

# SIDE LIGHTING IN PHOTOGRAPHY

## GOAL



Capture a photograph using side lighting where the scene or your subject is lit by light from one side.

## SUMMARY

In photography, light affects the mood and looks of a photograph and it is one of the most important factors to keep in mind for great results. There are many ways in which you can light your subject and one of those is side lighting. In this project, we will discuss how side lighting can be used to create flattering images.



Side lighting is where the light hits the subject at an angle from one side and the angle of the light depends on how you place the subject and the light source. Although there are no rules on the angle that needs to be used for side lighting, something between 45 and 60 degrees works well, but feel free to experiment other angles depending on your visual appeal. Each one will give a different result.



Photo by Eugene Chan



Photo by Daniela Cuevas

# THINGS TO REMEMBER:

## 1. STRONG OR SOFT



Depending on the resulting image you are looking to achieve, side lighting can be strong or soft. Strong light can be used for photos that need a dramatic result and soft light can be used for a soft and flattering result, mostly portraits.

## 2. DEPTH



The benefit of using side lighting is that it helps to define the shape and enhance the textures of the subject. Depending on the light, the shadows add depth and contrast to the image.

## 3. EMOTIONS



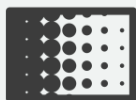
Side lighting is a great way to capture images that show emotions. You can capture soft and dreamy images that feel light and magical or noir kind of images that look dramatic.

## 4. GOLDEN HOUR



When capturing landscapes and architecture, the golden hour is the best time for using side light when the sun is low in the horizon and creates dramatic shadows that show depth and add drama.

## 5. INTENSITY



When using artificial light, make sure that you use the right intensity of light to illuminate the subject. You can make use of any light sources either strong or diffused depending on your goal.

## 6. BACKGROUND

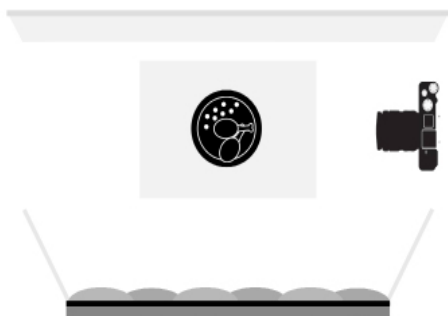


Side lighting helps to separate the subject from the background, but you also need to make sure, especially for portraits, still life, etc., that the background is not cluttered.

# LIGHTING SETUPS:

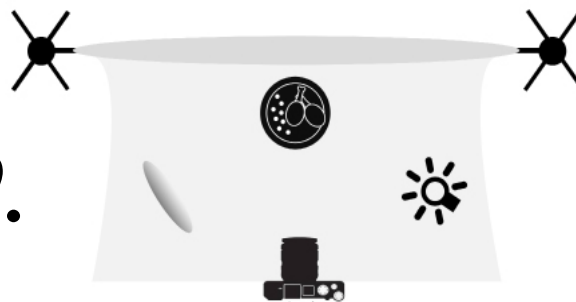
You can use natural light or artificial diffused light. If you see that there are dark shadows that are quite harsh and distracting, you can fill these shadows using a reflector on the opposite side to the light source. Use white reflectors so you get soft white light to fill the shadows. Also, use contrasting colours to capture effective resulting images.

1.



- Natural light

2.



- Artificial light and a reflector

# SETUP FOR SIDE LIT FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY:

## 1. ANGLES



Photo by Cedar Wheeler

If you are capturing a portrait, make sure the soft sunlight falls on the subject from a 45 degrees angle, so you get soft shadows. You can use a reflector if needed to fill in unwanted shadows on the opposite side. Side light from the back at 45 to 60 degrees is great to capture images with rim light. These kinds of images can help capture partial silhouette.

## 3. SHOOTING INDOORS



Photo by Stories

You can also capture interesting photographs like portraits, still life, products, food, etc., indoors using natural light. Use light through the doors and windows and allow them to fall on the subject at an angle of about 45 degrees to side light them. If the light is stronger than you require, make use of curtains, blinds, linen, etc., to diffuse the light.

## 2. PERSPECTIVE



Photo by Isaac Osgood

When using natural light, you cannot change the direction of the light, so you need to position your subject so that light falls at an angle on them. If you cannot move the subject, wait for the sun to fall on them at the desired angle or you can also move around to get the best results. Adjust your perspective, angle, position by moving around.

## 4. ARTIFICIAL LIGHT



Photo by Guilherme Stecanella

When using artificial light, make sure that you use the right intensity of light to illuminate the subject. You can make use of any light sources either strong or diffused depending on the resulting image that you are looking to create. Note that side lighting is great for capturing low key images.

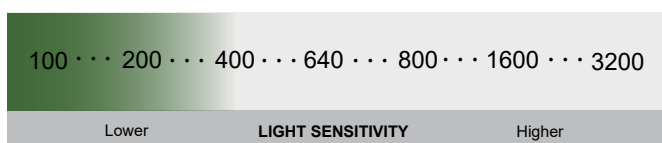
# CAMERA SETTINGS:



Wide Aperture (more light)

Narrow Aperture (less light)

- If you are shooting portraits, products, still life, etc., use aperture values like f/1.8 to f/4 depending on how much of the subject you want in focus. If you are shooting landscape and architecture, shoot between f/7 and f/16 depending on how much of the scene you want in focus.

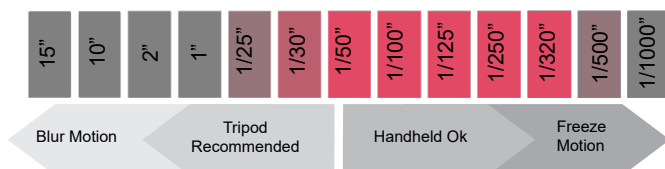


Lower

LIGHT SENSITIVITY

Higher

- Adjust the iso based on the above values to get the desired exposure. It is good to have it at lower values.



- Set the shutter speed to faster than 1/250s to avoid blur. Make sure that it is never slower than 1/focal length taking into account the crop factor.
- When shooting landscapes and architecture, it is good to use a tripod for creative composition. Make sure you turn off image stabilisation and use mirror lockup features for DSLRs.



Photos by Ales Krivec and Ron Jake Roque

## ADDITIONAL TIPS:

1.

Shoot in manual mode and raw format. Adjust the white balance depending on the light in the scene.

2.

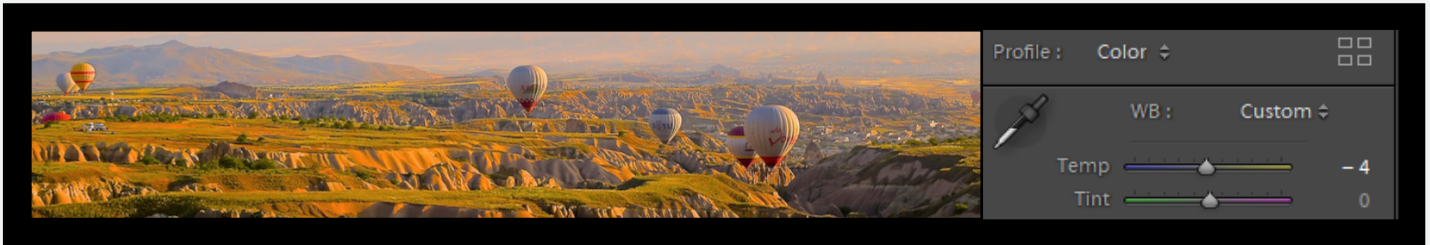
If you are looking for moody images where only the subject needs to be lit and other areas a bit dark, then try spot metering so the camera can expose for the subject and keep other areas slightly dark.



# EDITING:

Once you have done shooting, import the food photos to your favourite post processing application.

1. Adjust the white balance if necessary and crop the image to get the desired composition.



2. Make adjustments to exposure, contrast, highlights, shadows, black and whites. Remove any unwanted elements, spots, etc., if needed. For landscapes and architecture you may need to add a bit of clarity or sharpening.



3. Increase the vibrance if you think that the photograph looks dull without a colour pop.



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