

SHOOTING BASICS

LIGHTING

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UNDERSTANDING LIGHT

Natural light photography solely depends on the sun to light an image. There are several factors that contribute to the quality or intensity of the available light. These factors depend on the time of day, if there is cloud cover or if there is shade to find (mountains, trees, etc.) During the day the sun is high in the sky and is called direct light. Direct light causes the subject to have unflattering shadows so this limits what images can be produced. If there are clouds, then that can help to defuse the sun for more flattering light. Also, using the shade can also be a great way to work around the harsh midday sun.

DIRECTION OF LIGHT

Understanding the direction of light will greatly impact an image. I refer to this as finding the light. On a cloudy day sometimes understanding where the sun is in the sky can help you find the source of the light (I use a sun tracker app to help). If you know the direction of light then you can position the subject accordingly.

1. Backlighting is positioning your subject with their backs completely to the sun. During sunset this will give your subject

a golden glow. With your subject facing away from the sun then you can continue to change your camera angle or direction to get a desired result. For example the subject here is facing directly away from the sun but I am shooting about 90 degrees from the sun's direction.



2. Front lighting is used when the lighting is softer which is toward the end of sunset or sunrise. You would tell the subject to face toward the light or find the light. Below is an example of when the clients were facing the light to ensure they had enough exposure on their faces.



3. Side lighting can also add some more depth and dimension to an image. It will produce more lowlights and highlights. In the image below the light is hitting the subjects on the side of the face but my camera angle is about 130 degrees from the sun

so it's still giving me a desired glow.



WORKING WITH LIGHT

Working with light is so much fun and isn't something that comes naturally, so playing around and taking the time to find the light is how you learn! I continue to learn new tricks every time I pick up my camera. Lighting conditions continually change so we must learn to roll with it!

Rule of thumb: If the light is harsh, find a way to defuse the light (shade, trees, clouds). Backlight the subjects with the strongest light at sunset, then when the sun begins to go down more turn them toward the light.

