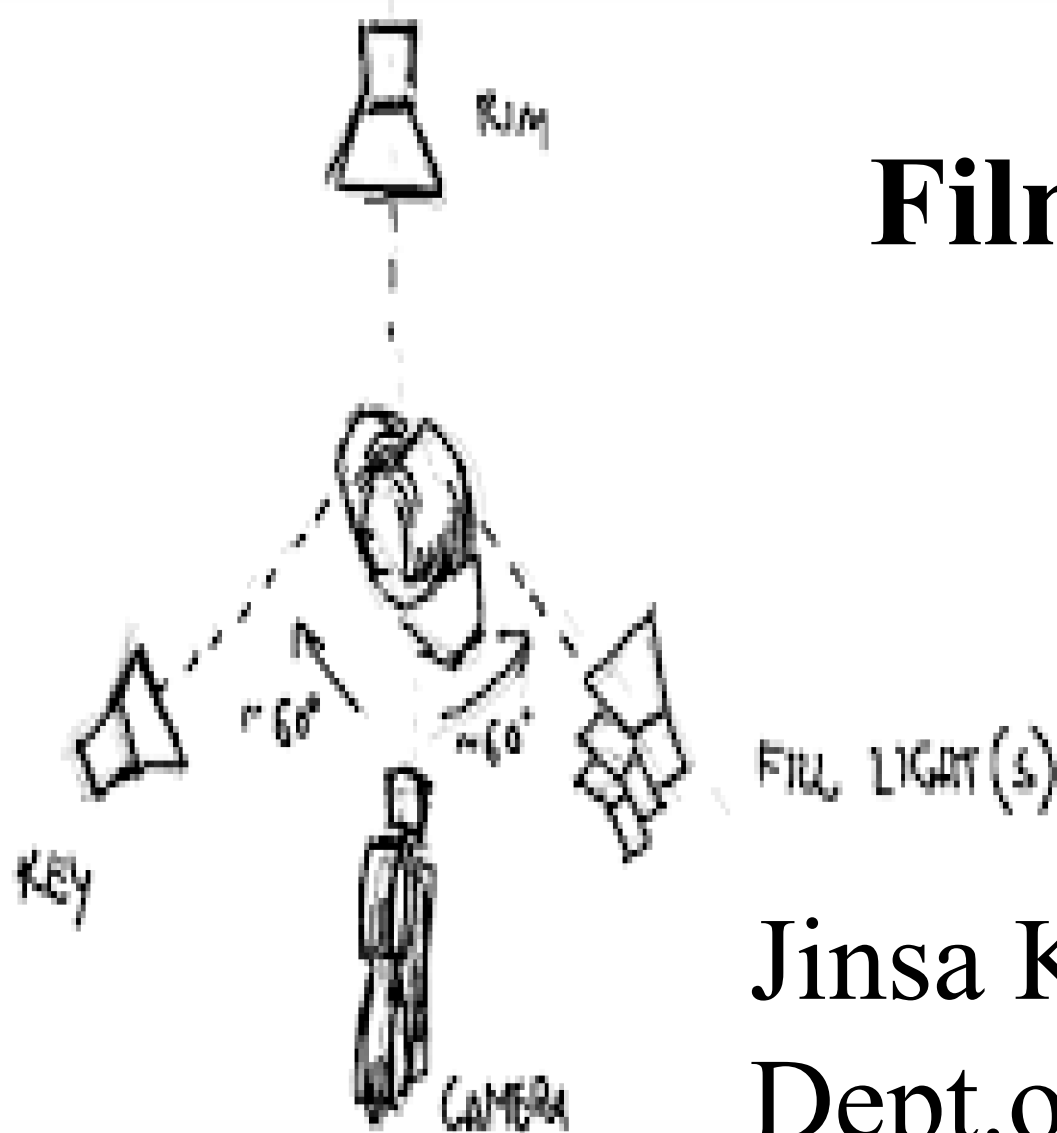# Film lighting

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KEY LIGHT

Main light of a scene or subject.

it's normally the strongest light in each scene or photo.

 Even if your lighting crew is going for a complicated multi-light setup, the key light is usually the first to be set up.

It's your "main" light doesn't mean it always has to be facing your subject.

 You can place your key light anywhere, even from the side or behind your subject to create a darker mood.

- Just avoid placing it near or right beside the camera as this will create flat and direct lighting for your subject.

- It is placed to one side of the camera/subject so that this side is well lit and the other side has some shadow.

- a common placement is about 45 degrees to either side of the camera, and about 45 degrees up from the subject.

Fill light

This technique is used to "fill in" and remove the dark, shadowy areas that your key light creates.

The purpose of this light is to fill in the shadows created by the key light

Placed in the opposite direction of the key light

The fill will usually be softer and less bright than the key

- The fill light should not create a second shadow
- If you see two shadows, that means the fill light is too powerful and needs to be reduced.
- **Scrims are designed to reduce the light without softening it**
- **neutral density gels to reduce light**
- These "gels" are semi-transparent gray sheets that you can put over the light to reduce the light without changing its color.

Back Light

The back light is placed behind the subject

lights it from the back .

its purpose is to provide definition and subtle highlights around the subject's outlines.

This helps separate the subject from the background and provide a three-dimensional look.

low key

- Being the opposite of high key, low key lighting for a scene would mean a lot of shadows and possibly just one strong key light source. The focus is on the use of shadows and how it creates mystery, suspense, or drama for a scene and character instead of on the use of lighting, which makes it great for horror and thriller films.

High key

- High key refers to a style of lighting used to create a very bright scene that's visually shadowless, often close to overexposure. Lighting ratios are ignored so all light sources would have pretty much the same intensity. This technique is used in many movies, TV sitcoms, commercials, and music videos today, but it first became popular during the classic Hollywood period in the 1930s and 40s.

- High key lighting is used to produce images that encourage an optimistic, upbeat reaction. The photos come out youthful and simple but sophisticated.

- scenes that possess a lot of whites and light tones – a whole range of them.

- These images have very minimal mid-tones and blacks. If you use high key lighting in your photos, the mid-tones or mid-range tones become white.

- Mostly used in portrait, wedding, newborn and fashion photography
- Portrait Photography: when taking photos of business professionals; for baby or newborn photography; for fashion shoots; for pre-nuptial shoots; professional or fun close-ups or shoots. Weddings, especially photos of the bride, are perfect for high key lighting.

- For professional portfolios (corporate employee profiles and model setcards)
- For nature shots
- For cinematic shots
- For advertising-related photoshoots (brochures, booklets, posters, billboards, etc.

low key

- The low key technique uses a lot of darker tones, shadows, and blacks
- Uses a lot of deep blacks, darker tones, and shadows
- Very minimal amount of whites and mid-tones
- Reduces lighting to produce images with striking contrasts
- Produces dramatic and mysterious photos
- Features a lot of shadows

- Dramatic close-ups, like when you're trying to capture emotion. A close-up of someone crying is a good example. Journalism and documentary photography would be a good example of this.
- When you're trying to emphasize part of a subject's face or body, for instance the subject's blue green eyes.
- If you want your subject to look dramatic in black & white.
- When there is intense action happening, such as two people in a shouting match or two soccer players holding on to one ball.

Practical lighting

- Practical lighting is the use of regular, working light sources like lamps, candles, or even the TV. These are usually intentionally added in by the set designer or lighting crew to create a cinematic nighttime scene. They may sometimes be used to also give off subtle lighting for your subject.
- ractical lights are not always easy to work with, as candles and lamps are typically not strong enough to light up a subject. A hidden, supplementary motivated light (more on that later) may be used or dimmers can be installed in lamps so the light's intensity can be adjusted.

Bounce lighting

- Bounce lighting is about literally bouncing the light from a strong light source towards your subject or scene using a reflector or any light-colored surface, such as walls and ceilings. Doing so creates a bigger area of light that is more evenly spread out.

Hard lighting

- **Hard lighting** is a lighting aesthetic with harsh shadows that draws attention to a specific actor or part of a scene.

- . A great use of hard light is in *The Night of the Hunter*. In this frame below, the shadow cast on the wall presents a menacing character and gives the audience the impression that he is capable of something very evil. The large shadow might also insinuate a sense of strength and power relative to the smaller character on the left.

- Film noir cinema embraced these techniques to overcome the limitations of black and white film.

- hard lights have definitive shadows while soft lights have smooth and gradual shadows.

- Shadows are incredibly important in visual storytelling

Soft lighting

- **Soft lighting** is a lighting aesthetic with little to no harsh shadows that's bright yet balanced

- soft light is flattering light.

- **Soft light** makes shadows that are barely visible

- A cloudy day is **soft light**.

- soft lights have smooth and gradual shadows.

Motivated lighting

- **Motivated lighting** is a controlled lighting technique meant to imitate natural light sources in the scene like the sun or the moon.

- **Side lighting** lights the actor from the side and focuses on the contours of their face for a high-contrast dramatic effect.
- Side lighting is light that falls on a subject at roughly ninety degrees to the camera. This means that one side of a subject will be lit and the other side will be in shadow. In terms of helping to convey a subject's shape and form this is ideal.

- **The director** shares visual inspirations and ideas for cinematic lighting.

- **The [director of photography](#) or cinematographer**: creates the lighting plan with input from the director.

- **The gaffer** designs and executes the cinematographer's lighting plan and oversees the crew that brings the lighting plan to life.

- **Lighting tells the audience where to look**. The lighting setup guides the eye to a specific actor, prop, or part of a scene.
- **Lighting reflects the psychology of characters**. The amount, size, color, and harshness of light surrounding a character can be adjusted to match their emotions.
- **Lighting defines and supports the genre of the film**. Lighting is the tool that conveys mood most clearly. For example, one of the film genres most known for its distinct lighting style is film noir, characterized by stark contrasts between light and dark, dramatically patterned shadows, and unique framing and composition choices.