

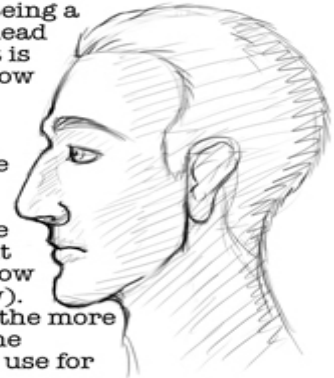
The Planes of the Face

As you might have noticed, the face is not flat. Being a three-dimensional object the human face and head have different planes, or surfaces. When light is added into the equation, these planes effect how shadows are cast on the face.



Frontal Light Source

Having the light coming from the front of the subject helps to define many of the basic features of the face as all of the forward-facing planes will be lighted and those that are side, top, or underplaes are placed in some light shadow. Any back planes will be in heavy shadow (such as the back of the head in the profile view). The farther removed from the light source and the more a plane turns away from the light, the darker the shadow becomes. This is often a good source to use for most portraits.



Side Light Source

Having the light source come from the side casts half of the face in light shadow due to the curvature of the skull. This works well for frontal views, but not so much for the profile. It also provides more dramatic lighting and can give the opprotunity for a wide range of values.



Top Light Source

With the light coming from directly above the underplanes of the face are cast in sharp shadow, such as the eye socket, top lip, and below the nose.



Final Notes

Most portraits use a combination of these three basic light sources. Understanding the the planes of the face and how light and shadow reacts with them can help when it comes to rending the face vrom life.