Light

Full course PDF

Learn framing, camera, light, prompts and delivery through short lessons and practice.

4. Light

The main source establishes the subject’s lighting. Name the term: _____.

Key light

The main source establishes the subject’s lighting.

SouthWorks’ practical lighting guidance, published by Adobe. A setup is a starting point, not a universal requirement.

https://helpx.adobe.com/ie/stock/contributor/help/artist-hub-migration/lighting-for-video.html · 2026-09-16

Additional illumination lifts the shadows cast by the key. Name the term: _____.

Fill light

Additional illumination lifts the shadows cast by the key.

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https://helpx.adobe.com/ie/stock/contributor/help/artist-hub-migration/lighting-for-video.html · 2026-09-16

Light behind the subject helps separate it from the background. Name the term: _____.

Backlight

Light behind the subject helps separate it from the background.

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https://helpx.adobe.com/ie/stock/contributor/help/artist-hub-migration/lighting-for-video.html · 2026-09-16

Dark flags or fabric absorb stray light to deepen shadows. Name the term: _____.

Negative fill

Dark flags or fabric absorb stray light to deepen shadows.

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Increasing the apparent size of the source softens shadow edges. Name the term: _____.

Soft light

Increasing the apparent size of the source softens shadow edges.

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https://helpx.adobe.com/ie/stock/contributor/help/artist-hub-migration/lighting-for-video.html · 2026-09-16

A pale surface redirects light into the scene. Name the term: _____.

Bounce

A pale surface redirects light into the scene.

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https://helpx.adobe.com/ie/stock/contributor/help/artist-hub-migration/lighting-for-video.html · 2026-09-16

A source remains illuminated during recording. Name the term: _____.

Continuous light

A source remains illuminated during recording.

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https://helpx.adobe.com/ie/stock/contributor/help/artist-hub-migration/lighting-for-video.html · 2026-09-16

The source’s warm or cool appearance is described in kelvins. Name the term: _____.

Colour temperature

The source’s warm or cool appearance is described in kelvins.

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https://helpx.adobe.com/ie/stock/contributor/help/artist-hub-migration/lighting-for-video.html · 2026-09-16

Weather and the changing sun can alter exposure and colour during a shoot. Name the term: _____.

Natural-light continuity

Weather and the changing sun can alter exposure and colour during a shoot.

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How would you use this principle: Concept belongs to the cinematographer, implementation belongs to the gaffer?

on the ASC's Camerimage panel on exactly this question, Vilmos Zsigmond described the cinematographer as in charge of the concept of the light and the gaffer as responsible for making it happen, and James Plannette described roughing the light in and then finishing it with the cinematographer, who is, in his phrase, the decider. That does not mean there is no argument, only that the argument ends.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/gaffer/

How would you use this principle: Know which system you are working in?

the same panel spelled out that in the American division of labour the grips set the flags, diffusion and bounce while the electricians handle the fixture, whereas in the European system the gaffer and electricians set everything involving the fixture, flags and diffusion included. Turning up with the wrong assumption wastes an hour and irritates two departments.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/gaffer/

How would you use this principle: Plan the power before the picture?

a lighting design a location's switchboard cannot carry is not a design. Read the electrical installation condition report, look at the board for signs of overload and age, and size distribution, protection and emergency lighting for the whole rig.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/gaffer/

How would you use this principle: Repeatability beats brilliance?

a look nobody can rebuild after a unit move is a look you shot once. Numbered or colour-coded channels, desk notes filed against slate numbers, and metered colour temperature are how a night interior matches three weeks later on another stage.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/gaffer/

How would you use this principle: Speed is a lighting value?

the fastest gaffer buys the cinematographer the ten minutes that make the last shot of the day look like the first. Order the setups so the fewest fixtures have to move.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/gaffer/

How would you use this principle: Movement is dramatic punctuation or it is noise?

a push that begins on a line and settles on a reaction means something, while the same push drifting through a scene only says the camera is restless. Ask what the move is for before deciding how to build it.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/key-grip/

How would you use this principle: The department's real product is repeatability?

a dolly move that can be hit identically on take nine, same start mark, same speed, same settle, is what lets a director choose a take on performance rather than on mechanics.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/key-grip/

How would you use this principle: The division of labour is regional, not universal?

the ASC's cinematographers-and-gaffers panel put it plainly, that American grips set the flags, diffusion and bounce while in the European system the gaffer's electricians handle everything attached to the fixture. Read the room before you touch a stand.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/key-grip/

How would you use this principle: Design from the location, not the catalogue?

uneven ground, a protected floor, a doorway three inches too narrow. Recce notes with measurements and photographs are what turn a shot list into a build that works on the day.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/key-grip/

How would you use this principle: Quote the honest number early?

install and strike times belong in the schedule before the day, not on it. A key grip who says an hour and means an hour keeps their safety veto credible for the moment it is needed.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/key-grip/

How would you use this principle: Motivate the key?

every light the audience can perceive should have a plausible cause inside the world of the shot, a window, a fire, a practical, the sky. Motivation is what lets the audience stop noticing lighting and start believing the space. When you need a light with no source, hide it in a direction the eye is not auditing.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/lighting-td/

How would you use this principle: Light the story point, not the set?

a CG set is fully modelled and fully lit-able, which is the trap. Decide what the audience must see in this shot and let the rest fall away. Wide-open even illumination is a failure of decision, not a neutral choice.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/lighting-td/

How would you use this principle: Continuity across a sequence is the actual deliverable?

a shot that is beautiful alone and half a stop off its neighbour is a broken shot. Build the sequence rig first, review shots side by side and in cut order rather than one at a time, and treat any drift in key direction or level as a bug.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/lighting-td/

How would you use this principle: Guide the eye with contrast and colour temperature?

the brightest, warmest, most saturated area in frame is where the audience looks. Use that deliberately, and if the thing they should look at is not that area, you have a note to give yourself before the director gives it to you.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/lighting-td/

How would you use this principle: Render cost is a design constraint you own?

volumes, area lights, transmissive materials and deep ray depths all buy realism with time. Knowing what a lighting idea costs, and finding the version that reads for a fraction of it, is as much of the craft as taste.

https://shotcraft.video/learn/crafts/lighting-td/

Progress can be exported to a file and imported again. With no server, that file is the only real guarantee — browsers do clear storage.