

# How to Brighten a Scene by Using Less Light

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Suppose you are using a flash and shooting in manual mode to photograph a person standing in a room. You have set the camera to properly expose the subject for the light from your flash. After you shoot you check the image and find the subject is properly exposed, but the background of the room is too dark. What can you do? If you turn up the flash power you'll throw more light onto the background, but you'll also overexpose the subject. What's the solution?

It may seem counter-intuitive, but the answer is to REDUCE the power of your flash and use LESS light! This will reduce the light on your subject, requiring you to lower the f/stop for proper exposure. But, this lower f/stop will also let in more ambient light from the background, making it brighter than it was before.

That's how you brighten a background by using LESS light on the subject.

This technique is handy when photographing people at a wedding where the background of the church altar is too dark, dinner guests seated at a banquet, or even in a studio when the background light isn't strong enough. It's especially handy when shooting high key when the background light is maxed out, but not bright enough. Just lower the light on the subject, expose for the subject, and the background will appear brighter.