

BY CHRISTINA GREVE

DAY 2 | NATURAL LIGHT



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FINDING THE BEST LIGHT

Finding the right light will take your photographs from good to outstanding. With the use of light, you can manipulate your photos and turn them into masterpieces.

Not everyone finds it easy to spot the right light at first. I know because I used to be one of those people. Learning to shoot using just natural light has been difficult for me to learn. I didn't understand what "finding the light" really meant when I started out myself.

For some people learning to find soft diffused light is a process. If you are a newbie in the photography world, you might know what I mean—and I hope my tips in this lesson, will help you in the right direction.





THE SECRET TO BEAUTIFUL PHOTOS

Light is the KEY factor in creating a successful image. Light determines not only brightness and darkness, but also tone, mood and the atmosphere.

Therefore it is necessary to control and manipulate light correctly in order to get the best texture, vibrancy of colour and luminosity on your subjects.

By playing and experimenting with shadows and highlights, you can create stylized looking images that will help you take your photography to the next level.





LOOK FOR SOFT EVEN LIGHT

The best way to learn how to find good light is to look around before taking the picture. Take a moment to investigate the room or the area. Look for a window with soft, even light. Avoid harsh sunlight and dark shadows.

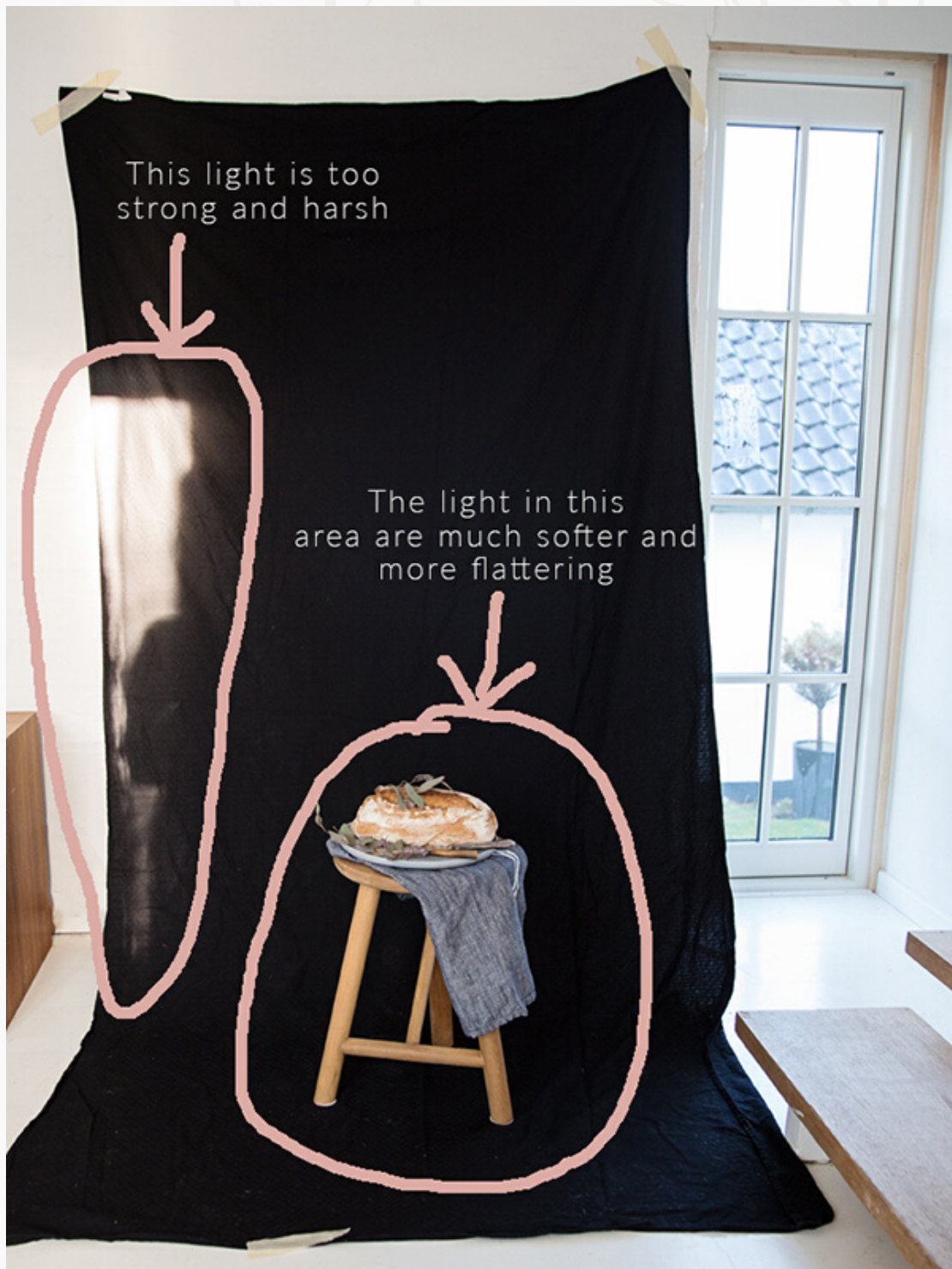
Look for something in between, but closer to the bright side. If there is too much bright sunshine coming in, dark shadows will appear in your photos, which in most cases are not very flattering.

If you are shooting outside, look for open shadow. “Open Shadow” basically means that you place your subject in the brightest area of a shadow or in a place that’s not directly facing the sun.

Think about how the light is outside on an overcast day when the sun is lightly covered by fluffy clouds.

That's the best light, and that's the type of light you're looking for.

Never place food or flowers in a harsh sunbeam, unless this is a specific look you're going for. Direct sunlight tends to cast a yellow tone which is not very flattering for food and still life photos. Always turn off all artificial light to avoid a yellow tone to your photos and set your camera white balance to AUTO.



How to Set Up a Photography Workspace with Good Natural Light

Do you think you need a professional studio to create magazine worthy photos?

Then let me crush that illusion right now. I personally believe that the best images often are set up in the most simple way, without expensive equipment.

You don't need to invest in expensive equipment to get great images. The very best light comes through your windows every day. Let me show you three examples of how you can easily create a good workspace in your home.





SET-UP 1: DIRECT LIGHT FROM A WINDOW

First things first; you need a surface to work on for your styling. Find a table - any size and height will do and place it close to a window. Choose a window in your home that has soft light. Avoid a room with too much sunlight (it's too much when the shadows are present). If too much light is "hitting" the table you can move the table further away from the window until the light appears softer.

In the photo above, you can see that the corner of the table gets too much sunlight. Therefore I moved the table away from the window until my food setup is located in soft flattering light. I've also placed a white cardboard on the opposite side of the window which will catch the light coming from the window and bounce it back onto the food setup. This helps brighten up the shadows.

Choose a window next to a wall. The key is to go for a clutter-free background. You can also use a door or a closet as a background - just make sure it's something simple and clean. This way you make sure nothing will take focus away from the subject you are photographing.

SET-UP 2: LIGHT FROM A DOOR OPENING

In this next example I'm using a door opening instead of a window. It works great as a light source. For the best result you must experiment with the placement of your subject. The closer the subject is to the door opening the brighter your image, the further away, the more moody your light will be. Take a few test shoots to see what works best.

TIP: Using light from a door opening is also perfect for portraits, as you get beautiful crisp light from the front and darkness coming from behind. This adds atmosphere and depth in the image.





SET-UP 3: IN-DIRECT LIGHT FROM ABOVE

This set-up is a little different from the first two examples. The window is suddenly much higher up than my subject and that helps me get some really pretty and soft light - **because it's no longer direct light - it's in-direct.**

If you have a window in your ceiling this can also be a great choice for placing your set-up under it. This shows that you really can get away with capturing beautiful photos at home, without a professional studio.





READY TO TAKE ACTION?

Alright, now it's your turn. Set up a small workspace next to a window with good available daylight. Study **HOW** the light falls on the table. Is it soft? Is it too strong? Too dark? Do you need to move the table closer to the window or further away. Really practice to look at **HOW** the light falls on the table.

When you've found the best light go grab some food in your kitchen. Something simple like eggs, apples or bread. Then place the food on the table and take a few pictures. Study the light. Adjust. Test again. Now, test another window or door opening and investigate how the light is different in each location. This is how you find your favourite workspace.



LET'S SUM UP

- NEVER use an on camera flash.
- Turn off all artificial light to avoid a yellow tone to your photos.
- Shoot in the middle of the day or early afternoon when the light is at its best.
- Position your subject close to a window or door opening.
- Avoid strong sunlight as it gives very harsh shadows.
- Use a white board to reflect light back at your subject.
- Identify areas in your home with great light and set up your favorite workspace.
- Experiment, be playful and have FUN!



Christina Greve is a Lifestyle Photographer, Stylist, Empowerment Coach and Holistic therapist. She provides tools, education and inspiration designed to help multi-passionate women, artists and creative souls find direction, push through self-doubt + make a living doing what they LOVE.

Her work has been featured in numerous magazines, blogs and books worldwide. After a decade of working with psychology, Christina's passion for photography evolved into a full-time photography and coaching business.

Today she runs a thriving + fast-growing international empire specializing in professional online training, motivating and engaging female photographers, designers, bloggers, makers and creatives. She has coached thousands of fabulous women from more than 40+ countries.

With her Podcast "The Empowered Creative," her popular Instagram posts, and quickly sold-out workshops, Christina has become the go-to person for many creatives seeking like-minded sisterhood, real support and heartfelt encouragement.



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