Foundational Photography Skills Lesson 4

Lighting Reference Sheet

**Natural Lighting** Light that is present without human interference. This can be the direct light of the sun on a bright sunny day, or the light created by a cloudy or foggy day. Natural light also includes the light of the moon at night. With natural lighting, you may need to position yourself, the object, or the person you are photographing to achieve the lighting you want.

**Artificial Lighting** Light that has a human-made source (for example, a lamp or flashlight) and can often be moved around and adjusted. With artificial light, it is easier to manipulate or position where you’d like the lighting to fall.

**Golden Hour** The brief period of daytime shortly after sunrise or before sunset. During this time, daylight is often redder and softer than when the sun is higher in the sky. Cinematographers also refer to the golden hour as the “magic hour.” The “hour” actually lasts about 20 or 30 minutes.

**Hard Light** A type of bright light in photography that casts harsh, sharply defined shadows and typically draws the viewer’s attention to a specific area.

**Ambient Lighting** In photography, ambient light is considered the “natural light” within a room.

**Back Lighting (Backlight)** A light source located behind the person or object you are photographing. Back lighting creates great opportunities to play with silhouettes and create long shadows in your photography.

**Soft Light** Soft lighting occurs when your light source is diffused. A soft light is the effect is more subtle than it would be with a direct source of light. By using soft light, you will end up with less intense shadows, if any at all, and a lower contrast between the darks and lights in your photo.

Explore further!

Lighting is arguably one of the most important aspects of photography. While this lesson focuses on a few foundational techniques to get you started, here are a few other ideas to experiment with:

**Split Lighting** Shining light on half of a subject to highlight one side while leaving the other side mostly dark.

**Rim Lighting** Moving the light source behind the subject to create a halo effect. This can be achieved outdoors when the sun is low in the sky, or in the studio by moving the lights directly behind the subject.

**Short Lighting** A classic portrait lighting pattern where the person being photographed is lit from the side of their face opposite from the camera.

**Broad Lighting** In portrait photography, when a subject’s face is slightly tilted away from the center but lit from the direction of the camera.
**Loop Lighting** In portrait photography, loop lighting creates a shadow that loops down and around the side of the nose, and on the neck and under the chin. These shadows subtly help define the subject’s bone structure. To do this, place your light slightly above your model’s eye level, then angle the light slightly downward at about a 45-degree angle.

**Butterfly Lighting** A type of soft lighting pattern for traditional studio portraiture. A light is placed above and directly centered with the person’s face. It forms a butterfly-shaped shadow under the subject’s nose, which is the source of the name.

**Rembrandt Lighting** A popular lighting technique in studio portrait photography. It can be achieved using one light and a reflector, or two lights. Place your main source to the left or right side of the subject and aim it down at the face at about a 45-degree angle. On the other side of the subject, place the reflector or second light about 3 or 4 feet away at a 45-degree angle to the subject. Keep adjusting the light’s position until you see the telltale triangle and the shadow to the side of and slightly below the nose.