

Warm Sunlit Skincare Photography

The objective of this setup was to create a warm, natural-looking skincare campaign with a soft sunlight pattern on the background. The lighting needed to feel like golden afternoon sunlight entering a room, while keeping the model's skin soft and the product packaging clearly visible.

We used four lights, each with a specific purpose: soft key light, simulated sunlight, ambient fill and a focused product light.



1. Key Light - Camera Left

The main light is a diffused umbrella positioned camera left, in front of the model.

The umbrella gives us a broad, soft source that wraps around the face and clothing. This is particularly useful for skincare and beauty photography because it creates smooth transitions between highlights and shadows without making the skin look overly harsh.

The placement also creates natural-looking shadows that give the face dimension. We don't want the light to come directly from the camera axis, because that would make the portrait look flatter.

The umbrella is doing the primary job of lighting the model, keeping the skin luminous and the cream-coloured outfit looking soft and textured.

The goal is soft light with direction, not flat light from everywhere.



2. Sunlight Effect - Camera Left

To create the sunlight pattern on the backdrop, we used a separate light fitted with an optical snoot, positioned camera left and aimed at the background.

The optical snoot allows us to project a controlled beam and create the sharp, diagonal pattern that resembles sunlight entering through a window.

Notice that the background isn't illuminated evenly. The bright diagonal area contrasts with the darker brown surroundings, creating depth and a clear visual direction.

This is what makes the image feel like a real environment rather than a simple studio portrait.

The key is to keep this light separate from the main subject lighting. If the snoot spills too much onto the model, it can introduce unwanted highlights and interfere with the carefully controlled skin tones.

The optical snoot creates the illusion of sunlight; it doesn't need to light the entire scene.



3. Ambient Fill - Camera Right

A top-bounce light is used to introduce ambient fill from camera right. This provides a gentle lift to the shadows without competing with the main umbrella.

In a warm, high-contrast setup like this, allowing every shadow to become completely dark can make the image feel heavy. On the other hand, adding too much fill would remove the depth that makes the sunlight effect convincing. The bounce light helps maintain detail in the darker areas of the model's face, outfit and surrounding set while preserving the overall warmth. Think of this light as controlling the contrast rather than creating another obvious highlight.



4. Product Light - Camera Left

The fourth light is a simple snoot aimed directly at the product.

This is the most important light for giving the product its own definition within the composition.

The ambient and key lights establish the overall scene, but they don't necessarily create the strongest highlights on the packaging. The snoot lets us add a more concentrated beam exactly where the product needs it.

This helps the bottle and box stand out from the surrounding props, brings attention to the label and creates a sense of dimension.

For product photography, this distinction matters: a product can be correctly exposed and still look flat.

A controlled highlight helps communicate its shape, surface and material.

The product light should be adjusted carefully so that the label remains readable and reflective areas don't become distracting hotspots.



5. How the Four Lights Work Together

The strength of this setup comes from separating the lighting into four distinct jobs.

- Umbrella: soft, flattering light on the model.
- Optical snoot: the projected sunlight pattern on the background.
- Top bounce: subtle ambient fill to manage shadows.
- Product snoot: concentrated light to highlight the packaging.

The warm brown backdrop, cream outfit and natural props all work within the same colour palette. The projected sunlight adds contrast, while the soft key keeps the image gentle enough for a skincare campaign.

The result is an image that feels warm and atmospheric without sacrificing the product's visibility.



Camera Settings

As shown in the lighting diagram:

- Camera: Canon R6 Mark II
- Lens: 35mm f/1.8
- Shutter speed: 1/160 sec
- Aperture: f/3.5
- ISO: 800



Camera: Canon R6 m2
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by Siddology

 [setmylight.com](https://www.setmylight.com)

The Key Takeaway

The biggest lesson here is that you don't need to make every light do everything.

Let one source create softness, another create the sunlight pattern, another control the shadows, and a final source give the product its own highlight. When each light has a clear purpose, you can build an image that feels natural and effortless—even when every part of it is carefully controlled.

