

CAPTURE A PHOTOGRAPH IN A SOFT OR DIFFUSED LIGHTING

GOAL



Create a photograph of food using side lighting.



SUMMARY

Soft light can lend a calm and dreamy mood in images depending on what and how you photograph. Soft lighting can be found naturally or created in a studio or indoor setting for photography.

In this project, we will look at how to use soft or diffused lighting for photography.

Soft or diffused light is light that is filtered by something either naturally or artificially. This light is the one that is preferred by most photographers as it helps with capturing soft and beautiful images with the right details, textures and colours.

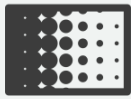


Photo by A. Kretschmer

Photo by Daniil Lobachev

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. DIFFUSING



Similarly when indoors, if sunlight is harsh or too bright, it can be allowed to diffuse through curtains or other diffusing materials. This can be applied to artificial light when you want to diffuse them and make them soft. Just use a diffusing material.

2. SOFTNESS



Soft light is flattering and is the most sought after light for portrait photography. It creates the right amount of soft shadows and gives a soft look to the textures on the skin. Also soft light is not harsh for the models themselves, so they feel more comfortable.

3. GENRES



Besides portraits, landscapes, wildlife, still life, food, and many more genres of photography work great under soft light. Although the lighting conditions and sources may vary for these genres, they all work great under soft light.

4. SHADOWS



Soft light should be used in situations where you wish to have soft textures and shadows. Using soft light will eliminate the trouble of hard shadows that can sometimes be a distraction in the image.

5. COLORS



With soft light, you can evenly light up a scene and capture rich colours. If you are looking for a warm mood in your images, photograph during the golden hour when the light is warm.

6. REFLECTORS

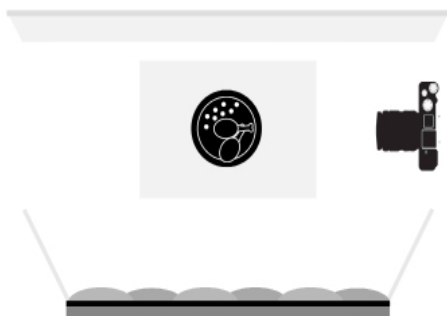


If you are outdoors on a sunny day, and you are looking for soft light, make use of reflectors to illuminate your subject rather than placing them under the harsh direct sunlight.

LIGHTING SETUPS:

Check to see how light is falling on your subject. The simplest way to create an interesting lighting setup is to use side lighting. Illuminate your subject from an angle of about 45 to 60 degrees on the side.

1.



- Natural light

2.



- Artificial light and a reflector

MORE TIPS:

1. TIMING

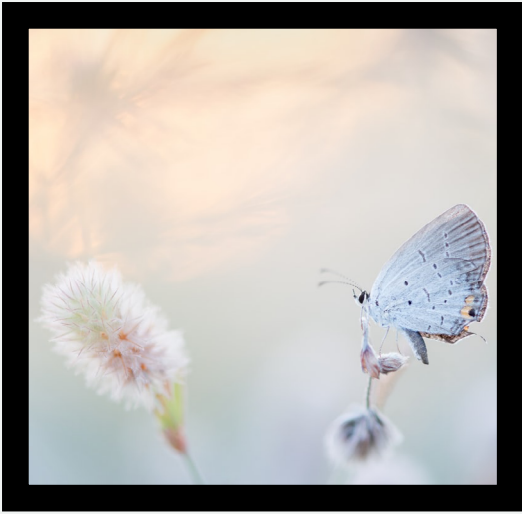


Photo by Ray Hennessy

- During the golden hour, the sunlight is filtered through the atmosphere.
- During the blue hour, we have the soft blue light scattered in the atmosphere and it does not directly fall on a subject and hence is the soft ambient light available.
- On overcast days, sunlight is filtered by the clouds that act as huge diffusers.

3. PROPER ANGLES



Photo by Kira auf der Heide

Work the light in various angles and by slightly lowering or lifting the perspective of light to see which one gives you the desired look. If there are areas that fall into the shadow area on the other side, you can make use of a reflector to fill in some light in the shadow areas.

2. ARTIFICIAL LIGHT



Photo by Some Tale

When shooting indoors, make use of curtains or other fabric that will help you to diffuse the harsh sunlight and make it soft. For other artificial lights, make use of softboxes and other light modifiers to diffuse the light. You can also bounce light off the walls or other reflectors to get soft light indoors.

4. LOCATION

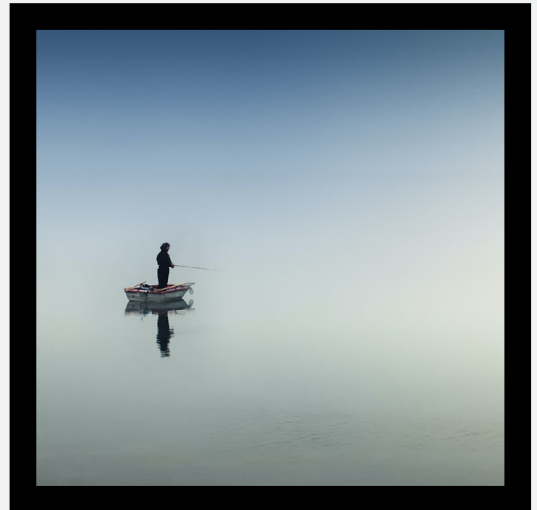
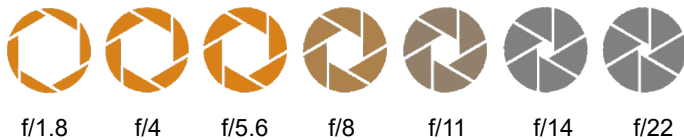


Photo by Johannes Plenio

- If you are photographing outdoors, choose an overcast day or photograph during the golden hour.
- If you are stuck with bright sunny light, look for a shady location.
- If shooting indoors, use light modifiers or choose a time and location where light is soft. You can even diffuse window light using a curtain or a white sheet.

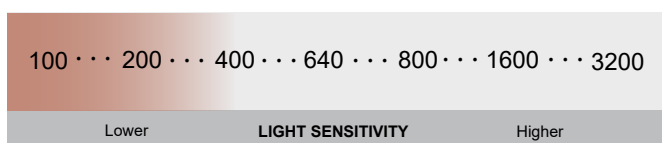
CAMERA SETTINGS:



Wide Aperture (more light)

Narrow Aperture (less light)

- Set the aperture depending on the subject and type of photography. For portraits, you will need to use wide aperture values like f/2.8 or f/4 depending on how much background blur you need, for landscapes, architecture, you will need to shoot between f/8 and f/14.



- Based on the above settings, set the iso to get the desired exposure.



- Set the shutter speed to faster than 1/focal length if hand holding the camera. If using a tripod, you can use slower shutter speeds as long as there are no moving elements in the scene. Long exposure photos work great under soft light and for these images you will need to use a tripod.



Photos by Eduardo Jaeger and Michael Shannon

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

1.

If using a tripod, turn off image stabilisation. For DSLRs, make use of the mirror lockup feature. Use a cable release or inbuilt timer to avoid camera shake.

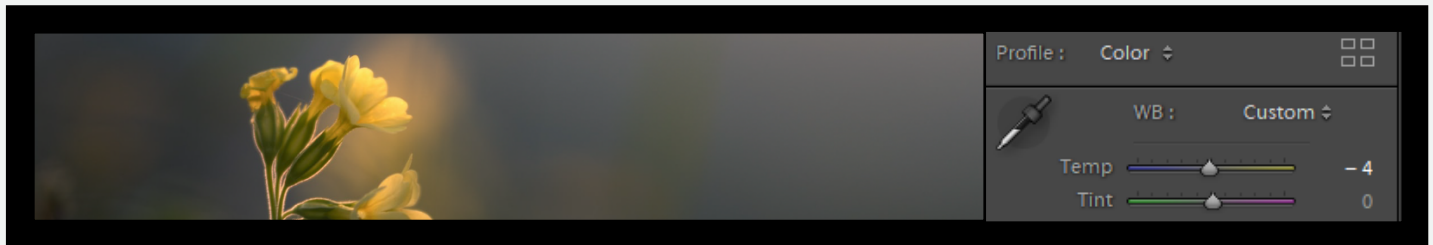
2.

Set the camera to shoot raw and in manual mode so you can have creative control over the exposure. Set the white balance based on the light in the scene and if not sure, leave it on auto and make adjustments when post processing.

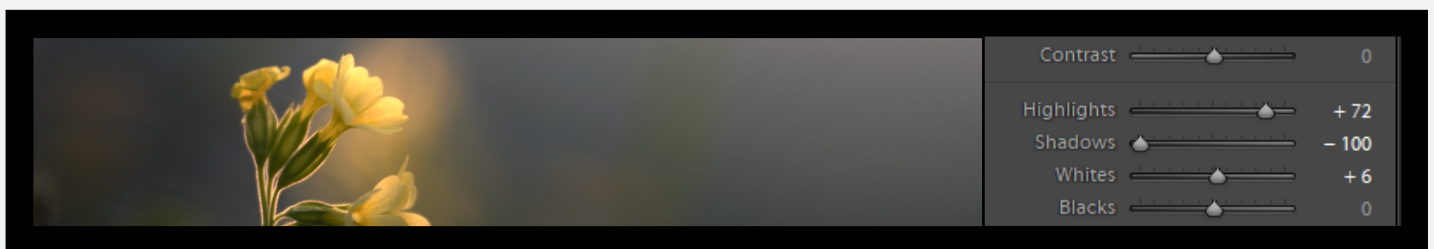
EDITING:

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

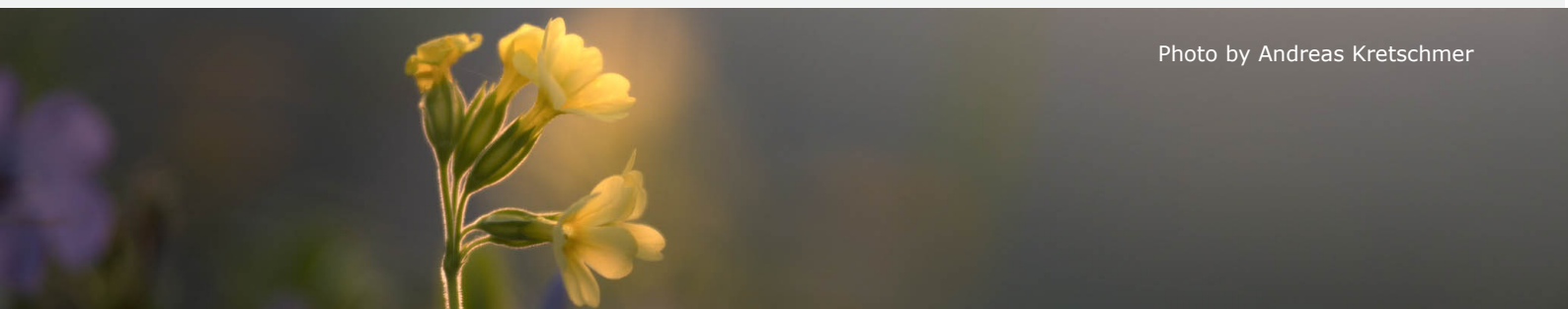
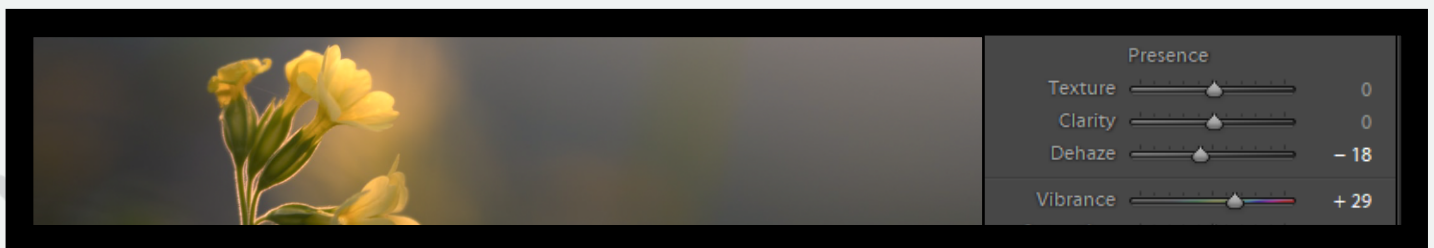
1. Adjust the white balance if necessary and crop the image to get the desired composition.



2. Remove any distracting elements or dust specks using the clone or heal tool. Adjust verticals and horizontals if there are architectural structures incorporated into the frame. Make basic adjustments like exposure, contrast, highlights, shadows, blacks and whites.



3. Add vibrance if necessary and if you wish to work with specific colours, make use of the HSL panel. Also, use the clarity and texture tools if necessary.



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