DUAL VIZION · WORKSHOP REFERENCE

Intro to Lighting

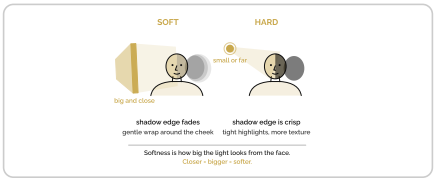
One light, then two: directional, overhead, and both together

From the workshop on Sunday, November 15, 2026 at Union 206, Alexandria VA, with Michael A. Edwards Jr. (Dual Vizion) and Andre Coleman (Shots by AJC).

Fundamentals

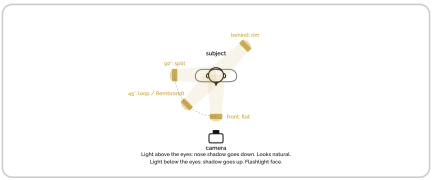
Soft or hard

It comes down to **how big the light looks from the face**. Big and close is soft: the shadow edge fades. Small or far away is hard: crisp edges, more texture.
A modifier makes the light bigger. Moving it closer makes it bigger still.



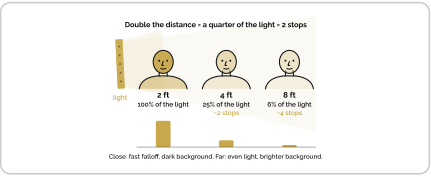
Direction and height

Where the light sits around the face decides where the shadows go. Straight on is **flat**. **45°** gives you shape. **90°** splits the face. **Behind** draws a rim.
Keep it **above the eyes** so the nose shadow falls down, the way sunlight does.



Distance: the inverse square law

Twice as far means **a quarter of the light**, two stops.
The part you'll use tonight: light **close** means a dark background. Light **further back** means an even one. Closer is also softer.



SETUP 1 · ONE LIGHT

Directional key

Shape and mood from one side. Portraits that need a jawline, musicians, moody branding.

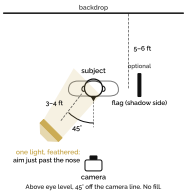


One light, with direction

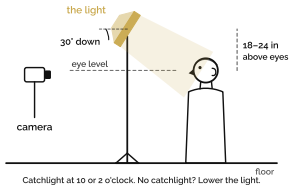
One light about 45° off the camera line, above her eyes. The lit side has shape and the background falls away.

Michael A. Edwards Jr. / Dual Vizion Photography

FROM ABOVE: WHERE EVERYTHING GOES



FROM THE SIDE: HEIGHT



GEAR

- ◇ One light on a stand with a softbox
- ◇ Sandbag on the stand
- ◇ Optional: black flag on the shadow side, white reflector to fill it

STEPS

1. Room lights off. Subject 5–6 ft in front of the backdrop.
2. Light at **45°** from the camera line, **3–4 ft** from the face.
3. Head of the light **18–24 in above the eyes**, tilted down about 30°.
4. **Feather it:** aim the center just past the nose, not at it.
5. Check the eyes for a catchlight at 10 or 2 o'clock, then shoot.

SETTINGS

LED	Manual · 1/125 s · f/2.8–f/4 · ISO 800–1600 · WB matched to the light. No trigger needed. Expose for the lit side and let the shadow side fall.
STROBE	Manual · 1/160 s · f/5.6 · ISO 100 · WB Flash. Start around 1/8 power. Trigger on the station's channel.

YOUR SHOT LIST

- ☐ The look: light at 45°, short nose shadow.
- ☐ Move it toward 90° and watch half the face go dark.
- ☐ Back to 45° with the reflector on the shadow side.

COMMON FIXES

- **No catchlight** → The light is too high. Lower it.
- **Hotspot on the forehead** → Feather it. Aim the edge past the nose.
- **Flat face, bright background** → Light's too far. Bring it to 3–4 ft.
- **Shadow side too dark** → Add the white reflector on that side.
- **Black band across the frame** → Shutter is over sync. Drop to 1/160.

SETUP 2 · ONE LIGHT, OVERHEAD

Overhead

Even, flattering light from above. Full-length fashion, beauty, anyone who wants a glow.

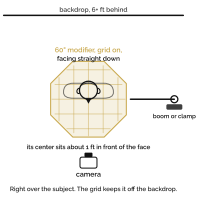


One big gridded light, overhead

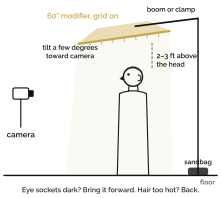
A 60" modifier with a grid, right above her. A pool of light on her and the floor, and the backdrop stays dark.

Andre Coleman / Shots by AJC

FROM ABOVE: WHERE EVERYTHING GOES



FROM THE SIDE: HEIGHT



GEAR

- ◇ 60" modifier with the grid on
- ◇ On a boom arm or clamped overhead
- ◇ Sandbag on the boom stand
- ◇ Optional: white reflector at the waist to lift the eyes

STEPS

1. Subject at least 6 ft from the backdrop.
2. Modifier **2–3 ft above the head**, center about **1 ft in front** of the face.
3. Face it down, tilted a few degrees toward camera. Grid on.
4. Test frame. Look at the eye sockets: dark means bring the light forward.
5. Shoot full length first, then step in for a half-length.

SETTINGS

LED	Manual · 1/125 s · f/2.8–f/4 · ISO 800–1600 · WB matched. Light at full power, it's big and gridded.
STROBE	Manual · 1/160 s · f/5.6–f/8 · ISO 100 · WB Flash. Start around 1/8 power and adjust from the test frame. Trigger on the station's channel.

YOUR SHOT LIST

- ☐ Full length: the pool of light.
- ☐ Half length, chin up a touch: eyes catch the light.
- ☐ Reflector at the waist: compare the eyes.

COMMON FIXES

- **Dark eye sockets** → Bring the light forward, or have them lift the chin a little.
- **Hair or shoulders too hot** → Move the light back, or drop the power.
- **Backdrop getting light** → Grid on, and move the subject further from the backdrop.
- **Boom in the frame** → Raise it, or shoot a little tighter.
- **Flash didn't fire** → Trigger channel doesn't match the station. Check it, test fire.

SETUP 3 · TWO LIGHTS

Overhead + directional

The finished portrait. The directional light shapes the face, the overhead lifts the hair and shoulders off the backdrop.

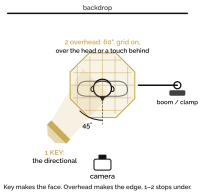


Directional key plus the overhead

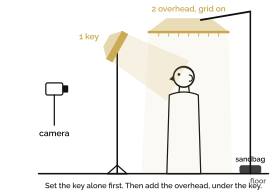
The directional light makes the face. The overhead adds the edge on the hair and shoulders.

Michael A. Edwards Jr. / Dual Vizion Photography

FROM ABOVE: WHERE EVERYTHING GOES



FROM THE SIDE: HEIGHT



GEAR

- ◇ The directional light from Setup 1 (the key)
- ◇ The gridded overhead, on a clamp or boom
- ◇ Sandbags on both stands
- ◇ Two groups on your trigger: A for the key, B for the overhead

STEPS

1. Set the **key** exactly like Setup 1. Overhead off. Shoot a test frame.
2. Overhead on, **above the head or a touch behind it**, grid on.
3. Start it **1–2 stops under the key**. The hair should glow, not go white.
4. Change only the overhead's power. The key stays put.
5. Say out loud which light is the key, then shoot.

SETTINGS

LED	Manual · 1/125 s · f/2.8–f/4 · ISO 800–1600 · WB matched. Key at full, overhead around 25 to 50%.
STROBE	Manual · 1/160 s · f/5.6 · ISO 100 · WB Flash. Group A (key) about 1/8, group B (overhead) about 1/32. Set A alone first, then bring in B.

YOUR SHOT LIST

- ☐ Key only.
- ☐ Key plus overhead: the edge appears.
- ☐ Overhead too hot, then fixed.

COMMON FIXES

- **Hair goes white** → Overhead is too hot. Drop group B.
- **Two nose shadows** → The overhead is too far forward. Move it back over the head.
- **Face got darker when the overhead came on** → You changed the wrong group. Only B moves.
- **Only one light fired** → Enable groups A and B on the trigger, same channel. Test fire.