

Home made softbox

The main problem with your average flash gun is the shadows are too harsh. This is determined by the light quality and the size of the flash head. There are many ways to overcome this problem like bouncing the light off the ceiling. This effectively makes a very large flash surface but tends to produce unwanted shadows underneath the subject. For example makes bags under the eyes stand out like sore thumbs.

There are many commercial products on the market to produce nice soft even light, but these are expensive and not always that good.

So what to do, well you could try to make your own softbox, it is not that difficult and will cost you next to nothing, and you will see gives far superior performance to commercial offerings.

The items you will need are:

- Stiff picture mounting card, A0 size about 2-3mm thick, at least one side must be white
- All purpose glue for porous materials
- Heavy duty packaging tape
- Translucent material, tissue paper, baking grease proof paper, I prefer drafting film because its really strong and doesn't crease.
- Scalpel or craft knife, straight edge, and cutting surface.

That's it.

Step 1:

Decide on your final size for the softbox. It should be as large as possible, without blocking the lens. Some flash guns have sensors on the front to measure automatic flash, you will have to be creative to avoid blocking those. Here is a really old one with a shape for the Canon 430 ez flash gun. This worked really well but was an early model and didn't look very good. For my latest softbox the final size was 200mm x 385mm, designed for a Canon 10D with 28-105 lens.

Step 2:

Measure the sides of your flash head, add up all the sides, and cut a strip of mounting card about 20mm wide and however long you measured. This will be the fiction fit hole to fit over the flash gun head. Cut another piece of card 20mm wide by the length of the longest side. Mark and score the long strip then fold so it fits around your flash head then glue the other card on the join. Make sure the join is half way along one of the longest sides. Take the mount off the flash and clip then leave to dry.

Step 3:

Mark out on the card all the main sides to the softbox, use the mount you just glued and the final size of the softbox to determine the angles etc. Mine was achieved by drawing a rectangle 140mm (the depth of the softbox) x 385mm, then use the mount in the center of the longest side and extend lines from the edges of the mount to the corners. Repeat for all sides. This produces the sides of the softbox. Don't forget here to add 10mm tabs on the ends this makes it easier to glue the diffuser and attach the flash mount.

Step 4:

To ensure you have even lighting over such a large area, you will need to put a second diffuser halfway inside the softbox, just mark and score some card, fold to make right angles brackets and glue on the sides you made in Step 3. So when all glued into the softbox shape this provides a small ledge to glue and sheet of diffusing film.

Step 5:

This is where you find out if all you angles are correct. Glue all the sides together onto the flash mount you made earlier, one at a time letting them dry as you go. Makes sure you have the white side of the card inside the softbox. Use the packaging take along the seams to give stability. Then cut a small rectangle of the diffusing film and glue inside the softbox on the ledge. Then cut the final large rectangle of diffusing film and glue to the outside of the softbox. Let it all dry before trying (I know its tempting to use but try to resist).

It is a lot easier to make than explain so don't let it put you off, the results are really great. So why not have a go.

Taken from an article found at <http://clownloach.net/Reviews/01022004/index.html>

For full instructions and step by step photographs with comparisons to other products go to the above web site.