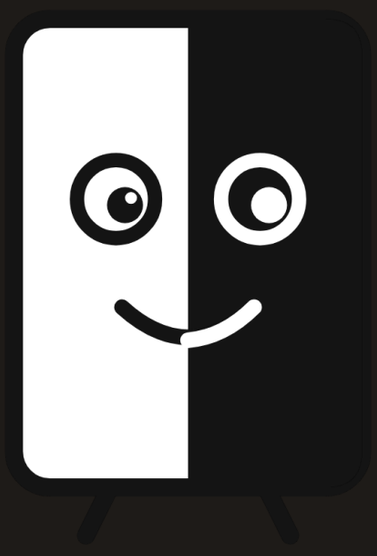
LAÏD LIAZID · FREE GUIDE



Wilson

The guide to light

One white board, one black board, your phone. And your photos change.

Portrait · Food · Jewelry & objects · Bottles

“Before the screen comes the eye.”

WELCOME

Hi, meet Wilson.

In 20 years of shooting all over the world, my favorite accessory costs almost nothing: **a board, white on one side, black on the other.** I call it Wilson.

Why Wilson? A nod to a Tom Hanks movie, where an unexpected companion never leaves his side. I'll let you work out which one…

Wilson doesn't create light. It **moves** the light that's already there: the sun, a window, a grey sky.

White side

It **adds** light where there isn't enough.

Black side

It **adds shadow**: a more dramatic, more mysterious portrait.



No need to know photography. If you can hold a board, you can use me.

HOW TO USE IT

How to read this guide

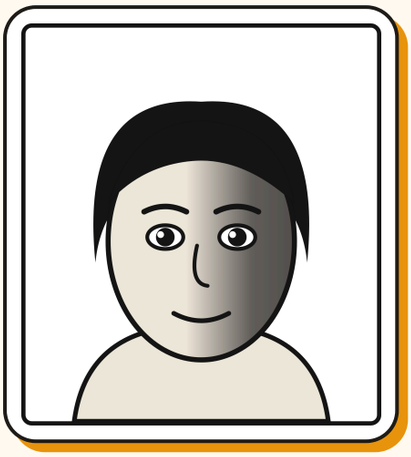
Each situation is drawn **twice**: from above (where you place everything) and from the front (where the light comes from). Then the result.

- Light (sun, window)
- Light bounced by Wilson
- Wilson, white side
- Wilson, black side

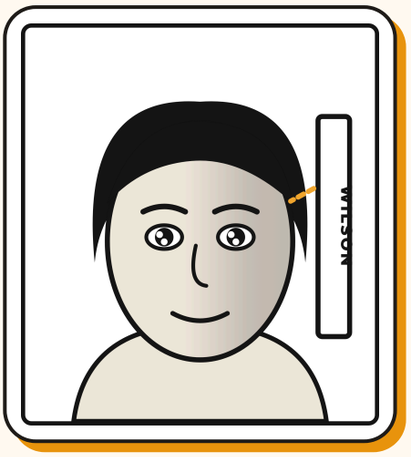
What's inside

- The two sides and how to make it
- Portrait: backlight, window, full sun
- 1, 2, 3 reflectors
- Food: plates and drinks
- Product shots: jewelry, objects, bottles
- Phone settings
- Mistakes and cheat sheet

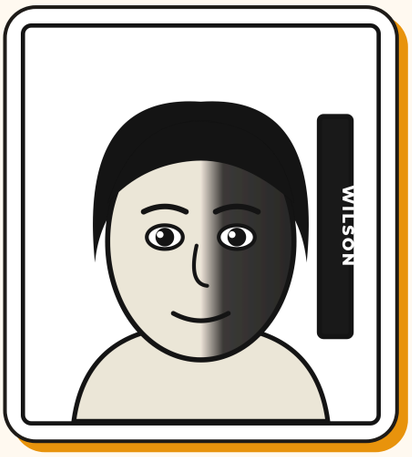
White to brighten. Black to sculpt.



Without Wilson



White side: soft



Black side: sculpted

White side: softer

Shadows soften, dark circles fade, the eyes light up.

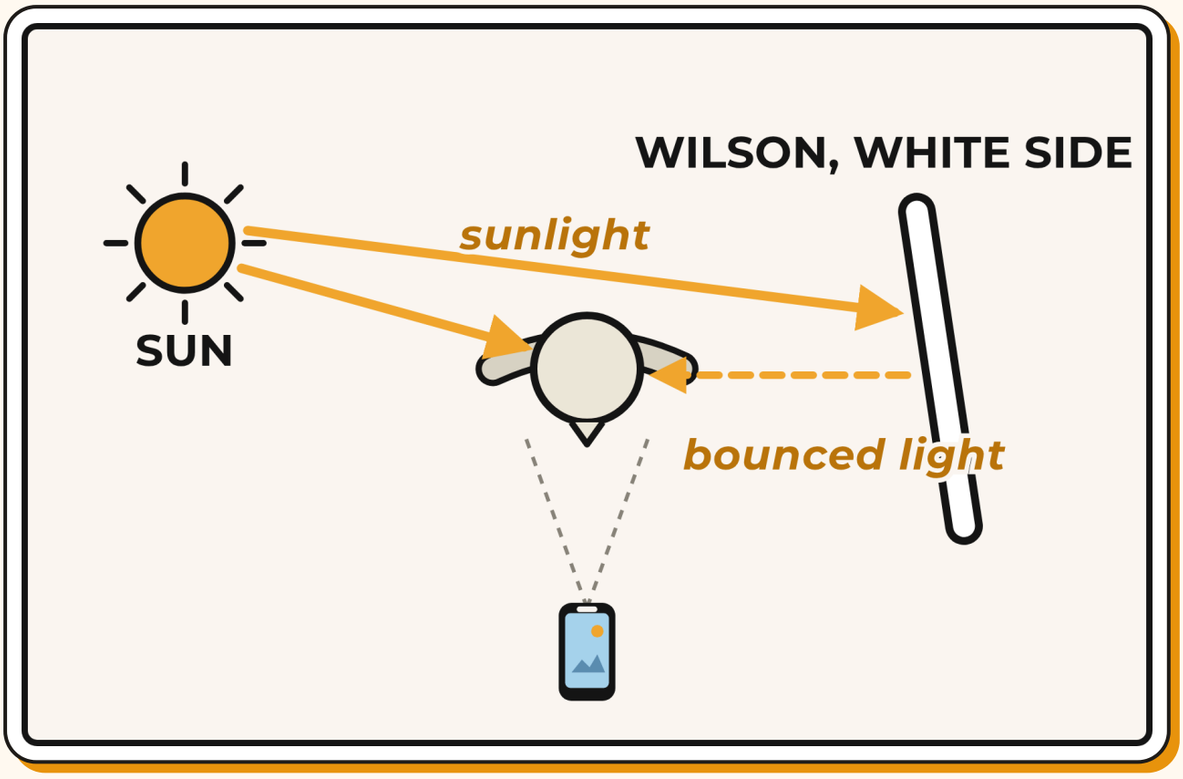
Black side: more character

It stops light from coming back. More shadow, more contrast. The face gets sculpted: more dramatic, more mysterious, more sensual.

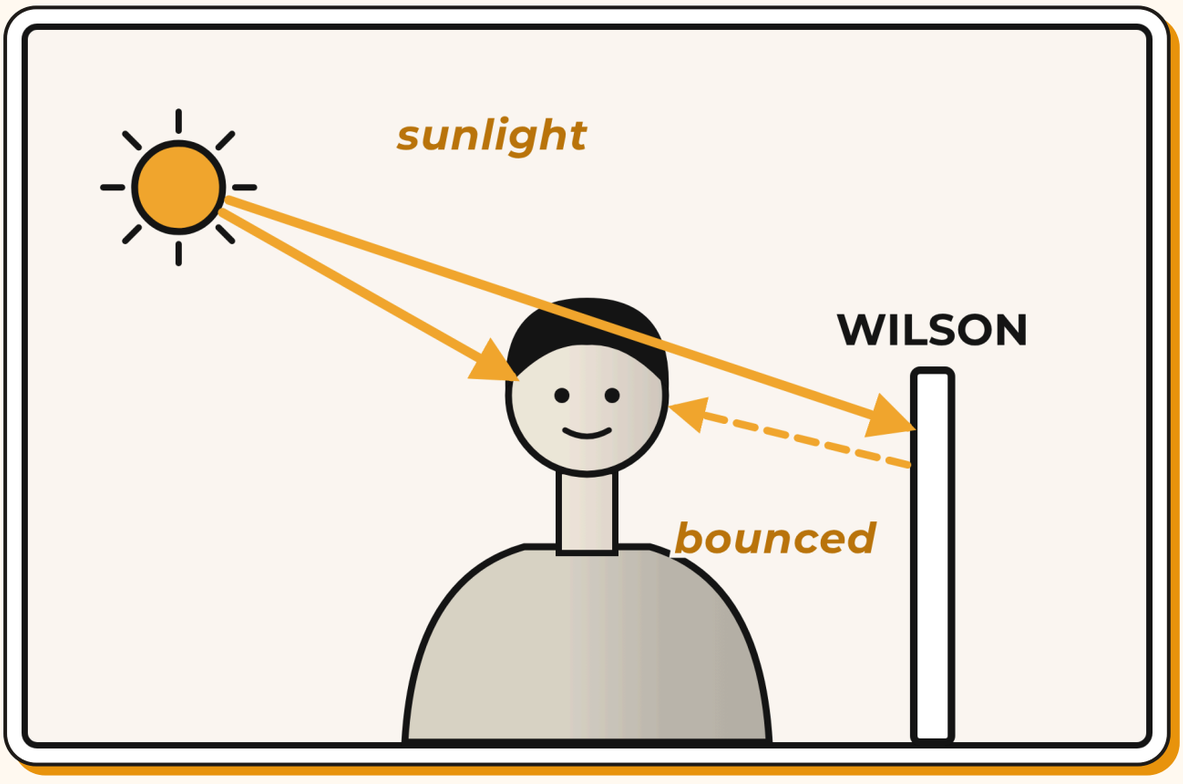
What happens

WHITE BOUNCES

TOP VIEW



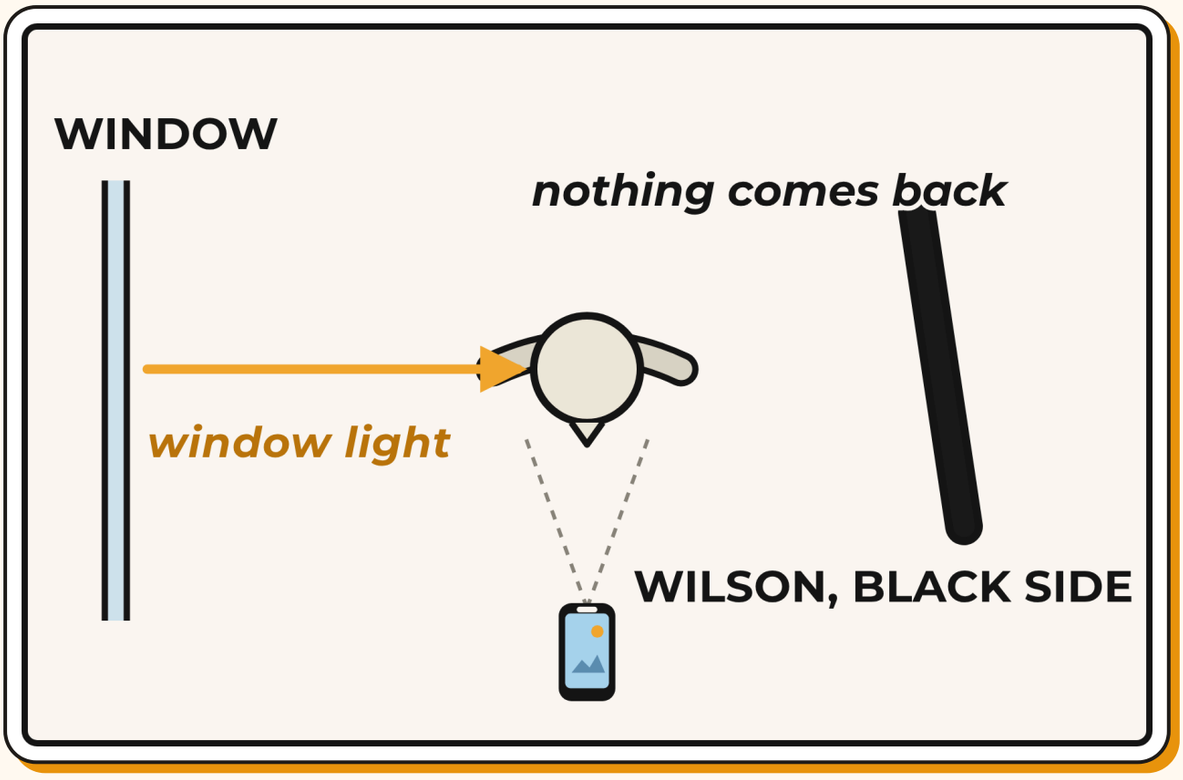
FRONT VIEW



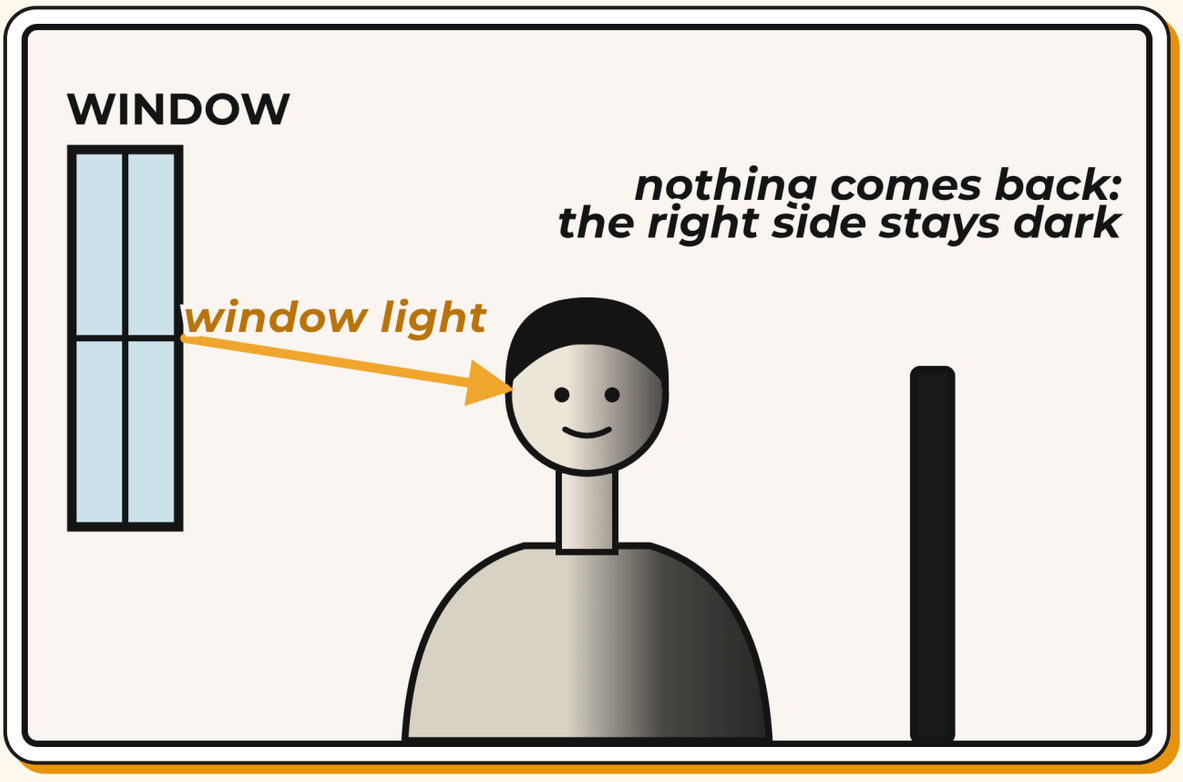
Light hits Wilson and bounces back onto the face.

BLACK SCULPTS

TOP VIEW



FRONT VIEW



Nothing comes back: that side of the face stays in shadow.

02 · MAKE IT

Make your Wilson. It's almost free.

1 polystyrene board

One whole piece, square or rectangular. **Free**: ask appliance, DIY or furniture stores. Their boxes are full of it.

Matte black

A sheet of black art paper, or matte black acrylic paint.

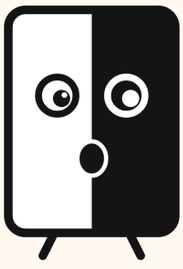
Tape

Ideally gaffer tape. Otherwise, painter's paper masking tape.

Tools

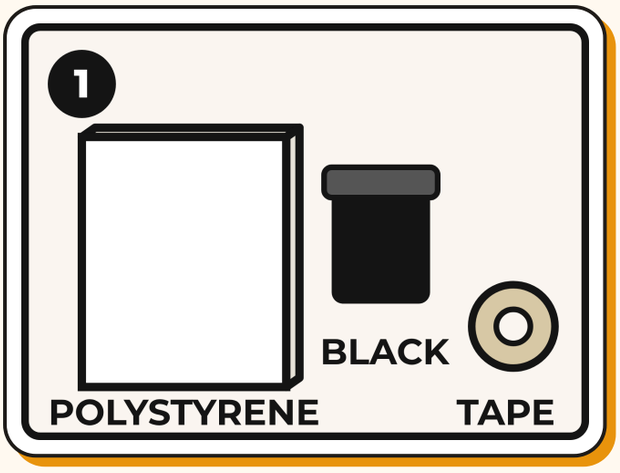
White glue for the paper. A craft knife and a ruler only if you want to trim the edges.

No spray cans. Spray paint and spray glue melt polystyrene.

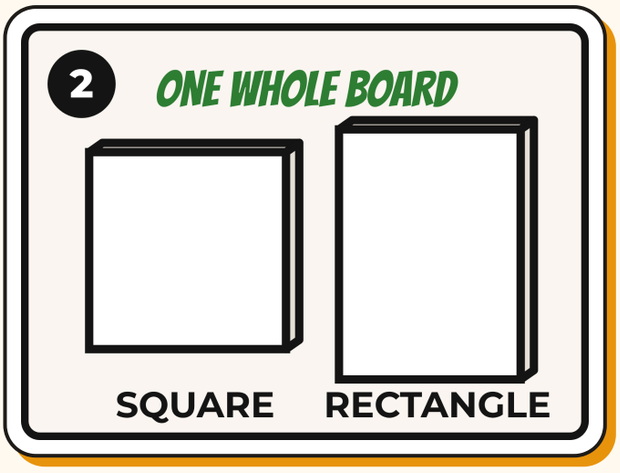


Matte, always matte. A shiny surface bounces a harsh spot instead of soft light.

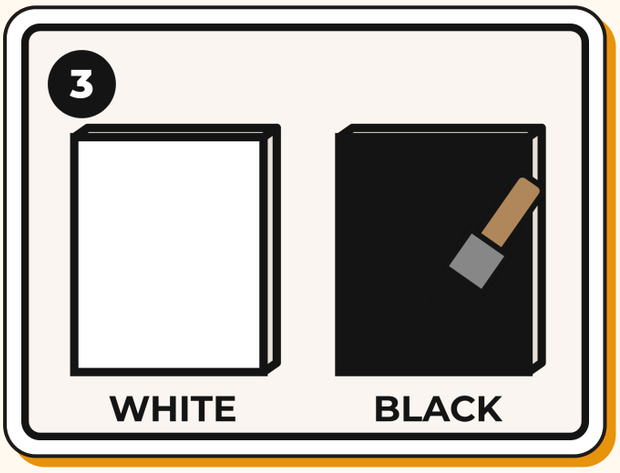
In 6 steps



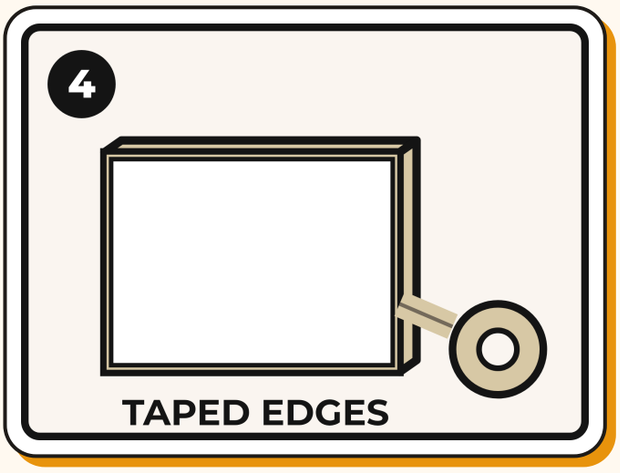
Gather your materials.



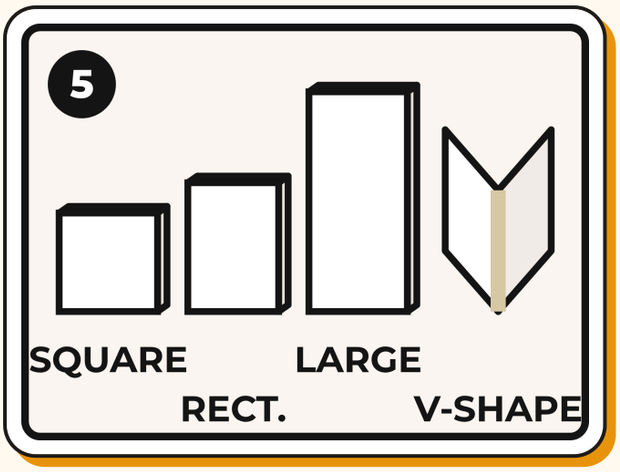
Get one whole board, square or rectangular. No need to cut it.



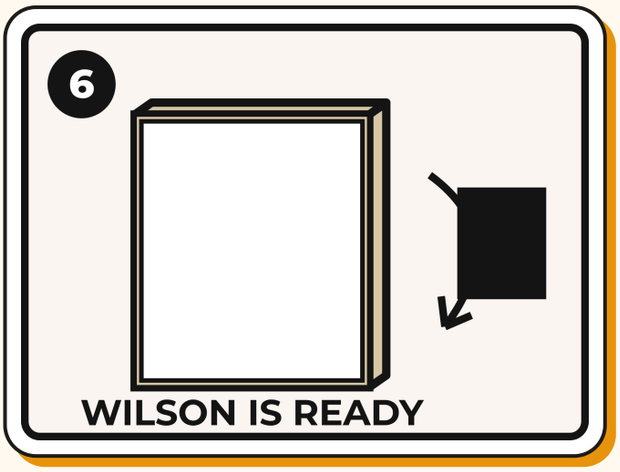
Paint (or glue black paper on) **one side only**. The other stays white.



Tape all the edges: gaffer or paper masking tape. No more crumbling polystyrene.



Any size works: square, rectangle, a big board like in a studio, or two small boards taped together so it opens in a V.



Wilson is ready: white on one side, black on the other.

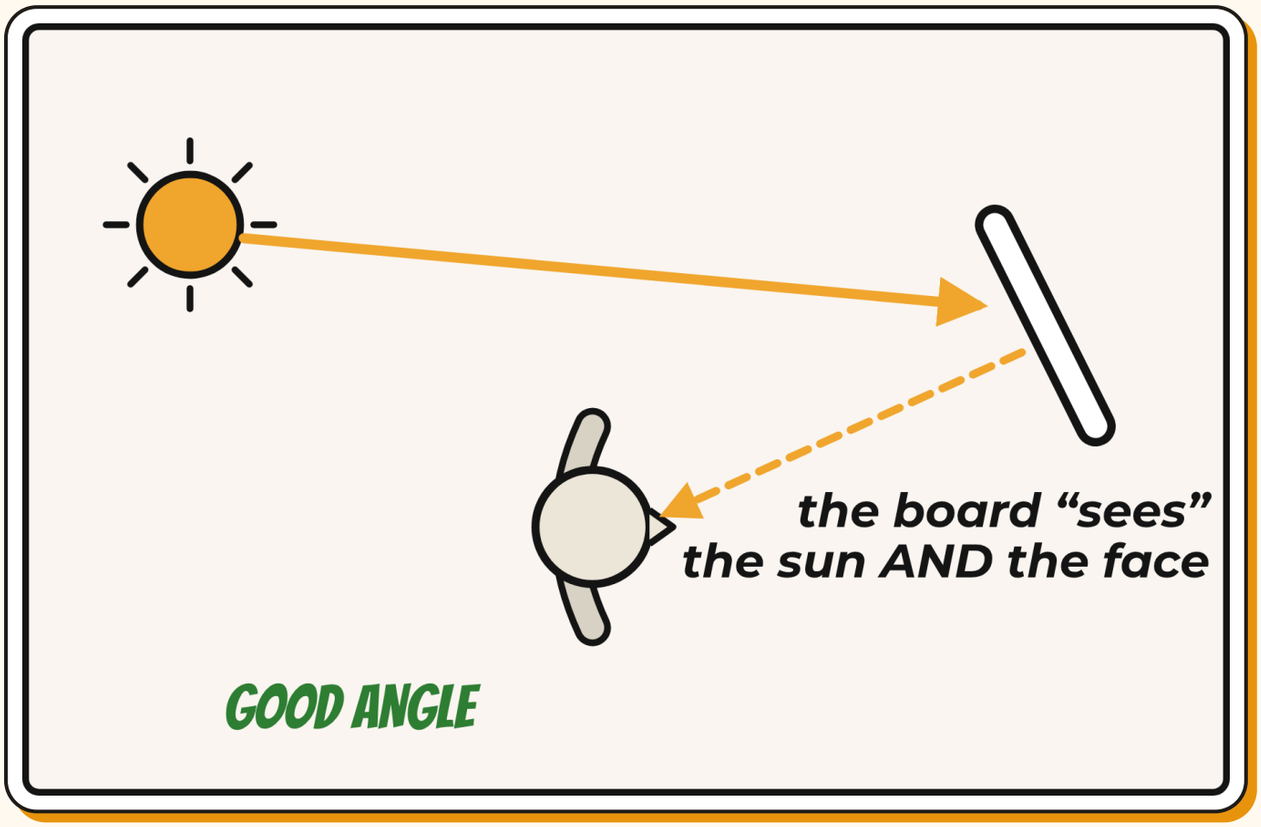
Bonus: make a mini-Wilson too, about A5 size. Perfect for food and jewelry.

03 · PLACEMENT

3 rules, that's all

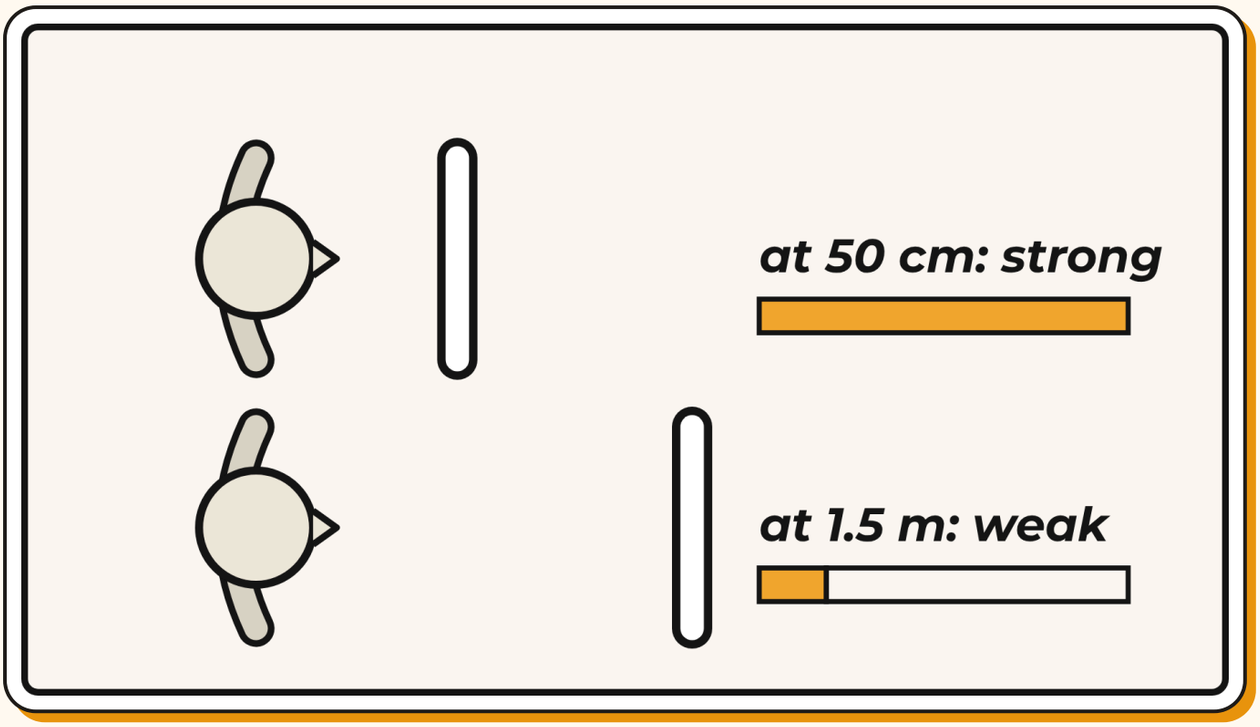
1. The angle

Wilson must “see” the light **and** the face. Turn it until you see the light land.



2. The distance

Closer means stronger. At 50 cm it works. At 1.5 m, almost nothing.



3. The size

Bigger means softer. A big Wilson wraps the face, a mini-Wilson targets a detail.

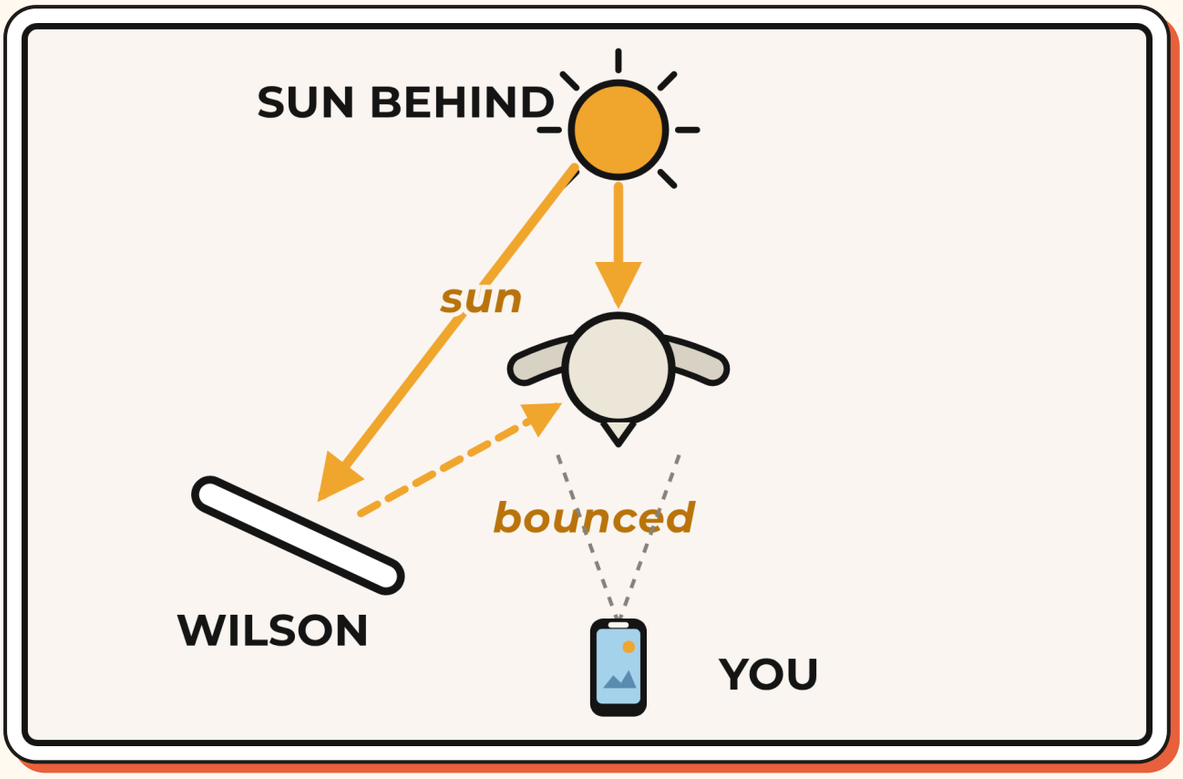
The test: look at their eyes. See a small white spot in each eye? That's Wilson's white side reflecting: it's in the right place. No spot? Bring it closer.

04 · PORTRAIT

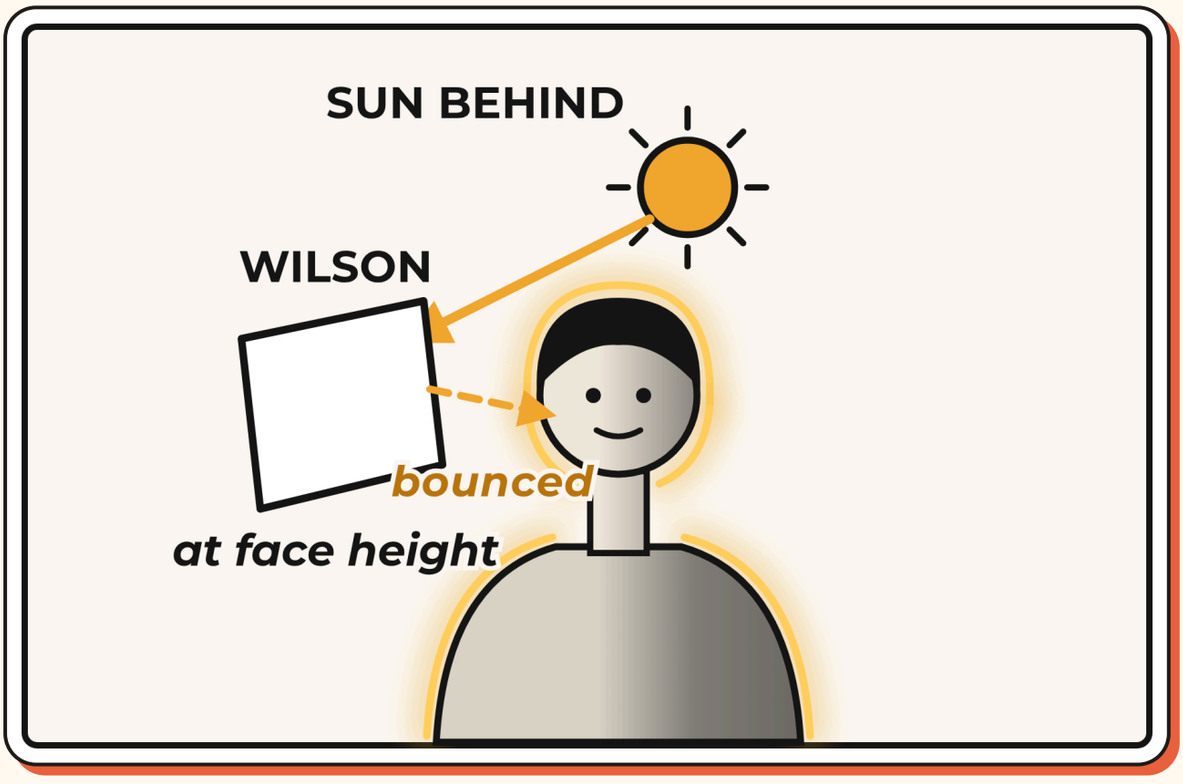
Backlight

THE SETUP

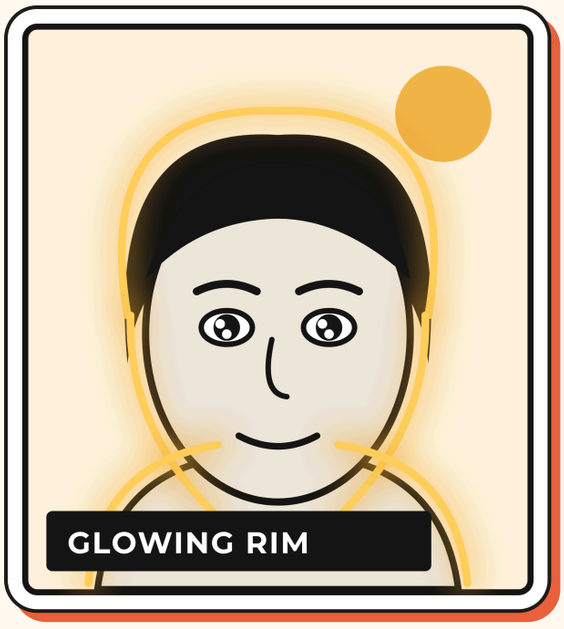
TOP VIEW



FRONT VIEW



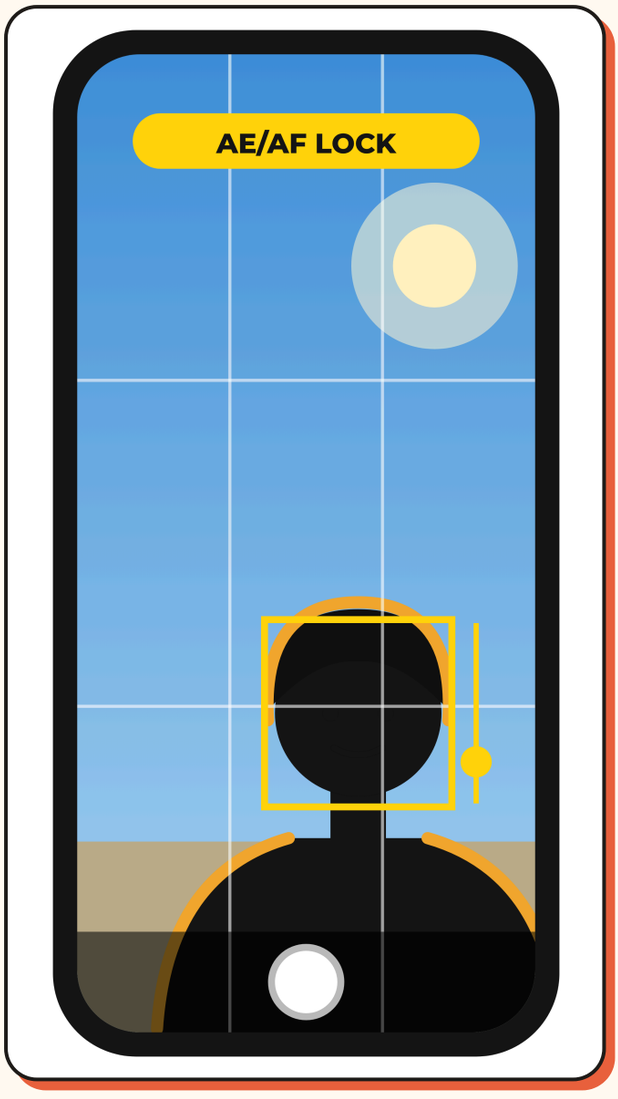
Sun behind the person, Wilson in front, on the left, at face height (mouth level).



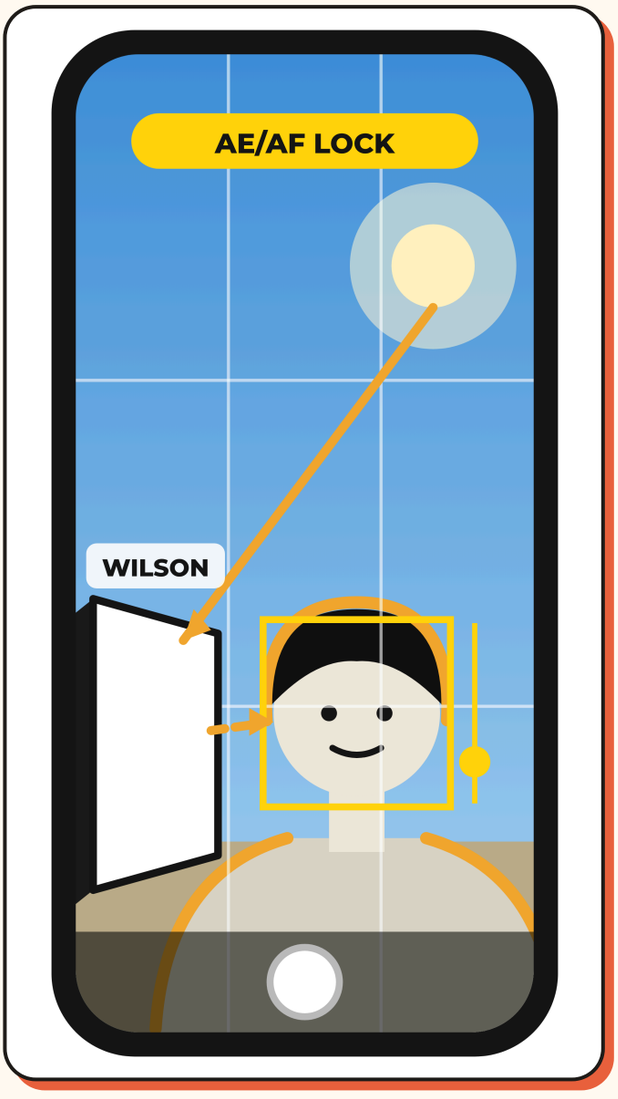
The sun draws a glowing rim around the hair, face and shoulders. Wilson lights the face back up. And nobody squints.

04 · PORTRAIT

The move that changes everything



1. Without Wilson: silhouette



2. With Wilson: face lit

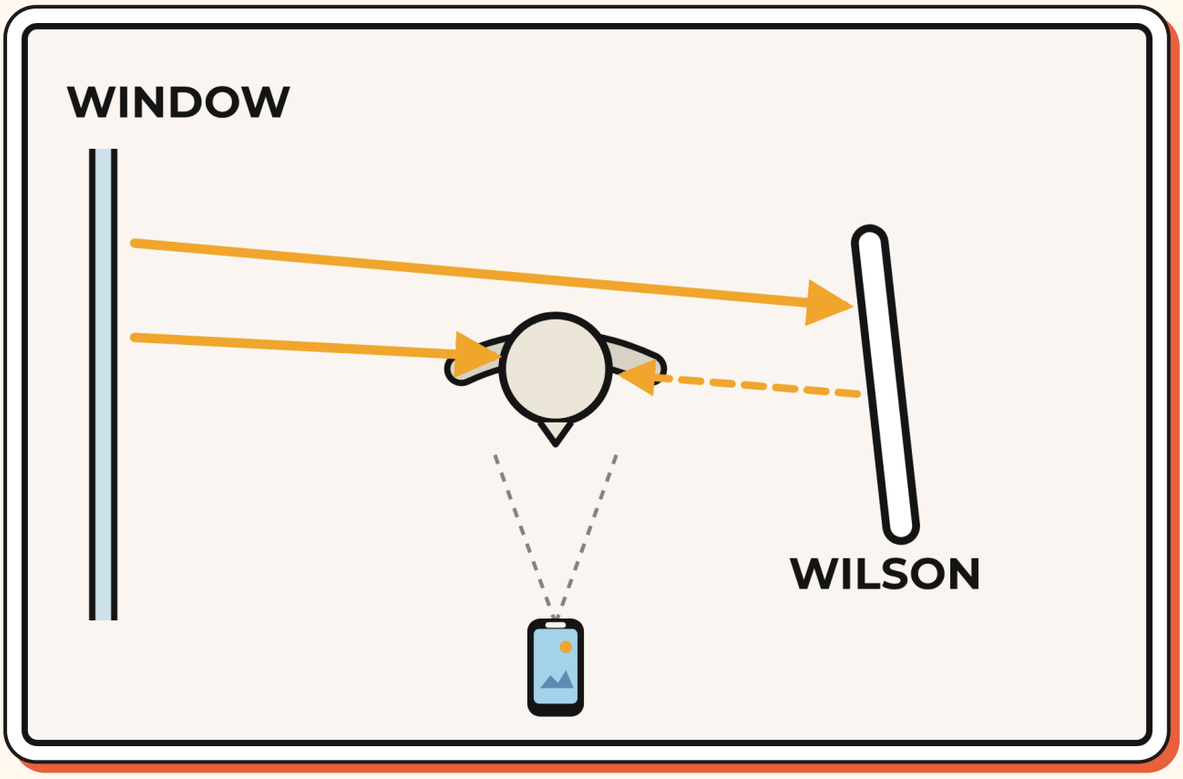
1. **Long-press on the face**: focus and exposure lock (AE/AF).
2. **Lower the exposure** until the sky turns blue again. The person goes dark: that's normal.
3. **Add Wilson**, facing the sun: light hits Wilson and bounces onto the face. The sky stays blue.

04 · PORTRAIT

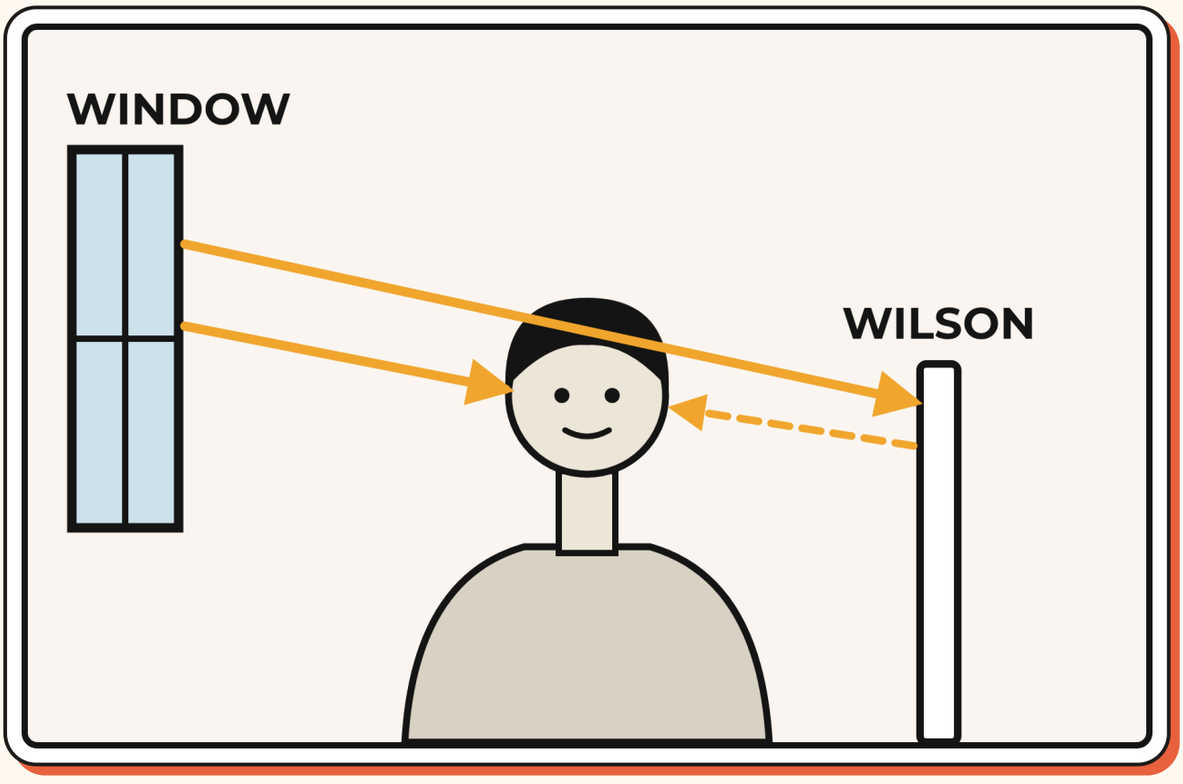
By a window

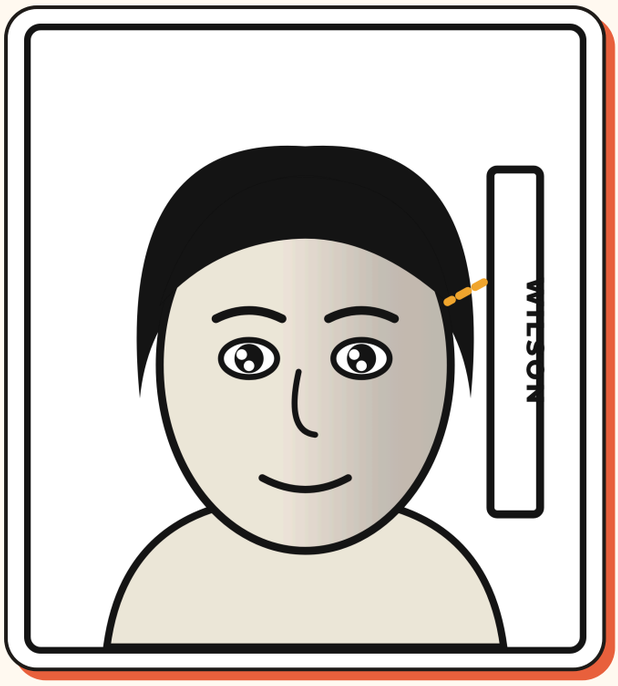
THE SETUP

TOP VIEW

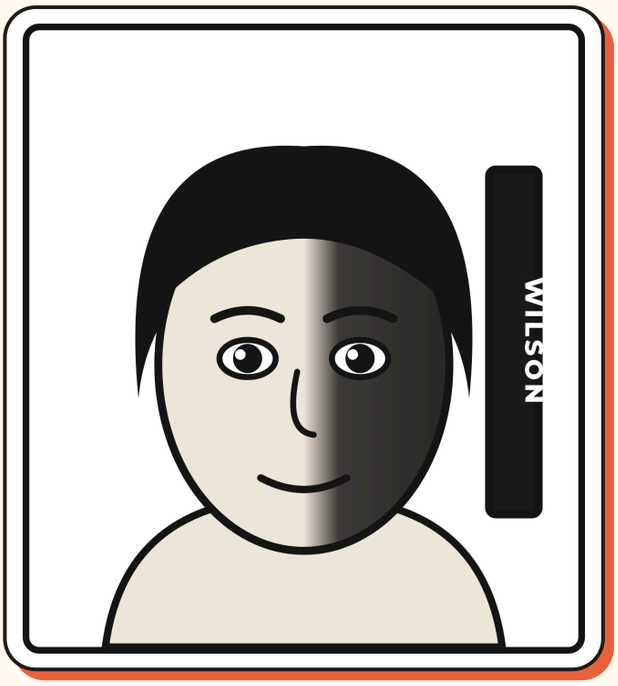


FRONT VIEW





White Wilson: soft



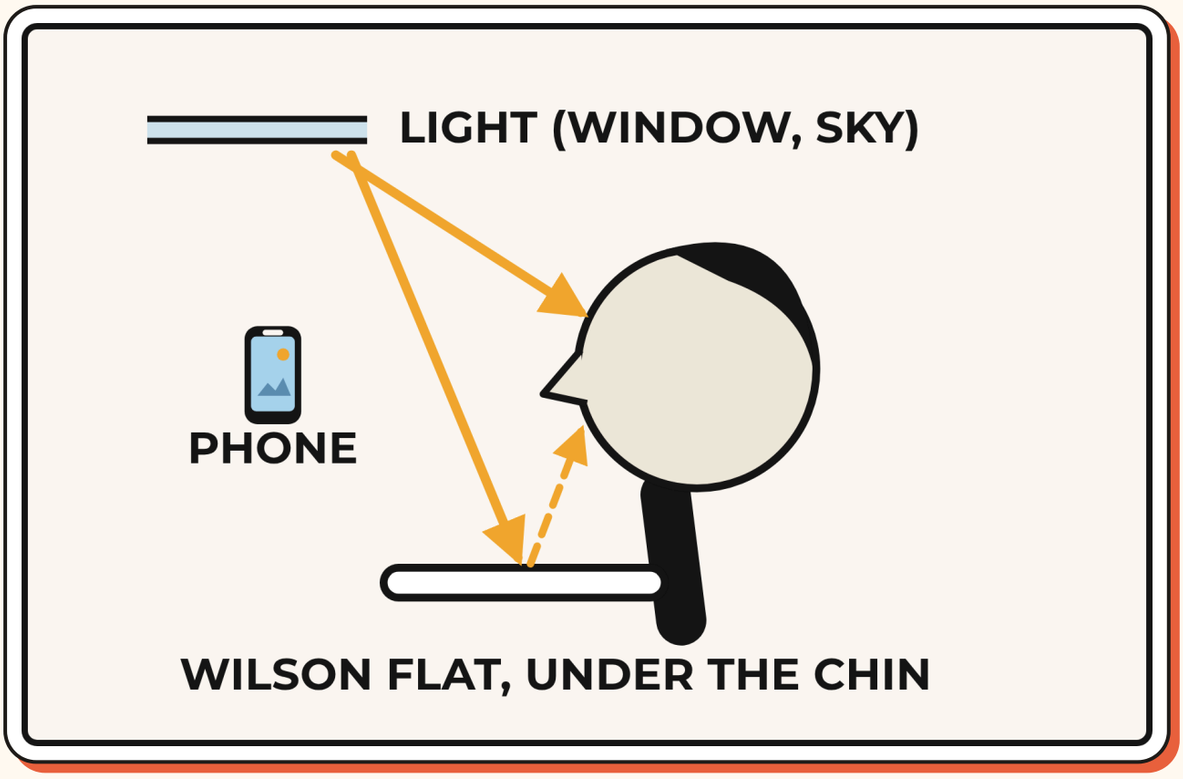
Black Wilson: character

The window lights one side. Wilson decides the other.

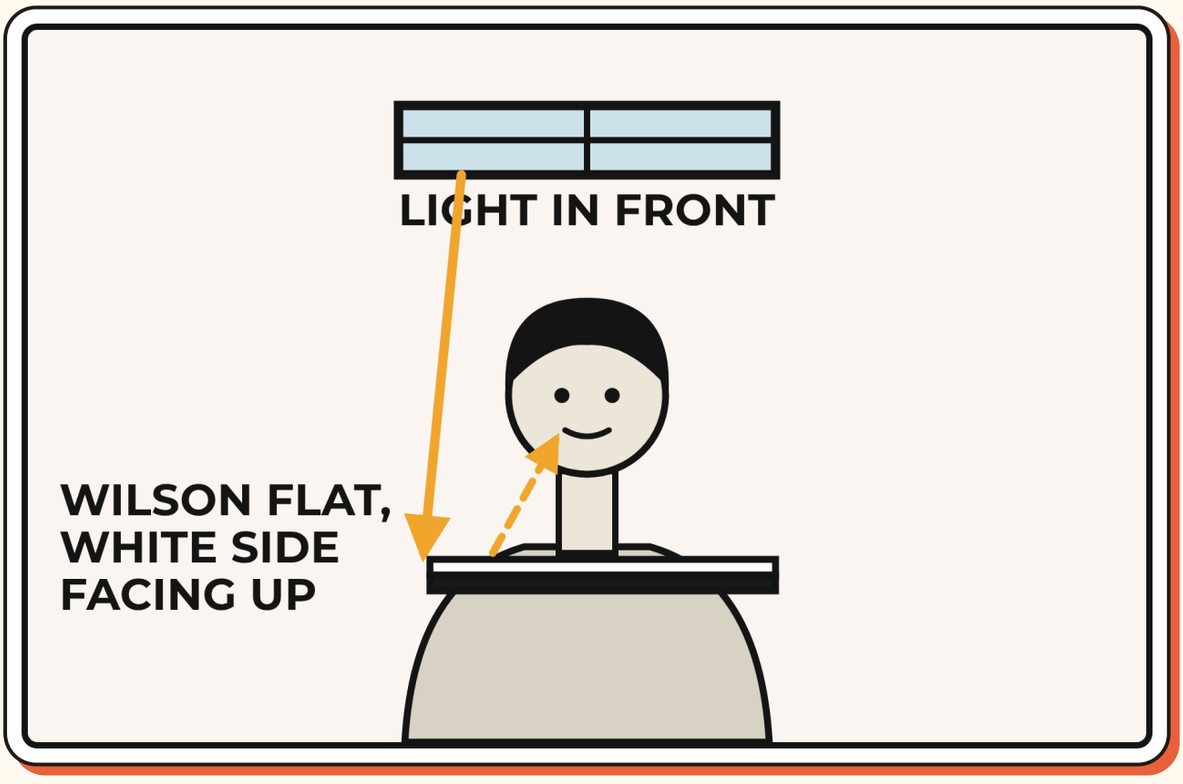
“Beauty” light

WILSON UNDER THE CHIN

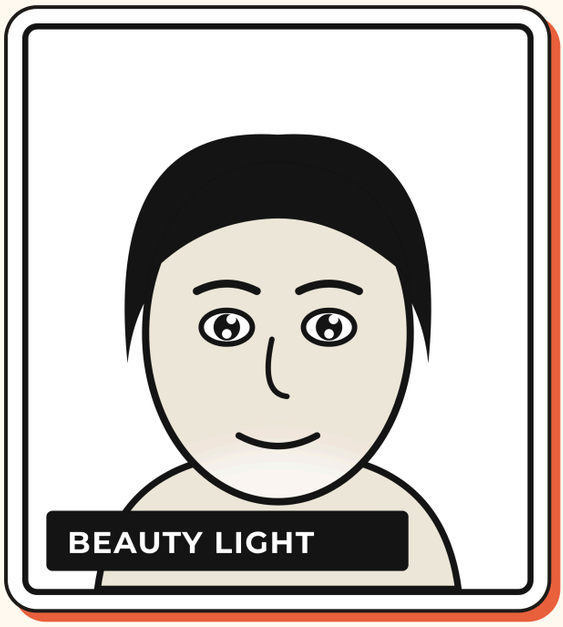
SIDE VIEW



FRONT VIEW



The person faces the light (sun, window or lamp: any source works) and holds Wilson flat against their chest, **white side up**. Dark circles fade, and a 2nd catchlight appears in the eyes.



Watch the example with Sita in my free video (in French): laidliazid.com/wilson

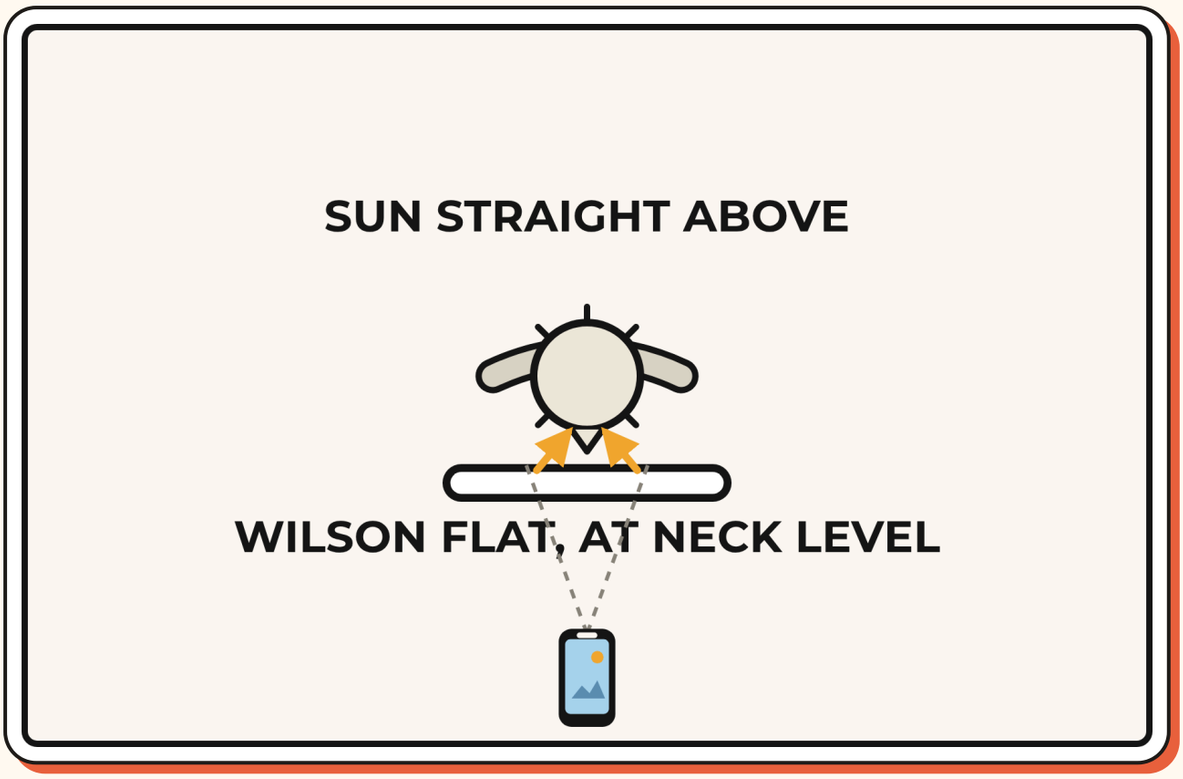
04 · PORTRAIT

Midday, full sun

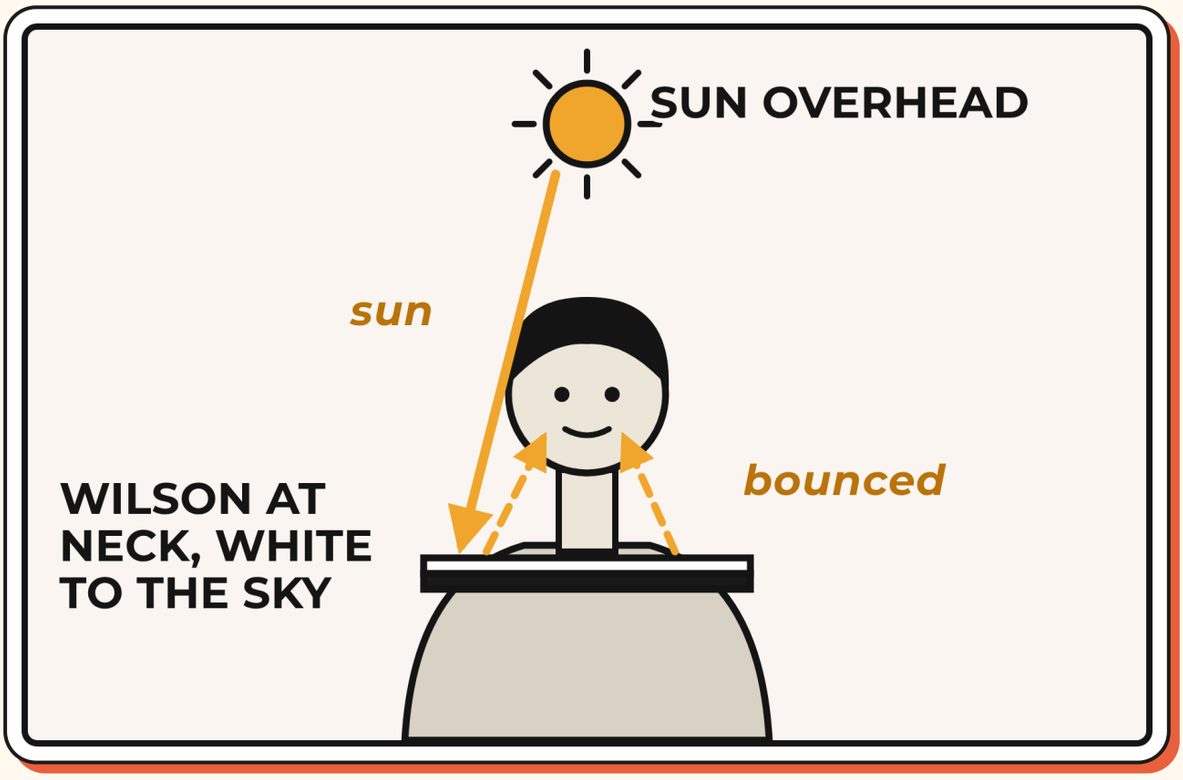
The sun is straight overhead: **shadows under the eyes** and under the chin.

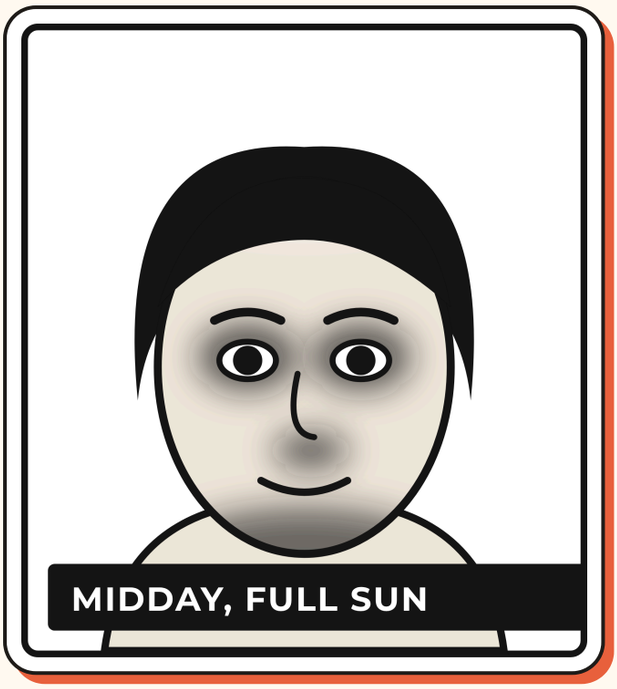
The fix: Wilson flat at neck level, white side to the sky.

TOP VIEW

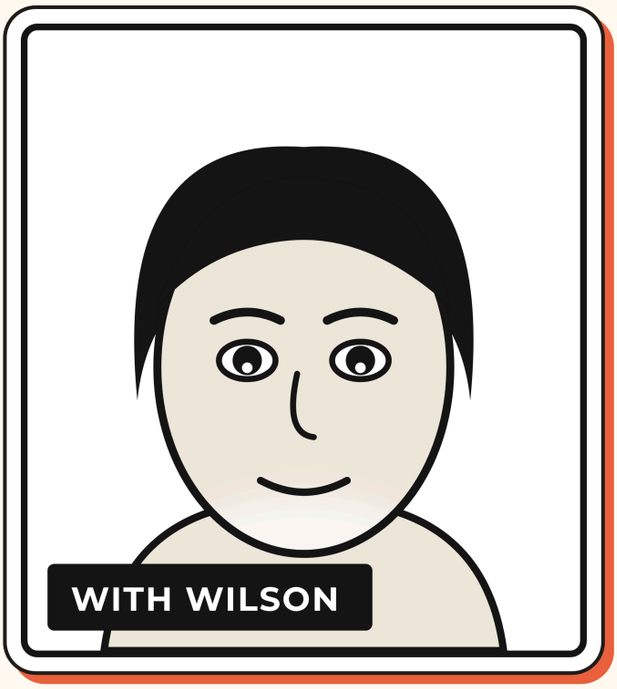


FRONT VIEW





Without Wilson



With Wilson at neck level

Stick to head-and-shoulders framing: a full-length shot would need a very big reflector. Flash works too, but its light is harsher.

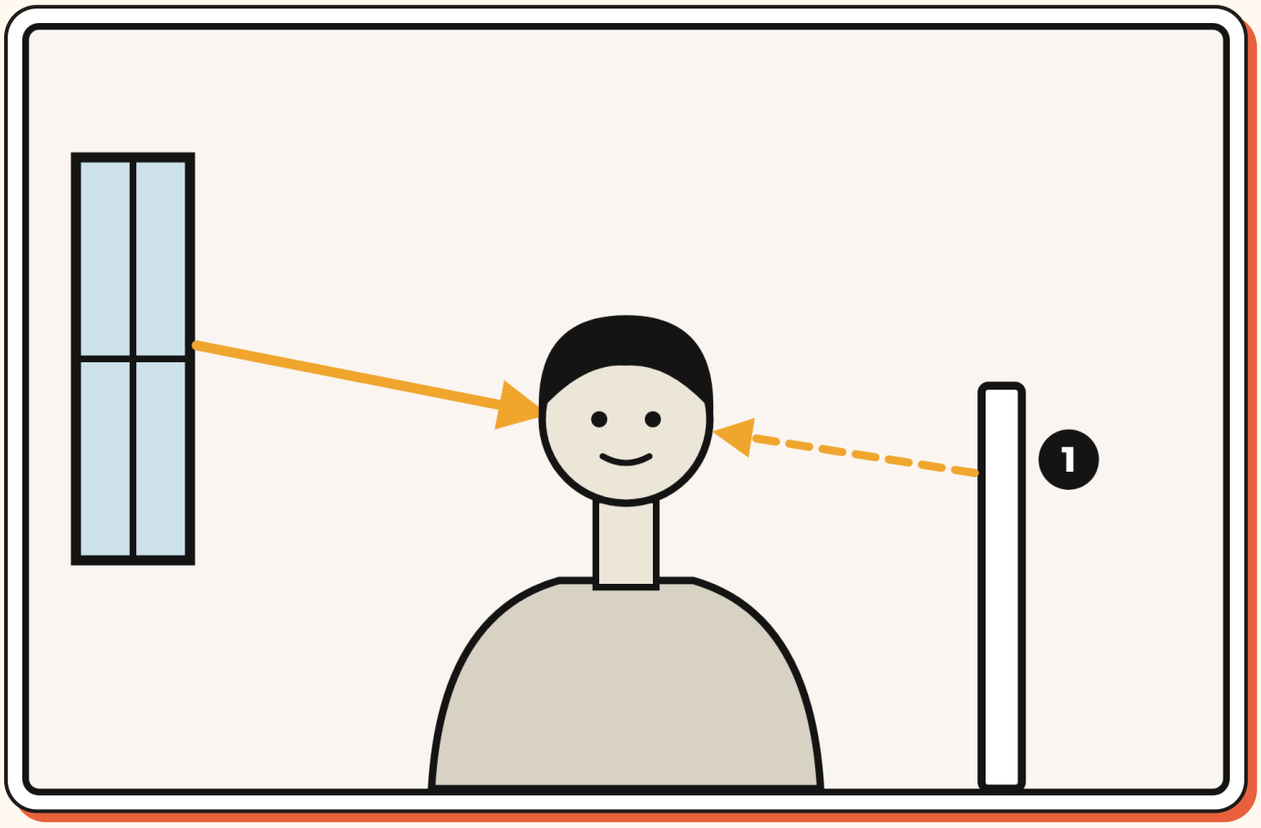
I also cover this in the **“Gear tips”** video of my course.

05 · 1, 2, 3

1, 2, 3 Wilson

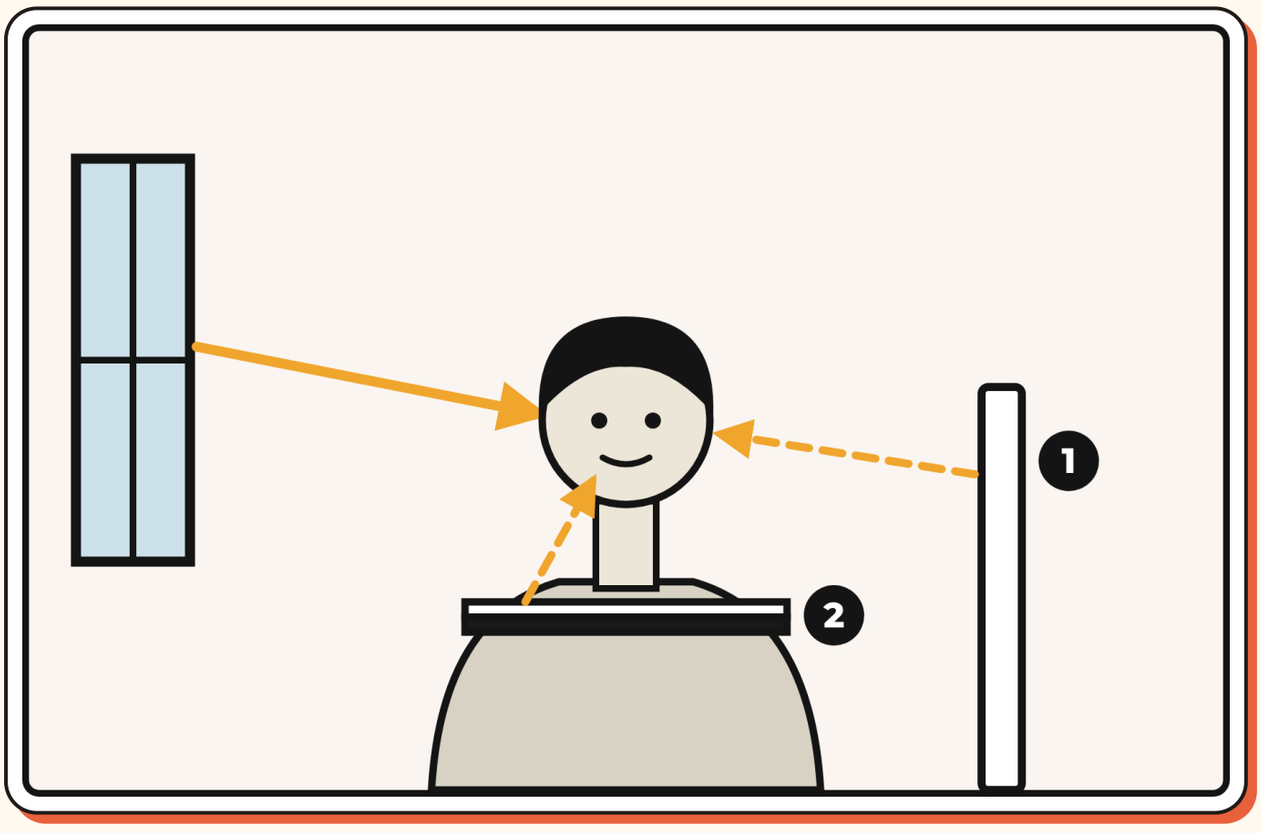
1: fill in

Opposite the window. The go-to setup.



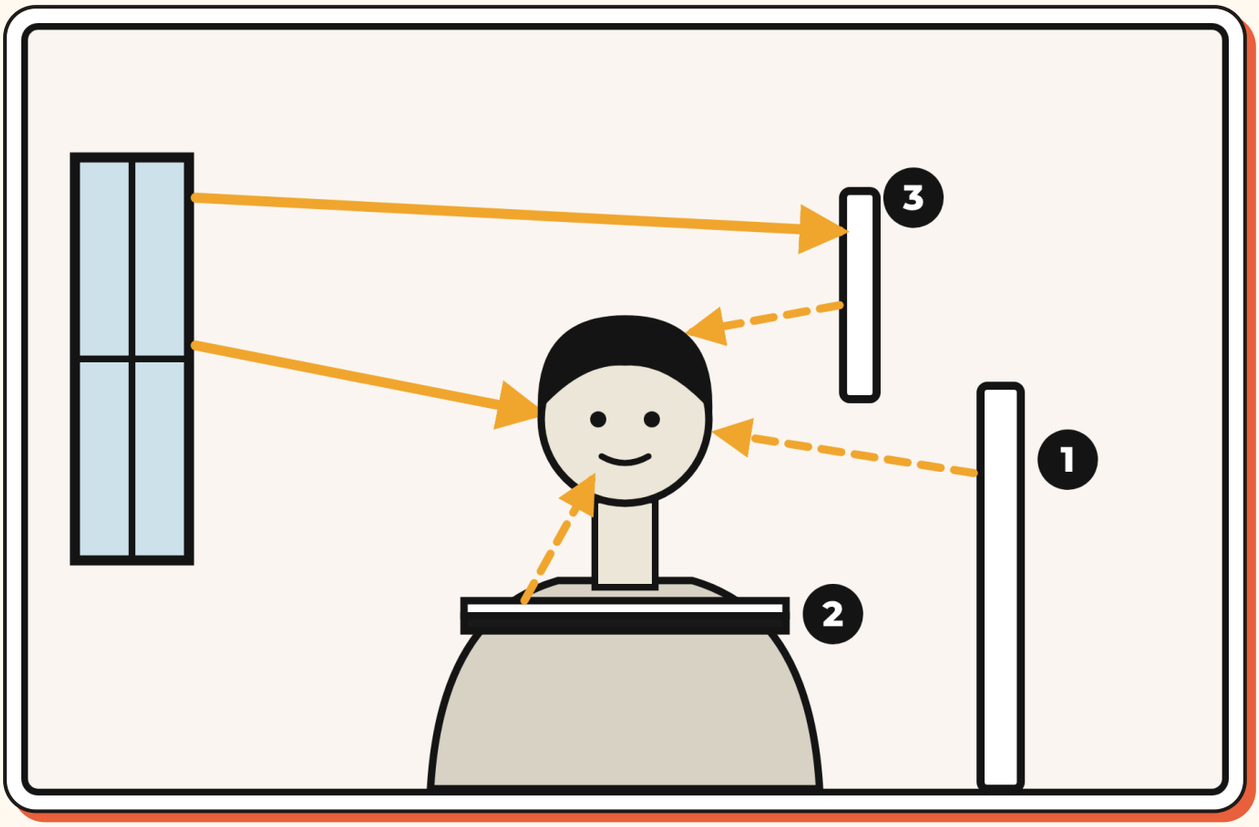
2: + under the chin

Flat, white side up: dark circles fade.



3: + the hair

Behind the person. Only if the room is very bright, or outdoors.



No limit

In a studio: 2 m × 1 m reflectors. At home: a white sheet over a door.

And in black?

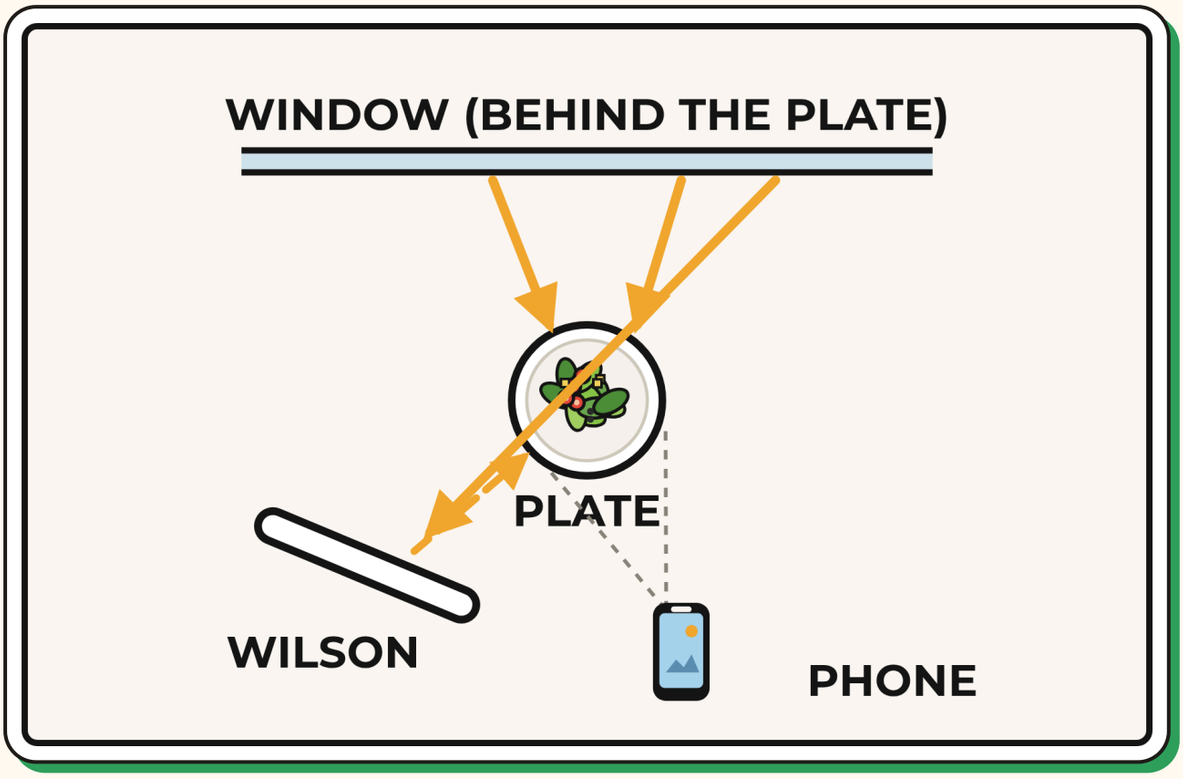
Swap no. 1 for the black side: a “cinematic” portrait.

06 · FOOD

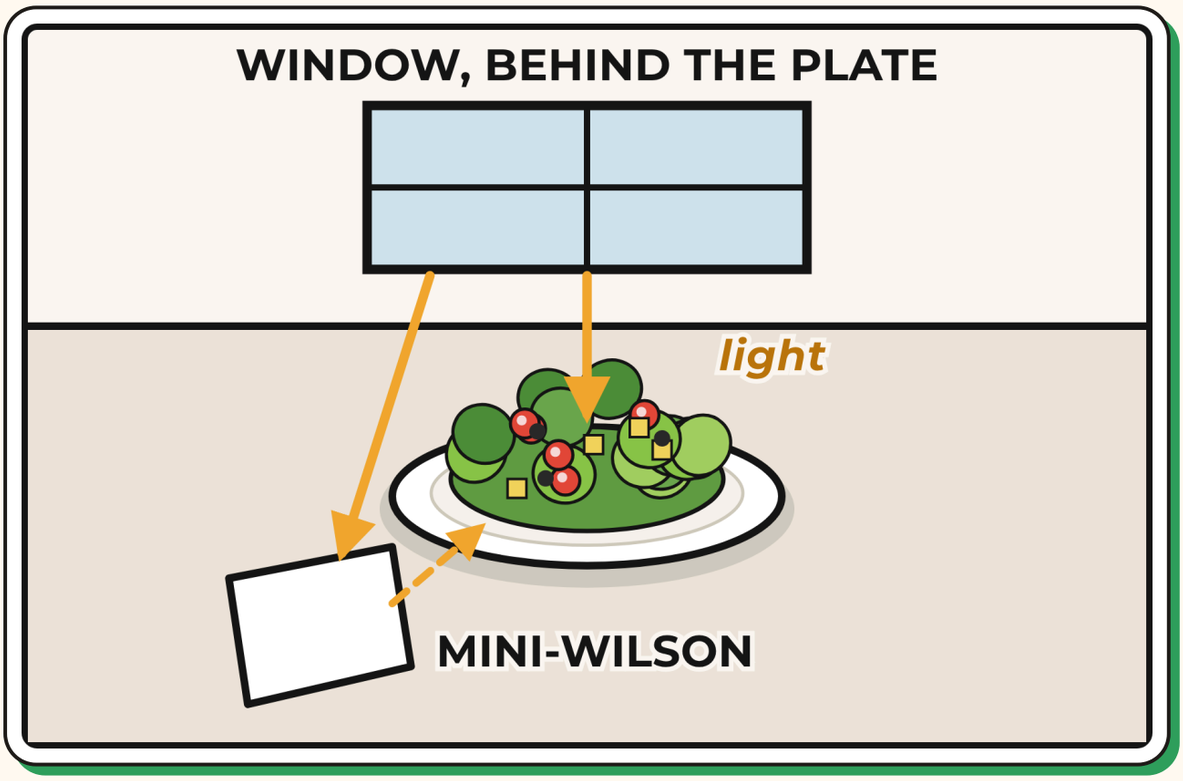
The light comes from behind the plate

THE SETUP

TOP VIEW

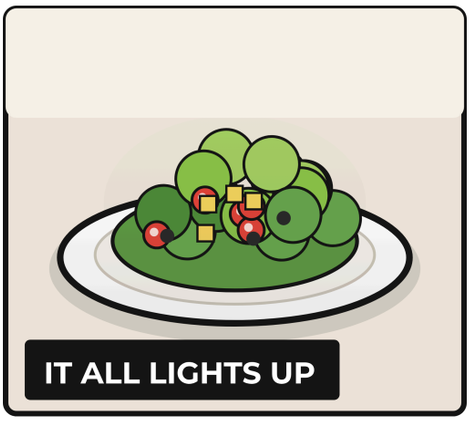


FRONT VIEW (FROM ABOVE)





Without Wilson



With a mini-Wilson in front

Blur behind the plate

Android or iPhone: zoom to 1.5× or 2× if your phone can, and the background blurs. Otherwise, switch to Portrait mode.

Think macro

Show the whole dish, then do what luxury and jewelry brands do: close-up details, a corner of the plate. White or black Wilson helps there too.

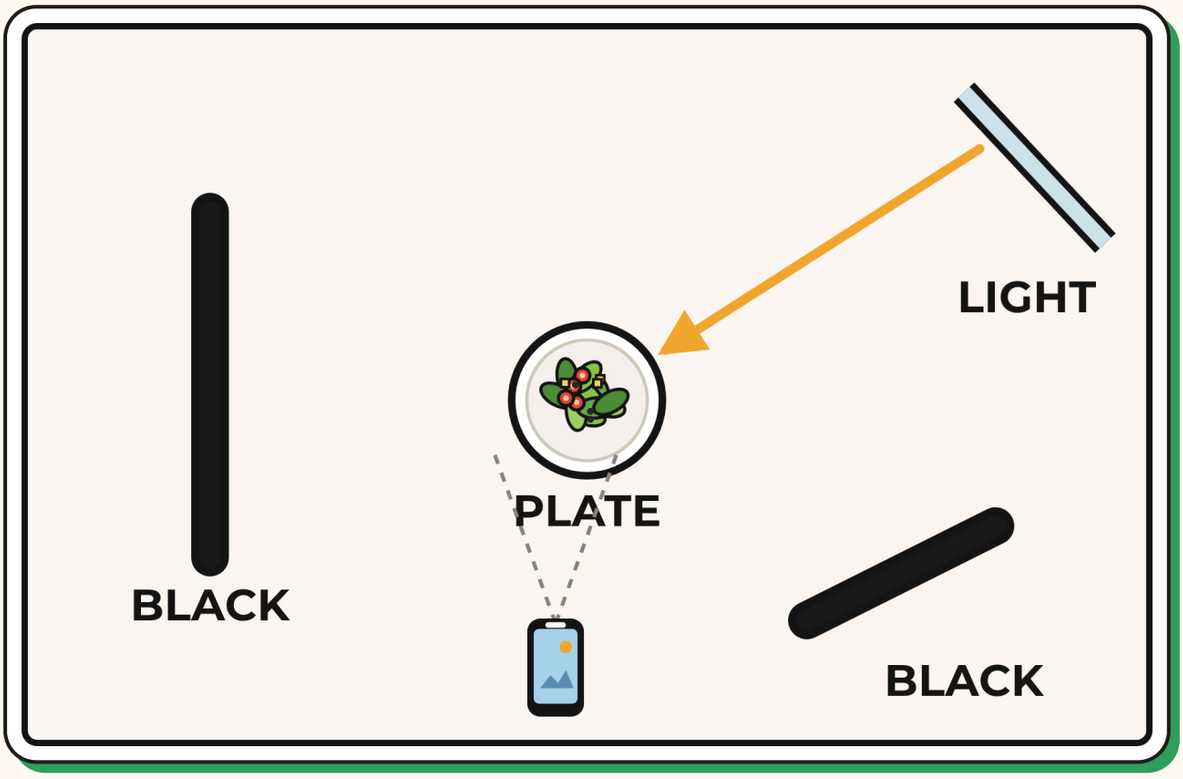
Restaurant owners: use the table by the window, and switch off the ceiling lights.

06 · FOOD

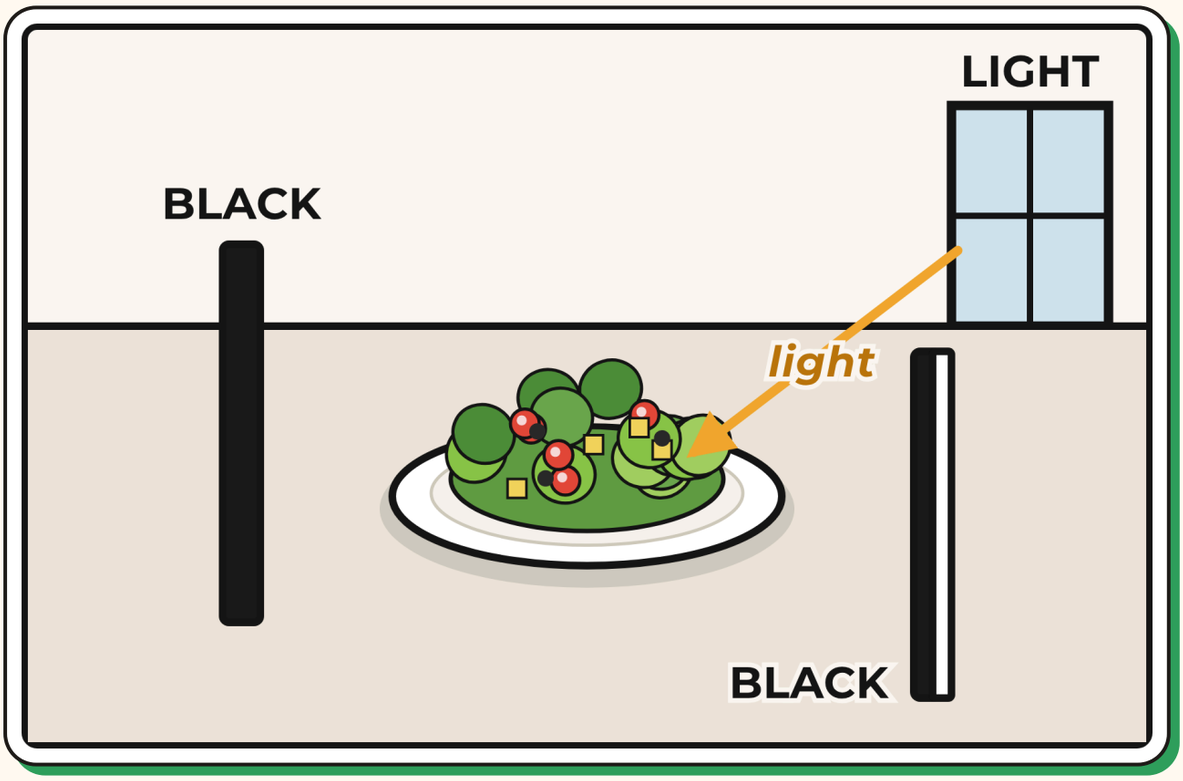
Dark mood and top-down shots

DARK MOOD

TOP VIEW



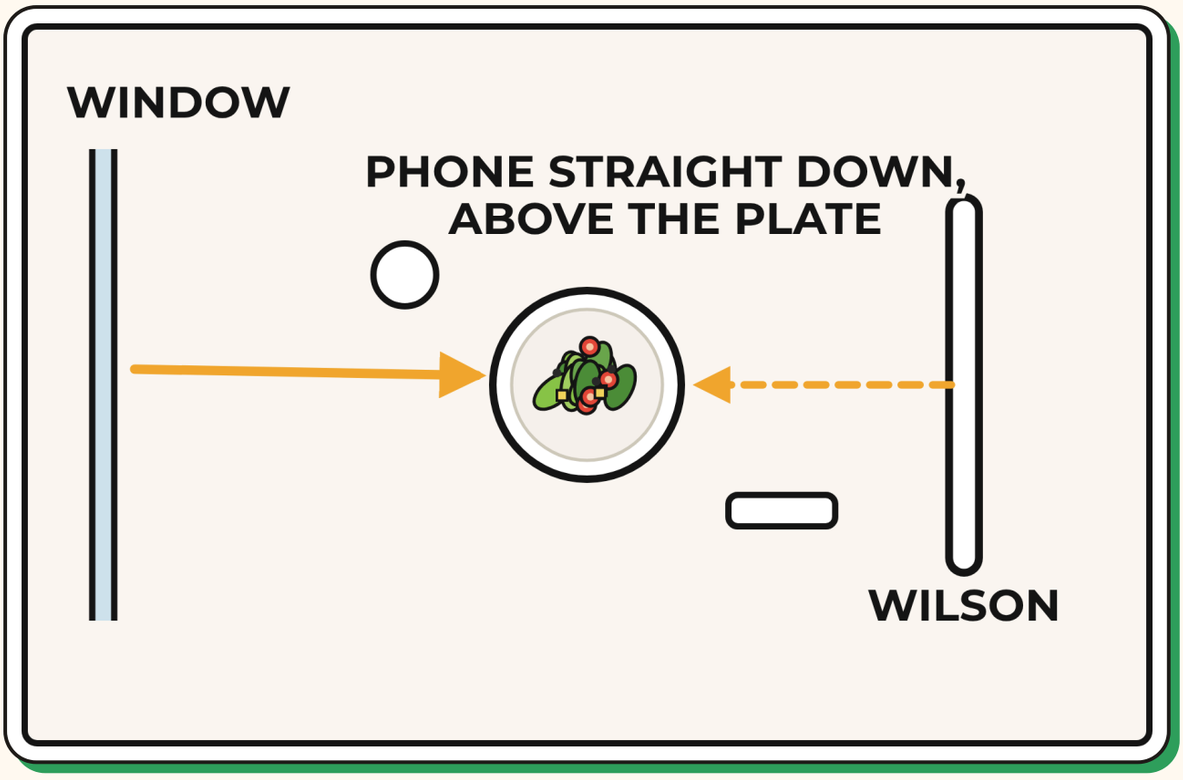
FRONT VIEW (FROM ABOVE)



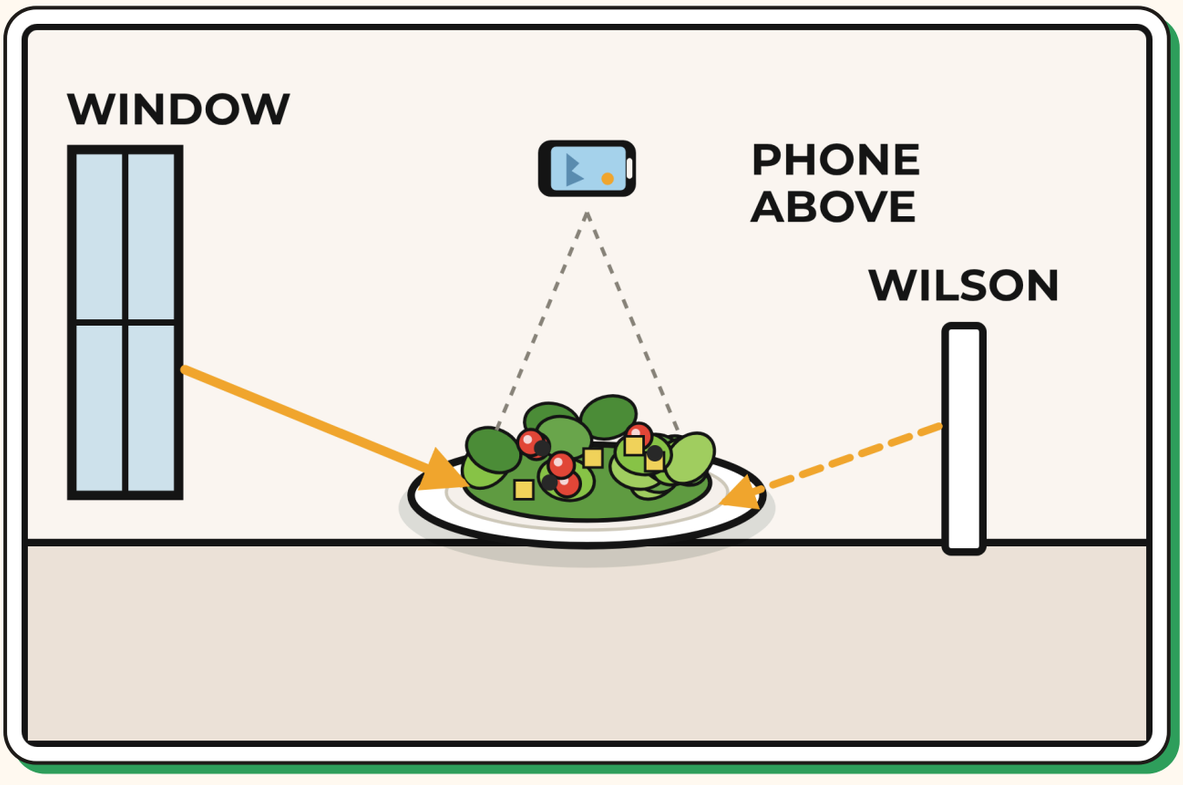
Light falls on the dish, **two black Wilsons** around it: the light gathers in the center, with all its colors.

THE DISH FROM ABOVE

TOP VIEW



FRONT VIEW



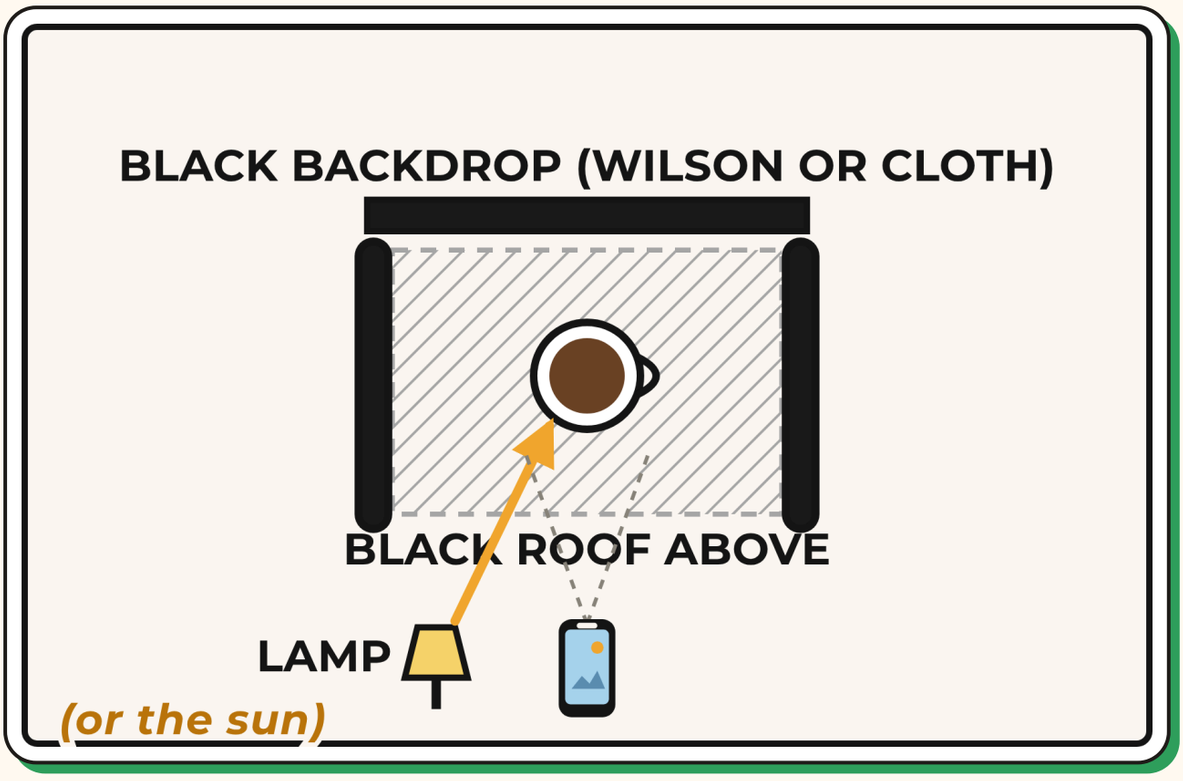
Window on one side, white Wilson on the other. Phone above, perfectly flat (turn on the grid).

06 · FOOD

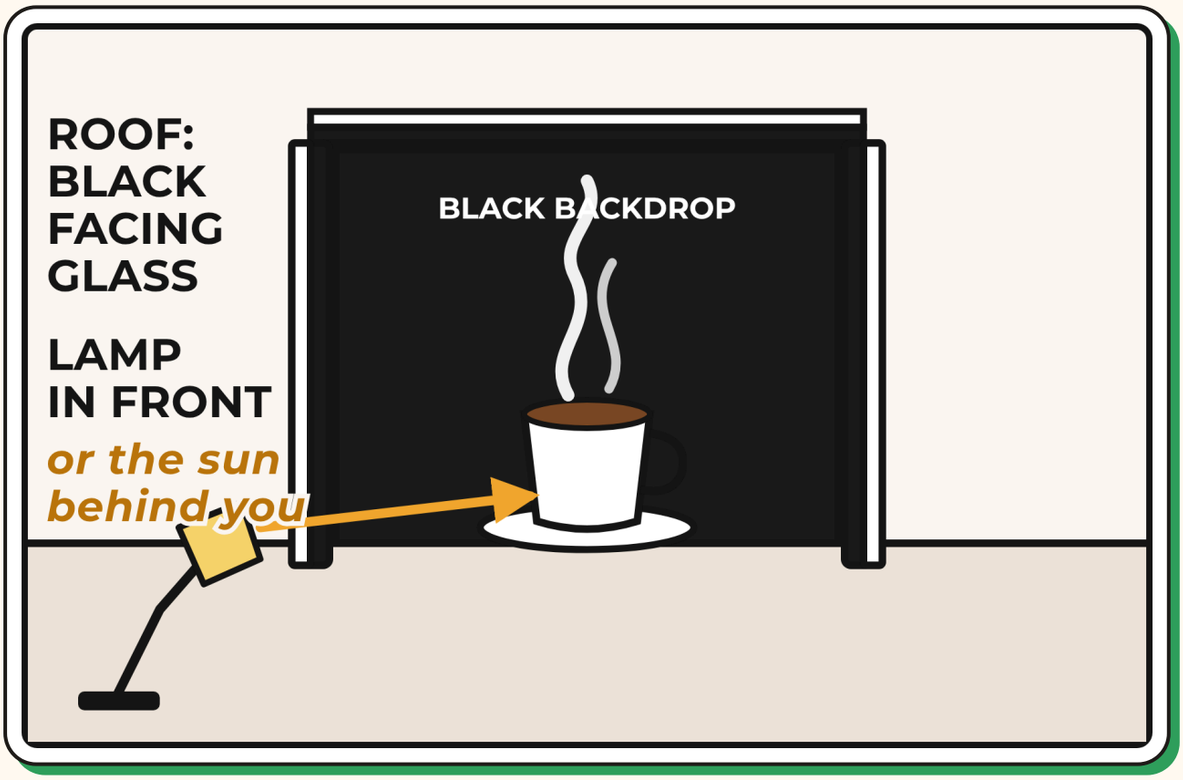
Hot drinks: the black backdrop

BLACK BACKDROP: THE STEAM STANDS OUT

TOP VIEW



FRONT VIEW



Build a **black box** with four Wilsons, black side facing the cup: behind, left, right and on top. For the back, a black cloth works too.

Light comes from the front, at phone level: the sun behind you, or a desk lamp aimed at the cup.

On black, steam and smoke stand out. On white, they disappear.

Works for jewelry too: jewelry on black always looks good.

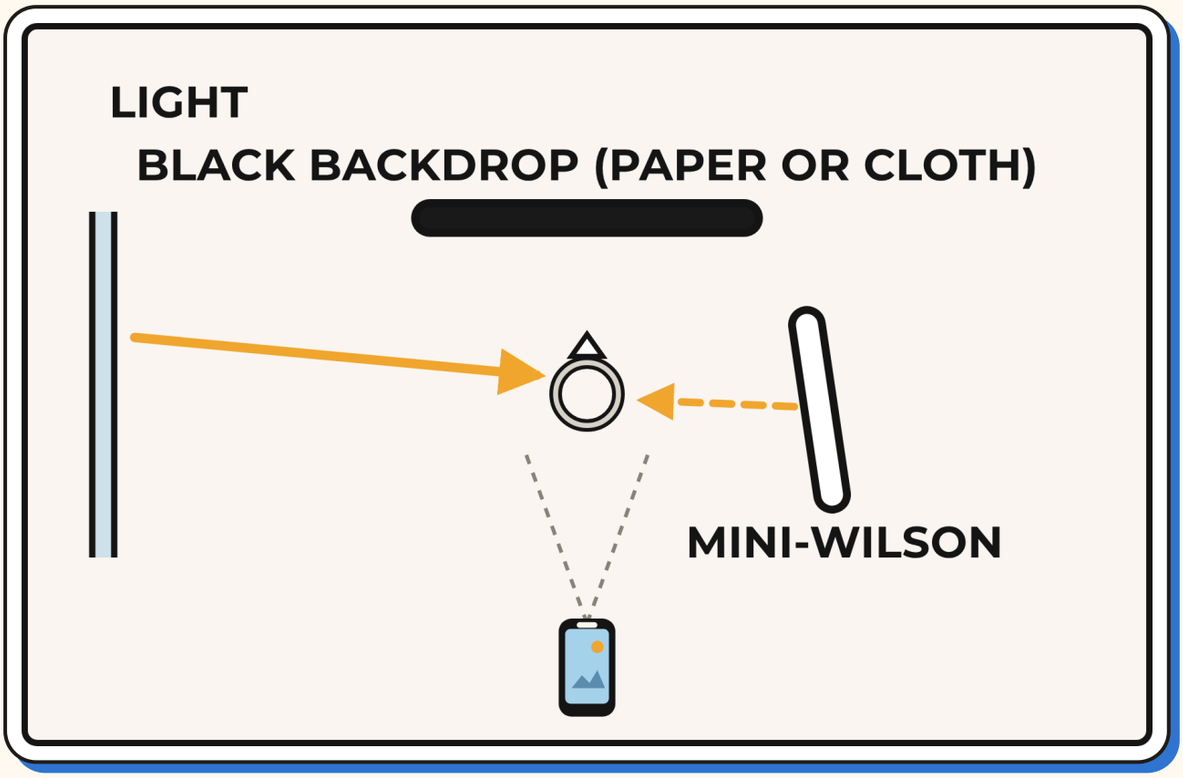
07 · PRODUCT SHOTS

Rings and jewelry

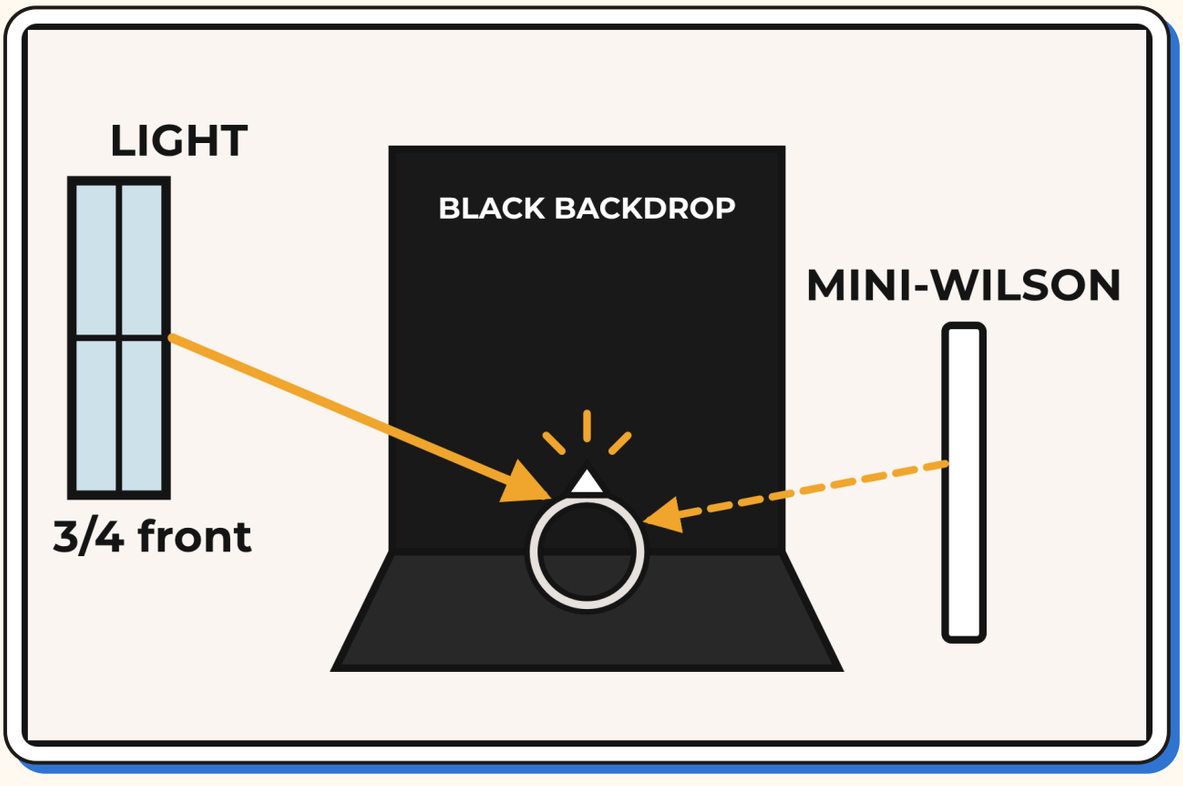
Jewelry always looks better with darkness behind it.

ON BLACK

TOP VIEW



FRONT VIEW





White mini-Wilson: the metal shines



Black Wilson: only the stone stands out

Light at three-quarters on the ring. Wilson decides the rest: white for shine, black for mystery.

White background or a natural setting?

That works too: a tent of white mini-Wilsons, or a real setting (a hand, wood, stone, a plant). Wilson always helps bring out one side of the piece.

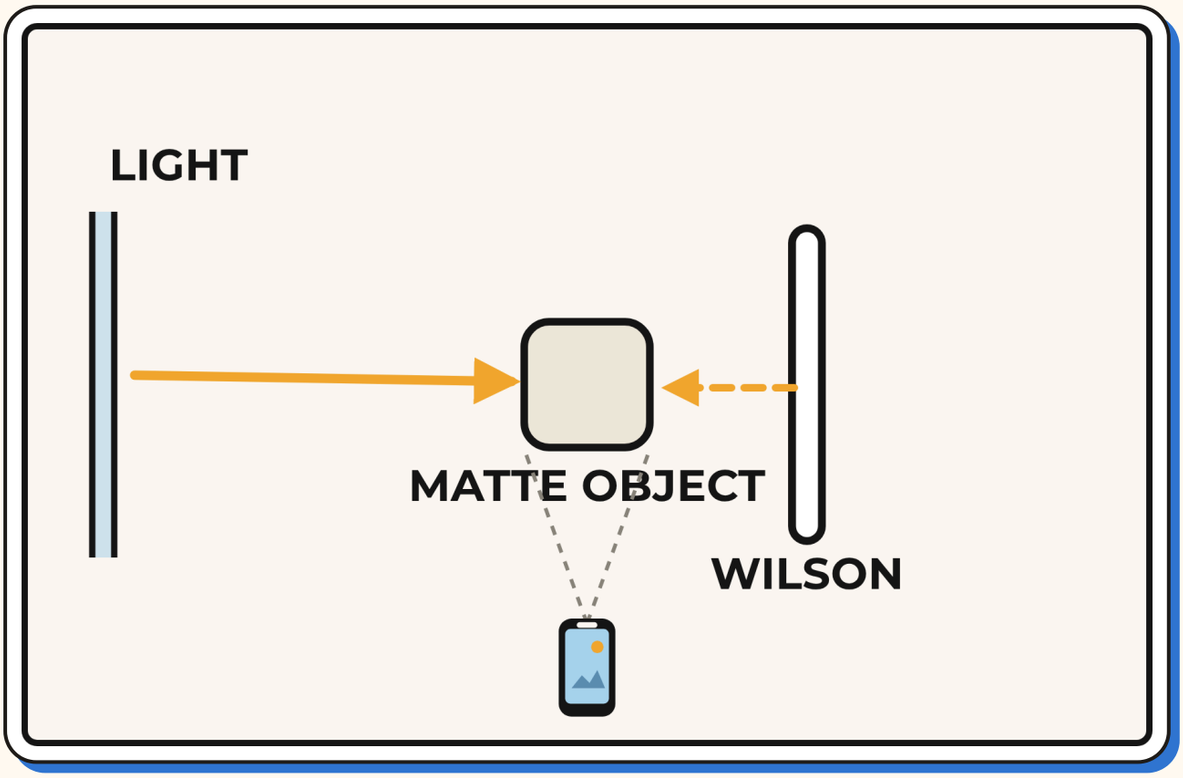
07 · PRODUCT SHOTS

Matte objects

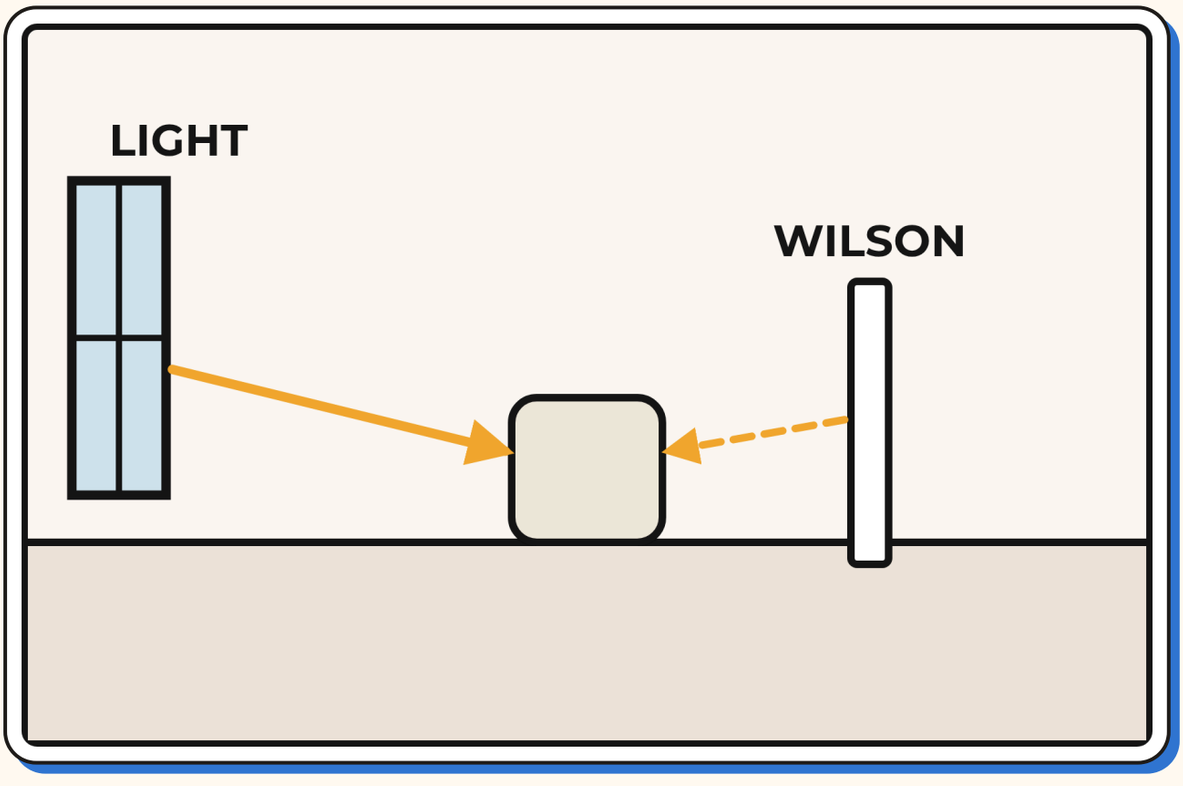
Soap, ceramics, boxes, cosmetics: one Wilson is enough.

THE SETUP

TOP VIEW



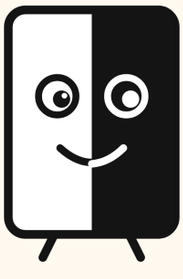
FRONT VIEW



Light on one side, white Wilson on the other.

On your phone

Don't put the lens right up to the object: **zoom (1.2×, 1.3× or 1.4×) and step back**. It avoids distortion.

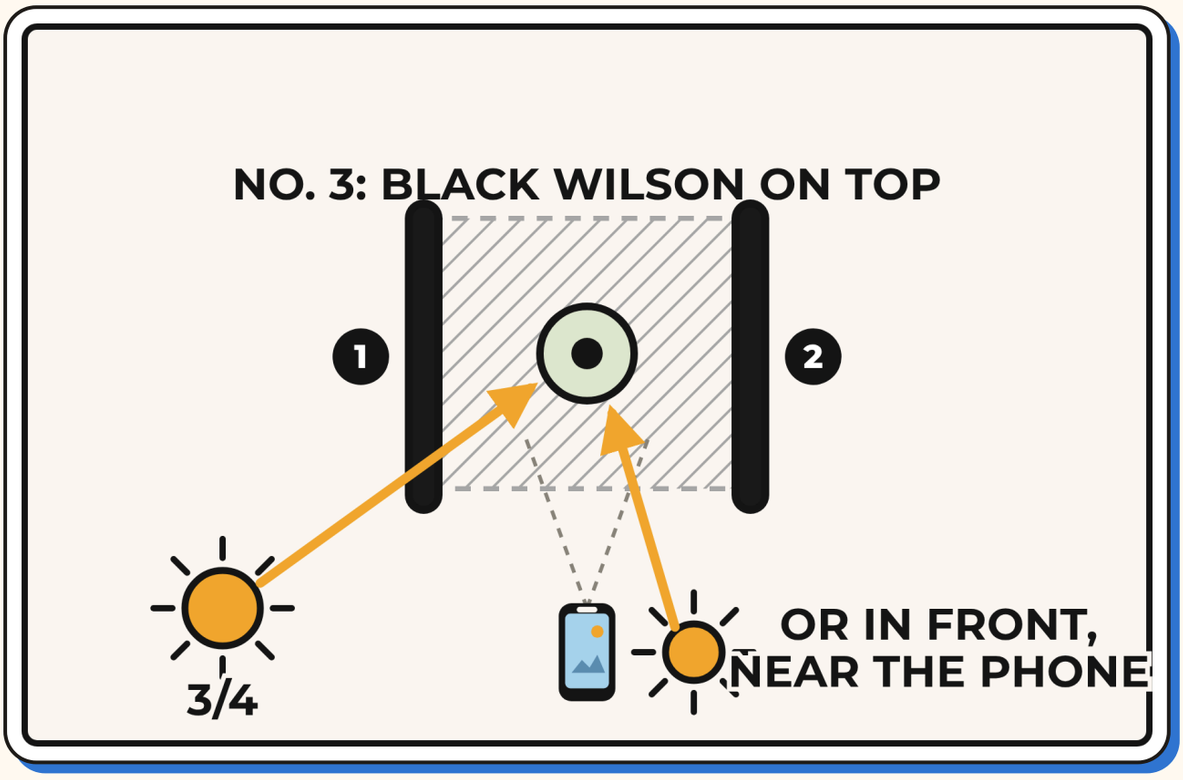


A well-lit product sells better.

Glass bottles

Olive oil, syrup, perfume: glass reflects the whole room. We replace those reflections with black.

TOP VIEW



FRONT VIEW



The setup

Black Wilson on the left, on the right, and a 3rd on top: **black facing the bottle**, white to the sky.

The light

At three-quarters (the most interesting), or from the front next to the phone. Sun or lamp, either works. The black backdrop keeps the color.



Without Wilson



In the black tunnel

08 · PHONE

5 phone settings

1

Clean the lens

A wipe with your T-shirt before every shoot.

2

Zoom to 1.2× or 1.3× minimum

Depending on what your phone can do, then step back. It avoids distortion, especially on plates and round products.

3

Lock AE/AF

Long-press on the subject: exposure and focus stop moving. It stays sharp as long as neither of you moves.

4

Lower the exposure

Slide the little sun next to the yellow square down. In bright sun, part of the face (or product) stays lit and the rest falls into black. A very contrasty image.

5

Flash off, grid on

Flash flattens everything. Except for a Studio 54 party look: strong flash on the subject, everything around very dark. The grid keeps your image straight.



Check the screen with and without me. No difference? Bring me closer.

6 mistakes to avoid

✕ Wilson too far
Bring it right to the edge of the frame.

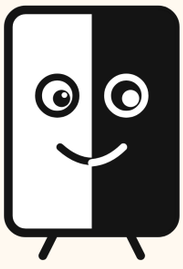
✕ Wilson in the shade
It has to catch the light itself.

✕ Flashlight effect
The Wilson below must stay weaker than the main light.

✕ Squinting eyes
Move Wilson back or tilt it.

✕ Wilson in the shot
Check the edges and reflections.

✕ Mixed light
Turn off the lamps, keep one source.



If you remember one thing: look at the light before you look at the screen.

• 10 · CHEAT SHEET

Cheat sheet

Take a screenshot.

I WANT…	SIDE	WHERE WILSON GOES
Soften a face	White	Opposite the light, 50 cm away
Dramatic, mysterious portrait	Black	Opposite the light, very close
Backlight	White	In front, left, at face height
Midday sun	White	Flat at neck level
Hide dark circles	White	Flat, under the chin
Separate from the background	White	Behind, opposite side
Appetizing dish	White	Light behind, Wilson in front
Dark-mood dish	Black	On both sides
Steam that stands out	Black	Back, left, right, top; light in front
Clean bottle	Black	Left, right and top
Elegant ring	White Black	Black backdrop, mini-Wilson on one side

Learn these rules. Then you can break them: that's where your style begins.

The angle

Wilson sees the light and the subject

Distance

Closer, stronger

Size

Bigger, softer

WHAT NEXT?

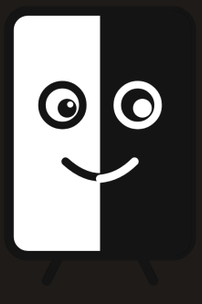
Wilson is the light. My course is everything else.

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