

Lighting Glossary

artificial light Human-made illumination not limited to "indoor" variety: fluorescent bulbs, jack-o'-lanterns, a car's headlights, all qualify. Typically, it has lower color temperature than natural light, and thus more reddish qualities. [See color temperature, natural light]

available light Amount of illumination normally present in a particular environment: natural light, artificial or a combination of them.

back light Illumination from behind, creates sense of depth by separating foreground subject from background area. Applied erroneously, causes severe silhouetting. [See fill light, key light, three-point lighting]



barndoors Accessories for video lights. Adjustable folding flaps that attach to a lamp, controlling light distribution.

cameo lighting Foreground subjects illuminated by a highly directional light, appearing before a completely black background.

color temperature Relative amount of "white" light's reddish or bluish qualities, measured in "degrees Kelvin." Desirable readings for video are 3,200K indoors, 5,600K outdoors. [See artificial, natural light]

cookie (cucalorus) Lighting accessory consisting of random pattern of cutouts that cast patterned shadows when light passes through. Used to imitate shadows of natural lighting.

diffused light Illuminates a relatively large area indistinctly; produces soft light quality with soft shadows.

diffuser Gauzy or translucent material that alters the quality of light passing through it to produce less intense, flatter lighting with weaker, less noticeable shadows.

directional light Light that illuminates in a relatively small area with a distinct light beam; usually created with spotlight and yields harsh, defined shadows.

fill light Supplementary illumination, usually from a soft light positioned to the side of the subject, which lightens or eliminates shadows created by key light. [See back light, key light, three-point lighting]

flare Bright flashes evident in video, caused by excessive light beaming into a camera's lens and reflecting off its internal glass elements.

flat lighting Illumination characterized by even, diffused light without shadows, highlights or contrast. This type of lighting may impede the viewer's sense of depth and dimension.

floodlight Radiates a diffused, scattered blanket of light with soft, indistinct shadows. Best used to spread illumination on broad areas, whereas spotlights focus on individual subjects.

foot-candle A unit of illumination equal to the light of a candle at a distance of one foot.

gel Colored material placed in front of a light source to alter its hue. Useful for special effects and correcting mismatches in lighting, as in scenes lit by both daylight and artificial light.



Photo by Tom Devoil

incident light That which emanates directly from a light source, measured from the object it strikes to the source. [See reflected light]

key light Principal illumination source on a subject or scene, normally positioned slightly off center and angled to provide shadow detail. [See back light, fill light, three-point lighting]

natural light Planetary illumination—from sun, moon, stars—be it indoors or out. Has higher color temperature than artificial light, and thus more bluish qualities. [See artificial light, color temperature]

reflected light Light re-directed by bouncing off of a reflector or reflective material. [See incident light]

reflector Lighting accessory helpful for spreading light as well as filling in shadows. Often made of lightweight reflective metal or poster board covered with a metallic material.

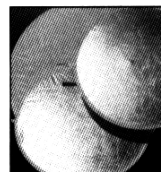


Photo by Tom Devoil

scrim Lighting accessory made of wire mesh, lessens intensity of light source without softening it. Half scrims and graduated scrims reduce illumination in more specific areas of the scene.

snoot Open-ended cylindrical funnel mounted on a light source to project a narrow, concentrated circle of illumination on the subject or scene.

spotlight Radiates a well-defined directional beam of light, casting hard, distinct shadows. Best used to focus illumination on individual subjects, whereas floodlights blanket broader areas.

three-point lighting Basic lighting approach employing key, fill and back lights to illuminate subject with sense of depth and texture. Strategic placement imitates natural outdoor lighting environment, avoids flat lighting. [See back light, fill light, key light]

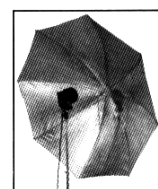


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umbrella Lighting accessory available in various sizes usually made of textured gold or silver fabric. Facilitates soft, shadowless illumination by reflecting light onto a scene. ✓