

Lighting Rooms

In this section, you will learn how to control your light sources by equalizing the ambient light in the room and adding highlights or changing the direction of the main light source. I will also show a few techniques for taking care of unwanted light that may be coming from a win-



Tools: Mamiya 645AF, 80mm lens

Lights: three strobes bounced off of the ceiling, panel with light in the center, or P1, position

Power settings: ceiling bounce (camera right) at full power, two ceiling bounces at camera left at full power, panel with a strobe light in the center, or P1 position, at 50 percent power

Camera settings: shutter speed $\frac{1}{30}$, aperture $f/22$

Who's on set: photographer, client, three assistants, stylist, set builder, product manager, art director, product coordinator

dow or hallway. Remember, you are lighting the set to the best of your abilities when every light and shadow has been checked and approved.

As you look at the interior space, remember that although you are lighting an object that has depth, you are creating a flat, two-dimensional image of that room. Look at every angle as if it were in a painting. Your exposure is your paint brush. The shadows are the darker palette, showing depth and size of the objects in the scene to the viewer. The highlights are the image's features, the objects of beauty and importance, the "why" of the image. I have included several images that show these lighting theories at work.

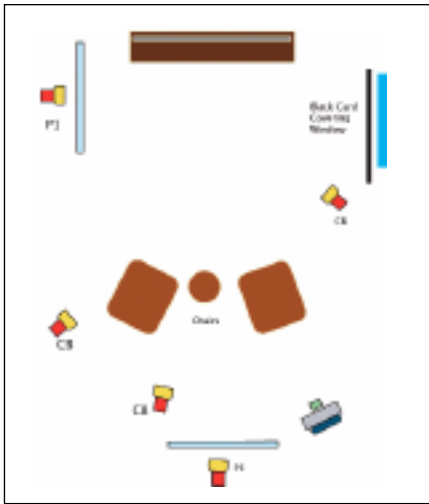
Though the interior shots shown in this section were made in rectangular rooms, remember that you will need to create images in interiors of a wide variety of sizes and shapes. Also, note that the lighting in a room changes as the sun moves around the globe. The sun is never in the same exact place twice in a year's time. Therefore, the approaches provided in this chapter should serve only as examples; your interior working space may require a different strategy.

The easiest way to light a room is to bounce your lights directly into the ceiling. This creates a soft, diffuse light that is usually complementary to the colors in the room. Also, it creates a natural-looking light source. Once you determine how many lights to bounce from the ceiling and where to place them, you can add fill lights to bring out the texture in the shadow areas.

Speaking of shadows, it's important to note that when lighting a room scene, there should be only one set of shadows projected from the objects in the room. Having several shadows cast to the sides of any objects is a sure sign that the room is illuminated by artificial light. Remember, you want the effect to appear natural.

Please note that each lighting schematic deals with a particular problem and each technique can be used in any room at any time of the day.

About the Images. I always begin my room lighting job with ceiling bounces. To produce the first image



Tools: Mamiya 645AF, 35mm lens
Lights: three ceiling bounces, two panels with strobes at P1, black foam core
Power settings: three ceiling bounces at full power, strobe with panel at camera left at ½ power, strobe with panel at rear at ½ power
Camera settings: shutter speed 1/60, aperture f/22
Who's on set: stylist, photographer, two assistants, two clients, set designer



(facing page), I placed a ceiling bounce at full power on the camera-right rear area of the set. This served as the main light. With the light in position, I had to ensure that it did not produce a glare on the TV screen. Once this light was in place, I was able to determine that more light was needed on the far left side, so I added two ceiling bounces, which were used at full power. This reflected light throughout the room. These lights matched the light produced by the main light and the window.

Once these lights were set up, the console was darker than I wanted it. Because this was a commercial room shot, the TV and console needed to pop. Therefore, I added one final light: a panel with a strobe in the center, or P1, position. This light was at 50 percent power, but added to the effects of the other strobes, it produced a nice, bright light on the products. Because the light was diffuse, we were able to add brightness but still create a light quality that seemed to mesh with the light produced by the other units on the set.

This image, which was part of a series, was shot in an unfurnished house. We actually rented \$30,000 worth

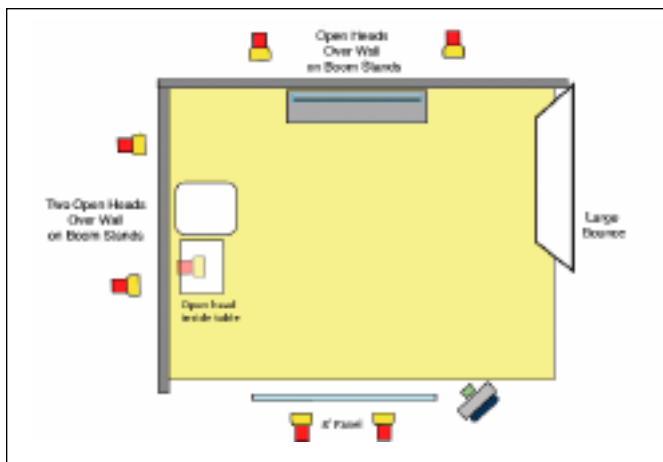
of furniture, artwork, and plants, and had it delivered to the location. We used Photoshop to doctor the unfinished areas of the home's walls and floors.

The lighting for the second image (above) was pretty straightforward. I started with the ceiling bounce on the right side of the camera, making sure the light stand was out of the view of the lens. I then placed the other two ceiling bounces toward camera left. The light from one was reflected from the ceiling onto the TV, and the other was bounced from the ceiling to the floor. All three strobes were on full power; they created the overall light in the room. Next, I covered the window with a piece of black foam core. Finally, two fill lights were added for atmosphere. The first—a panel with a strobe in the center, or P1, position—was added to the left side of the room and used at its lowest power setting. The second fill light was a panel with a strobe in the center, or P1, position. This light was placed at the left of the camera to provide fill on the back of the chairs.

This shot is an amazing example of photographic deception. If you take a good look at the “ceiling” in the

image, you may notice that it's actually an architectural feature of the house that drops down into the room. A little post-capture magic helped us to create this deception: the projector was shot separately and was added in Photoshop. Because the wall was only 10 feet wide but was 25 feet long, we created a little more wall area in Photoshop as well.

For the third room lighting example (below), we used an 8x4-foot panel with two strobes behind it as our main light. This light caused large shadows from the furniture to appear on the walls, so we added four strobes



Tools: Mamiya 645AF, 35mm lens

Lights: four strobes on boom stands, 8-foot panel with two strobes

Power settings: strobes behind panels at full power, overhead lights at $\frac{2}{5}$ power, light in table at low power

Camera settings: shutter speed $\frac{1}{60}$, aperture f/22

Who's on set: photographer, client, two assistants, set builder, product manager

on boom stands—two pointed over the back wall and two pointed over the wall to camera left—to soften the shadows for a more pleasing result. This is a great technique for eliminating shadows while letting the main light do its work. Next, a large bounce card was used to reflect all of the light into the shot from the right side.

The strongest shadow in the shot is caused by the light inside the red and white table at camera right, which was used to open up the shadows of the hole of the table. Before the light was added, the darkness attracted the viewer's attention.

Fortunately, all of the shadows in the shot fall in the same direction. This adds credibility to any room shot.

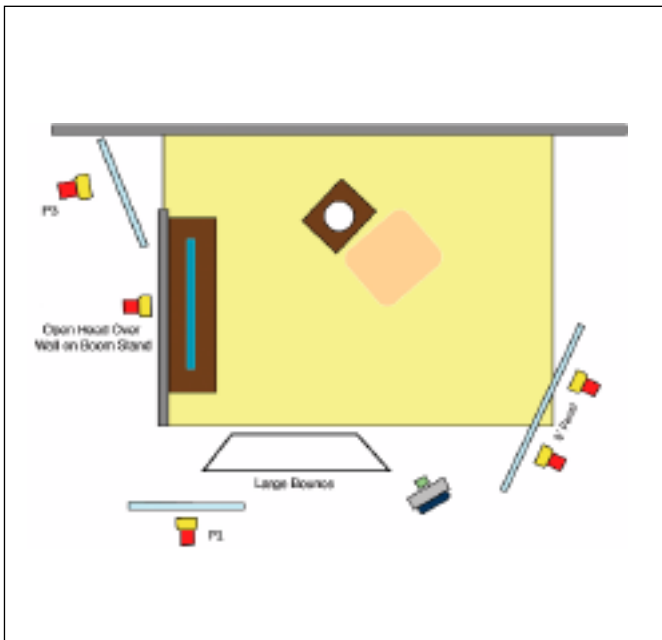
Two exposures—one for the whites and one for the reds—were combined in Photoshop to produce the final image. The TV screen was originally just a solid blue, but a pleasing blue gradient seemed to add a little spark to the image. This once again proves that using Photoshop can allow you to creatively enhance your images, quickly and easily.

The set featured in this image was built and ready in one day.

Our fourth room lighting setup (facing page) bears some similarities to the previous setup we discussed. For this image, we once again used an 8x4-foot panel with two strobes behind it as the main light. In this setup, too, this produced large shadows. To soften the shadows on the tan wall, I positioned a strobe on a boom over the top of the wall and directed its light downward. Though the light made the top of the wall brighter, it did not affect the mood of the scene.

A panel was placed at the left side of the set with a strobe shooting through the bottom-left corner, or the P3 position. This light was used at a lower power than the other lights on the set. I wanted to create the effect that this light was coming from a hallway. By adding light to the tan wall, I was able to achieve more tonal difference between the tan and green wall. Also, the combined light from the three strobes really gave the wall a beautiful luminosity.

On the left side of the set, a large bounce card was used to reflect light back into the set. However, there was still not enough light to illuminate the wood grain on the entertainment cabinet, so another panel and

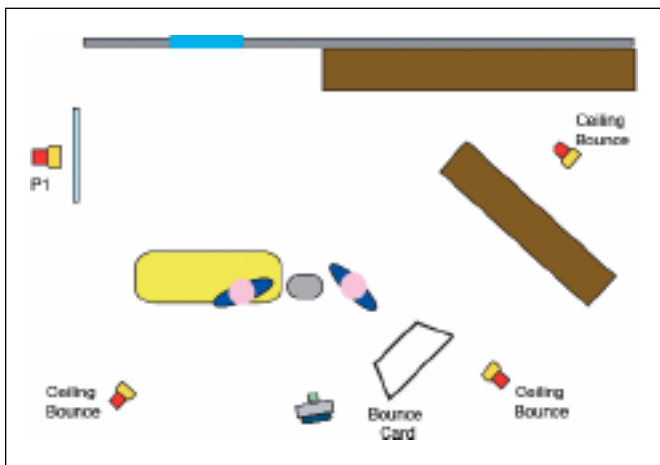


Tools: Mamiya 645AF, 35mm lens
Lights: large panel with two strobes, three panels with strobes
Power settings: 8-foot panel strobes at full power, P1 at 1/2 power, P3 on low power
Camera settings: shutter speed 1/60, aperture f/22
Who's on set: photographer, client, two assistants, set builder, product manager

strobe were added. We placed this light directly behind the bounce card to block this light from hitting anything other than the cabinet and speaker.

To produce the final image, I once again created two exposures, one for the highlights and one for the shadows, and combined them in Photoshop. The gradient on the screen was added in Photoshop too.

Once people are added to the mix, producing an effective room shot becomes more difficult. In our fifth example (next page), you can see that we have two mod-



Tools: Mamiya 645 AF, 35mm lens
Lights: three strobes as ceiling bounces, one panel with strobe in center, or P1, position
Power settings: two strobes at full power, one strobe at 50 percent power, one strobe on lowest-available power setting
Camera settings: shutter speed $\frac{1}{125}$, aperture $f/8$
Who's on set: photographer, client, assistant, intern, stylist, product manager, two models

els, one product, fifteen reflective materials, overhead tungsten lights, and a window. In short, this scene was a lighting nightmare.

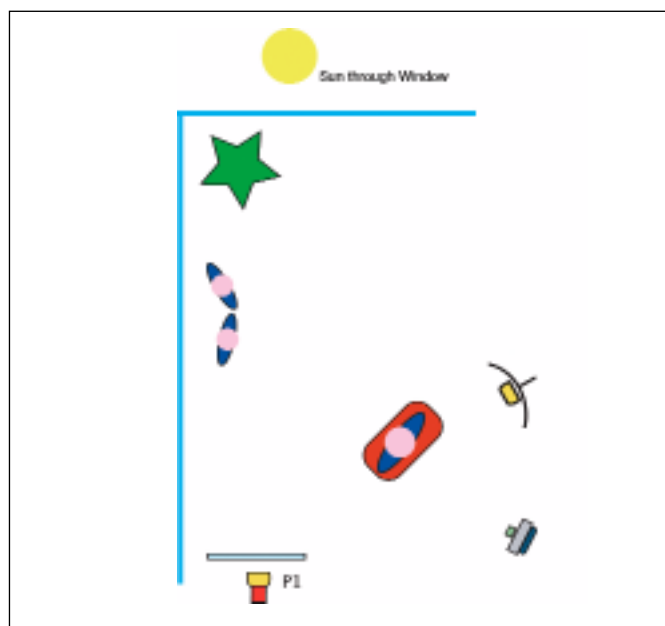
To light the shot, I placed two ceiling bounces at full power at the camera left and camera right front of the room. These co-main lights provided the required illumination in the front of the shot. There was a little light coming from the window in the background, but the back of the set needed more light. I added a panel with a strobe placed in the center, or P1, position at the rear camera-left area of the set. This light was used at 50 percent power and provided fill. This opened up the space.

Next, I had to focus my attention on the kitchen. I couldn't use lights placed outside of that area because the microwave was so reflective. I took an open head, layed it on the floor, and propped it up so that it was aimed at the ceiling. I choose to set the power at the lowest setting the power pack offered. This approach was certainly unconventional, but it did the job.

Though our final example (facing page) included a model and two extras, it was simple to light. There was

so much available light in the room from the large windows that all I really needed was fill light on the main subjects. The main light for the shot was a simple umbrella aimed directly at the boy. This light was at 75 percent power and was about 1/2 stop brighter than the natural light. This made the focal point of the image—the boy and his suitcase—pop right out of the shot. I added a light panel with a strobe at 25 percent power in the center, or P1, position behind the model behind the extras in the shot to produce a little fill. It was important to bring up the light levels in the areas behind the main subject to ensure that the image appeared natural.

Realism is important in commercial photography. If anything in the shot seems phony to viewers, they may not buy the concept or product you are trying to sell. On the other hand, there is a time and a place for playing upon the viewer's sense of disbelief. When you are trying to create a more fictional, fantastical image, go all of the way. Make sure that every aspect of the concept is simply and blatantly over the top.



Tools: Mamiya 645 AF, 35mm lens

Lights: umbrella, panel, strobe

Power settings: umbrella at 75 percent power, panel with strobe at 75 percent power, in the center, or P1, position

Camera settings: shutter speed 1/125, aperture f/11

Who's on set: photographer, client, two assistants, makeup artist, child model and his mother, two extras

