THE QUICK START GUIDE TO OFF-CAMERA FLASH

The Five Keys to Start Flashing your Clients the Right Way

By: ZACH & JODY

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ZACH & JODY

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ZACH JODY

INTRO

Why an eBook?

Many photographers think that flash exists to make their lives difficult. This is not the case.

Flash is not your enemy.

Flash is your friend.

Its existence is not to frustrate you or take away your birthday, but rather it wants to add beauty to your images, if only you will let it.

In this eBook we have five keys for you to get started using flash.

But why even use flash? We have three reasons that we think every photographer should have flash skills in their arsenal...

WHY FLASH

REASON #1:

Flash sets photographers apart.

If you can add SOME off-camera lighting to your portfolio, it will help you stand out from the other photographers who shoot natural-light photography. Lighting can give your work a unique edge and is something a bit different, which makes clients take a second look and helps you to become what Seth Godin calls a "purple cow."

When you stand out and get noticed, you have a better chance of getting booked!

WHY FLASH

(cont.)

REASON #2:

Flash allows photographers to shoot in difficult lighting situations.

When beautiful, natural-light is non-existent (or extremely lacking), it is vital to have the tools to still be able to capture the moments happening.

Some photoshoots can be rescheduled – weddings cannot. Having flash skills will help you not to miss the shot AND will save you time in post-production dodging and burning the daylights out of your shots!

REASON #3:

Flash allows photographers to offer their clients more variety.

If you have beautiful natural-light to shoot in then, by all means, shoot away! However, if you have the ability to shoot with flash, you can give your clients a completely different look taken in the exact same scenario. Take for example, the below two images taken within a few minutes of each other.

(Natural Light)

(Flash)

LET'S DO THIS!

Are you convinced?

Are you ready to take the FIRST steps to adding this creative technique to your shooting arsenal?

We think you are ☺

Enjoy our *5 Easy Keys to start Flashing Your Clients the Right Way*.

KEY 1

*Remove your flash from
your camera*

Yes, these are the keys to "Off-Camera Flash" so, the first thing you need to do is take your flash **off of your camera**. Sometimes it is easiest to just keep the flash on our camera and point it right at our subject, but unfortunately, this is not the most flattering light that we can put on our client, for many reasons.

Separating your flash from the front of your camera does two things:

First, when your flash comes at your clients from the side instead of straight-on, this creates dimension on your client, which makes your images have much more depth and more realism.

Second, you can now CHOOSE to highlight their best features, and hide the other parts we may not want to focus on, which makes our clients look their best.
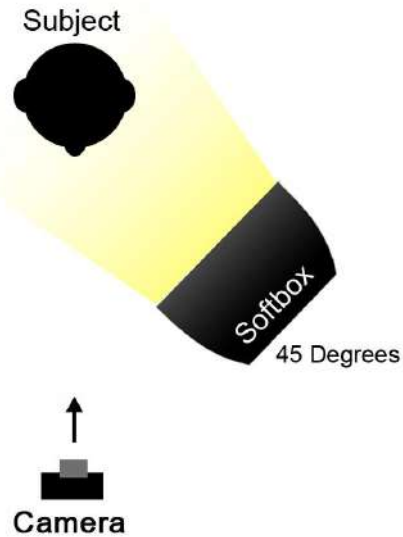
LIGHTING TIP:

If you want nice highlights and shadows, a great starting point for flash placement is having your light between 30 and 45 degrees to either side of your client.

Aerial View

Subject

Softbox

45 Degrees

Camera

KEY 2

Start simple

The greatest ideas are the simplest.

-William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

When you start using flash, the best way to do it is to start SIMPLE. **Don't** overwhelm yourself.

The above image shows lighting to the extreme. You don't need four lights to rock out your lighting. You just need ONE small light set-up in order to take a **thousand** different types of images!

When you keep it **simple**, you have a better chance of getting off on the right foot with flash, and not **quitting** because it was too complicated.

💡 *LIGHTING TIP:*

To start, we recommend using something you probably already own, which is your Speedlight (Sb900 or 580EX or similar) and adding ONE thing to it which we will discuss in key 3.

KEY 3
Creating beautiful light

" To Love Beauty is to See Light. "

-Victor Hugo

(Image created using the Rapid Box)

In order to get the light that comes straight out of our speedlight (which is pretty harsh) and turn it into soft and beautiful light, we need a great "**modifier**." A great modifier is one that creates good "quality" light AND is practical to set up and move around at a real shoot.

Soft, beautiful light (which is perfect for the average client) is created by a large light source, so we want a modifier that can take the light coming from our tiny speedlight and make it **bigger**.

A great lighting modifier can create softer light, more controllable light, or do a number of different cool lighting techniques, but ultimately, having a good modifier will help make your clients look stellar!

💡 *LIGHTING TIP:*

The modifier that we recommend for a speedlight, is the Rapid Box from Westcott Lighting.

We recommend this modifier because it has ALL the features that we just talked about. It makes the light coming out of your speedlight softer (and does it REALLY well), it is light-weight, and it is EASY to set up and move around!

KEY 4

Never guess

"

Luck tends to favor the prepared.

"

-Lewis Schiff, *Business Brilliant*

The **last** thing you want to do (especially in front of a client) is to **guess** with flash. The BEST thing you can do is KNOW exactly what you are doing.

With flash, we always use a light meter because it shows us exactly how bright the light coming from our flash is and we **never** have to **guess**!

You can get away with NOT using a light meter, but trust us, it makes the entire process very **simple**, and easy to replicate each time you go out to shoot!

A light meter can seem a little confusing at first glance if you have yet to use one, but it is actually pretty simple. It shows the **same settings** as your camera and has **ISO**, **Shutter Speed** and **F Stop**. The other settings are easy to understand when you read through the manual and the other key function to know is what TYPE of light you are measuring with the meter (ambient existing light or flash).

💡 LIGHTING TIP:

Any time you meter light, either take a reading while putting the meter on your subjects chin, or meter your own chin standing in the place your client will stand. If you point the meter at your flash, you will get slightly darker exposures, and if you point the meter towards your camera position, then you will get slightly bright exposures (unless your flash is coming from the camera position).

Place meter here ➡

KEY 5

You are smarter than your camera

"

*Systems give you the
FREEDOM to create art.*

"

- Zach Gray

Even though there are all these cool technologies that allow you to put your camera and/or flash on auto and just shoot away, they don't always give you the best results.

We like telling our camera what to do, so we shoot the camera AND the flash on manual MOST of the time, and when we do this, we get very **consistent** results. Consistency is really great in post-production because editing can fly when all the images are similar.

Just as important as controlling your camera and flash are, it is just as important to have a **systematic** way to get **results**. When you have a SYSTEM to follow, then you know that you are going to get when you set out to shoot with flash.

OUR SYTEM

*Three Systematic Starter Steps
for Great flash Results.*

CORRECT MODIFIER PLACEMENT

Always put the CENTER of your lighting modifier slightly above the center of your clients eyes (like in the below image).

This allows the light to fall on your client's face in the right lighting "pattern" that always looks good! (Once you master this, then you can start to get creative with how high the light is).

CORRECT MODIFIER PLACEMENT

In the final image below you can see how beautiful the light falling on her face looks.

This image has just a slight tweak in Lightroom and the high drama that you see in this shot is from the off-camera lighting!

POWER THE FLASH

To **start** with flash shots, we make sure the flash is exactly **1 to 2 stops** brighter than our ambient light (or, to put it another way, the flash is either **twice as bright**, or **three times** as bright as the ambient, existing light).

So, we meter the ambient light (with our hand-held meter) and then turn our flash power up until it is between 1 OR 2 stops **brighter** than that reading. We then set our camera to those flash power settings and shoot!

(We also do many other types of "ratios" between the ambient and flash, but this is a great starting point).

WATCH YOUR SHUTTER SPEED!

Many times, when shooting on manual flash (with some exceptions), you typically can't raise your shutter speed faster than 1/200th of a second (on Canon) or around 1/250th of a second (on Nikon).

If your shutter goes faster than the "X-Sync speed" then the shutter can actually go so fast, that it doesn't see some, or all, of the flash when it goes off. The result can be dark edges or a bad looking vignette on your images.

On the next few pages, we will show you how we shot a cool image in bad ambient lighting. We LOVED the location and background, but the natural light on our subject was not the best. Check out the progression of the lighting using these **simple principles** you just learned!

Example:

The correct ambient light reading on our subject (according to our hand-held light meter) for the below shot was ISO 100, 1/100th of a second at f/5.6.

(ISO 100, 1/100th Shutter at f/5.6 Correct Ambient Light Exposure)

Example:

We then powered up the flash until the meter reading was ISO 100, 1/100th of a second at f/11 so it was exactly **2 stops** brighter than the ambient reading. We then set our camera to those settings and took a shot WITHOUT flash.

(ISO 100, 100th shutter at f/11 with NO flash)

Example:

Here, in the final image, you can see that we effectively darkened the background by under-exposing it (or made the flash brighter!), and then added the flash in to clearly and dramatically light our subject. The result is a great looking image in a hard to shoot situation!

(ISO 100, 100th shutter at f/11 with flash)

(ISO 100, 100th shutter at f/11 | Flash)

(ISO 100, 100th shutter at f/11 NO flash)

(ISO 100, 1/100th Shutter at f/5.6 Correct Ambient Light Exposure)

Zach Gray: Desert Portraits with a Diffused Parabolic Umbrella   LIKE?   SHARE

2:58 / 5:29

Check out the <u>video</u> from this actual shoot!

Tip: The reason I set my shutter speed to 1/100th, is so that I can adjust my shutter speed on the fly to either darken (speed shutter up to 1/200th), or lighten (slow shutter speed to 1/50th) the background. This way, you don't have to re-meter the lighting if you want a darker background once you take your first image.

*(**note:** in the video, it says the aperture is f/16, but is was f/11).*

CONCLUSION

Approaching the end

WHAT'S NEXT

Congratulations!

With the information you just read, you are on your way to starting with flash!

There is SOOO much more to share about off-camera lighting (we taught a 10 hour workshop on using ONE light for five years!), and hopefully we have you excited to get started on your learning journey and start trying this out!

Continue reading for links to gear you need to get started, and links to further content to get you even more FREE info on shooting AMAZING flash images!

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"I just read @Zach & Jody Photography's free off-camera flash eBook and loved it! You can get this too at http://bit.ly/FreeEBookZJ"

FREE GEAR LIST

Free stuff is always good

GEAR LIST

*The items you need to shoot
with one small light are:*

Speed light (these are camera specific)
Rapid Box
Light Meter
Radio Trigger Transmitter
Radio Trigger Receiver
Light Stand or Mono-Pod

MORE FREE INFO

Finally, the end

LINKS TO
top lighting posts

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