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11

CHEAP AND DIY TOOLS I USE TO LIGHT MY VIDEOS

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You made the right choice by downloading this report! Here you'll find 11 affordable lighting tools I use to make my videos – talking head, product, fashion and short films.

My kit has grown and evolved many times over my 14-year career, and you can be sure the stuff I'm about to reveal is the real deal – and tested!

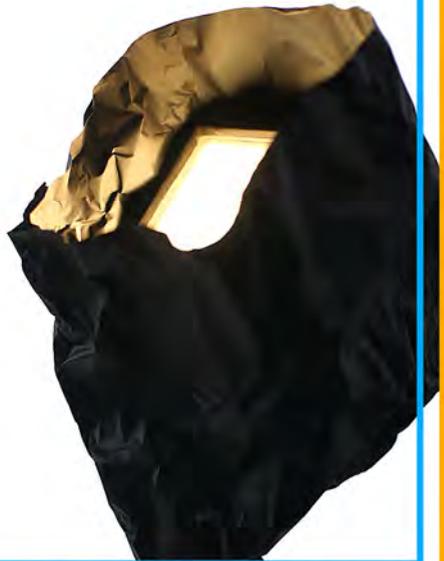
More importantly, they're cheap! I know you might not have a lot of money to spend. And if you're starting out, you shouldn't be wasting money on accumulating gear! Be smart. Make sure you follow this golden rule:

“Only buy gear if your business or job will return the investment in 3 months or less.”

This means, if you buy a \$3,000 camera, it must make you an *additional \$3,000* in 3 months or less. If you know that's not going to happen, don't buy it!

Ready? Here we go.

1 The 500 W Work/Shop Light + Black Cinefoil



500 W Halogen Work Light + Cinefoil

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What does it do?

This is a [tough halogen floodlight](#). It throws enough light to power a 15'x15' room. I have four of these.

How does the aluminium black cinefoil help?

It helps control the spill, and being heat resistant, is safe. I use Rosco Cinefoil (12" x 50' roll) ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)).

Why does it belong on this list?

There is no cheaper or tougher alternative to two or three of [these lights](#) to power a large room or set. They are designed to be used outside.

What are the cheap alternatives?

You can look for Parcans (56 or 64) ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)), or Chinese-made 800W Red heads ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)).

What are the better alternatives?

Next up would be a Lowel Omni-Light ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)), or Nooklite ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)). But I prefer one step up to an original Ianiro Redhead ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)); or, if you want more versatility, an Arri/Mole Richardson 650W fresnel (Tweenie) ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)).

I have fresnels and other lights, but every time I put [these](#) away in my storeroom something forces me to bring them back!

2 The 4-Socket Holder with LED Bulbs



Godox TL-4/5 Tricolor Socket Holder



What does it do?

This ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) takes household bulbs: LEDs, fluorescents, even tungsten (but watch the wattage!). Four or five is an ideal medium. You need to pair it with a softbox (see later).

Why do I recommend LEDs?

The Yuji LED bulbs I use have excellent color, are tough and will last a long time. Check out my review [here](#).

Why does it belong on this list?

Because no matter where you are, if you can find a light bulb, you can screw it on and continue shooting.

This is the best cheap alternative to a halogen source for interviews and close to medium shots, especially when paired with a softbox.

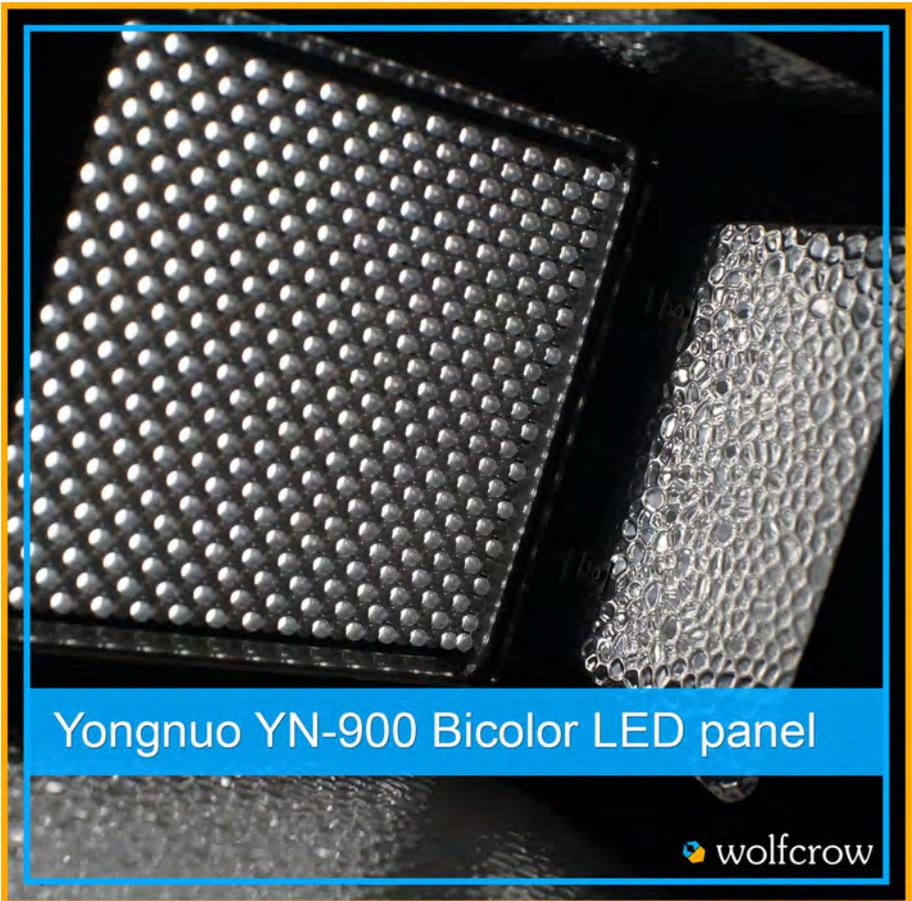
Are there any cheaper alternatives?

Nope, unless you prefer halogen sources as mentioned earlier.

What are the better options out there?

There are few. I don't recommend fluorescent and for tungsten the Lowel Rifa ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) comes to mind. Another tough solution is the Chimera Triolet ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) or Photoflex Starlite ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)).

3 The 1x1 Bi-color LED Panel



Yongnuo YN-900 Bicolor LED panel

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What does it do?

[This light](#) can be used as a fill or key. It's handy, light and easy to pack. It can be powered by batteries. 1x1 means One foot by One foot, but you can find them in many sizes.

How does bi-color help?

The ability to manipulate color temperature will save you a lot of hassle. You'll get used to it!

Why does it belong on this list?

No other light type can change color temperature this way! You can even dim these lights (most of them) from 0 to 100%.

Are there any cheaper alternatives?

Too many! Cheaper alternatives tend to give out weird color casts on skin tones. Check out my review of the YN-900 [here](#).

What are the better options out there?

You can opt for a Zylight F8 LED fresnel ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)), which combines LED with fresnel and is easy to transport. But it, too, gives out a green cast. The absolute champion, in my opinion, is the Arri L7-C ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)). It is a thing of beauty.

4 The Softbox with Honeycomb Grid



What does it do?

It gives you a soft source of light for interview subjects, and makes aesthetically challenged individuals look good.

How does the honeycomb grid help?

It helps to control the spill, really makes your subject stand out. The grid does reduce light output though.

Why does it belong on this list?

There is no versatile alternative to a softbox with grid ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)). You can bounce light on walls or ceilings, or tape muslin to the walls or floor, but that's a lot more work, and you need space (and an assistant). This is a bread-and-butter tool.

Are there any cheap options?

Yes, you can purchase cheap softboxes and they should get the job done. Start with a 24 or 36" softbox to begin with. The other decision you'll have to make is square or round ([Octabox](#)). I prefer square. If you don't know, start with square.

What are the better options out there?

The Chimera softbox ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) is your best bet, and it is also heat resistant. These last a long time!

5 The Collapsible 5-in-1 Reflector



What does it do?

It has [five different surfaces](#) – white, black, silver, gold and translucent. And it folds up neatly for travel. Learning to fold this one back is an initiation into manhood.

Do you need all five surfaces?

It depends, but you won't know which ones work for you if you don't try all of them!

What does each surface do?

1. White reflects back the light without changing color.
2. Black blocks light and acts as negative fill.
3. Silver bounces back more light than white, and is harsher.
4. Gold does what silver does, but warms up the light considerably.
5. Translucent is used to shoot through light for diffusion or as a scrim to block sunlight from falling on a subject.

Are there any cheaper alternatives?

No! It is cheap! ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#))

What are the better options out there?

A 4x4 frame ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) with different diffusion materials.

6 The On-camera 'Pocket' LED light



On-Camera Dimmable LED Panel

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What does it do?

It is a [small LED panel](#), the size of a large candy bar, that you can perch on top of your camera or hold in one hand.

How does the small size help?

You can position it in any tight space to shine some fill onto a subject's face. A life saver, this!

Why does it belong on this list?

It's a battery powered light that can fit in your pocket. Nothing can replace it.

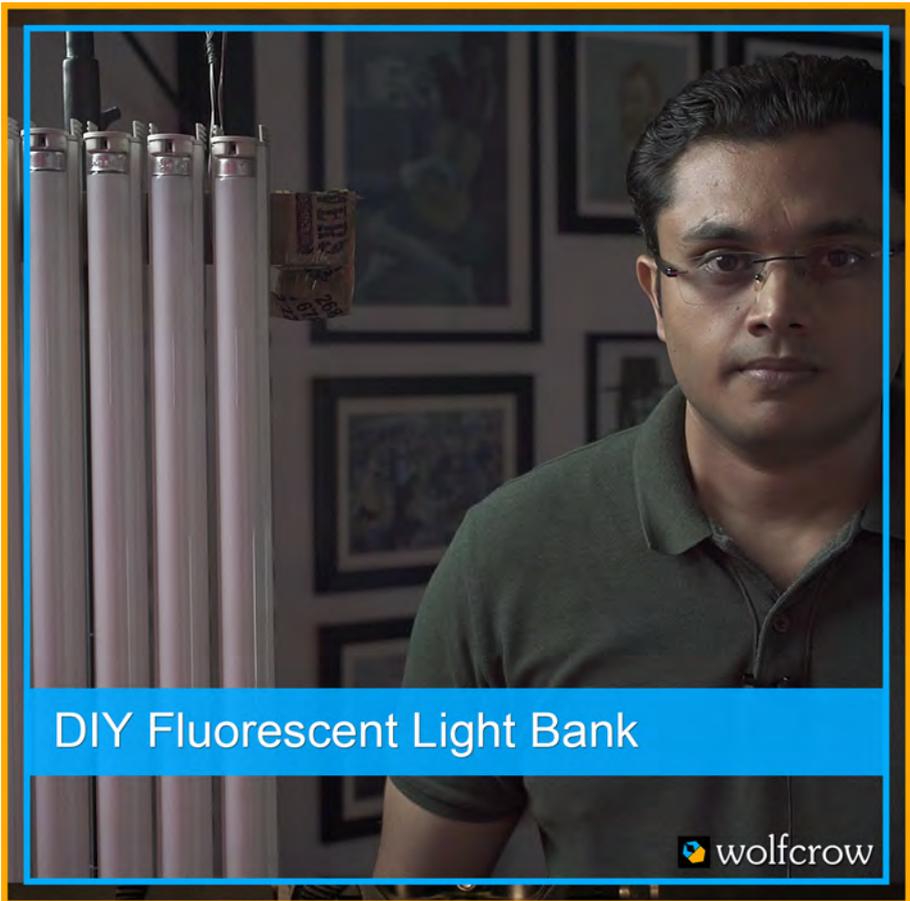
What are the cheap options?

The Chinese-branded ones ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) are cheap, and might do the job. But they all have ugly green color casts. Still, they are handy, so get some!

What are the better options out there?

The better options are more expensive. The Cineo Matchbox ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) is one great light. The Mole Richardson MoleLED ([B&H](#)) is another viable option. The better options give you two things: better color and better construction.

7 The DIY Fluorescent Light Bank



What do these do?

A [fluorescent light bank](#) gives you soft diffused light without needing any modifiers. It's great for interviews and general lighting for short films, documentaries, etc.

Even major Hollywood productions and commercials use Kino Flos (the branded expensive version of fluorescent light banks) all the time.

Why does a fluorescent light bank belong on this list?

It's one of the cheapest and easiest ways to get soft, even light without modifiers or expensive fixtures. You can buy fluorescent tube lights anywhere in the world.

How did I make mine?

Get T8 bulbs. The DIY setup I have is made of 6 tube lights each, and they are controlled by a switch.

They are wired correctly and grounded. The lights in their holders are attached to wooden bars so they can be hung on light stands. **Important:** Get a qualified electrician to build these for you. It just takes a couple of hours.

What are the better options out there?

Only one: Kino Flos ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)).

8 The Articulating or “Magic Arm”



Articulating or “Magic” Arm

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What does it do?

It is [an arm](#) that can twist in any direction, all controlled by just one locking knob. It comes usually with one 1/4"-20 screw/thread at each end. You also get cold shoe, 3/8", etc.

When starting out, get two sizes: 6/7" and 10/11/12".

How does this help?

Imagine using an LCD and you want to shoot from the ground, or high up. Wouldn't it be great if you had a "magic" arm that can reposition the LCD anywhere - securely? That's just one of its cool features.

Why does it belong on this list?

The arm can be used to attach LED lights, an LCD monitor, viewfinder, diffusion, microphone, etc. You can also use it to flag light from entering the lens.

Are there any cheap options?

Sure - ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)). They are mostly okay, but don't trust them 100%!

What are the better options out there?

Get stuff from reputable manufacturers ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)). And get more than one.

9 The Macro Extension Tube Set



Macro Extension Tube Set



What does it do?

It attaches between the lens and the lens mount. This will help you focus your lens closer. Normally, it comes in three sizes that you can also attach separately or in pairs to vary the length.

The longer it is, the closer you can focus, roughly.

How does this help?

It saves you money from having to purchase a dedicated macro lens. Even though you lose a bit of light you can make great shots! Remember, adding a macro extension tube takes away infinity focus.

And remember to get a set with electronic contacts if you want to control aperture and need focus confirmation.

Why does it belong on this list?

It saves you money, with almost no downside.

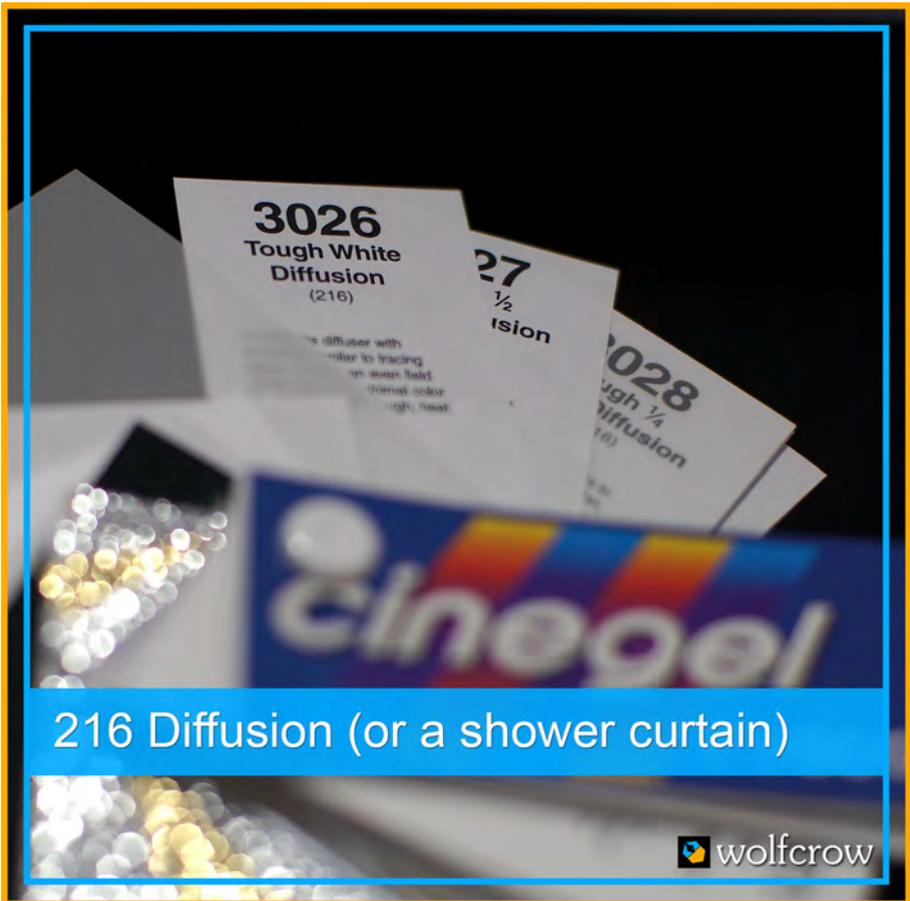
What are the cheap options?

Stay away from the [cheap options](#). These become loose very fast, and your lens might drop off!

What are the better options out there?

Kenko ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) is the best third-party name for macro extension tubes.

10 The 216 Diffusion (or Shower Curtain)



What does it do?

It diffuses the light to provide a large soft source. 216 is a specific kind of diffusion - the number is its identity, worldwide.

Hang it off a C-stand or rod, and shoot light through it.

How does it help?

The quality of light is beautiful, much better than what you get with a softbox or 5-in-1 reflector. A sheet or roll of 216 ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) isn't that expensive, and you can use it to good effect. You might even come to love it!

Why does it belong on this list?

You can't step into a movie set that doesn't carry a 216!

There are many kinds of diffusion, with different numbers. 216 just happens to be the most popular. A good place to start. It will give you a taste for good light – just like the pros use it!

Are there any cheaper alternatives?

The shower curtain ([Amazon](#)). I prefer a slightly beige shower curtain to create a warmer light.

What are the better options out there?

None! 216 ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) is the gold standard.

11 The Light Stand + Sandbags



What does it do?

[It holds and positions your light](#) so you don't have to pay for an assistant – and his/her medical bills!

Which stand to buy?

You can buy a simple photo light stand or a C-stand ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)). The C-stand is heavier and can't be folded for easy transport, but can hold a boom arm and much heavier lights.

Why do you need sandbags?

So your precious light won't fall and kill itself! You can fill it with sand or water or mud (make sure it's clean).

Why does it belong on this list?

You can't light without light stands. You can get away with it sometimes, but you need your lights to stay put.

What are the cheap options?

Cheap is bad when it comes to light stands.

What are the better options out there?

Manfrotto ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) is okay for lightweight fixtures. A Mathews C-stand ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)) with gobo arm for heavier stuff.

BONUS!

12 The Expensive Lapel or Lavalier Microphone



Sanken COS-11D



What does it do?

It records audio!

Why lapel or lavalier?

You can clip it onto any person, clothes, anywhere, and get decent audio.

Why ‘expensive’?

The cheap lapel mics don’t have EMI shielding. You’ll pick up unwanted sounds, even when there aren’t any!

Why does it belong on this list?

Because the biggest mistake most videographers and cinematographers do when starting out is ignoring audio!

What are the cheap options?

Avoid, but if you need one for backup, try the Audio Technica ATR-3350 ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)).

What are the better options out there?

Close your eyes and get a Sanken COS-11D ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#)). You’ll be happy!

There are other options out there, so the sky’s the limit.

ANOTHER BONUS!

13 Gaffers Tape

Don't forget the glue that holds everything together – Gaffers Tape ([Amazon](#), [B&H](#))! Gaffers tape leaves no residue and helps you attach cinefoil, fix broken gear, tape muslin to walls or the floor, plus accomplish many more life and career-saving tasks.

That's all, folks!

If this guide helped you please follow wolfcrow on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) for tips, tricks and news.

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