

ONE LIGHT, DARK BACKDROP

The Look

This setup is a great example of how **light placement can completely change the appearance of your background.**

The backdrop is actually **white**, but by placing the key light carefully and controlling its spread with a grid, it falls into a deep grey/black tone.

The entire look was created with **just one light.**



01. KEY LIGHT

Modifier: Octa with Grid

Position: Camera left, slightly forward of the model

The octa was placed to the **camera-left side of the model and slightly ahead of her**, rather than directly facing the backdrop.

The light is positioned close enough and at an angle where it primarily illuminates the model while very little light reaches the backdrop.

The **grid is critical here**.

It restricts the spread of the octa and prevents the light from spilling across the white backdrop. Because the backdrop receives much less light, the white surface falls dramatically darker and appears **grey to almost black**.

This is a simple way to create a dark-background look without actually using a black background.



02. WHY THE WHITE BACKDROP LOOKS DARK

This is the main concept behind the setup.

A white backdrop does **not automatically have to look white**.

Its brightness depends on how much light reaches it.

By moving the light closer to the subject and angling it away from the background, the model receives significantly more light than the backdrop.

Adding the grid gives even more control over the spill.

More light on subject → less light on background → darker background.

This is essentially using **light falloff and distance** to separate the subject from the background.



03. WHY THE GRID MATTERS

Without the grid, the octa would spread light much more widely.

Some of that light would hit the white backdrop, making it considerably brighter and reducing the contrast of the image.

The grid acts like a control mechanism:

Octa = softness

Grid = direction + control

This combination allows you to retain the flattering quality of a large soft source while still keeping the background dark.



04. SUBJECT PLACEMENT

The model was kept sufficiently away from the backdrop so that the light falling on her did not strongly illuminate the background.

This distance also helps create a gradual tonal transition behind the subject rather than a completely flat background.

For a similar result, start by:

1. Moving the model away from the backdrop.
2. Bringing the octa closer to the model.
3. Angling the octa across the model rather than directly toward the backdrop.
4. Adding a grid to control spill.
5. Adjusting exposure for the model rather than the background.

Small changes in the light's position can make a surprisingly large difference.



05. CAMERA SETTINGS

Camera: Canon R6 Mark II

Lens: 24–105mm f/4

Shutter: 1/160 sec

Aperture: f/9

ISO: 100

The **f/9 aperture** keeps the model and styling sharp while also allowing the studio light to be controlled precisely.

ISO 100 keeps the image clean and gives maximum control over the exposure.

The **1/160 sec shutter speed** was used to stay within the camera/flash synchronization range while freezing the subject cleanly.



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SetMyLight
by Siddology

 mylightz.com

THE LIGHTING FORMULA

1 Octa + Grid

Camera left

Close to subject

Slightly ahead of model

Model separated from backdrop

That's it.

No background light.

No rim light.

No fill light.

The dark background isn't created by lighting the background dark.

It's created by NOT lighting it.

That is the key idea behind this setup.

