

# Conceptual Lighting Design

Lights tell us where we are in a sense, who is important in a shot, and how we should feel about the events occurring.

Light tells the viewer the following:

**Where** - reveals the space to us.

**What** - Disguises or illuminates subjects

**Who** - Reveals who the character is.

**Mood** - Candle, flashlight, chandelier, desk lamp, campfire, and office fluorescents all have a different feel.

**Depth** - How far we can see into the frame.

**Texture** - patterns the light casts

**Source** - symbolic light sources. A light coming from a burning house has a much different feel than one coming from a cozy fireplace.

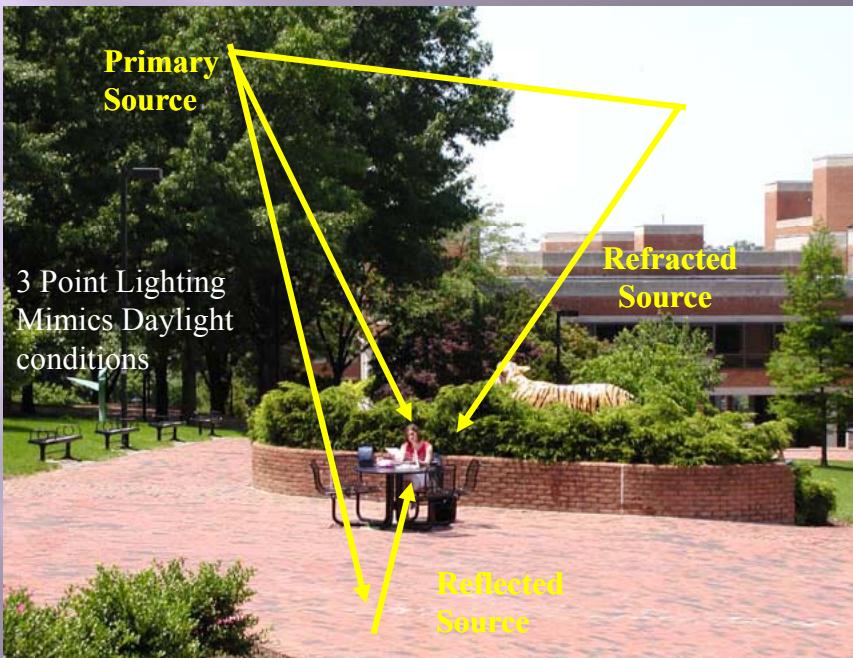
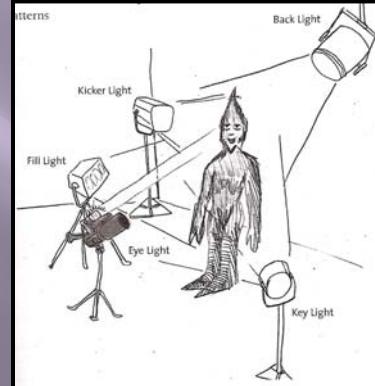
## Light Factors

- ❑ Quality - intensity, how bright/dark
- ❑ Direction - path of light projection from brightest source point to fall off in the distance.
- ❑ Source - object emitting light
- ❑ Colour - symbolic colour to tell story/mood of scene/film
- ❑ Texture - shapes and patterns of light.

## 3 Point Lighting Setup

1. Key
2. Fill
3. Back

- Kicker (optional)
- Eye (optional)



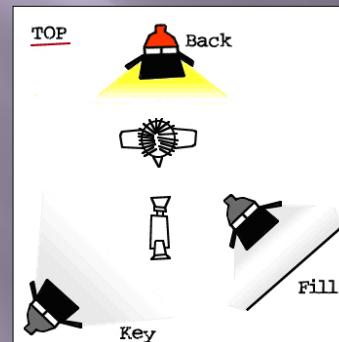
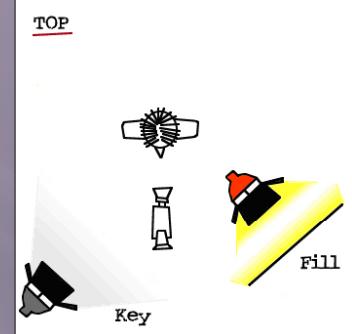
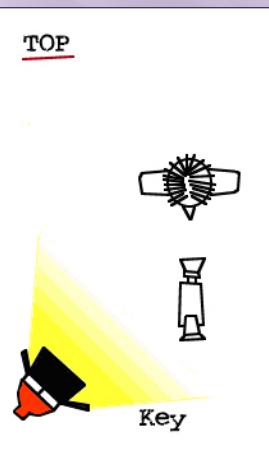
## 3 Point Lighting

Advantage: characters won't look flat against backgrounds, but will have volume that almost pops them right off the screen with an illuminated perfection. Most important characters in a shot should be considered for strong 3 point lighting.



## 3 Point Lighting

### Setup





Back-Light



Back-Light &amp; Fill-light



Full 3-point lighting

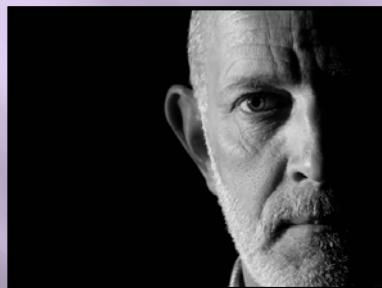
## 3 Point Lighting Example

### Lighting Styles for Individual Characters

Hard	Soft
Clearly defined, bold, sharp light and shadows	Fuzzy, soft light
Straight rays off light, often from a single source	Bounced light
Harsh midday overhead sun	Diffuse, even light, like an overcast sky
Crisp textures and shadows	Softer textures and shadows
Hard Edges to objects in frame	Softer Edges

## High Key Low Key Lighting Styles

- High Key the light is placed higher on the subject, which flattens out really dramatic shadow casting (high noon).
- Low Key lighting is setup to cast lots of shadows. The main key light is placed in a low position to cast more shadows off of subjects (twilight).



Low Key



High Key

## High Key & Low Key Lighting Styles

High Key	Low Key
Fill and backlight	Less-intense key light on the side. May be a single light source for the shot.
Low contrast	Strong, extreme contrasts between dark and light areas in the frame.
Soft, transparent shadows	Sharp shadows, with a dark void around characters
Comedies, dramas, adventures	Danger, somber, mysterious, horror, noir films such as Blade Runner
Light, fun, happy	Sad, heavy, dark, scary

## Using Shadows to Develop Lighting Styles

You can use two types of shadows to increase depth and volume in your shots:

1. Attached shading – shades features across the surface of objects. A person's face with a single candle flame on the right will produce attached shading effects across facial features.
2. Cast shadows – shadows objects cast across walls in the background or on other surfaces (for instance, a person holding a candle casts a silhouette against a wall).

Example:

### Godfather – Marlon Brando

Always lit from above so that his eyes were in shadow (to make him appear more mysterious).



## Lighting for Effect

- ❑ Light through fabrics such as silk, sheer or lacy fabrics
- ❑ Bounce cards
- ❑ Lighting gels
- ❑ Handmade gobos



Careful: Possible Fire Hazard



## Light Source As Symbol

Symbolic Light Source	Possible Meanings
Big portable stage lights	Big budget, super illumination, professional, movie stars
Birthday cake with candles	Celebration, getting older, fun, making wishes, childlike, annual
Burning bush	Miracle or fire, holy, guidance, higher communication, pay attention, communication, with unseen realms
Burning wooden/straw effigy	Letting go, casting a spell, protest, ritual, riot, summoning the power of the symbolic shape
Campfire	Primitive, survival, outdoors, warmth, light
Candles burning in shapes such as a circle of saints or symbols	Sacred space, altar, intentions, ritual, holy

Symbolic Light Source	Possible Meanings
Car Headlights	Temporary, direct, harsh low spotlight, threatening, moving, mysterious, ominous
Christmas lights	Holiday cheer, celebration, sparkles, magical, twinkles
Fireplace	Warm, cozy, romantic, life-sustaining, comfort
Flashlights	Searching through the unknown, examining darkness or fear, unsettling limited scope of vision, guiding light.
Glowing character	Enlightened being, radioactive, in love, beaming with joy
Glowing statue	Illuminated symbol, turned on, active, alive powerful
Harsh midday sunlight	Hot emotions boiling over, breaking points, melting
Lava lamp	Funky, retro, liberal, youthful, fun, psychedelic

Symbolic Light Source	Possible Meanings
Light box/light table	Working light, examining, study, illuminating the unknown, details, scrutiny, solving a mystery
Light switch turning on/off fast	Disorienting, between worlds, strobe, unsettling, things appearing and disappearing, unseen changes occurring
Moonlight	Intuitive, romantic, cold blue magic, quiet, peaceful
Swinging overhead lightbulb	Sharp slicing motion in air produces uneasy feel of being cut open, exposed, unsettling, danger, uncertain, shifting emotions, examining, ungrounded, violence.
Torches	Primitive, cavemen, jungle, caves, passing-the-flame ceremony, keeping the torch burning for some reason.

## Lighting Tips

- ❑ Start with a single light source per shot and add as needed.
- ❑ Eyes are drawn to what's brightest in shot.
- ❑ Good guys are lit better than bad guys
- ❑ Under-light rather than over-light.
- ❑ Experiment, be daring, break rules.
- ❑ Use shadows to build suspense at key moments.

## Lighting Safety

- ❑ Lights are Hot!
- ❑ Wear gloves
- ❑ Never place near flammable material
- ❑ Always setup lights in well ventilate area
- ❑ Turn off lights when not in use.



## Colour Design

- Strong colour design can help tell your story and evoke different sets of emotions.

contrast



Wizard Of Oz



## Blue Velvet

Colour design in "Blue Velvet" shows the Two worlds colliding.



Bright primary colors showing happy, bright side of town at the beginning of the film.

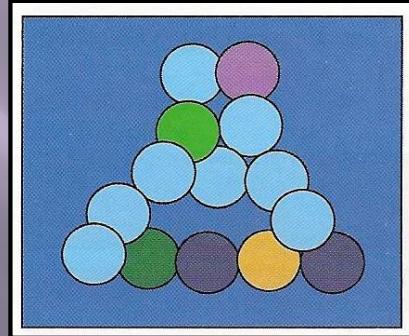


Muted dark wine colours for the Darker side of town.

## Colour Balance Test

Eyes move toward warm, bright, or white colours in the frame.

Use this to your advantage when adding colour to your scene.



## Creating a Colour Palette

- ❑ Colour Palette each location
- ❑ Limit the number of colours in your palette.
- ❑ Use lots of neutral colours with small amounts of bright ones to lead the eye around the story taking place in the frame.
- ❑ Choose a colour to represent your theme.



## “Traffic” (2000)



Mexican world is tinted in grainy, hot yellow Sepia tones.



San Diego drug dealer world is very Beachlike with full, sunny, warm palette.



World of the rich girl and politician is in Cool traditional blues with sharp, expensive Looking, subdued lighting.

## Colour to Show Theme

- Apply to certain theme objects

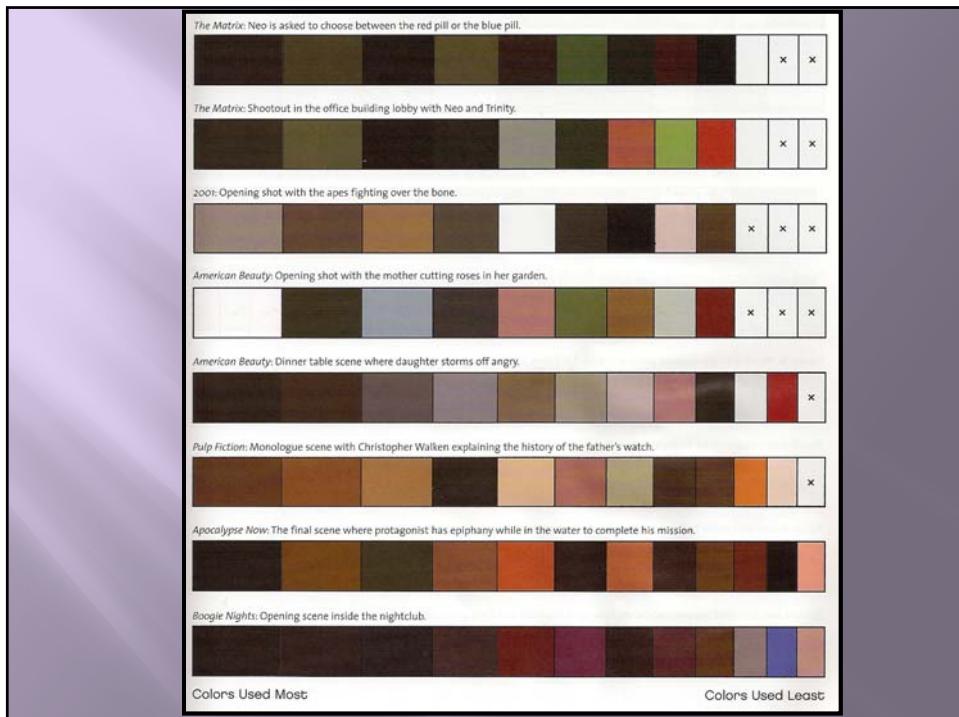
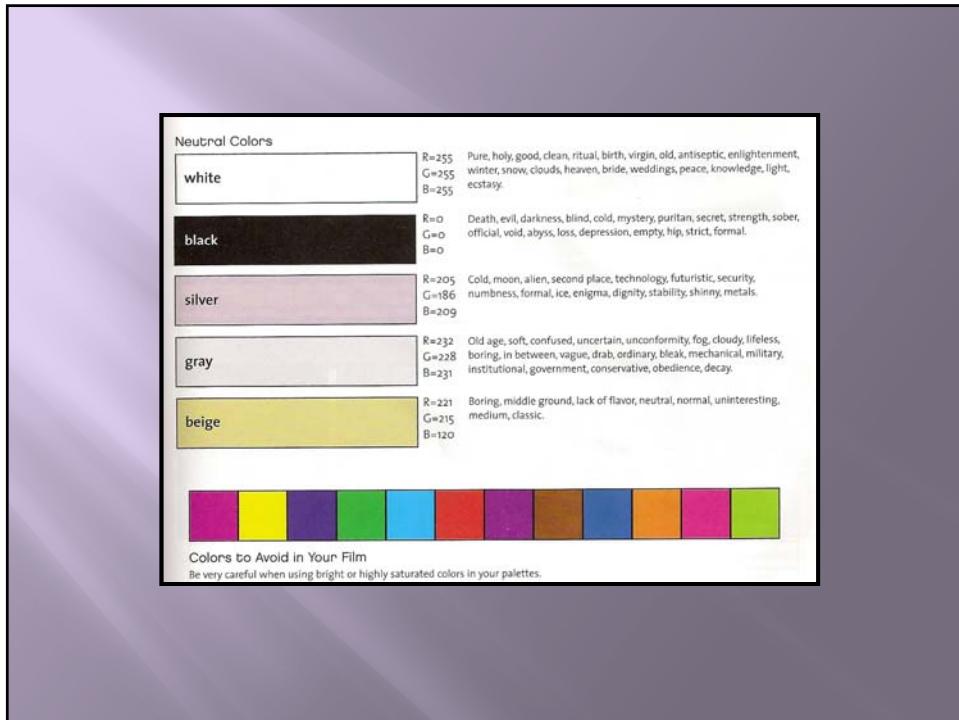


From “American Beauty” (1999), red is chosen As a theme colour throughout the film.



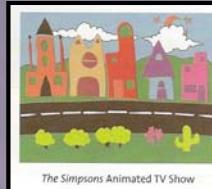
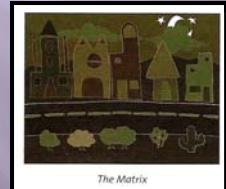
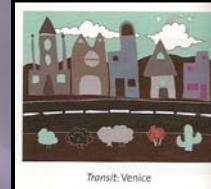
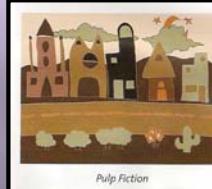
The Color Psychology Chart		
Warm Colors		
red	R=252 G=0 B=25	Anger, popular, loud, prostitute, debt, warning, vivid, positive, attention grabbing, holidays, passion, violence, sex, aggression, fire, hate, lust, dynamic, dramatic, powerful, heart, seduction, danger, excitement, survival, blood, rage, revenge.
magenta	R=240 G=2 B=127	Sensitive, racy, cheap, hot, plastic, enchanting, optimistic, happy, love.
mauve	R=174 G=1 B=126	Suave, classy, fruity, sophisticated, modern, city, worldly, stylish, impressive, cultured.
pink	R=249 G=155 B=204	Girly, love, soft, romantic, Valentine, young, innocent.
orange	R=255 G=77 B=0	Summer, tempting, fitness, cheerful, heat, bold, vulgar, energetic, harvest, fall, fire, assertive, artificial, clowns, safety, vital, toxic.
coral	R=252 G=78 B=50	Wild, fiery, passionate, sharp, glorious, explosive, spirited.
yellow	R=255 G=255 B=51	Exciting, sour, anxious, sharp, adventure, inspiring, imagination, sun, warmth, daytime, happy, drought, caution, disease, coward, abundance.
gold	R=255 G=204 B=55	Wealth, heat, joyful, lavish, uncertain, rich, mellow, abundant, content, cozy, lion, sun, first place, top honors, ancient, ritual, class, timeless, heavy, greed, idolatry, power, ceremony, corrupt, healing.
brown	R=167 G=86 B=13	Earth, mud, wood, autumn, leather, poverty, dull, reliability, animal, primal, dirty, fertility, organic.

Cool Colors		
purple		
purple	R=100 G=22 B=135	Grand, regal, leader, superior, majestic, gracious.
violet		
violet	R=40 G=19 B=132	Intuition, wisdom, power, royalty, wealth, ritual, old women, loneliness, religion, snob, feminine, isolation, winter solstice.
ultramarine		
ultramarine	R=40 G=19 B=132	Calm, peaceful, serene, loyalty, sadness, eternity, intelligence, sky, ocean, water, night, innocence, communication, protection, winter.
Cool Colors (continued)		
sky blue		
sky blue	R=104 G=163 B=204	Honest, true, good, calm, clean, peaceful, enlightened, tranquility, sky, good will, wisdom.
cyan		
cyan	R=52 G=179 B=209	Cold, ice, hard, technical, intelligent, analytical, clear, peacock, wind.
tourquoise		
tourquoise	R=128 G=207 B=226	Primitive, intuitive, ancient, outdoors, strong, spiritual, free, eagle, stimulating, Native American, sky.
green		
green	R=63 G=141 B=50	Eternal, emeralds, fresh, jealousy, elves, safe, secure, healthy, life, money, growth, fruitfulness, nature, spring, rebirth, creativity, Irish, poison, swamp, evil, envy, snake, youth, sick.
lime		
lime	R=112 G=191 B=69	Young, refreshing, sharp, lively, clean, naive, citrus, desert, sporty.



## Applying Colour Palettes to Images

Notice how the mood of the scene changes dramatically as different sample colour palettes are applied.



## Colour Correction

- ❑ Always colour correct all shots!
- ❑ Consider tinting to support your theme
- ❑ Consider adding a Film look in post
- ❑ Avoid over exposing and blowing everything out or setting things up so dark that there is no information in the frame to tweak.



## Example: Film Noir

**Film noir** is a cinematic term used primarily to describe stylish Hollywood crime dramas, particularly those that emphasize moral ambiguity and sexual motivation. Hollywood's classic film noir period is generally regarded as stretching from the early 1940s to the late 1950s.



The Big Combo (1955)



Maltese Falcon (1941)

## Film Noir Visual Style

The Big Sleep 1946



- Typically black and white film
- Stark light/dark contrasts
- Iconic shots using patterns such as Venetian blinds
- Partially or wholly obscured character faces
- Use of Dutch Angles, Low Angles, and Wide Angle shots.



Jack Nicholson in Chinatown