

TABLETOP PHOTOGRAPHY

Tabletop photography can be very rewarding and does not require an expensive setup.

Types of lighting : daylight, studio strobe with modeling light, tungsten, quartz, regular strobe with extension cord or slave to camera, umbrellas, soft boxes, flashlight

THREE LIGHTS ARE GENERALLY RECOMMENDED

1. The main or “key” light is the dominate light.
2. The fill light softens shadows and shapes the subject.
3. The “kicker” light adds accent or separates the subject from the background.
4. A background light, if used, lights the background only.

STEPS FOR A TABLE TOP PHOTOGRAPH

1. Set the subject with relation to the background. Try to use a comfortable working height.
2. Place camera. Check subject with regard to shape, and proportion to final frame size.
3. Place “kicker” light to rear or side of subject for best effect. Use maximum wattage.
4. Set main light to the opposite side of camera. Adjust for maximum intensity on subject. Adjust for shadows by changing height.
5. Set fill light on the other side of the camera at approximately a 45 degree angle to the subject.
6. Turn the “live view” feature on the camera, if equipped. Check and adjust the camera position for the best view.
7. Balance the main and fill lights by checking shadows.
8. Balance “kicker” light to refine accents and reduce wattage or distance if necessary.
9. Eliminate any unwanted reflections by moving lights as necessary.
10. Set color balance using the “PRE” setting.
11. Check focus for near and far areas of the subject or subjects.
12. Set camera to “Aperture Priority” and determine the f/stop needed for depth of field, and verify that all areas of in ended focus are sharp. Take test shot.
13. Check histogram for optimum capture.
14. Use magnifier on the LCD screen to check focus of all areas of the view on the test shot.
15. Take a final test shot and then bracket the exposure with 1/3 f/stops. (Two over and two under. This is good insurance.
16. If possible, remove the flash card or connect the camera to a computer monitor to check for any deficiencies on a large screen.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL TABLE TOP PHOTOGRAPHY

1. Ideal lens : 60mm or 105mm closeup lens
2. Zoom lenses can creep when pointing down. (Use tape to keep lens from “creeping.”)

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3. Gear head tripods are best for table top.
4. Rheostats can be helpful for adjusting lights.
5. A step stool is handy.
6. A small flash light and a magnifier can be handy to see camera settings.
7. Canned air and a small paint brush can be used to remove unwanted dust or hair.
8. Modeling clay and pipe cleaners can be used to position subjects, especially flowers.
9. Remember the angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection when placing lights.
10. Don't forget about the inverse square law when positioning lights to maintain a lighting ratio. A 3:1 ratio is a good place to start.
11. Sometimes it is preferable to focus in between multiple subject to maximize the depth of field.
12. The best photograph begins with the best capture. Don't believe that Photoshop can "fix" everything.
13. Take your time and study the photo. The more you look, the more you will see.
14. Don't be afraid to experiment.