

# Classic Portrait Lighting

## 3 keys to good portrait lighting

- Light Source
- Light Pattern
- Light Ratio

### Light Source

**Main** (or Key) light ~establishes a lighting pattern with the shadows formed off the nose. Brightest intensity light

**Fill** light ~establishes a lighting ratio on the face from one side to the other

**Background** light ~provides depth and gives some tonal variation between the subject and the background

**Separation/ Hair** light ~gives separation between subjects hair and background. (think of someone with dark hair on a dark background)

### Light Pattern

**Loop** ~most used in traditional portraits. Gives nice curve to cheekbone. Shadow is a small loop to the side & bottom of nose.

**Butterfly** ~used for glamour portraits. Very good for minimizing facial texture, large nose or narrow face. Shadow is directly under nose in shape of butterfly.

**Rembrandt** ~dramatic classic lighting. Great for creating mood or masculine lighting. Shadow is to the side of the nose creating a triangle on cheekbone under eye.

**Split** ~ face half lit with key light, half in shadow.

**Rim / Profile** ~ backlit so slight outline highlights subject

### Light Ratio = Main : Fill

**1 : 1** flat lighting ~ no shadows. Flattens facial texture and features. High Key lighting **M** f11 **F** f11

**2 : 1** flat to traditional ~ a touch of shadow to show some definition **M** f11 **F** f8

**3 : 1** traditional to dramatic ~ nice shadow to show facial curvature. Good for slimming face. **M** f11 **F** f5.6

**4 : 1** dramatic ~ also good for hiding facial flaws. Low Key lighting **M** f11 **F** f4

\*another technique to figure ratios is **Ratio = Fill + Main : Fill only**. (This just seems like more math)

### Lighting Terms

**Short lighting** -fill light side is more towards camera. Good for fuller face

**Broad lighting** -main light side is more towards camera. Good for narrow face.

**Hard lighting** -spectral /smaller light source. More dramatic

**Soft lighting** -diffused /larger light source. More forgiving