

Photography Start-up Guide

For all MK Photography Lighting Systems



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Congratulations on your New Lighting System

You have taken the first step to shoot
quick and easy professional photos

This abridged photography startup guide will
show you how to setup your digital camera and
shoot high quality photographs in minutes.

You may find the complete guide at:
www.mkdigitaldirect.com/startup

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Using your photography lighting system

The following tips will help you avoid some of the most common photography issues that many of our customers face when using our lighting systems; while helping you achieve high-quality product photographs quickly and easily. Please take the time to read through this information.

1. Setting-up your photography lighting system

To setup your photography lighting system, simply connect the black power cable to an 110 volts electricity outlet. It's that simple!

Note: You must use a power transformer if you're using 220/240 volts. Otherwise, you'll burn the system and void the warranty.



2. Using the various lighting options

All of our photography lighting systems feature fluorescent lighting (the most commonly used); while certain models also feature halogen (yellow) and LED lighting. Although it is possible to turn on all lighting types at once, you shouldn't do it, as mixing different light colors (white and yellow) is not recommended.



Fluorescent



Halogen



LEDs

Recommended light configurations:

- **Fluorescent lighting only (white):** For most types of products and jewel
- **Fluorescent + LED lighting:** LEDs are for giving sparkle to your products.
- **Halogen lighting only (yellow):** Should only be used to photograph items that contain only red, orange or purple gemstones.

3. Positioning your camera properly

To easily focus your items while photographing, your camera should not be on the edge or close to the edge of the camera opening of your photography system. Instead, you should leave between 12 to 24" of space between the camera lens and the item being photographed.



To photograph from the top of the system, you may attach your camera using the "L" shaped bracket (provided) or magnetic bracket (certain models only). When using the "L" shaped bracket, position the camera as far as possible (towards the top).

You may also photograph from the front of your system by using a tripod (not provided). When using a tripod, make sure your camera is 12-24" away. Once this is done, you'll be able to easily focus your items. See page for more info.



4. **Illuminating the various fluorescent light panels**

Some of the MK photography lighting systems feature individual lighting switches for each of the fluorescent light panels (right, left, back, bottom, and others). These switches provide you total control over your illumination. By turning on or off the various panels, you'll be able to brighten or darken different parts of your items. Choosing which ones to turn on/off is completely up to you, there is no rule. Use your creativity to test out what is best for you.



5. **Rotating your lighting system 90 degrees**

Some of the MK photography lighting systems, like the Photo-eBox (Model #73001) and the Photo-eBox PLUS 1419 (Model #74006) may be turned 90 degrees onto one of their sides to allow you to take advantage of the photography space available from a different perspective.



By turning the light box on its side, the length of it becomes its height, and the height becomes its width. This will allow you to photograph taller items that wouldn't normally fit when the lighting system is sitting normally on its bottom side.

Preparing your products for photography

1. **Cleaning your products**

One of the most important steps before you begin photographing anything, is the cleaning of your products. Using today's high resolution cameras, you will be able to capture even the smallest details in your products. Therefore, it is crucial that you clean them up very well before you photograph them, specially jewelry - which can easily get dirty. When handling jewelry, we recommend that you use gloves so that your fingerprints don't show in your photos. To easily and thoroughly clean your jewelry we recommend the SparkleSparkle™ cleaning products (Sold seperately).



SparkleSparkle

2. **Positioning your products**

There is an infinite number of ways in which you can position your jewelry inside your photography lighting system. Some of the MK lighting systems already include several jewelry accessories which you may use to hold your pieces in place. Additionally, you may use just about anything else you'd like inside your system to add flavor to your photos. Use any background you'd like (textiles, ceramics, textures, etc), or just be creative. See website for more details on how to use the included jewelry accessories.



MK Accessories



Setting up your digital camera

Did you purchase a camera from us?

If you did, your camera is already pre-set to the correct settings (for use with fluorescent lighting). If you didn't, please adjust your camera to the following settings:

Connecting your Camera to the computer?

Please visit our website for detailed instructions: www.mkdigitaldirect.com/startup
The ability to connect your camera to the computer for a live preview in your computer (Called "Remote Shooting") depends on whether your camera contains this feature. If your camera lacks this feature, you'll be unable to do this. Call for more info.

Note: The photos are for illustration purposes only. This guide goes into specific detail for setting Canon PowerShot cameras, although the instructions may also be followed to set-up other digital cameras (See your camera's manual for specific information).

1. Set your camera to Manual Mode

The letter "M" (for "manual") should be selected in the mode wheel.



Canon Powershot SX120 IS



Canon Powershot SX20 IS

2. Set the aperture to the biggest F Stop number.

In order to achieve the greatest depth-of-field, set your camera's aperture to the biggest F Stop number. Choose F8.0 for Canon PowerShot cameras (or other point-and-shoot cameras), and F16.0 or F32.0 for professional DSLRs cameras. While photographing, a greater depth-of-field will help you get your entire product in focus, rather than only parts of it.

Note: Read your camera's manual for detailed information on how to do this.

Setting the aperture in Canon PowerShot cameras:

- **Step 1** - To modify the aperture in most Canon PowerShot cameras press the +/- button, which toggles between selecting the aperture or shutter speed.
- **Step 2** - To select the aperture, make sure the "F-stop" number appears between two green arrows; once it is you'll be able to modify the F-stop number by moving the wheel on the back of the camera clockwise or counterclockwise.
- **Step 3** - Move the back wheel as necessary to select the desired F-stop #.

Setting up the aperture in Canon PowerShot cameras:



+/- Button found in most Canon cameras



Showing the aperture being set at 8.0

3. Attach a close-up (macro) lens to your camera.

When photographing items 6 to 18 inches away from the camera, a close-up lens (or filter) is required in order to properly focus your items.

Attaching a close-up lens to Canon PowerShot cameras:

- **Step 1** - Screw the +2 close-up lens (filter) into the lens adapter. If the +2 close-up lens does not let you focus properly, use the +4 lens instead.
- **Step 2** - Attach the lens adapter to you camera. If you are using our custom-made lens adapters simply place it on top of the camera lens and apply pressure.
- **Step 3** - Tighten the tiny screws on the lens adapter to hold it in place.



Macro lens & lens adapter being attached



Camera with lens attached

4. Make sure the FLASH is turned off.

The flash is turned off when you see the image of a lightning bolt crossed-out within a circle on your screen.



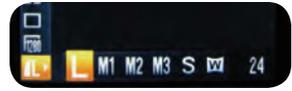
5. Set the focus to "Spot"

Set your camera's focus option to "Spot". This will allow you to have total control of where you want to focus your items. This is found in most Canon cameras under the "Function/Set" menu.

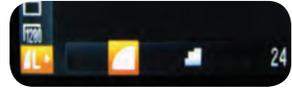
Note: Please refer to your camera's manual for specific information on how its done

6. **Adjust the file size and resolution.**

In order to take advantage of your camera's Megapixels, in order to provide you with a very high-quality and detailed photograph, you must adjust your camera's file size and resolution settings. Set your file size to the largest possible ("L") and the resolution to "Superfine" or "Fine". To modify these settings on Canon PowerShot cameras, go to the "func/set" menu. For all other cameras, please read your camera's manual.



Setting the image size to "Large"



Setting the image resolution to "Fine"

7. **Adjust the Custom White Balance**

If you purchased a camera from MK Digital, your camera's white balance has already been adjusted to the correct setting for fluorescent lighting. If you choose to photograph with halogen lighting you'll need to do a custom white balance adjustment once again. If you did not buy a camera from MK Digital, you still need to do a custom white balance adjustment.

NOTE: Halogen lighting is used only for photographing jewelry containing gemstones such as rubies, amethysts, and other colored stones that are red, orange, or purple.

Steps for performing a custom white balance adjustment:

- a) Make sure your camera's aperture is at F8.0 and the shutter speed is at 1/400 for a custom white balance using fluorescent lighting, or 1/100 for halogen lighting. Turn on the desired lighting.
- b) Find the menu in your camera that allows you to perform a custom white balance. For Canon PowerShot Cameras: Press the FUNC/SET button, go down to the white balance options in the left menu and then scroll right or left until you find an icon that shows a circle on top of two triangles (this is the custom white balance option). *View image to the right.*
- c) Position your camera so that it is looking towards the inside of the lighting system.
Note: Make sure the lighting system is empty
- d) Finally, press the button indicated by your camera to evaluate the lighting and perform a white balance adjustment of the inside of the photography system.



Adjusting the custom white balance found under Canon's "func/set" menu



Camera positioned straight down, looking into the inside of the lighting system with fluorescent lights on

Note: In Canon PowerShot Cameras the name of a button will appear to the left of the words "Evaluate White Bal". Press the button shown to actually perform a white balance. In the illustration above the "DISP" button appears.

Shooting High-Quality Photographs

The following steps will explain what you need to do with your camera in order to achieve high-quality photographs by using our lighting systems.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- If you bought a camera from MK Digital, the camera has been preset for use with fluorescent lighting (white light).
- Never use fluorescent and halogen lighting at the same time. Choose one or the other. LED lighting may be used alongside fluorescent, but not halogen light.

Steps to Follow:

1. **Turn ON your camera, then turn ON the Macro Mode (Enable it)**
 This is the only setting that *never* gets saved. You must enable it every time you turn on your camera. Press down the area or button next to the tulip symbol until the flower/tulip symbol appears on your LCD screen.



Canon Powershot SX120 IS



Canon Powershot SX20 IS

2. **Zoom In**

Use your camera's zoom features to get a closer look of your item

Note: Zoom-in as much as you can, while making sure your camera is still able to focus. If you zoom-in too much your camera might not focus the item and you will lose depth-of-field. You should zoom-out and then crop your image to get the desired section of your photo. *Read steps 4 and 5 for more details on how to focus.*

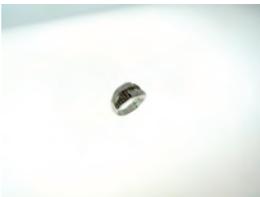


Photo without using the zoom



Photo using the zoom

3. Choose the correct shutter speed to adjust brightness

Every time you take a picture you need to choose the correct light by adjusting the shutter speed, according to what you think looks best. The shutter speed is represented by a fraction, like 1/100 or 1/250 of a second.

Do the following:

- Place an item inside the lighting system**
- Adjust the shutter speed** (by changing the fraction number to be greater or smaller) until you get an image on your screen that is the most appropriate balance between too light and too dark. Choose what image looks best and take note of the shutter speed number. Read important notes on next page.
- Take a photo with the shutter speed number you chose.** This is your “Best looking image”. Note: It doesn’t matter which number you chose.
- Take two additional photos**, one with a slower speed (A lighter photo) and one with a faster speed (A darker photo) from the one you originally chose. *Take note of which shutter speed you use for each one. Read example below.*
- Judge your photos.** Transfer your images to the computer, then open them in full screen to make a better judgment of which one looks best. The best photo will often be the one that looks slightly darker, as this photo will look best after it’s been properly edited. The slightly brighter photo is usually inadequate, as parts of your product will fade into the background. The slightly darker photo or the “best looking one” will often be the best to use for editing.
Important Note: Choosing an image with a slightly gray background is perfectly normal. You will later eliminate the gray by editing your image.

Example: Let’s pretend you chose the shutter speed number 1/100 to be just the right balance between too dark and too light. Take a photo with 1/100, then a slower speed (let’s say 1/50) which will take a brighter photo, and then a faster speed (let’s say 1/125) which will take a darker photo.



Image that looks best
Shutter speed you think is best



Image that looks brighter
Slower shutter speed



Image that looks darker
Faster shutter speed

Important Notes:

- The LCD screen in your camera might not give you the best and most accurate representation of your photos. To decide which shutter speed gives you the best photos possible, make sure to always judge your photos in your computer screen. Experiment with various shutter speeds for best results.
- Do not use the shutter speeds mentioned previously, they are just examples. You must choose the shutter speeds yourself.

4. Focus your photos.

Press your camera's shutter button halfway until you hear a beeping sound and see a green square on your LCD screen, this means the camera is focusing properly. If the square is yellow or no square appears, the camera is not focusing properly. **Important Note:** To fix this, physically move the camera away from the item (as needed) and/or zoom out. You may also try exchanging the +2 macro lens for the +4 lens.



Focused Image
Green Square Appears



Unfocused Image
Yellow Square (or nothing) Appears

Note: Not all cameras show a green or yellow square when the image is focused or not focused. Please read your camera's manual for specific information. Do not release the shutter button until your image is properly focused.

5. Achieve Depth-of-field in your photos.

As mentioned previously, achieving depth-of-field will allow you to focus your entire item, rather than just sections of it. The first step in helping you achieve depth-of-field involved setting your camera to the highest F-stop number (See page 6). The second step, involves knowing how to properly focus your item.

The goal is to have the entire product in focus, rather than just one section or part of it. The trick is to focus the "middle" section of the item; that is, the area between the farthest section (the back or bottom) and the closest section (the top or front) away from the camera. Take a look on the next page at our example on how to focus a ring.

Steps to achieve depth-of-field:

- a) **Step 1** - Make sure your camera is set to "spot" focus. View camera setup step #5.
- b) **Step 2** - Move the camera so that the center (square) of the screen appears on the "middle" of the item (middle point between the farthest and closest part of the item). View photo B (next page) on how to do this step when shooting a ring.
- c) **Step 3** - Press and hold the shutter button half-way to focus the item. Without releasing, move the camera back to center the item on the screen (View Photo C).
- d) **Step 4** - Click the shutter button all the way down to shoot the image.

Example of how to achieve depth-of-field when photographing a ring.

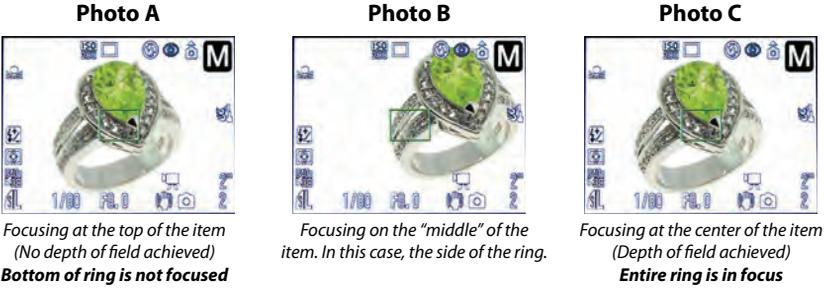


Photo A
Focusing at the top of the item
(No depth of field achieved)
Bottom of ring is not focused

Photo B
Focusing on the "middle" of the item. In this case, the side of the ring.

Photo C
Focusing at the center of the item
(Depth of field achieved)
Entire ring is in focus

6. **Edit your photographs.**

When needed, the last step in order to produce high-quality images is to edit your photographs' brightness and contrast - nothing else.

When using an MK Digital photography lighting system to photograph most types of products and jewelry items with our standard white background, you'll be able to shoot raw (unedited) photographs that will contain a perfect or nearly perfect white background. Yet, there are certain products (like silver jewelry, silver watches, etc.), that when photographed will contain a slightly gray background.

This is caused by the lack of color contrast between the item being photographed and the white background in our systems. When this is the case, you can easily edit your photographs's brightness and contrast to get rid of the slightly gray background.

A raw (unedited) photograph with a slightly gray backgrounds (and we mean only slightly gray, not gray) is a perfectly good photograph, and can be easily edited and transformed into a professional high quality image.

General steps for editing your photos.

Whether you choose to use our Catalog Producer software or any other photo editing software, please follow these steps:



- 1. **Crop your photo:** Select only the area that contains your product.
- 2. **Adjust the contrast:** Increase your photograph's contrast.
- 3. **Adjust the brightness:** Increase your photograph's brightness.

Adjust the contrast and brightness as needed in order to get rid of the slightly gray background and transform it into a clean white background. Note that if you add too much brightness and contrast, you will also alter the original colors and feel of your photo.

Using the Catalog Producer software to edit your photos.

- a) **Open the Catalog Producer software** - Simply open the software.
- b) **Load your photos into the software**

- i) Press the tab called "File Search".
- ii) Press the "Browse" button, then search and select the folder where you have saved your photographs.
- iii) Press the "Find Now" button to search for all images in the selected folder.
- iv) Select the photos you'd like to use and load into the software and then press "Add to catalog".



- c) **Crop your photo** - If needed, crop (cut) your image so that you only use the section of the photo that features your item. (View Photo D).

Steps to crop your photograph

- i) Click on the "Crop" button under the "Image edit" tab.
- ii) Select the area that you would like to crop. To select an area, click and hold your mouse then drag it diagonally to create a square or rectangle (shown in red). See the example in the image below, where the mouse has been dragged from point A to point B to form the red square.
- iii) To crop the selected area "right-click" your mouse.

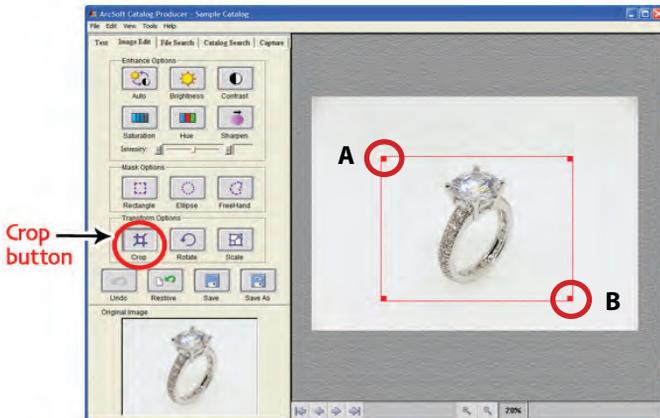


Photo D - Screenshot of photograph being cropped in Arcsoft Catalog Producer Software - Image Edit Tab

Example: Click and drag from point A to B in the image shown above

- d) **Adjust the brightness and contrast** - Edit your photos by increasing the brightness and contrast by 10 to 12 points each, while 20 to 25 points for the sharpening. (View Photo E)

To edit brightness, contrast or sharpening click on the appropriate button and then move the intensity bar to the right or left (you may also use the arrows).

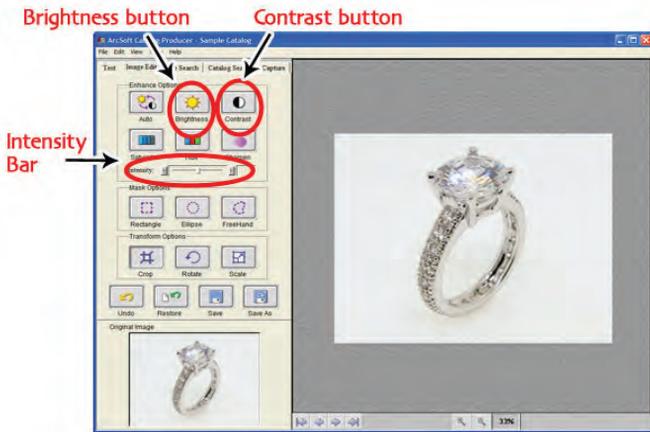


Photo E - Screenshot showing the brightness and contrast buttons in the image edit tab
Note: Photo shown has not been edited for brightness and contrast yet

- e) **Save your new photo** - "Save" or "Save As" your new edited photograph.



Photo F - Photo of ring after editing.
The background is perfectly white, and the ring looks perfect! You're done.

NOTE: Play around with the brightness, contrast and sharpening adjustments; this is the best way to find out which adjustments work best for you.

Photography Tips & Resources

Want to learn more, need more help?

Don't worry, we have lots of other resources to help you achieve the high-quality product photographs you need. Check out the many other ways in which you can learn more photography tips and how to's, as well as how you can get in touch with us.

1. Complete Photography Startup Guide

To find more detailed information on the various topics of this guide, please visit the complete photography startup guide on our website:

www.mkdigitaldirect.com/startup

2. Photography Tips & How To's - Online

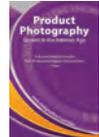
We've created several photography guides with specific tips and how to's steps on how to photograph various types of products. We highly recommend that you read them so that you get a better idea of the many ways in which you can photograph products using the MK photography lighting systems. Tips website:

www.mkdigitaldirect.com/tips



3. Product Photography Secrets in the Internet Age - Booklet

Learn the basics about photography, lighting, digital cameras and the importance of using high-quality product photographs in today's internet age. This booklet is included with your photography lighting system. If you can't find it, you can download a free PDF copy online.



4. MK Digital's Blog

Check out our blog to learn about the latest tips on product and jewelry photography, our latest products, news and more. Visit us at:

www.mkdigitaldirect.com/blog



5. YouTube Videos

Don't like reading too much? Visit our YouTube page to find short videos on how to photograph various types of products, how to setup your digital camera, photography tips and techniques and much more.



6. Social Networking

Keep in touch with MK Digital through Facebook & Twitter!

facebook.com/mkdigitaldirect • twitter.com/mkdigitaldirect



7. Contact Us - We're here to help you.

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