Basic Lighting Terms

**Key Light** - The apparent principal source of directional illumination on a scene.

**Fill Light** - Generally, a diffused light used to reduce shadow or contrast range.

**Back Light** - Directional light coming from behind a subject.

**Baselight** - The overall illumination in a studio or on a set, before lighting takes place. For example, if you are shooting outdoors under overcast sky, your baselight is the sun light diffused by the clouds. A certain amount of baselight is necessary to obtain a video or film image.

**Side Light** - A directional light that illuminates the subject, usually from the opposite side of the camera from the key light.

**Kicker** - Directional illumination from the back, off to one side of the subject, usually from a low angle.

**Soft Light or Diffused Light** - Light source or sources that produce undefined shadows over a large area. Produced by diffusing or bouncing a primary light source. An overcast day produces Soft Light, and is free!

**Hard Light** - Produces well-defined shadows and causes fast falloff, which means the lighted area changes rather abruptly into dense shadow area. Produced by Spotlights.

**Color Temperature** - Relative redness or bluishness of light as measured in degrees Kelvin. Normal indoor fixtures operate at 3200 degrees K; outdoor sunlight is around 5600 degrees K.

**Quartz Light** - A high intensity fixture whose lamp consists of a quartz or silica housing (instead of glass) and a tungsten-halogen filament. Produces a bright light of stable color temperature (3200 K). Never touch these bulbs with your bare hands!

---

**Productional Use of Lights**

1. Backlight: light from anywhere behind the subject; typical elevation 45° to 75°.
3. Base Light: Foundation Light: diffuse light uniformly flooding the whole setting, preventing light intensity falling below the minimum acceptable. In general, television practice establishes a flat base light and builds up other lights from this.
4. Key Light: predominant direction of light, usually frontal for full-face and side light for profile.
5. Clothes Light: hard light revealing texture and form of clothing.
6. Eye Light: a low-power lamp providing eye catch-light without modifying exposure.
7. Filler, Fill-in, Fill Light: soft light used to lighten shadows cast by spotlights. The balance between key and fill lights determines lighting contrast.
9. Set Light, Background Light: any light that illuminates the background alone.

We shall also encounter the terms - Frontal: any light from around camera viewpoint; Modelling Light, Accent Light: any hard light revealing texture and form; Cross Light: frontal spotlight of any height placed about 45° laterally to the subject; Kicker, Cross Backlight: back light of any height placed about 135° to the subject.

---

**Three Point Lighting**

The key light illuminates and models the subject, and the filler (fill-light) reduces the harshness of shadows cast by the key, revealing detail. The backlight outlines the subject in light, separating it tonally from its background.