Designed and written by

GEOFF CABLE
& GARY CROUCH

The creators and administrators of the

Fill-In Flash

This information sheet is designed as a supplement to the GC2 Photo Club video on the same subject. It is provided to help reinforce learning and as a reference document for you to keep.

Bright sunlight outdoors or a harsh artificial light source will create strong shadows, as you can see in Figure 1. These shadows can fall across your subjects face in a portrait and make ugly rings under the eyes and unattractive marks under the nose, as well as emphasizing wrinkles and blemishes on the skin.
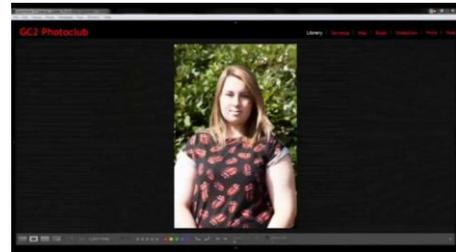

Figure 1

In a group shot the shadows cast by one person can fall across another person's face obscuring them from view.

Figure 2

If your subject is 'backlit', as in Figure 2, and you do not take a light reading for the person's face it will be in shadow or underexposed.

If you do not have the option to move your subject or you like the backlit effect but you still want to see detail in your subjects face, you can use a flash gun to 'Fill in' the shadows or light the subjects face.

Figure 3

Before we go any further I would recommend that you use some sort of diffuser on your flash gun to soften the light it produces, such as the one on my camera in Figure 3.

The first step, when using flash as a 'Fill in', is to view your subject and decide how much flash is required, or what power setting to apply on your flash gun.

Figure 4

With a 'backlit' subject you will need the flash to light the person's face and balance the flash lighting with the surrounding ambient light.

To do this you will need to take a meter reading or test shot of the overall scene and then set the power of the flash to match the overall exposure.

Designed and written by

**GEOFF CABLE
& GARY CROUCH**

The creators and
administrators of
the

A good place to start is to set the flash to light the scene as you would if you taking a shot in low light and were using your flash gun as the main light source (+0- or full power on our flash gun, as in Figure 4) as it is unlikely that you would overexpose if shooting directly into bright sunlight. However if the flash setting is too strong it will give a unnatural 'overlit' effect on the subject.

If you are just using your flash gun to 'fill in' or take out harsh shadows, caused by direct hard sunlight or sidelighting, you will need to vary the strength of the flash depending on the contrast or harshness of the shadows. If the light is very harsh or contrasty (a high ratio between the exposure for the highlights and the shadows) the shadows will be very strong.

If you have strong shadows like this you will need to set the flash to a higher setting to 'fill them in' or balance the contrast. Almost at a ratio of 1 to 1 (that is your flash will be set to nearly the +0- setting that you would use to illuminate the whole scene, as you would in low light)
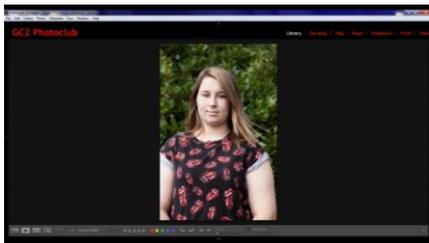

Figure 5

If you have weaker shadows and less contrasty lighting, like in Figure 5, you will only have to set your flash gun to give an exposure of half a stop less than the main exposure (that is if your main exposure is F8 you will set the flash to give an exposure of F5.6 and a half if you are using it on manual or set your Flash gun to -1/2 if you are using an automatic mode such as ETTL).

If the shadows are much weaker you may want to set the flash to -2/3 or -1/4 as you will not need the flash to be so bright, as we did to create the image in Figure 6.

Figure 6

These figures are only a guideline and I recommend that you go out with your Camera and Flash gun and experiment with different settings in order to better understand how to get the effect or lighting balance that you require in different lighting circumstances.
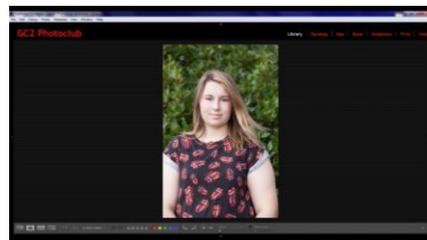
We hope you found this information sheet useful, visit our web site at www.gc2photoclub.com for more tutorials and information.

Don't forget to subscribe to our newsletter for the latest updates.

Bye for now

Geoff and Gary