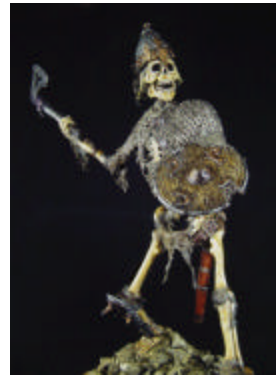


Great model Photography, On A Beer Budget



Getting Started:

Good model Photography does not need to involve a massive amount of money. While a good set of professional lights etc... can cost hundreds of dollars, it is not necessary to spend that kind of money. The system that I use consists of two "Goose neck" desk lamps, two "daylight balanced" (standard) light bulbs, a tripod, camera, a set of close-up filters and a seamless background.

Let me define a few things.

Lamps: I prefer to get the all-metal clamp on, goose neck lamps. They hold up to heat better, and tend to be sturdier. They are available at most office supply stores for \$10 to \$20 each.

Daylight Balanced bulbs: These are standard incandescent bulbs that burn at the same color range as regular sunlight. Do not be alarmed that the bulb is tinted blue. That is what is needed to filter the light to the correct color range. These bulbs are available at most good photography stores especially those catering to pro photographers. They run about \$6.00 ea. (A lot cheaper than the \$40 to \$ 50 for the bulb for pro lights). These bulbs have a life expectancy of about eight hrs. Eight hrs does not sound like a long time, but these lights should be turned off between shots anyway. They do burn a LOT hotter that the average incandescent bulb, and we do not want to burn up our lamps.

Tripod and Camera: Good tripod is really a must. They range in price from \$25 on up. Just make sure to get one that is relatively sturdy, as you may need to make long exposures to get your shot. As far as cameras go, this system will work with film or digital cameras. While some digital cameras have a close-up flash function, the even light provided by the lamps will give you a much sharper, less contrasty image. This will allow you to show off minute detail that would otherwise be “blown out” by a flash.

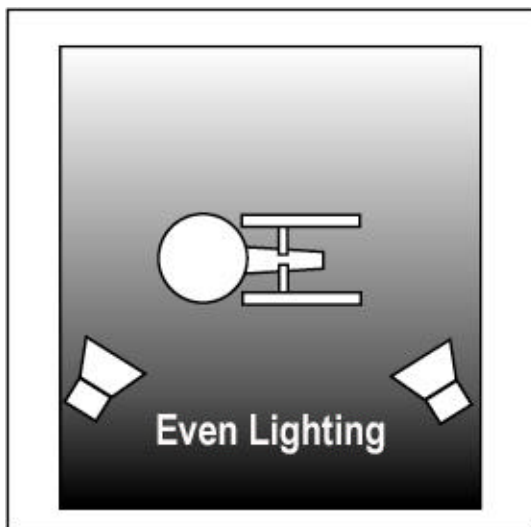


Close-up Filters and Seamless Backgrounds: Close-up Filters are a set of extra lenses that can be screwed onto the front of standard SLR camera lens. For a cost of \$50 or so, you can convert your regular lenses to a lens capable of doing macro photography. They come in three powers +1, +2, +4 and can be used in any combination. This is a great alternative to buying a \$300- \$500 macro lens. The only drawback to these is that you do get some distortion when all of them are being used and they subject is extremely small (Say a 25 mm gaming miniature).

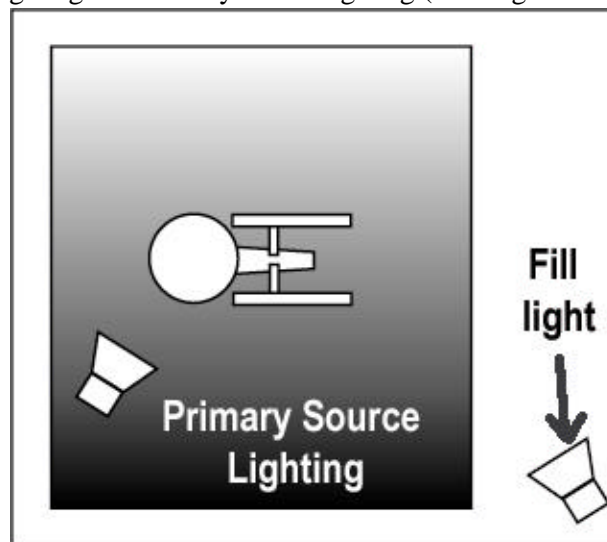
A seamless background can be purchased or made. I usually use a piece of well-ironed fabric, Attached to the wall and spread out over a table. I then use the clamps from the lights to hold down the end of the BG to the table. The ideal set up is to have the BG gently curve from the table to the wall. This should make a nice “distraction free BG.

Lights, Camera, Action:

There are two basic ways to set up your lights, even lighting and Primary source lighting (see diagrams below).



In this setup, the lights need to be at 45 degree angles to the subject.



In this setup you will want to use a fill light or reflector to back fill and high light the subject.



A variation to these is to add a Third light to illuminate the surface of the background. This can be done by laying a light on the background and turning the reflector on the light up along the BG. A WORD OF CAUTION: I usually take an additional “Goose Neck” and clamp it to the table, extending it out (fully) horizontal to the surface of the background. This prevents the light from touching the background material, reduces the fire hazard. I would, however, recommend that this light only be on for taking a light meter reading and the actual shot. That will keep the background material from getting too hot.

Lastly, Taking the Shot:

I always shoot my picture with my automatic camera set to manual. This allows me the luxury of controlling the F Stop (aperture setting) and the shutter speed. A good rule of thumb is to set the exposure and F-stop so that it is at the highest F-stop number (giving the greatest “depth-of-field”) and allowing you to “bracket” the exposure. Bracketing is the process by which you take three exposures to get the maximum results for one shoot. You take one exposure above the recommended light meter reading, one at the reading and one below the reading. This will give you a range of shots to choose from after processing. That way if you are shooting a light colored subject, you do not run the risk of getting an entire roll that is over exposed.



Another method I use is to buy a “Gray Card” from the store where you got the light bulbs. A Gray Card is a large card colored a completely neutral gray; this card is placed in front of the subject, to get an accurate light meter reading. If you are shooting a really light or dark colored subject, your cameras light meter can be fooled by the color of the subject. This is the primary cause of over and under exposed images. The Gray Card gives a very accurate reading because it is a mid-range, neutral color that will not fool the light meter, and give you a good exposure setting with which you can then bracket. Be warned though, when you move the Gray Card, your camera will give you a different reading. Simply ignore that and take the bracketed shots. If you have trouble, simply write down the settings from the Gray Card reading. HAVE FUN AND GOOD SHOOTING!

Thanks, and if you have and further questions or problems, my email is:

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