

MULTIPLE LIGHT SOURCES

By Kent DuFault



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-lighted-buildings-near-river-2570704/>

Dave Morgan – No EXIF

Using multiple light sources in your night photography has one very distinct and incredibly powerful attribute that you can take advantage of, and that attribute is color.

When the sun goes down, the lights go on, and in most cases, each light source brings its own colorful hue to the party!

The Basics of Night Photography

- You need a camera that can do extended exposures. This is virtually any camera, including smartphone cameras.
- You will want to use a wider lens and get close as this will diminish the effect of camera shake.
- A camera with low noise at higher ISO settings and extended exposures is a plus.

- While not a requirement, a tripod is a handy tool that will provide you with more options for creativity.
- A remote shutter release, wired or wireless, makes taking night pictures easier. Another option is to use the camera shutter self-timer. The main thing is that you don't want the camera wiggling around.
- Try bringing along some colored filters that you can place in front of your lens. Start with RGB – a red, green, and blue filter. For example, with a thirty-second exposure, hold each of the filters in front of the lens for 10 seconds. I'm going to keep the result a secret. Give it a try. You can find inexpensive gelatin filters (light gels) on Amazon, in most camera stores, and at some crafting stores.



Assignment:

Find some brightly lit nighttime scenes in your location. Capture the moment naturally to learn what kind of color variations the available lighting provides. Next, try using your gels. Keep your exposure at least 10 to 30 seconds. Use your aperture and ISO settings to get the time value (exposure length) to the suggested timeframe.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/cars-on-road-near-high-rise-building-during-night-time-4344752/>

Aleksandar Pasaric – No EXIF

When setting up your multiple light source night shots, be aware of 'black holes.'



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/cars-on-road-near-high-rise-building-during-night-time-4344752/>

Aleksandar Pasaric – No EXIF

Edit by Kent DuFault

Be cautious of black holes that add nothing to the final composition.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/cars-on-road-near-high-rise-building-during-night-time-4344752/>

Aleksandar Pasaric – No EXIF

Edit by Kent DuFault

A camera frame, such as this one (above), is much more interesting than the original, which included quite a few black holes. Yes, an image can be cropped. But why not get it right in the camera? And then you have all that resolution to work with when completing your post-production.

Night photography, such as this, is all about color. Don't be afraid to boost color saturation levels a bit. For the edited version, I raised the global color saturation level to +20. That really gave the color some punch without going overboard.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-buildings-during-nighttime-2603464/>

Aleksandar Pasaric – Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 50mm lens, f/11, ISO 50, no shutter EXIF

Sometimes black holes aren't bad if they add to the composition or story behind the shot.

This photo (above) has black holes, but they are integral to the graphic nature of the composition.



Assignment:

Get out there and create some nighttime shots with available lighting in your area. Explore the concept of black holes. Try to eliminate them or include them when they bring a sense of story or graphics to a final composition.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/portrait-photo-of-woman-standing-in-front-of-lit-ferris-wheel-looking-away-2403202/>

Manuel Barros – Panasonic Lumix DC-GH5, 22mm lens, f/1.1, ISO 1000, no shutter EXIF

A fun way to play and learn about multiple light sources at night is to use them to create a portrait. This style of portraiture often has a whimsical or mysterious mood.

When creating portraits in this style, don't worry about color balance. In fact, a weird color balance can often add to the effect.

Instead, use your creativity to craft a story around the subject with the mixed nighttime lighting providing the only illumination.



Assignment:

Create a portfolio of work of at least ten portrait images that you're proud of that are taken at night and illuminated only by existing mixed lighting sources that you found. Use a pose and perhaps props to incorporate a story into each shot.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/aerial-photo-of-illuminated-outdoor-swimming-pools-in-various-shapes-at-night-3048211/>

Tom Fisk – Hasselblad L1D-20C Drone camera, 10.3mm lens, f/2.8, ISO 3200, no shutter EXIF

One of the best avenues for a creative nighttime mixed lighting photoshoot is getting up high and looking down. A downward angle tends to eliminate unnecessary black holes.

This photographer used a drone for his photo. However, that isn't a necessity. I've created numerous exciting shots by simply going to a higher building, a bridge, or even a scenic overlook.

Looking down provides a perspective that many viewers aren't used to seeing, and that creates visual excitement.



Assignment:

Practice getting up high and shooting downward onto a mixed lighting nighttime scene. Don't forget to keep the camera steady and avoid camera shake!



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/silhouette-of-crossing-a-pedestrian-lane-in-a-city-street-at-night-3333923/>

Josh Hild – Canon EOS 6D, 35mm lens, f/1.8, 125th of a second, ISO 640

Earlier, we discussed the idea of using multiple colored gels. For this Creativity Prompt, I want you to use a single-colored glass filter or a colored gel to create or enhance the mood or story for a nighttime multiple light source photoshoot.

In the example photo (above), a cyan filter further created the story of a cold winter night.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/afYy2K3G0S8>

Road Trip with Raj – Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 78mm setting on a zoom lens, f/2.8, 1/40th, ISO 100

Adding a red filter to this nighttime neon sign shot creates a more vital message for the viewer.



Assignment:

Pick one colored filter and go out one evening and go crazy with it. Try to construct storylines around the color you've chosen.



<https://unsplash.com/photos/TxoMYFip9d0>

Nathan Anderson – Nikon D750, 20mm lens, f/1.8, 15 seconds, ISO 1600

One exciting and more challenging multiple light source for you to use is the night sky, along with your electronic flash.



Assignment:

Pick a location that is very dark with little or no light pollution. Put your camera on a tripod. Determine exposure for the sky, which will typically be somewhere between 10 and 30 seconds at your widest aperture with an ISO setting somewhere between 800 and 3200. While the shutter is open, manually fire your flash at different objects while covering or uncovering it with your colored gels.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-people-on-waiting-shed-during-nighttime-2856023/>

Brett Sayles – Nikon Z6, 50mm lens, f/1.8, ISO 3200, no shutter EXIF



Assignment:

For your final challenge, photograph people doing an activity at night. Using the multiple light sources present, try to capture the sharpest and most natural-looking photo that you can. This will test your abilities, particularly in the area of judging white balance. Smartphones tend to work well for this style of imaging. However, try your other cameras as well as see if you can make it happen!