

CATALOGUE PHOTOGRAPHY

LIGHTING

Appropriate lighting is essential for the accurate documentation of our collection items. Light has a huge impact on the way we perceive detail. Cameras are also very sensitive to light and will interpret and capture physical information according to the lighting situation. By organising an optimal lighting scenario, the quality of your images will be improved and your collection will be better documented.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

In order to achieve effective lighting, you may need to invest in professional photographic equipment. The following list includes commonly required equipment with some inexpensive alternatives:

- **LAMPS:** Professional 'continuous' or 'strobe studio' lighting kit will be the most effective; however, if you are on a tight budget, desk or clamp lamps, or even diffused daylight will work.
- **DIFFUSERS:** Professional light diffusers are usually called grid cloths, frosts, umbrellas or soft boxes and can be purchased from photographic suppliers. However you can achieve a similar effect with a semi opaque, white, flame resistant nylon fabric attached to a suspended bar.
- **LIGHT KIT:** This is essentially a tent lit with LED lights which creates a miniature lighting studio for small items. You can purchase a ready-made kit, or construct one yourself.

SELECTING THE RIGHT BULB

All sources of light omit different colour temperatures. Warmer colour temperatures will appear slightly red and cooler colour temperatures will appear slightly blue. In order to capture the colour of an item accurately, choose white or daylight bulbs. These sit somewhere in the middle of the colour temperature scale.



SETTING UP YOUR LIGHTS

You will need to arrange your lamps in a manner that produces an even distribution of light. Position your lamps equal distance from either side of the camera location at 45 degree angles. Adjust the height and titling the head of your lamps so that they direct light to the centre of the item. If you are photographing an item from above, tilt the lamps to 30-45 degrees off the horizontal plane of where the item sits.

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IN LIEU OF LAMPS, CHOOSE A WELL-LIT SPACE

If you do not have access to lamps you may need to rely on the light from a well-lit room. Bear in mind that the colour temperature of the lights may impart an orange or blue tone to the photographs. If you are struggling to find a space with enough light it can be helpful to make use of natural sunlight by opening blinds or windows.

DIFFUSE AND/OR REFLECT THE LIGHT

Once your lights are set up, if there are stark shadows or bright highlights you will want to soften the light with diffusers and/or reflect it around the item.

- Place **light diffusers** centrally in front of the lamps to disperse the light. The objective is to broaden the light source so that it is not being omitted so directly and harshly. Diffusers also reduce reflection on shiny surfaces. If you do not have a diffuser, you could use thin white paper or fabric.
- Use **reflective material** to bounce light around the item. If you are still combatting shadows and highlights, or do not have any diffusers, it is possible to troubleshoot this problem by strategically reflecting light. Position a reflective surface so that it catches the light and reflects it into the shadows. You may need a second pair of hands to assist you with this while you are capturing the images with your camera! If you do not have a reflector, you could use foil or styrofoam.



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