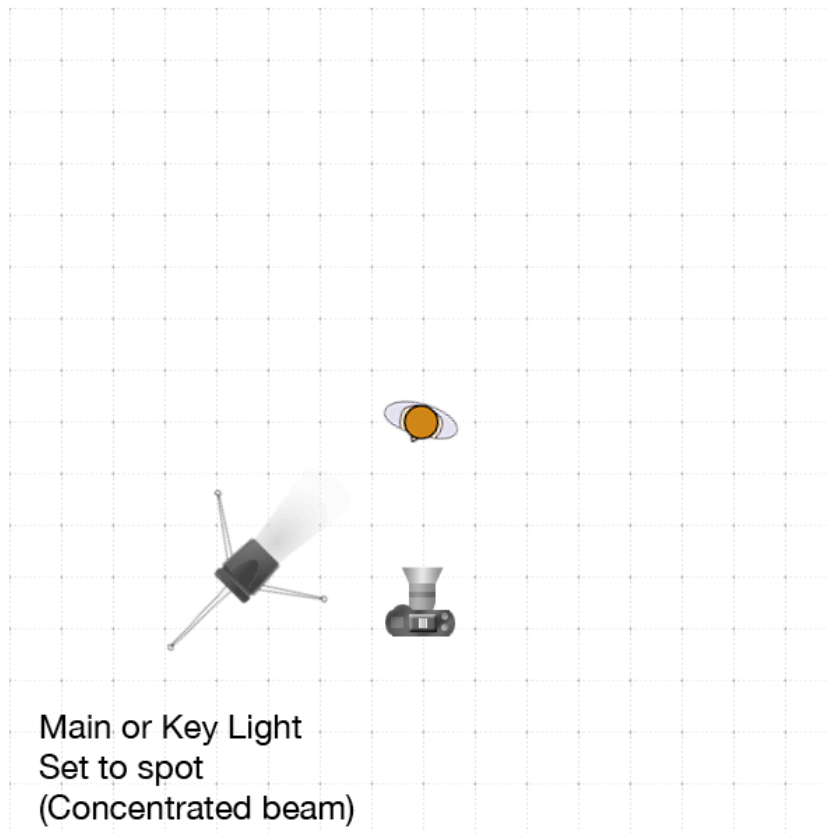AD30400 Video Art
Paul McCormick
Spring 2012

Lighting Basics

Main or Key Light

Key light is the most important light in a standard lighting set up. The key light will be the hottest or brightest light its purpose is to highlight the subject.   Common position of a key light is between 30 and 60–degree angle on the left or right of the camera.

Main or Key Light
Set to spot
(Concentrated beam)

High Key Light

A key light placed above the subject projecting down will be felt as natural light and wont distort the shadows much.
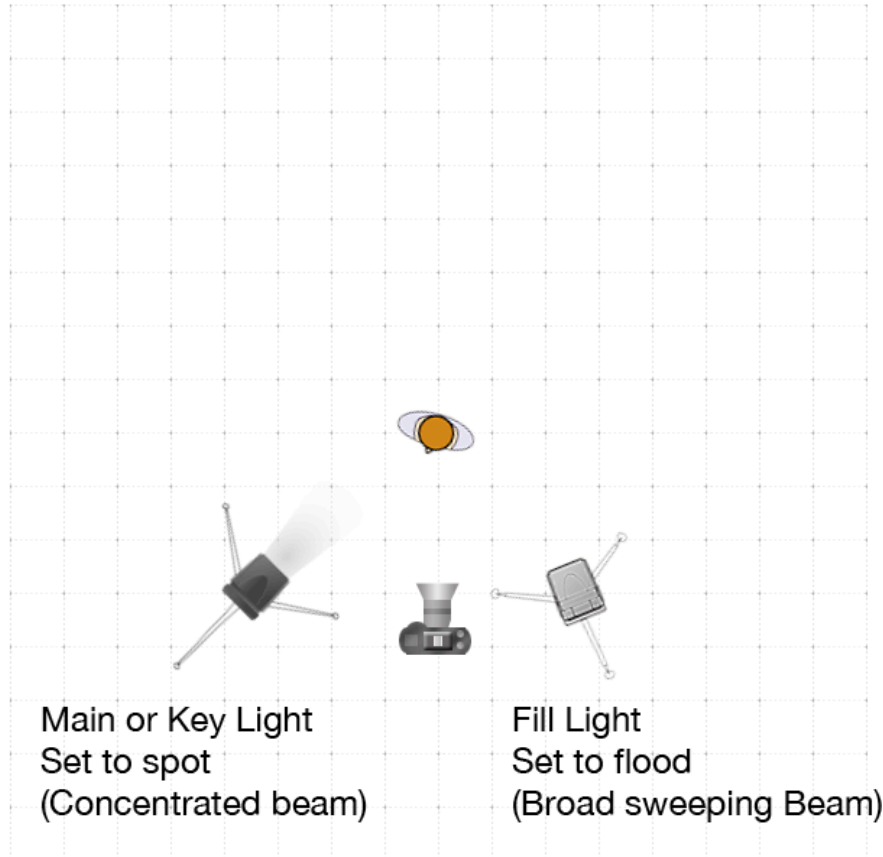
Low Key Light

A key light placed below the subject projecting up will cast shadows on the face and elongate facial features giving the subject a dramatic effect.

Using only a key light will unevenly accentuate the subject and leaves your background flat and under lit to fix this you need to add fill, hair and background lights.

Fill Light
A fill light is used to reduce contrast caused by the key light. The fill light will be a step or two lower than the key to off set the shadows casted on the subject and to fill in the light on the other side of the key at the same angle.
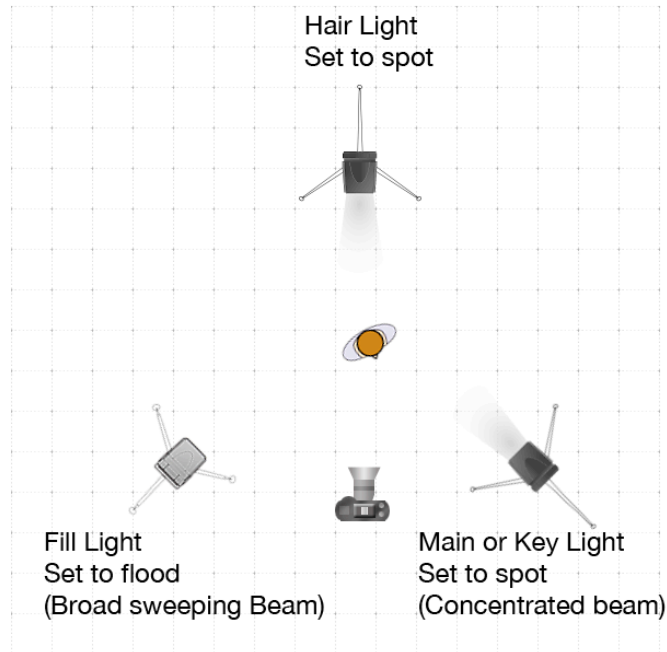
Main or Key Light
Set to spot
(Concentrated beam)

Fill Light
Set to flood
(Broad sweeping Beam)

Hair or Background Light
The hair light is also known as the back or kick light. If pointed away from the subject the lighting will provide a separation between the subject and the background. If pointed at the subject the lighting can be used to create a halo of light around the subject often used to show goodness or purity.
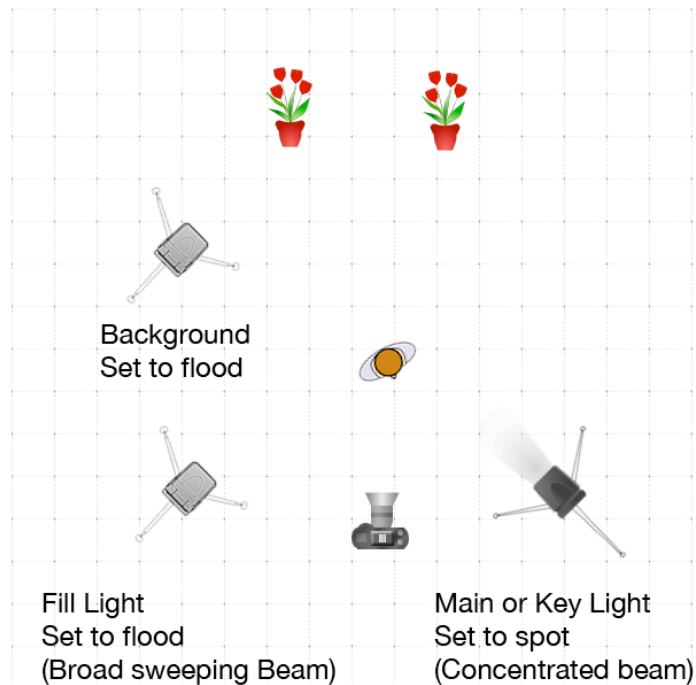
Three Point Setup
A three point lighting set up is the standard method for lighting. By combining the use of a key light, fill light and either a background or hair light the subject can be lit however the artist desires while controlling the shadows or fall off that may be caused by a single light source
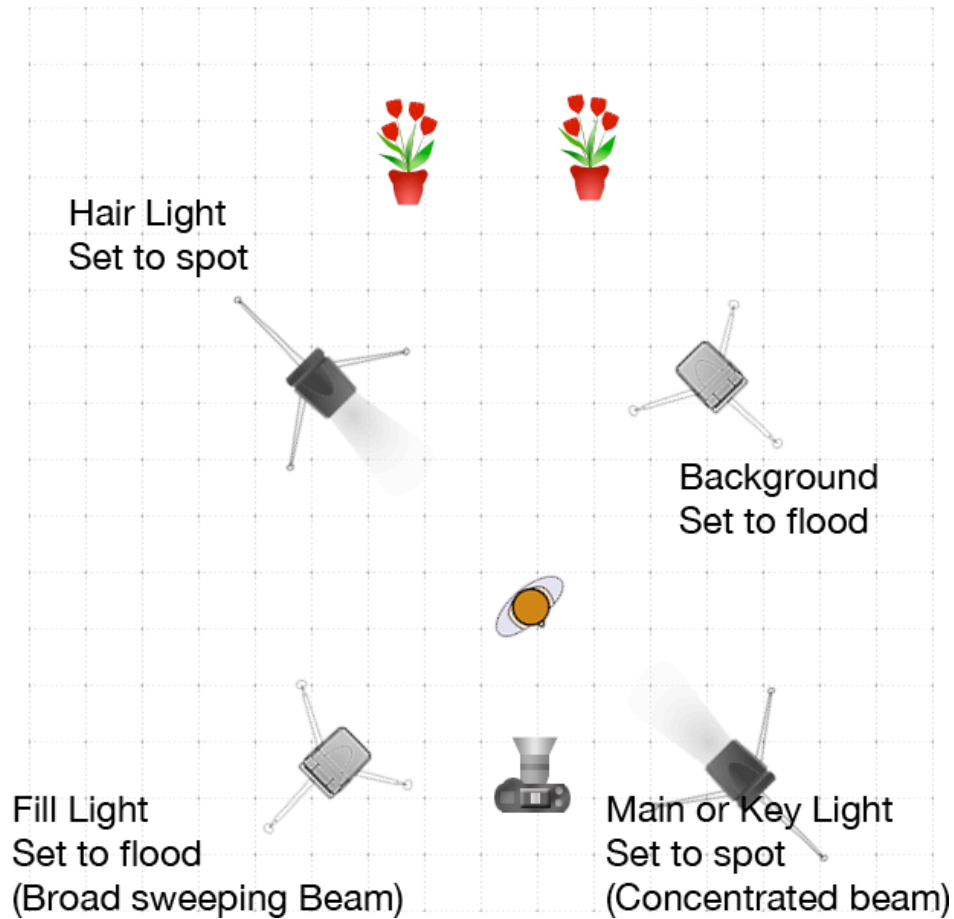
Three point with hair light

Hair Light
Set to spot

Fill Light
Set to flood
(Broad sweeping Beam)

Main or Key Light
Set to spot
(Concentrated beam)

Three point with background light

Background
Set to flood

Fill Light
Set to flood
(Broad sweeping Beam)

Main or Key Light
Set to spot
(Concentrated beam)

Four Point Setup

If enough lights are available I prefer a four light set up With a four light set up you are able to control the lighting of the subject and fill in shadows in the background that are caused by the foreground lighting.

Hair Light
Set to spot

Background
Set to flood

Fill Light
Set to flood
(Broad sweeping Beam)

Main or Key Light
Set to spot
(Concentrated beam)
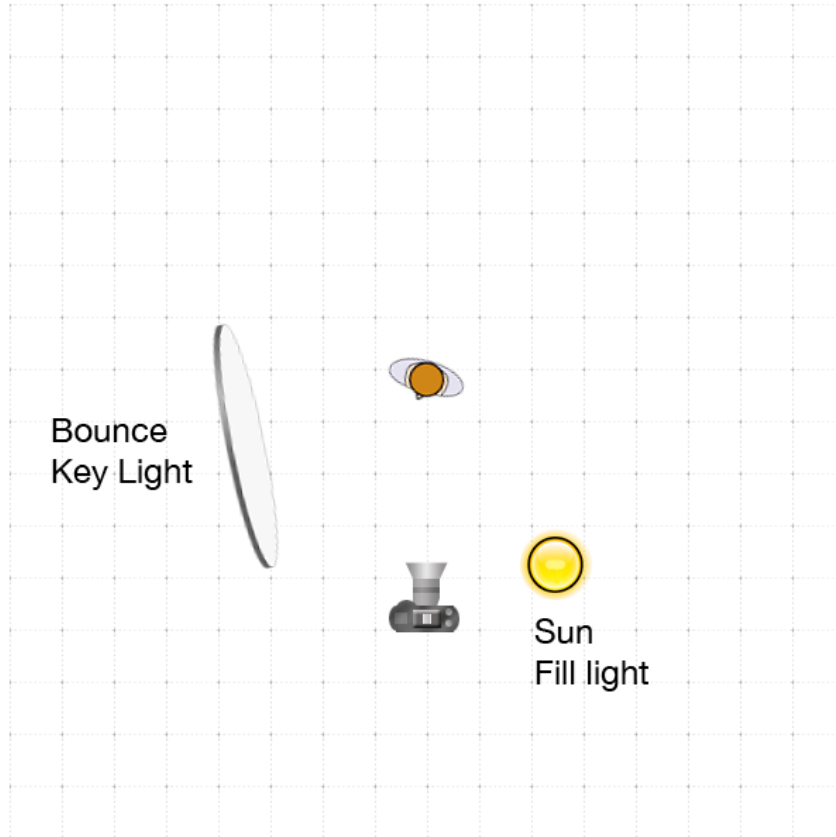
Location Lighting

If working out doors without access to an outlet or a battery pack you can use the sun and bounces and flags to light a scene.

Bounce
An object used to reflect light usually reflective or light in color.

Flag
An object used to block or reduces light or reflections usually black in color.

Bounce
Key Light

Sun
Fill light

External Information

Strobist
http://strobist.blogspot.com/

Strobist Lighting 101
http://strobist.blogspot.com/2006/03/lighting-101.html

One Light workshops
http://zackarias.com/workshop/onelight-info/

Online lighting diagram maker
http://www.lightingdiagrams.com/Creator