

## Black AND White

Scrim is a useful tool for dealing with hard sunlight. They essentially convert a distant, small light source into a close, large one. They come with the side effect of reducing the amount of light on the subject, but that isn't always a drawback. I'll explain that later.

I positioned our senior girl subject in front of a trampoline net. It was sunny, and we all know that high sunlight is very brutal on people, so we started with her wearing sunglasses. That's OK for a pose or two, but not as pretty as I wanted for her.



I placed a scrim directly over her to diffuse the light. I made sure she was shaded by the scrim such that no raw, full, sunlit areas of her were seen by the camera.



This made light quality that is technically adequate, but aesthetically inadequate. Light directly over someone is rarely pleasing. Note also that the background is rendered lighter because the scrim subtracted some light on her, but not on the background. Again, that's not necessarily a bad thing... only something to be aware of.



So I swapped the scrim for a black gobo directly over her, and moved the scrim farther ahead of her. That places the main light about 45 degrees in front of her rather than 90 degrees over her.



Better, huh?

You might wonder why the light looks so filled in., and so warm. See the light brown stones below her in the previous pull-back? No need for a fill reflector. Full sunlight struck those stones and bounced back up to her, while the sunlight was diffused and reduced from the scrim above her. No need for any additional lighting.



Side view of the lighting. This shows the raw sunlight striking the ground and bouncing up for warm fill.

Sometimes I get asked how long all this takes to set up. The time stamp on the last sunglasses photo was 4:09. The time stamp on the first scrim-only photo was 4:13, so that took four minutes to go to my van, get the light stand and scrim, and set it up. The time stamp on the last image with that setup was 4:18. The first with the black gobo photo was done at 4:21... So that change took three minutes. See? No big deal.

If you've ever seen pull-backs from movie sets or TV shows in bright sunlight, you'll see scrim (sometimes called "silks"). What you probably won't see is the modification I did here... placing a black gobo over the head. This tweak can make the difference between "OK" and "Oh my"!

