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Everyone has heard the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words," and in the fast-paced world of online business, there's no exception to this rule. This lesson shows how to light a reflective model car, a typical product that one might see at an online auction website or other small business website.

We took this very well made Ford Cobra model car that retails for $65.00, and imagined that we were going to sell it on the Internet in our model car business’ website or on an auction site such as eBay.

**Topics Covered:**

* Comparing On-Camera Flash to Studio Lighting  
* Setting Up a Main Light  
* Adding a Fill Light

**Equipment Used:**

* 1 Strobe with a Soft Box on a Standard Light Stand.  
* 1 Strobe with a Soft Box on a Boom and Boom Stand  
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
Looking through auction sites like eBay, you see lots of images where people just put products on a table or the floor and photograph them with the camera’s flash [figure 1], then they attempt to make up for the subpar images by writing a lot of text to explain all the features of the product. Save time by learning how to setup a simple lighting solution that will make your photos stand out! [figure 2]

**Figure 1**

**Figure 2**

**Setting Up a Main Light**

We began this shot by mounting a 1000-watt strobe with a medium soft box on a boom and boom stand and placed it directly over the model car. [figure 3]

**Figure 3**

We angled the soft box toward the front and lowered it down close to the cobra. This will keep the light off the background and make it go dark. [figure 4]

**Figure 4**
Adding a Fill Light

Notice that the front of the car is a little dark. Again, when you are shooting product photography, you want to illustrate the subject so that the consumer can see any and all details that you describe. So we decided to continue to further develop our lighting set-up. To improve the light on the front of the model we placed a 500-watt strobe with a small soft box to the left and flush down on the shooting table [figures 6 & 7], making sure to angle it away from the background to maintain the dark contrast we enjoyed from before.

We moved the SilverDome in close to get the right amount of light that we wanted. [figure 7]
This result shows more detail on the front of the Cobra, but we still have slight shadows on the side to give the Cobra depth and dimension. [figure 8]

With the strobes in the same position, we turned the model to take a few photos of different positions. [figure 9]

We turned the model again and took another shot. [figure 10]
With the final lighting set up established, you can shoot as many photos as you need to show the features of your product. In this case, we can show how the doors and hood can open.

Figure 11

Figure 12
A light tent (or cube) is designed for table-top photography of products. This simple tool can make catalog and product line photography fast, efficient, and attractive.

This lesson will show a standard table-top set up using umbrellas to shoot our model car. Then we will use our large light tent to shoot the same car. You can judge which is the better shot.
Topics Covered:

* Shooting with umbrellas
* Shooting with a Large light tent

Equipment Used:

* 2 Strobes with Soft Boxes on Standard Light Stands.
* 2 Strobes with Umbrellas on Standard Light Stands.
* 1-Medium Light Tent (or Cube)
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities

This shows a standard 2-umbrella set up to shoot a model RC car on a table top.

This is the result shot. The image is not bad, but it could be better. There are reflections of the umbrellas on the windows and the hood.

Now we can show how the large light tent works to shoot the same model car.
The front of the large light tent has a zippered front flap for accessing the inside of the shooting tent.

A small strobe with soft box was placed to the right front of the large light tent.

This shows a higher angle of the one-light set up.

Notice that the front panel is now closed. The camera lens can extend into the large light tent through a vertical zippered port (figure 6).

This is the result of our one-light set up (figure 7).
We placed our second Small Strobe with soft box to the left of the Large LiteRoom (figure 8).

Here in figure 9, you get a lower angle view of the two-light set up.

This is the result of our two-light set up.

Notice how the Large Lite Tent provides near shadowless lighting.

Once the lights are in place, you are free to move your product as you please. We moved the RC controller, changed the position of the car and changed the lens on the camera, all without having to move the lights.
Taking professional-looking pictures for posters, catalogs or Web sites can be broken down to a few key elements: lighting equipment and technique, camera quality, subject matter, and an adventurous spirit. As with everything, the more you practice, the better you get. But thanks to improved and more affordable camera and lighting equipment, there has never been a better time to learn how to take professional photographs.

**Topics Covered:**

* How to light large objects in the studio  
* How to light an object to naturally drop out the background

**Equipment Used:**

* 2 or 3 Strobes with Soft Boxes on Standard or Boom Light Stands.  
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
LIGHTING

In product photography, lighting is the most important aspect of a great image. You may be shooting something very beautiful, but unless you take the time to light it well, its beauty may not be captured in the final image.

To illustrate, we decided to photograph this state-of-the-art mountain bike. Because of its size and reflective qualities, the bike presents some photographic challenges.

![Figure 1](image1)

We began by putting a strobe with a large soft box directly overhead (figure 1).

![Figure 2](image2)

Then we placed two strobes with large soft boxes on each side of the set (figure 2).

![Figure 3](image3)

In order to make the background completely white so we could avoid hours of Photoshop work to cut around the spokes, we put two more strobes with soft boxes in the back on the left and right, aimed at the white seamless paper background.

![Figure 4](image4)

The background and foreground have now gone white except for the shadows under the tires, and the bike is still at a good exposure. We can see detail in both the highly reflective metal surfaces and detail in the black tires (figure 4).

NOTE: We did a quick two-minute Photoshop application to remove the bar on the seat that was holding up the bike.
We repositioned the lights for photographing close-up features of the bike (Figures 5 - 9).
When it comes to shooting professional-looking product shots, it is imperative to use good lighting tools. The softbox is arguably the most important of these tools. A well-designed softbox will provide you with even, diffused light that will render your subject beautifully and naturally.

**Topics Covered:**

* Positioning the camera for proper distance and angle
* Using strobes, soft boxes, and reflectors

**Equipment Used:**

* 1 or 2 Strobes with Soft Boxes on Standard or Boom Light Stands.
* Large reflectors (Silver or Gold)
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
For our first setup, we placed a soft box head on a strobe using both the inner baffle and the front diffusion. We then attached the strobe with softbox on a light stand behind our set (figure 1).

![Figure 1](image1)

Broader reflection across top of shoes

Front sections still dark

Here we see the soft, broad reflections produced by the softbox on the shoes.

![Figure 2](image2)

Adding a LitePanel fill

In this setup, we added a large silver reflector to the left side of our set to act as a fill.

![Figure 3](image3)

Reflection of Silver LitePanel

Here we see the results of the silver reflector, adding a clean, bright reflective fill to the shadows of the shoes.

![Figure 4](image4)
In this shot, we have added another strobe with softbox with the inner baffle and front diffusion installed. We then replaced the LitePanel with the softbox and strobe lighting setup.

Here we see the results, the addition of the second strobe and softbox adds a soft broad highlight along the side of both shoes and helps to separate them from each other.

This is our final results shot.
In this lesson we will take the mystery out for shooting reflective spheres by using a new and innovative take on an old standard lighting tool, the shooting enclosure.

**Topics Covered:**

* Installing a sweep in a light tent (or cube)
* Suspending subjects in a light tent (or cube)
* Controlling reflections on a sphere
Equipment Used:

* 2 Strobes with Soft Boxes on Standard Light Stands.
* 1-Medium Light Tent (or Cube)
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
* Fishing line and various clamps

We used Velcro™ fasteners to secure a backdrop inside of the medium light tent (figure 1).

The backdrop is put into place. The excess material can be cut away (figure 2).

Now we have a nice sweep backdrop in our light tent (figure 3).

To suspend our ornament, we placed a pencil across the opening of the connector at the top of the light tent (figure 4).
Fishing line was used to hang the ornament from the pencil.

Evergreen needles were placed around the subject. These were held in position with “A” type spring clamps.

The first strobe with the soft box. Was placed behind and to the right of the light tent.
This shows another angle of our light set up.

Figure 8

This image shows the result of this one light set up.

Figure 9
The second strobe with the soft box was placed at the front, left side of the light tent.

Figure 10

This shows another angle of our 2-light set up.

Figure 11
This image shows the effect of lighting with only the front strobe with the soft box.

Figure 12

Our final image lit with both of the strobes with the soft boxes positioned around the light tent.

Figure 13
When it comes to photographing still life scenes indoors, the photographer’s primary objective is to make the lighting look as natural as possible. Soft boxes are wonderful lighting tools to use for both still life scenes and portraits, as they are designed to simulate natural window light. However, there are many different shapes and sizes of soft box, each designed for specific applications.

**Equipment Used:**

* 1- Strobe and Soft Box on a Standard Light Stand or a Boom and Boom Stand
* Camera with Infraed Slave Triggering Capabilities
**Topics Covered:**

* This lesson will demonstrate side lighting vs. top lighting

Here we see the strobe with a soft box on a standard light stand positioned to the side of the lamp.

Figure 1

Here we see the results, a long clean highlight along the side of the vase.

Figure 2

Here we see the strobe with a soft box on a boom-stand positioned above the lamp and to the side.

Figure 3

Here we see the results. The flowers a well lit and the vase has upper reflections.

Figure 4
In the world of commercial catalog photography, the need to shoot a product on several backgrounds is very common. In these situations when you have a big product line to get through, the speed and simplicity of your plan will make all the difference. With these thoughts in mind, we will employ the “shooting tent” style of lighting in this lesson.

The idea of the shooting tent has been around a long time, and there are quite a few adequate products on the market. The idea is to place the product in a controlled setting, to create a soft forgiving light that is easy to set up and retain.

**Topics Covered:**

* The shooting tent; explained
* Double diffusion; the ultimate in soft light
* Changing backgrounds with the lite tent.
Equipment Used:

* 2 Strobes with Soft Boxes on Standard Light Stands.
* 1-Medium Light Tent (or Cube)
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
* Background material to place under object

We set up our light tent on the tabletop and positioned our camera. Then we set up one strobe to the left and one to the right.

We got great results with this easy to build light setup. Now we can make adjustments to our product shot without moving our camera or lights.

Some light tents are bottomless (shown here) and some are not. Changing background material under your product will be different for each type.

We placed a sheet of brushed aluminum on our table-top. The light tent will be place on top. If you are using a light tent with a bottom, you will have to insert your material into the tent and lay it on the bottom.
Once the background and subject are in place, the vertical port can cover the lens barrel to seal out unwanted light contamination (figure 5).

Flaps on the tent can be opened to make subject adjustments easy to perform (figure 6).

Here we sprayed a mixture of water and glycerin on our sunglasses and background (figure 7).

The zippered front is closed up again (figure 8).
We are now ready to shoot. This is our results shot after a few position and exposure changes.

This set-up is effective for any small object that you would want to photograph. You may want to change the background or positioning to match the theme of these different objects.
A local collector wanted to put his guitars up for auction but felt that his photographs didn’t do justice to the high quality of craftsmanship and beautiful details of his guitars. We showed him how a few key changes in set up and lighting could create dramatic results in his images.

**Topics Covered:**

* Simple lighting techniques for dramatic product shots
* The use of reflectors and diffusers
**Equipment Used:**

* 1 Strobe with Soft Box on Standard Light Stands
* 1 or 2 Large Reflectors on an Adjustable Stand
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities

Here we setup a strobe with soft box on a stand. It was placed above and to the side of the object.

Here we see the soft light produced by the soft box and strobe. However, the background is too bright.

In this setup we have installed 40° Grids to the softbox. This will direct the light onto the guitar and block the light from the backdrop.

In this results image we see the light control the grids add to the lighting setup. The light spill onto backdrop is now much more in control (figure 4).
In this setup shot, we have added a 39”x39” LitePanel with the white reflector cover as a fill. We also added a 32” MultiDisc with the soft gold surface bouncing warm light into the subject.

We now have a great shot of this guitar, showing all the beautiful details and the rich, warm color of the wood (figure 6).

To get a close-up shot we put the guitar on a platform, then repositioned the softbox strobe and a multiDisc reflector (figure 7).

We got great lighting for this using only a main light and reflector fill (figure 8).
Sometimes you can set up a simple lighting solution to make your detail and overall shots look professionally lit. However, with larger products a simple lighting solution doesn’t always work, and you must be prepared to modify or change your lighting for different surface textures or colors of your subject matter.

Topics Covered:

* Creating wrap-around light
* Creating a warm fill
* The importance of shooting detail shots
Equipment Used:

* 2 Strobes with Different Sized Soft Boxes on Standard Light Stands.
* 1 Strobes with Soft Box on an adjustable Boom Light Stand.
* 1 large reflectors on adjustable stands
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities

We first set up a softbox strobe to the left of the guitar, up high and aiming slightly down.

This time we set-up a larger softbox strobe with a brighter setting in the same place.

This is the result. The larger softbox provides a light source that covers the entire product better.
We added a 39”x72” aluminum reflector panel frame for a warm fill on the right. The panel was attached to a lite stand with simple studio clamps.

This is the result.

To get a detail shot of the product, we placed a softbox strobe overhead on a boom and Boom Stand.

This is the result.
Lighting and photographing two-dimensional objects such as framed paintings and prints can be tricky. This lesson will show a couple of tried-and-true tricks for getting great results.

**Topics Covered:**

* Getting the proper perspective  
* Setting up lights  
* Avoiding lens distortions

**Equipment Used:**

* 2 Strobes with Soft Boxes on Standard Light Stands.  
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
When photographing artwork, the angle of the camera to the artwork is very important. The camera should be positioned on center to the artwork to avoid a distortion of perspective (figure 1).

Center-alignment of the camera will result in the rendering the perspective properly (figure 2).
The first light should be positioned to one side of the artwork.

The lit side of the artwork is brighter than the unlit side.

The second light should be placed on the other side of the artwork at the same angle and distance of the first light.
The artwork is now lit properly.

We need to fix the problem we see with lens distortion “pushing out” the sides of the frame. This problem occurs when the camera is too close to the artwork when using a wide angle lens (figure 6).

Figure 6

Moving the camera back and using a longer focal length lens setting will “flatten out” the lens distortion (figure 7).

Figure 7

We now have an undistorted copy of the artwork that is lit brightly and evenly (figure 8).

Figure 8
Using Photoshop, the frame’s surrounding areas were removed adding a nice finishing touch to our final image (figure 9).

Figure 9
Controlling the color and contrast of any image can be a snap. This project will show a soft box which allows you to change interior panels which can change the contrast as well as the color of the light output by the box. This lesson will take you through some simple examples and show how this type of softbox can effect your images in a positive light.

**Topics Covered:**

* Setting the main light  
* Using the gold panel inserts  
* Using the circle mask

**Equipment Used:**

* 1 Strobe with Soft Box on Standard Light Stand (Changeable interior panels are used here)  
* Large diffusor panel (translucent fabric)  
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
In figure 2 we see the results, very soft highlights and clean even light (figure 2).

To add some warmth and help set a mood, we will add the gold interior panels to warm the output of the light. This figure shows the softbox with the gold panels installed. The baffle and front diffusion face have been removed (figure 3).

Set up the strobe with softbox without interior panels installed and both the interior baffle and front face installed. We have also placed a large diffusor over the subject, to give the soft box a double diffusion effect (figure 1).

Figure 4 shows our result. We see the color effect we want but the contrast is much too great and our shadows have blocked up.
Figure 5 shows the softbox in the final configuration and placement. We have also added a 42 inch reflector with the white side bouncing some fill into our final shot.

Figure 6 is our final result. We see the warm soft feeling we wanted from the light and the contrast and shadows are under control thanks to the proper configuration of diffusion and fill.
Shooting fine jewelry can present a big challenge to those without photographic experience and, for that matter, to a seasoned pro as well.

When you consider the high contrast of most pieces of fine jewelry, lighting these items can be a headache. Making the metal look good and getting just the right sparkle in the stones may seem impossible. With the help of the proper lighting tool this task can be a snap.

In this lesson we will use a medium light tent that will allow you to shoot your jewelry and other small items with professional results.

**Topics Covered:**

* Using your on-camera flash unit
* The pitfalls of the reflector light
* The good, the bad, and the ugly of using umbrellas
* Using the LiteRoom Kit
Equipment Used:

* 2 Strobes with Soft Boxes on Standard Light Stands.
* 1-Small Light Tent (or Cube)
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities

For comparison purposes, we took a shot of this emerald ring using a flash mounted on top of our camera. A piece of reflective material was held behind the ring to bounce some of the light back into the ring (figure 1).

Figure 1

Our shot shows a very high-contrast lighting and a harsh, unattractive shadow (figure 2).

Figure 2
The flash was removed from the camera and a reflector light was placed to the right of the ring.

Figure 3

Again, we have the same problem with harsh light and shadows.

Figure 4

Another reflector light was placed to the left of the ring as a fill light.

Figure 5
The lighting is much better, but the shadows are still too prominent and the highlight on the inside of the ring is too stark (figure 6).

The reflector lights were replaced with two umbrella bounce lights (figure 7).

The broader light produced with the umbrellas will soften the shadows.
The shadows are much better. However, the dark and light areas on the inside of the ring are still too distractive. We can do better (figure 8).

We set up a medium light tent on the tabletop and repositioned the ring inside.

A small strobe with soft box was positioned to the right (figure 9).

The result shot shows great improvement. The lighting is soft and pleasing.

We can make it even more vibrant (figure 10).
A second small strobe with soft box-was positioned to the left (figure 11).

This combination of a medium light tent and two small strobes is a standard set-up of jewelry.

Figure 11

The 2 soft lights and tent produced a beautiful, nearly shadowless, wrap-around light (figure 12).

The inside of the ring is now well lit and much more attractive than the previous shots.

Figure 12

For a more dramatic photo, we placed a piece of tile inside the light tent as a backdrop (figure 13).
The series of shots below show the progression of our lighting solutions for this ring.

- Flash on Camera
- One Reflector Light
- Two Reflector Lights
- Two Umbrellas
- Light Tent With One Light
- Light Tent With Two Lights
- Light Tent With Two Lights With Different Background
Lighting and photographing jewelry is one of the more challenging endeavors in studio photography for a couple of reasons.

First, you need to be able to bring your camera in close enough to capture the essence and details of the jewelry you’re photographing. And secondly, you need to be able to light the jewelry naturally, while simultaneously controlling and modifying reflections, which can be very unwieldy.

This lesson explores some basic studio techniques for capturing the charm and craftsmanship of fine jewelry.

**Equipment Used:**

* 1 Strobe with a Soft Sox on a Standard Light Stand.
* 1 Small Reflector Card and a Small Clamp System to Hold it.
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
Topics Covered:

* The Presentation
* The Before Shot
* Throwing Soft Light
* Adjusting Reflective Shapes
* Bouncing Light from the Main
* Adding Sparkle
* Adding Color
* Comparisons

The Presentation
For this lesson, we wanted to demonstrate how to go about lighting and photographing jewelry using just one light and a couple of reflectors. Our concept was to create a 3/4 overhead view of two wedding bands and an engagement ring propped up in an antique soap dish with course sea salt.

For many jewelry dealers and resellers, it often pays to get creative with props like this for marketing purposes. As any ad agency will tell you, the presentation of a product in marketing collateral is generally more important than the actual product itself.

First, we rolled in a homemade, plywood shooting table, suspended a 4-foot wide roll of white seamless background paper, and clipped the front end of the paper to the table using spring clamps. [figure 1]

We placed the soap dish near the front right corner of the table so that we could have flexibility in positioning our camera and lighting gear. Once we had the rings arranged, we positioned a tripod-mounted digital SLR with a 50mm macro lens attached in close and framed up the shot (figure 2).

The Before Shot
For comparison purposes, we first took a fully automatic shot with the built-in flash enabled (figure 3).
In the result shot, we noticed a couple of things right away. First, the quality of light was plain and flat. While the rings were illuminated adequately, there was no real sense of depth to the shot, and there was a hard shadow cast in the lower half of the shot.

Secondly, the wide aperture setting [automatically set to f/2.0] on the macro lens caused the depth of field to be so shallow that the cherub holding the soap dish was simply rendered as a big blur.

**Throwing Soft Light**

The first step in improving the shot was to disable the built-in flash. To illuminate the scene with a softer quality of light, we set up a small Strobe with softbox and positioned it at a 135-degree angle to the right of the camera (figure 4).

Next, we set the exposure mode in the camera to Manual, which would allow us to adjust the aperture setting and shutter settings. We set the aperture to f/10, set the shutter speed to accommodate a good exposure and took another shot (figure 5).
With just this one light, we see a big improvement. The shadows are soft and gradual, the lighting on the rings looks more natural, and there is an increased sense of dimension to the shot overall.

However, on closer inspection, we noticed two more things. First, the back of the cherub was overexposed since it was white, reflective, and closest to the soft box. If we kept the light where it was and wanted to maintain the overall exposure, we would need to place a scrim or makeshift gobo (“go-between”) in between the cherub and the light to prevent it from being overexposed.

Secondly, we noticed that the bands of the rings looked a little too dark. This is a common situation with rings and other jewelry, as they tend to reflect everything in the room. In the front of the men’s wedding band, you can see the reflection on the soft box, which is quite small in relation to the rest of the reflection. The rest is mostly underexposed ceiling.

**Adjusting Reflective Shapes**

Instead of settling on that shape and size of reflection, we decided to reposition the soft box to see how it would affect both the reflection in the rings, as well as the exposure on the cherub’s back.

For the next shot, we positioned the soft box at more of a 90-degree angle. Without changing the camera settings, we took another shot (figures 6 & 7).
In the result shot, we saw that the reflection in the men’s band was now more than twice the size, but that the shape was not very aesthetically pleasing.

When shooting reflective objects like jewelry or cookware, it’s very important to pay attention to the shapes you create in the reflections. Soft boxes, with their uniformity, can do wonders in creating and controlling these shapes.

Next, we angled the soft box so that it was coming more from behind the soap dish and really close to it. Remember, the closer your soft box is to your subject, the larger the reflection becomes. Looking through the viewfinder, we could easily see the shape the soft box was making.

Once it was angled where we wanted it, we took another shot (figures 8 & 9).
Now you can see that the reflection follows the shape of the ring a little more and that we’ve maintained the natural quality of the light. Also notice that the light on the cherub’s back is no longer overexposed and that the deeper depth of field allows us to make out the features of the cherub more clearly.

**Comparisons**
Below is a side-by-side look of the effects of the soft box in its various positions (figure 10).

**Bouncing Light from the Main**
Next, we decided to bounce a little light from the soft box back into the rings and shadow sections of the soap dish. We decided to use a 39x39” LitePanel with white fabric, but realized that it was going to be tricky getting it in close to the rings with the shooting table set up the way it was.

We also wanted to be able to angle the LitePanel on the set to optimize the light bounce from the strobe and soft box. So we first mounted a Main & T Clamp to the end of a LiteDisc Holder (figures 11 & 12).
We then secured the LiteDisc Holder to a sturdy light stand, attached the LitePanel to the Main & T Clamp, and positioned it to the left of the rings. This set-up then allowed us to easily angle the LitePanel to the optimal reflective position (figures 13 & 14).

Without making any changes to the camera settings, we took another shot (figure 15).
The biggest change to the shot was the reduction of overall contrast. Notice how the shadow areas of the cherub are now much brighter in tone. You can also make out the reflection of the LitePanel in the women’s wedding band to the left.

**Adding Sparkle**

With the overall contrast set to where we wanted it to be, we net focused on adding more sparkle to the diamonds. While we could have added another StarFlash strobe with a Snoot and Grid attached to throw some hard light on the diamonds, we decided to keep it simple and just add a small reflective silver card to the mix. We used a flexible arm clamp to position it in place (figures 16 & 17).

With the reflection looking good through the viewfinder, we took another shot (figure 18).
Notice how this small card had added a significant amount of punch to the rings. Again, there are several different ways to pull out the sparkle in jewelry like this, but this is probably one of the simplest.

Below, you can see the differences these two reflectors have made in the results. The first comparison examines the entire frame, while the second comparison focuses on just the rings. [figures 19 & 20]
Adding Color

At this point, we were pretty happy with the results. The only thing that was bothersome was that the shot felt a little too monochromatic. As a last-minute fix, we decided to slide a piece of painted foam core under the soap dish to add a little color. [figure 21]

Once this was in position, we rechecked focus and took a final shot. [figure 22]

The sea green background was just the thing to complete the shot. The small soft box and reflectors worked well to render the rings naturally and effectively.
When compared to the very first shot we took, you can see how far we came with the lighting! [figure 23]

Remember that while we just used one small soft box and a couple of reflectors, jewelry sets can get fairly intricate with many different lights, reflectors, gobos, etc., involved. As you add lights and lighting modifiers to your arsenal, you’ll discover how best to incorporate them into your basic lighting approach. Keep in mind that it’s always best to start simple and then build to it from there.

As always, remember to experiment with your lights and have fun!
When it comes to photographing jewelry, there are different approaches to consider with regards to how each particular piece will come across. Your choice of background is one consideration. Another is whether or not to include props within your shots. Still another is establishing a lighting style that is either soft or higher in contrast. This demonstration shows how softboxes can be configured to achieve various contrast levels when shooting jewelry.

Topics Covered:
* Setting up for high contrast
* Setting up for average contrast
* Setting up for soft lighting
* Filling in shadows with a 12” reflector
Equipment Used:

* 1 Strobe with a Soft Box on Standard Light Stands.
* 1 Small 12” Reflector on an Adjustable Stand
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities

A strobe with soft box was set up on the left side of the shooting table. The front diffusion face and the inner baffle of the soft box has been removed.

This shot shows our subject lit with the resulting high contrast light (figure 2).

We added the inner baffle to soften up the light.

The result is a softer light that is lower in contrast.
We left the inner baffle in the soft box and added the front diffusion panel (figure 5).

The light output is even softer here (figure 6).

We placed a 12” LiteDisc reflector to the right of our subject. This will bounce light from the soft box into the shadow side of our set (figure 7).

Here, figure 8, shows a closer view of our reflector set up.
The shadows are now softer and brighter than before (figure 8).

Below we show the progression of shots in our demonstration.

No baffle or diffusion face
With baffle / No diffusion face
With baffle and diffusion face
With baffle, diffusion face, and reflector fill
Cameos are a favorite item for many collectors. For those who want to photograph cameos for online sales and auctions, this lesson will show how to easily and properly light these items to bring out the texture and beauty of each piece.

**Topics Covered:**

* Setting the main light
* Setting the fill light
Equipment Used:

* 2 Strobes with a Soft Box on Standard Light Stands.
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities

The cameo is placed close to the front edge of a shooting surface so that the camera can get in close.

The goal when shooting cameos is to bring out the relief of the piece. This image (figure 2) shows the difference in light setup and results for flat lighting and textured lighting. We used the textured lighting approach for this lesson.

The first light is positioned low to the front of the cameo to broadcast larger shadow areas.

This is the result of using only the main light.
While we achieved good texture rendition for this piece, the darker side still needs to be lit better.

Figure 5

The fill light was set to the right of the cameo and a little further back than the main light. Notice that the fill light is also a little farther away than the main light (The main light was about 7 inches from the cameo, the fill was about 12 inches away).

Figure 6

This shot shows the lighting set up (figure 7).

Figure 7

Here is the result of shooting with only the main light (figure 8).

Figure 8
Here is the result of shooting with both the main light and the fill light (figure 9).
In commercial photography, there is a particular type of shot that lends itself to web and print layouts, which is called the “silhouetted shot.” If produced correctly, the object will appear to be sitting in a white room surrounded by light. It is a very clean style because it looks natural on a white page and is not confined to a square or rectangular frame.

Much of the success of a silhouetted shot is dependent on lighting, which to many might seem complicated and expensive. As you’ll discover in this lesson, however, this does not necessarily have to be the case.

This lesson demonstrates how to create a natural-looking silhouetted shot with very simple and inexpensive lighting tools and a little digital editing.
Equipment Used:

* 2 - 3 Strobes on Standard Light Stands.
* 1-Medium Light Tent (or Cube)
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
* Photoshop or Comparable Image Editing Program

Topics Covered:

* The Window-lit Shot
* Built-in Flash Lighting
* Shooting with Hard Lights
* Diffusing Light with a LiteIgloo
* Backlighting for a Natural Look

The Window-lit Shot
To demonstrate the silhouetted technique, we decided to photograph a strainer full of peppers. For comparison sake, we started with taking pictures of the peppers the way most people would tackle such a shot. After arranging the peppers in the strainer, we placed the strainer on a dining room table, mounted a digital camera to a tripod and framed up the shot. In this situation, the light from the windows would serve to illuminate the shot. (Figure 1)

We made the following adjustments to the camera settings:
**White Balance:** Daylight, or 5000K
**Flash:** Disabled
**Shooting Mode:** Manual exposure (allows aperture and shutter speed to be configured manually)
**ISO:** 100

We framed the shot and set the aperture to f/18 to ensure adequate depth of field and adjusted the shutter speed to render a good exposure, which in this case was half a second.

The result shows a fairly natural looking result, although there is quite a bit of contrast to the shot, even though it is lit with indirect window light. Notice how bright (and over-exposed) the strainer is on the left-hand side, while the peppers on the right-hand side are hidden in shadow. (Figure 2)
Built-in Flash Lighting
Next, we decided to use the flash of the camera to show how this lighting would affect the shot. After enabling the flash, we set the Exposure Mode to Auto and took an exposure (figures 3 & 4).

Figure 3
Figure 4

As expected, this type of lighting has produced a flat, unnatural look to the peppers. Because the light from the flash is traveling in the same direction as the lens, it tends to flatten out any sense of dimension. While everything is illuminated adequately, the quality of light is that of headlights in the dark -- not exactly the look that makes the mouth water.

Shooting With Hard Lights
Next, we decided to bring in some simple strobe lights on stands in order to better control the lighting of the shot. We first set one light to the right of the peppers and angled it to illuminate the side (figure 5).

Figure 5

When the light was where we wanted it, we disabled the flash on the camera, set the Exposure Mode back to Manual Exposure, adjusted the shutter speed for exposure and took another shot.
This result is similar to the first window light shot in that the contrast is very high. (figure 6)

Figure 6

With the small light source to the side, its “hard light” rakes across the peppers to create both bright and dark areas of the shot. Had we been using a larger light source, like a large soft box, these reflections would be larger and softer and the light would “wrap around” the peppers in a smooth, gradual way.
In an attempt to reduce the contrast somewhat here, we decided to bring in the second light to the other side of the set. This light would fill in the shadows cast from the first light. Once this was in position, we took another shot at the same exposure settings (figures 7 & 8).

As you can see, these two lights together help to illuminate every area of the peppers. And because these lights are both placed 90-degrees to the camera, they do a much better job at creating dimension to the shot, as compared to the built-in flash example, where the light is traveling at the same angle as the lens.

But even though the peppers are illuminated well in this shot, the quality of the light is not representative of light that would be flooding a room. And because we wanted to create a shot that feels like it’s in a soft white room, we needed to modify the light to further develop the shot.

Diffusing Light With A Lite tent or cube
What do you do when you don’t have a room illuminated with light? You bring the room to the set! For photographers who don’t have a lot of money to spend on multiple lighting fixtures and large soft boxes, there are light tents or cubes. These devices are made of the same fabric used in soft boxes, and works to diffuse “hard light” in the same way. To illustrate, we first placed the peppers into a light cube (figure 9).
For the first shot with the light tent, we turned on only the left-hand light, adjusted the shutter speed for exposure and took a shot (figure 10).

Notice the difference in the quality of light in the result. Because the light has illuminated a good portion of the light cube and diffused the light source, the quality of light is now soft and gradual. Notice the light transition at the base of the strainer and the broad, even reflections in the peppers.

Next, we turned on the other light and took a shot at the same exposure (figure 11).

As you can see from the result, the peppers are now beautifully illuminated on all sides while still maintaining a nice sense of dimension. You could stop here and have a great shot to drop out the background and place on a white page.

Figure 10

Figure 11

**Backlighting For A Natural Look**

However, in this case we wanted to finesse the light a little further to create an even more authentic looking shot. Some of the most convincing “silo” shots are the ones in which the subject matter is backlit. This type of lighting lends itself better to these types of shots as it tends to look more natural and not “cut out.”

So here, we simply moved the lights toward the rear of the LiteIgloo and pivoted each one so that they both faced the LiteIgloo directly (figures 12 & 13).
After we repositioned the lights, we came around to the front and peered into the light cube to see how the light was looking on the peppers. After doing so, we repositioned one of the lights slightly, found the lighting we wanted and took another shot (figure 14).

The result shows a beautifully backlit shot that is even more dimensional than the previous result.
Finishing Touches
Once we had the lighting where we wanted it, we decided to enhance the shot even further by adding fresh mist to the shot, as well as dropping out the background digitally with an image editing program like Photoshop (figure 15).
As most product photographers know, lighting and photographing highly reflective objects can be somewhat challenging. However, once you have the right lighting tools and have experimented a little with some basic lighting and camera techniques, you’ll be surprised with how many different ways you can go about creating professional-looking images, and with how easy the whole process can be.
Topics Covered:

* Deciding on a Background
* Using a Built-in Flash
* Modifying Reflections with a Soft Box
* Double-Diffusing with LitePanels
* Adjusting the Tonal Gradation and Contrast of the Shot

Equipment Used:

* 1- large Strobe on Boom Stand.
* 1- LitePanel 39x72” Fabric Translucent
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
* Reflective background material. (4x4’ sheet of black plexiglass)

Building the Set
As with any product shot, it is important to take some time to consider what type of background you want to use, as this can make a big difference in your final result. Since the turtle we were shooting here was highly reflective, we thought it would work well to accentuate this attribute by using a reflective background surface. And since the turtle’s silver finish was light in tone, we decided to use a black reflective background to create a tonally rich, dynamic look.

Our set was fairly simple and quick to put together. We set up two sawhorses in the corner of a small home office, placed a 4x2’ sheet of plywood on top of the sawhorses for support, and placed a 4x4’ sheet of Plexiglas over the plywood to serve as our background. We then mounted a digital camera to a tripod, placed the turtle on the Plexiglas and framed up the shot.

Built-in Flash Lighting
To demonstrate how most people would go about shooting an object like this, we set the camera to the Program (fully automatic) mode, activated the built-in flash and took a shot (figures 1 & 2).
As you can see, this snapshot result is not much to look at. Although the overall shot is too dark, the main problem with this type of built-in flash lighting is that it renders its subjects flatly. By flat, we mean there is a limited sense of dimension to the object. And since the flash is such a small light source, it often creates high contrast results with harsh, unnatural-looking shadows. Here, you can see the small reflection of the flash in the turtle, but the rest of the turtle is dark and shapeless.

**SOFTBOX LIGHTING**

To remedy this lighting of the shot, we deactivated the built-in flash, set up a strobe with a softbox on a boom and started out by placing it about 2 feet directly above the turtle. We checked our exposure and took a shot (Figures 3 & 4).

![Figure 3](image1.jpg)

![Figure 4](image2.jpg)

As you can see from this result, the lighting is dramatically different from that of the first result. You can make out the reflection of the soft box in the center of the shell of the turtle and see that the reflection in the Plexiglas is much more defined. Still, there are several areas of the turtle that are too dark to make out clearly, including the head and the rest of the shell.

To increase the amount of light reflecting into the top of the turtle, we simply lowered the soft box to within 6 inches of the Plexiglas and checked through the viewfinder to see the effect. The top of the turtle was now completely reflecting back the overhead soft box and the overall shape was much more defined. Once everything was in position, we took another shot (figures 5 & 6).

The result was greatly improved over the previous shot and had a very clean, graphic look to it. To see how to achieve even more detail and dimension for this object, read on!
DOUBLE DIFFUSING
To increase the sense of dimension and detail of the shot, we decided to diffuse the overhead light even more by placing a 39x72” LitePanel Frame in-between the turtle and the soft box. We placed one end of the frame on the back end of the Plexiglas and used a 2218 LiteStand and a Main & T Clamp to support the front end of the frame at about a 20-degree angle. We then positioned the soft box at the same angle as the LitePanel and placed it over the rear section of the frame to illuminate the LitePanel Fabric (figures 7 & 8). This brightened the reflection off the Plexiglas.
Once everything was in position, we took another shot (figure 9).

Notice now how the background has become a neutral gray. This gray section is actually the reflection of illuminated LitePanel Fabric overhead, and it allows us to make out the shape of the turtle more clearly. Additionally, it softens the edges of the reflections in the shell because the light cast onto the LitePanel has a smooth gradation to it.

The only part of the shot that was still too dark was the underside of the head of the turtle. Rather than adding a second light to the shot, we chose simply to place the soft box over the front end of the LitePanel in order to throw some light underneath the turtle (figures 10 & 11).
Once this last adjustment was made, we took our final shot (figure 12). Notice the amazing reflections in the turtle and the centering of the reflection in the glass background below.

Figure 12
In the following lesson, we show how simple it is to go anywhere and shoot products with the look, quality and control the studio offers, but without all the equipment. Our LiteRoom shooting enclosure can be used in your yard, at the park, or even at the beach with the sun providing all the light you need.

**Equipment Used:**

* 1-Medium Light Tent (or Cube)
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
* LitePanel 39x39” Fabric White/Soft Gold

**Topics Covered:**

* Using a Lite Tent shooting enclosure outside
* Using a LitePanel reflector to add highlights
We set up our light tent on a beach for a sandy set top (figure 1). The sand was smoothed out and a piece of driftwood was positioned as a prop.

The light tent is easily assembled. Set up takes about a minute.

In figure 2, we see the placement of the light tent we chose for our shot. Shooting in the morning or late afternoon when the sun is low in the sky is preferable. The result can be a nice side lighting.

We chose to use side lighting from the left. Our enclosure’s position is apparent from the shadow cast on the sand.

Other than the camera and tripod, we used three items for this lighting solution, a shooting enclosure, a reflector, and a light stand. Keep in mind that good results can be achieved using just the shooting enclosure. Even better results are possible when adding a reflector.

The light tent shooting enclosure is simply a framework with translucent fabric attached, much like a tent. The translucent fabric softens the sunlight for softer shadows and lower contrast. Two sizes (large and medium) are available and are generally used for table-top shooting.

The light tent used in this shoot is unlike most enclosures since it is floorless. This allows the shooter to place the enclosure just about anywhere and have a nice set top, as we have done here at the beach.
The camera was set low to the ground on a tripod (figure 3).

The camera and tripod were placed into position (figure 4). The camera lens fits inside the front of the enclosure box.

To take this shot to the next level we set up a 39X39 inch LitePanel and attached a soft gold/white cover with the soft gold side out. We then attached a T clamp to a light stand and placed this assembly on the right side of the light tent. The reflector will bounce the sun back into our shot adding a warm highlight to the shadow side of our shot (figure 6).

With the set and camera ready, we fired off our first shot. In our result image (figure 5), we see how the light tent has softened the hard sunlight and given us a diffused light quality. We have the wrapping highlights, soft rich shadow detail, and complete control of the overall contrast of the image.
With our reflector in place we framed up our shot and made another exposure (figure 7).

Below is a comparison of the first shot (figure 8) taken without a reflector and the second shot (figure 9) taken with reflected light from the right side.

Shot without a reflector

Shot with a reflector on the right
Figure 10 below is a close up of these two images to better show the highlights resulting from using a reflector in our lighting solution.

![Figure 10](image10.png)

Replacing items on the set is easy. The enclosure lifts up for easy access to the set top, the items are replaced and posed, and the enclosure is then put back in position.

Figures 11 and 12 show some other product shots of a camera and underwater camera housing we made in the same set up.

![Figure 11](image11.png)

![Figure 12](image12.png)
If you’ve ever tried to photograph clothing for commercial or resale purposes, you know how challenging it can be. Not only do you have to contend with awkward camera angles, access to a shooting space with adequate ceiling height, and be able to create lighting that is natural, even, and dynamic, you also have to make sure the clothing is styled in such a way to make it appealing to customers. Easier said than done! As you’ll soon see, having a photo stylist on set is an absolute must when shooting clothing.

This lesson takes a look at some of the techniques and tools a clothing stylist uses, as well as some dynamic lighting approaches for clothing in the studio.
Topics Covered:

* The Studio Space
* Shooting Surfaces
* Point-and-Shoot Results
* Building The Set
* A Note On Power Settings
* The Working Distance With Hard Light
* Accentuating With Fill
* Readjustments To Styling
* Reducing Overall Contrast
* Enhancements in Photoshop
* Comparisons
* Have Gear, Will Travel

Equipment Used:

* 1- Strobe and Soft Box on a Boom and Boom Stand
* 1- Strobe and soft box on a standard light stand
* 1- Strobe with a 7” reflector
* Camera with Infrared Slave Triggering Capabilities
* Camera stand with extra tall reach (or a platform to place it up on)
* 1 Sheet of Foam Core Boarda

The Studio Space
To show some techniques for photographing and styling clothing, we decided to go on location to a local Portland, Maine photo studio, where several photographers, including Mark Rockwood and François Gagné, do their commercial interior work (figure 1).

Figure 1
Shooting Surfaces

Next, we set up a shooting surface for the sweater, the components of which were kindly loaned to us by the studio. We used a 4’x8’ sheet of plywood-laminated foam board wrapped in duck cloth and supported it waist-high with two sawhorses (figure 4).

Point-and-Shoot Results

For comparative purposes, we decided to place the sweater on the foam board and take an Auto-programmed shot of it with the built-in flash enabled. Note that the photographer here, Ben Clay, did his best to try and style the sweater so that it would look somewhat appealing to a potential buyer (figures 5 & 6).
As you can see, the result was disastrous. The only redeeming quality of this snapshot is simply that it conveys to the viewer that it is indeed a sweater. But due to the poor styling and flat lighting, the result is unappealing and commercially useless.

Fortunately, we just so happened to have a professional photo stylist, Tamara Savage, with us that day to help us out of our sweater-styling bind. She steamed the sweater to eliminate its fold marks and wrinkles and Ben set up the lights.

Figure 6

Building The Set

First, he attached a strobe with soft box to a Boom and Boom Stand. He was careful to counterbalance the stand with a weight bag. He then positioned the light where he wanted it, (figures 7 & 8).

The next issue Ben had to contend with was camera placement. With the set waist high, the camera needed to be mounted even higher to adequately capture the entire sweater. The tripod he had brought would not have been tall enough for this shot, but fortunately, there were two studio monopods available to use in the corner. Ben took the smaller of the two and rolled it over the set (figure 9).

NOTE: Many photographers, when faced with this height issue, simply opt to lower the set so that it rests on or near the ground. The main problem with this is that it makes it significantly more difficult for the stylist to do her work effectively. Bending over and crouching for hours at a time can wreak havoc on a stylist, physically. So if you, as the photographer, plan on shooting more than one shot, be mindful of this working condition.
After mounting the camera to the monopod, Ben grabbed a stepladder and positioned it right next to the monopod. He then raised the camera up on the monopod rail, rotated the camera so that its image plane was nearly parallel to the shooting table, and framed the shot (figure 10).

Ben also set up another 650 W/s strobe with a soft box, and secured it to a light stand. This light would serve as the right hand fill for the shot (figure 11).

**A Note On Power Settings**

Because the overhead 300 W/s strobe did not have an accompanying power pack on the studio floor (these StarFlashes are monobloc strobes), the power settings could only be adjusted at the head. Since Ben set up this light overhead to primarily control the overall level of contrast, he knew that he would not need a lot of light output from this light and set the power to half strength. He figured that if he needed to make adjustments to the lighting ratios later on, he could do so with the other, more accessible, lights.

Once Tamara finished steaming the sweater, she brought it over to the set and began styling it (figure 13).

Once Tamara was ready for a “first”, Ben came in and framed up the shot. Sharp focus in a clothing shot like this is critical, so it helps to have adequate lighting conditions when dialing it in (figure 14).
The Predominant Light
After roughing in the frame, Ben decided to set up his main light, a stand-mounted 650 W/s Strobe with a 7-inch reflector attached. This “hard light” would be the predominant of the three lights in that it would determine the shape and flow of the shadows in the sweater. The other two “soft lights” were simply there to compliment this light and to help control contrast.

For comparative purposes, Ben first started out by positioning this hard light close to the set (figure 15).

Once this light was positioned to create interesting shadows on the sweater, Ben was ready to take a shot. Since he was using a wireless transmitter and receivers, Ben decided to only trigger the hard light for this first shot (figure 16).
The Working Distance With Hard Light

Although the light and shadows on this result show the initial styling in an interesting and natural way, there is one main problem with the hard light’s effect, and that has to do with positioning. It is simply too close to the set.

Notice how the light falls off fairly quickly as it travels from the upper left shoulder to the bottom right sleeve. Without getting into the specifics of the Inverse Square Law, this essentially is due to the fact that the hard light is so close to the set. Think of the sun, 93 million miles away. If by chance we were able to open a curtain in the studio and have the sun’s rays illuminate this sweater in the same direction as the hard light, you would see that the light is even across the sweater.

To keep it simple, just remember that by increasing the distance between a hard light and the subject matter, you will be better able to minimize the effects of perceived light falloff.

To lessen the light falloff here, we simply turned up the power on the main light and positioned it further back at the same relative angle. Once this was dialed in, we took another shot (figures 17 & 18).

While not perfect, the main light now illuminates the sweater with much less falloff. But keep in mind that as we add lights to this shot, the falloff will become increasingly unnoticeable. That said, remember that additional soft lights can only enhance, but not substitute for, the effects of the main light.
Accentuating With Fill
With the main light positioned and powered where we wanted it, we then enabled the overhead and side soft lights to fire on the next shot (figure 19).

As you can see, these fill lights really helped to reduce the overall contrast in the sweater and even out the light somewhat.

For an added touch, Ben held up a piece of white foam core to bounce some of the main light into the bottom areas of the sweater and took another shot (figure 20 & 21).

Readjustments To Styling
In reviewing the shot, Tamara felt that she wanted to restyle the left arm, as it wasn’t flowing as well as the rest of the sweater. After a few moments, she was ready for another shot (figures 23 & 24).

The result was much improved. Now the folds in the arm were more interesting and blended nicely with the rest of the styling.
Reducing Overall Contrast

After reviewing the image, Ben then decided to reduce the contrast just slightly, as well as brighten the overall image. So, first he opened the aperture 2/3 of a stop and then turned the hard light power down by 2/3 of a stop. By opening up the aperture, he was able to brighten the exposure of all of the lights by 2/3 of a stop. But then by powering the hard light down 2/3 of a stop, he was able to keep it at the same exposure level as the previous shot, thereby decreasing the overall contrast.

Once these adjustments were made, and Tamara had made some final styling touches, Ben took another shot (figures 25 & 26).

The shot was really coming together. The styling looked great, as did the lighting. Ideally, the photographer and the stylist work together to balance and accentuate the lighting and the styling. And keep in mind that each article of clothing is different and will require different treatments each time.

For a final touch, Ben decided to bring the bounce card in just a little tighter to fill in the dark shadows near the bottom of the sweater. With everything in place, he took his final shot (figures 27 & 28).

We were both happy with the shot. It had taken just under two hours to unpack the gear, set up the lighting, steam, style and light the sweater. To shoot another article of clothing, would take significantly less time to produce another final image.
Enhancements in Photoshop
Afterward, Ben downloaded the final result and opened it up in Adobe Photoshop for some final image editing touches. Using the Pen tool, he drew a path around the sweater, eliminated the background so that the sweater would rest on pure white and added a drop shadow that mimicked the quality and direction of the hard light (figure 29).

Comparisons
And now for the comparisons. As you can see, the combination of careful lighting and presentation leads to a progression of greatly improved images of our sweater.