Portrait
Lighting

by Clem Wehner

Types of Lighting

Flat

Portrait

Dramatic

Photos courtesy of B&H Photo Video

On-camera flash- FLAT!

Flat lighting

Flat lighting

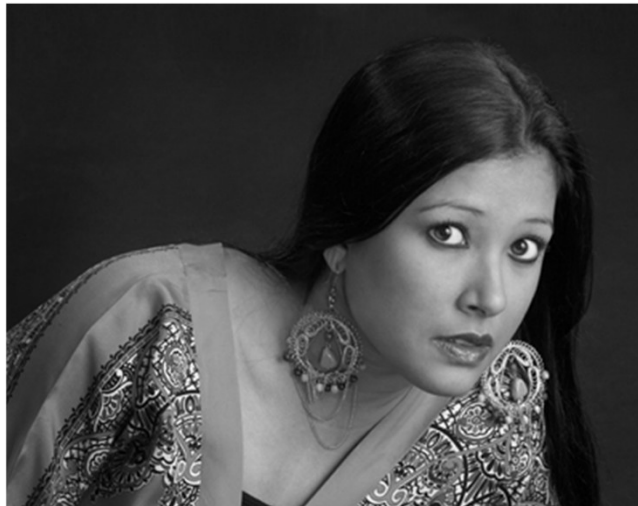

by April Jackson

Flat Lighting   Portrait Lighting

Always be aware of the light direction on your subject !

Perfect Portrait Lighting Ratio

Perfect Portrait lighting ratio!

by Carol Dwyer

Perfect Portrait lighting ratio

by Carol Dwyer

Dramatic Lighting

Perfect Portrait lighting ratio!

SIX STEPS TO

PERFECT PORTRAIT LIGHTING

Definitions

MAIN **LIGHT -- primary light that illuminates the subject and causes shadows.**

FILL **LIGHT -- secondary light that lights the shadow areas, usually dimmer than the main light.**

RATIO – brightness of one side of the subject compared to the other.
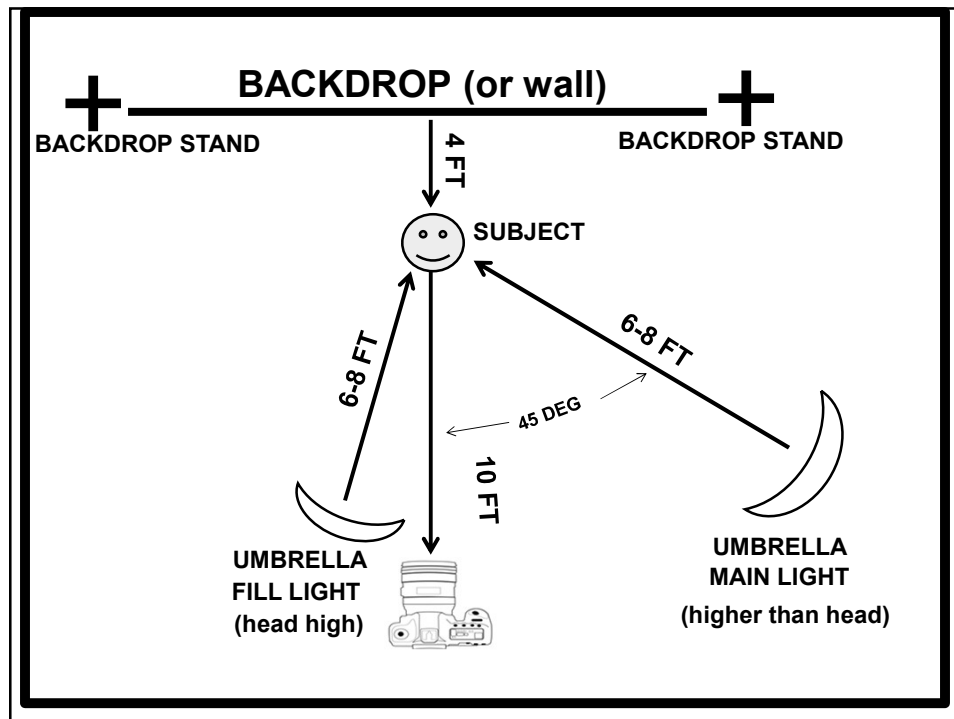

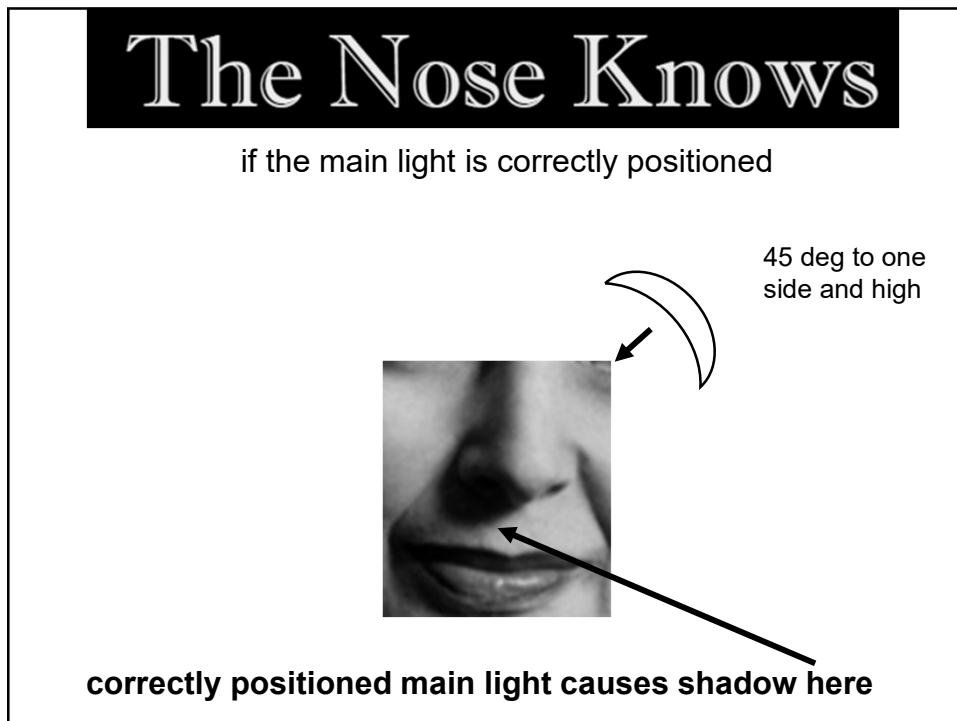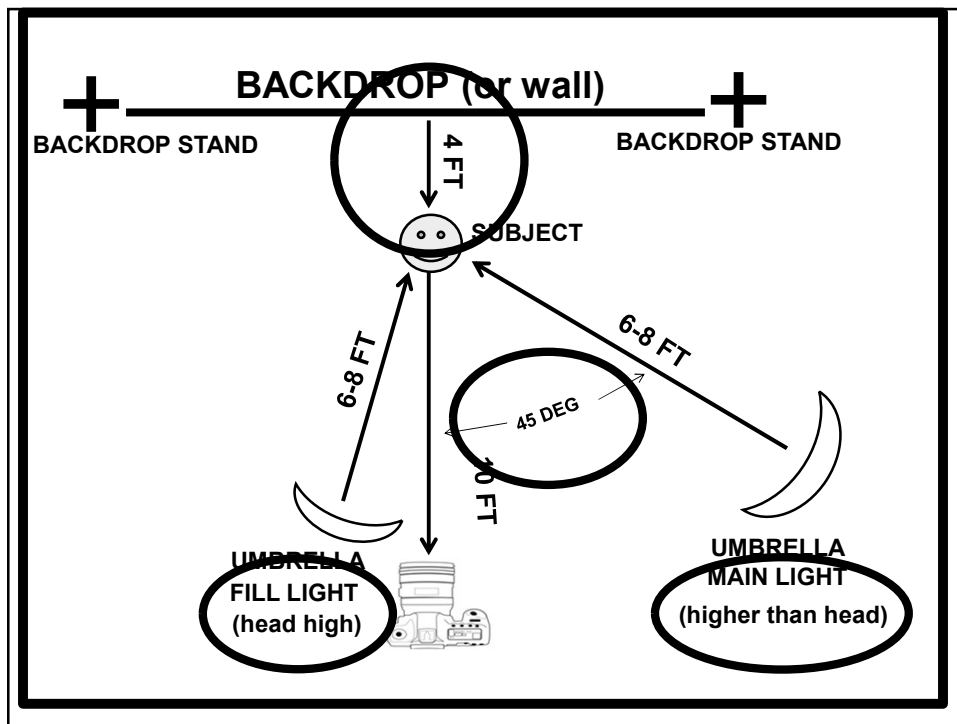## *Perfect Portrait lighting ratio!*

MAIN LIGHT

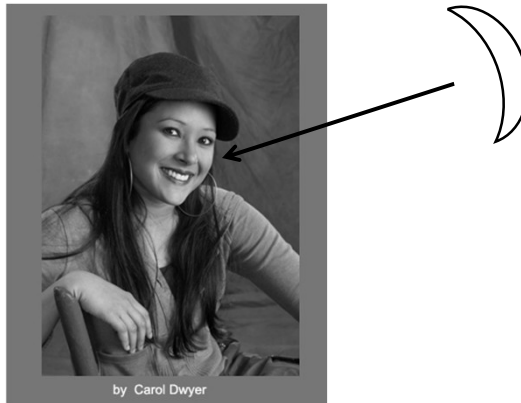**FILL LIGHT**

SIX STEPS TO

PERFECT PORTRAIT LIGHTING

1. Position the subject facing straight ahead.

2. Position the fill light directly in front of the subject's nose or slightly off to the side. Position it slightly higher than the subject's head.

3. Position the main light (key light) opposite side from the fill light, 6-8 feet away, 45 degrees off, and much higher than subject's head.

BACKDROP (or wall)

BACKDROP STAND   BACKDROP STAND

4 FT

SUBJECT

6-8 FT   6-8 FT

45 DEG

10 FT

UMBRELLA
FILL LIGHT
(head high)

UMBRELLA
MAIN LIGHT
(higher than head)

BACKDROP (or wall)

BACKDROP STAND   BACKDROP STAND

4 FT

SUBJECT

6-8 FT

6-8 FT

45 DEG

10 FT

UMBRELLA
FILL LIGHT
(head high)

UMBRELLA
MAIN LIGHT
(higher than head)

The Nose Knows

if the main light is correctly positioned

45 deg to one
side and high

correctly positioned main light causes shadow here

4. Adjust the main light brightness to about f/8 as measured at the subject.

by Carol Dwyer

5. Adjust the fill light for the desired "lighting ratio". Half as bright as the main light side (1 f/stop less)
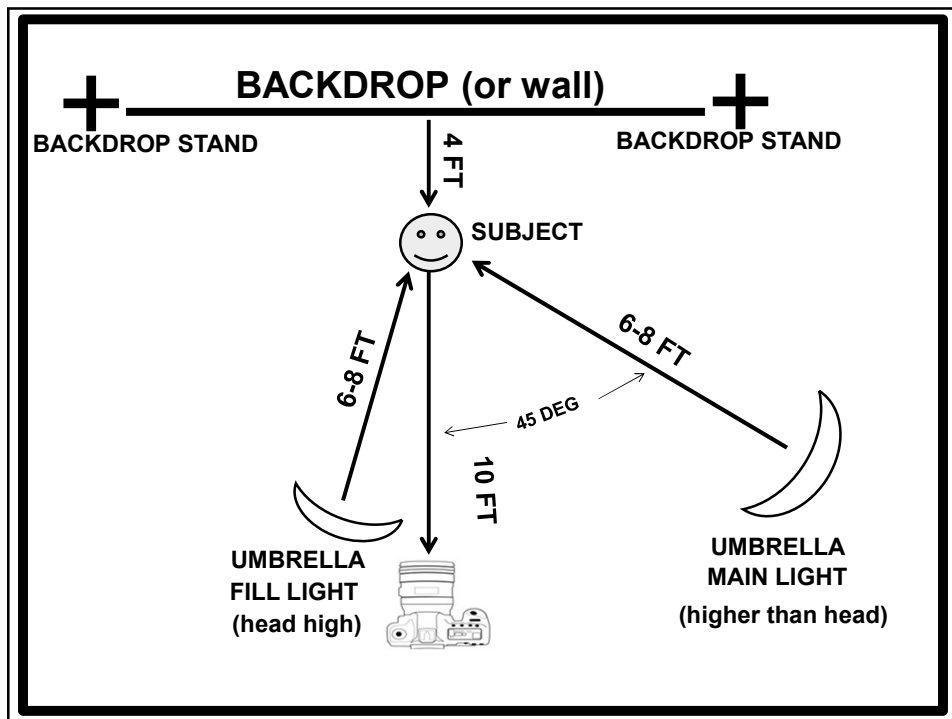
6. Set camera for the proper exposure:

  a. With strobe lights: Camera MUST be in
     Manual Exposure mode.

      1. Use a remote trigger or sync cable

      2. Set camera shutter speed to 1/60th

      3. Set camera aperture (f/stop)
        to get good exposure.

  b. CANNOT use auto-exposure with strobe lights

  c. CAN use auto exposure with flood lights (bulbs, LED)

BACKDROP (or wall)

BACKDROP STAND   BACKDROP STAND

4 FT

SUBJECT

6-8 FT

6-8 FT

45 DEG

10 FT

UMBRELLA
FILL LIGHT
(head high)

UMBRELLA
MAIN LIGHT
(higher than head)

DIFFUSION

"SOFTNESS"

Diffusion

(Reducing the contrast)

To make a smaller difference between
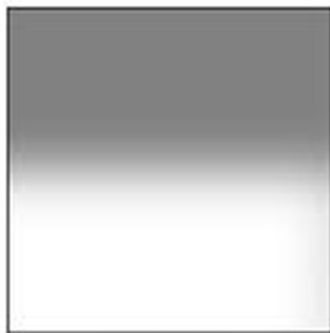
highlights and shadow

(called "softening" the light)

There's no such thing
as soft or hard light!

Light is just light,

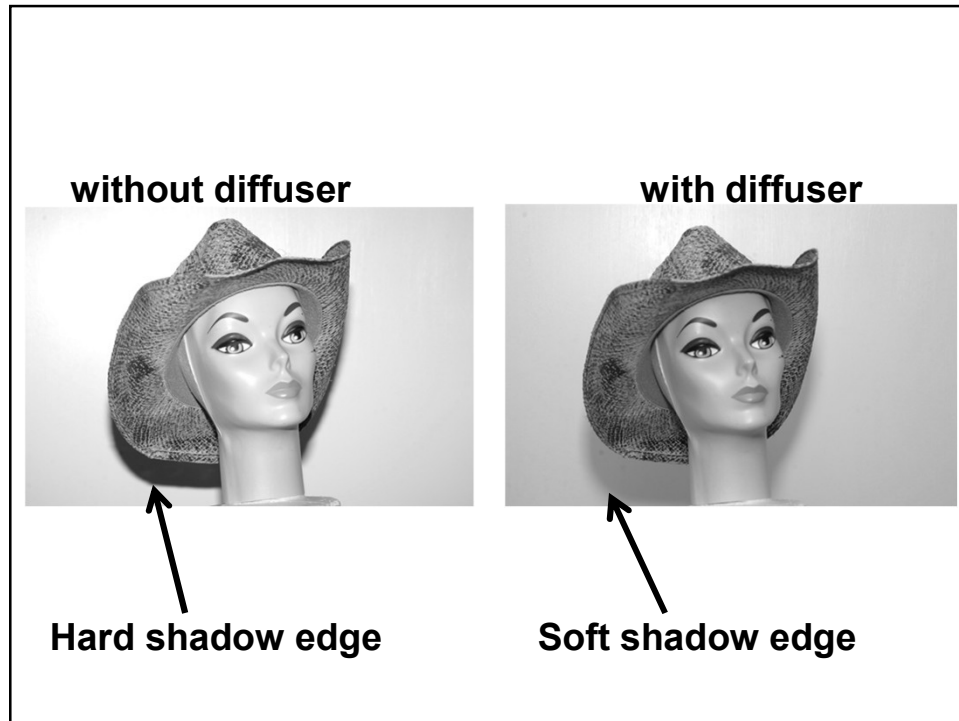**BUT, there are soft and hard shadow edges!**

DIFFUSION
CHANGES SHADOW EDGES

Soft Edge   Hard Edge

without diffuser   with diffuser

Hard shadow edge   **Soft shadow edge**

"Softness" of light

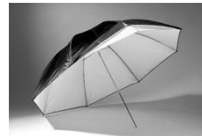**Distance** of light to subject –(closer is softer)

Size of light source - (bigger is softer)

Tools to diffuse light

- Soft boxes

- Umbrellas

- Diffusers

Setting the Exposure
(3 methods)

- **1. Use a Light Meter**

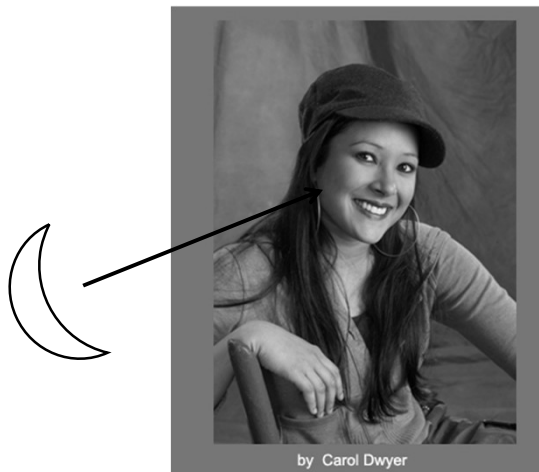- **2. Use a Gray Card**

- **3. Use Trial and Error settings**

Use a light meter to set main light

**Adjust the main light brightness
to about f/8 (at the subject)**

by Carol Dwyer

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5. Adjust the fill light for the desired "lighting ratio".

**Adjust to ½ as bright as the main light side.
(1 f/stop dimmer)**

by Carol Dwyer

Setting the Exposure

- **1. Use a Light Meter**

- **2. Use a Gray Card**

- **3. Use Trial and Error settings**

Using a GRAY CARD and HISTOGRAM

1. Put camera in MANUAL EXPOSURE MODE
   Set: Aperture- f/8, Shutter-1/60

2. Put gray card right next to the subject.

3. Zoom in to fill the screen with the gray card.

4. Take a picture of the gray card.

5. Check the histogram of the picture.

6. If spike is left of center, image is underexposed.

7. If spike is right of center, image is overexposed.

8. Adjust f/stop, take another photo.

9. Repeat until spike is centered.

This is the correct exposure setting.

Setting the Exposure

- **1. Use a Light Meter**

- **2. Use a Gray Card**

- **3. Use Trial and Error settings**

TRIAL AND ERROR EXPOSURE

Using studio strobe lights:

1. ADJUST MAIN LIGHT TO ABOUT ½ POWER

2. SET CAMERA TO f/8

3. TAKE TEST SHOTS

4. KEEP ADJUSTING MAIN LIGHT UNTIL IMAGE IS PROPERLY EXPOSED

Light from a door or window

Light from directly in front

Light from the side

Always be aware of the light direction on your subject !

Repeat:

<u>Always</u> be aware
of the direction of the light
on your subject!

Shooting Angle

Photo by Carol Dwyer

Photo by Carol Dwyer

by Carol Dwyer

BACKGROUNDS

USE COLORS/PATTERNS
THAT ENHANCE THE IMAGE

Patterned   Hot Spot

IS THE BACKGROUND "RIGHT" FOR THE IMAGE?

Simple but Complimentary

High-key

Photos by Carol Dwyer

Drape the background fabric to add interest

Bailey

Photo by Fran Wehner

Use clothes pins, clips, spring clamps, etc.

BACKGROUND WIDTH

BACKGROUND IS NOT WIDE ENOUGH

TIP:

**Take a photograph of
your background without people**

Use it to photoshop-in extra width

SEPARATION

by Carol Dwyer

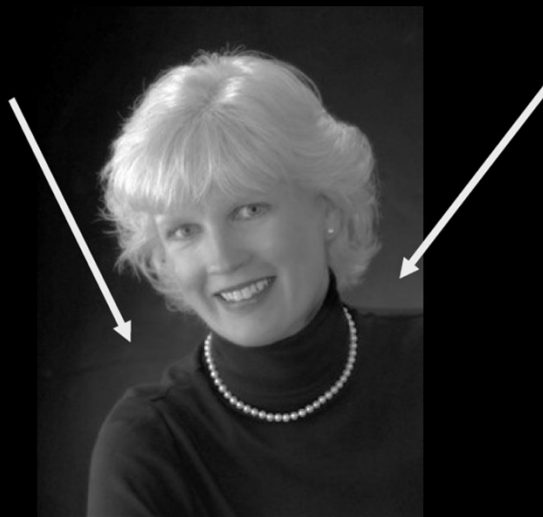**BACKGROUND COLOR**

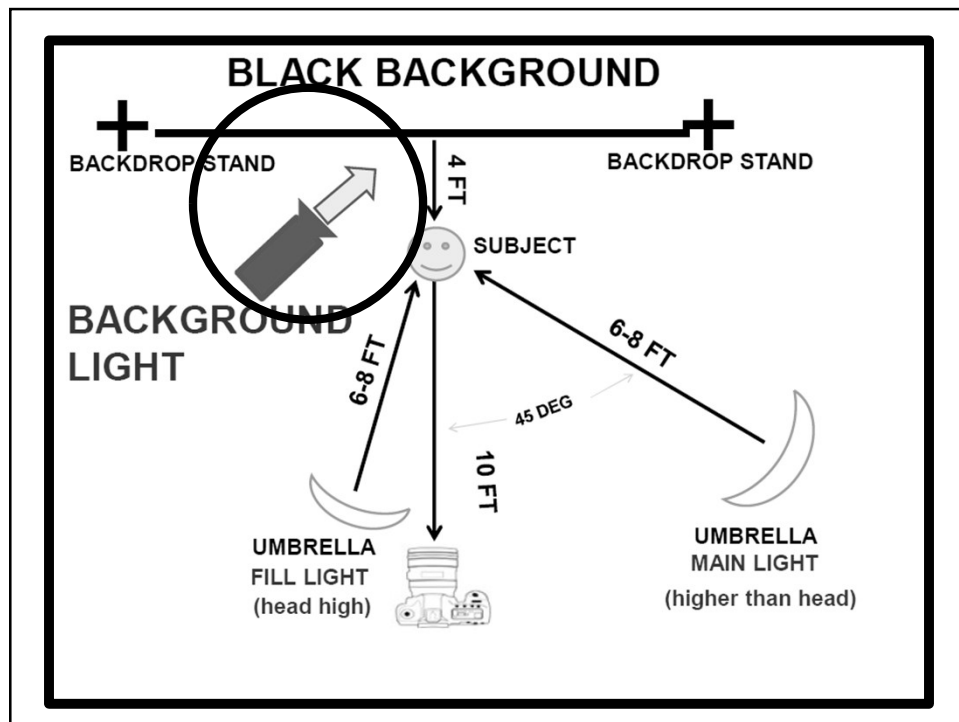No separation visible

by Carol Dwyer

SEPARATION IS IMPORTANT
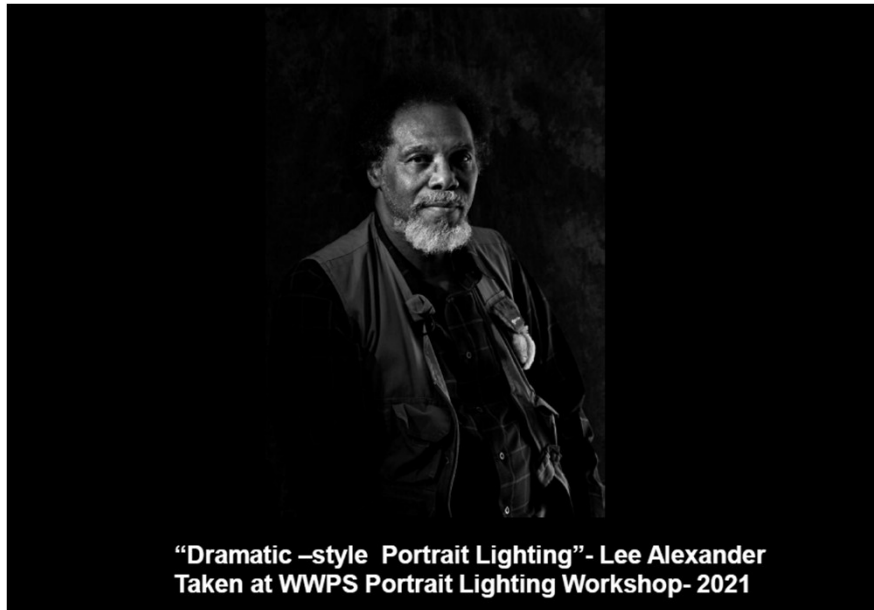
Using a black BACKGROUND

LIGHTING THE BACKGROUND

TO GET SEPARATION

Dramatic lighting

"Dramatic –style Portrait Lighting"- Lee Alexander
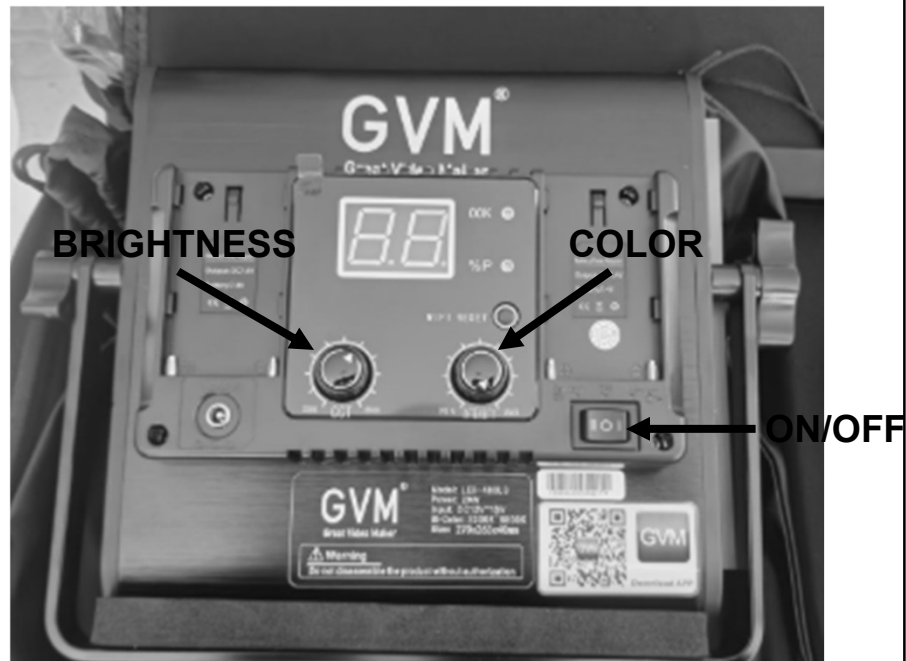Taken at WWPS Portrait Lighting Workshop- 2021

Dramatic lighting

- **Direction of light**
- **Light modifiers:**

                      - Snoots
                      - Barndoors

EQUIPMENT SETUP

CAMERA AND LIGHT COMBINATIONS

DSLR CAMERA use:

STROBE

LED

PHONE CAMERA use:

LED

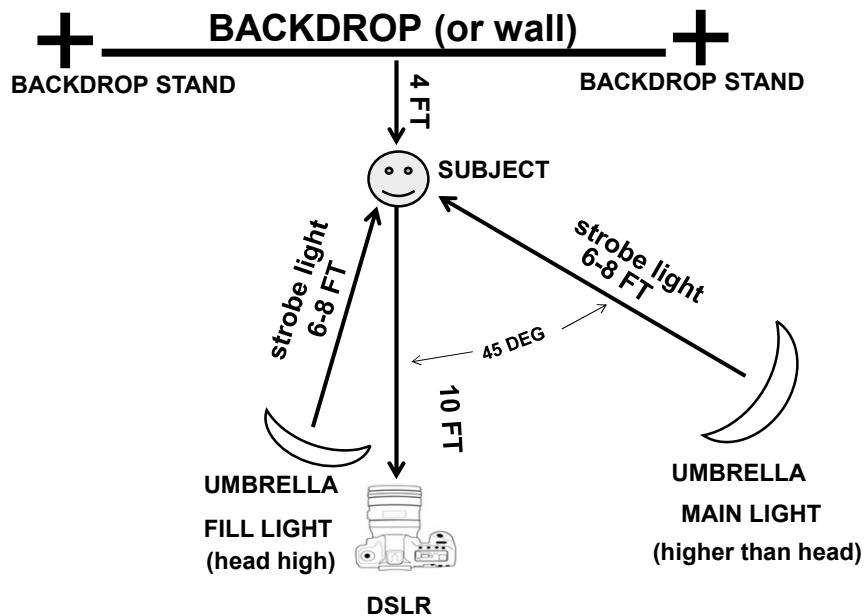
FOR DSLR CAMERAS + STROBE LIGHTS

BACKDROP (or wall)

BACKDROP STAND — BACKDROP STAND

4 FT

SUBJECT

strobe light 6-8 FT

strobe light 6-8 FT

45 DEG

10 FT

UMBRELLA
FILL LIGHT
(head high)

UMBRELLA
MAIN LIGHT
(higher than head)

DSLR

32

FOR DSLR CAMERAS + LED LIGHTS

BACKDROP (or wall)

BACKDROP STAND **BACKDROP STAND**

4 FT

SUBJECT

LED light 3-4 FT

LED light 3-4 FT

45 DEG

10 FT

LED LIGHT
FILL LIGHT
(head high)

DSLR

LED LIGHT
MAIN LIGHT
(higher than head)

FOR PHONE CAMERAS + LED LIGHTS

BACKDROP (or wall)

BACKDROP STAND **BACKDROP STAND**

4 FT

SUBJECT

LED lights 6-8 FT

LED lights 6-8 FT

45 DEG

LED LIGHT
FILL LIGHT
(head high) **PHONE CAMERA**

LED LIGHT
MAIN LIGHT
(higher than head)

33

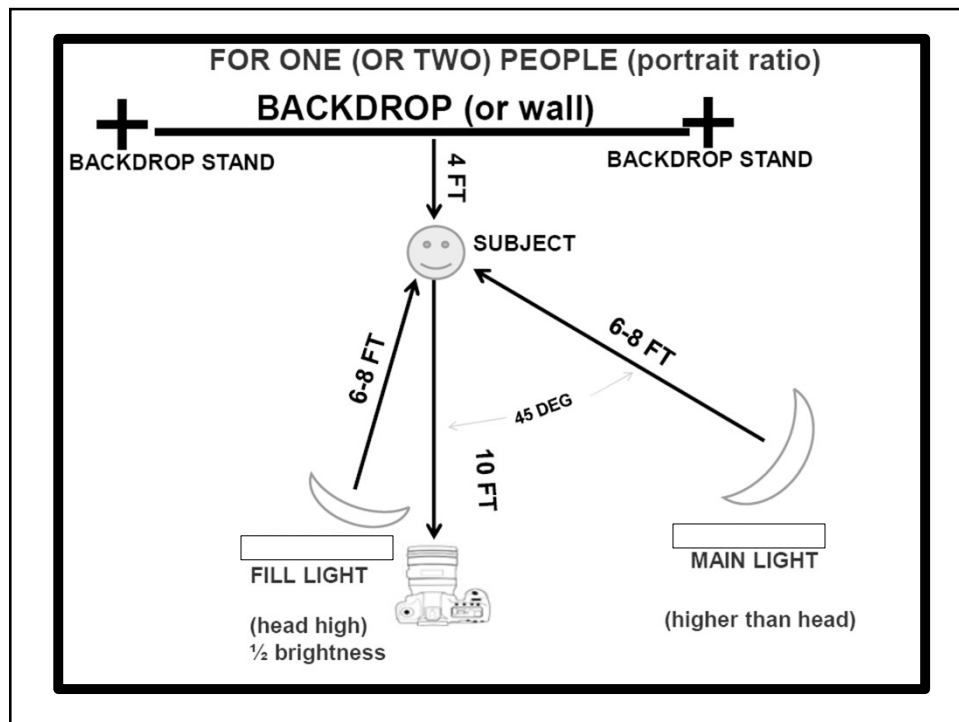**WHAT ABOUT PHONE CAMERAS + STROBE LIGHTS?**
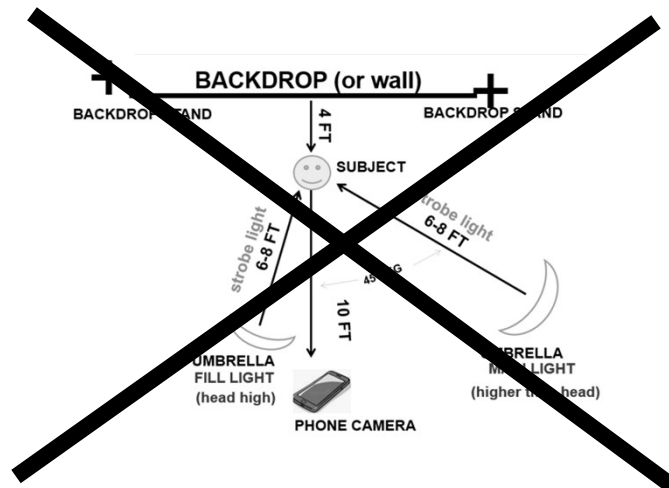
Not practical- no way to trigger the strobe lights

Portrait Lighting Ratio
depends on the number of people

- **1 or 2 people- use portrait ratio**

- **Groups- use flat lighting**
  (to avoid shadows)
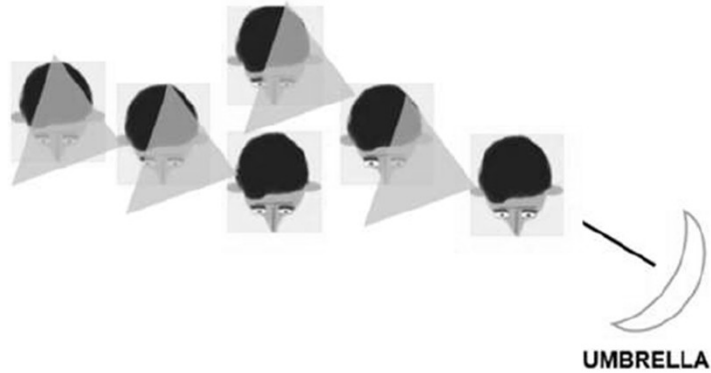
FOR ONE (OR TWO) PEOPLE (portrait ratio)

Portrait Lighting Ratio
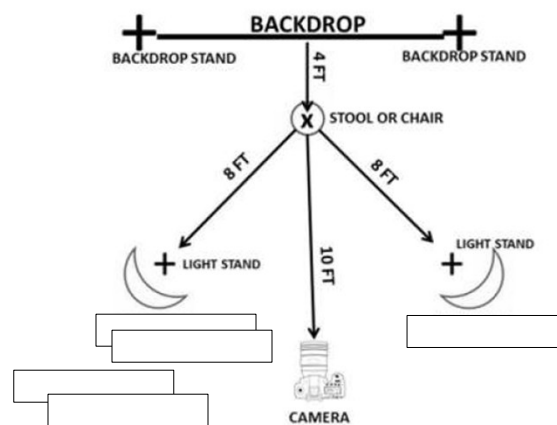**depends on the number of people**

- **1 or 2 people- use portrait ratio**

- **Groups- use flat lighting**
  (to avoid shadows)

WATCH FOR SHADOWS WITH GROUPS

UMBRELLA

CONSIDER USING "FLAT" LIGHTING

FOR GROUP PORTRAIT (flat light)

BACKDROP

BACKDROP STAND   BACKDROP STAND

4 FT

X STOOL OR CHAIR

8 FT   8 FT

LIGHT STAND   LIGHT STAND

10 FT

CAMERA

SET FILL AND MAIN LIGHT TO EQUAL BRIGHTNESS
(FLAT LIGHTING)

Portrait Lighting