

# Photographic Light Box Tutorial

So you've just spent days or weeks completing your latest rod. It's got a great weave, some marbling, hand made wooden grips or whatever rings your bell. Now you want to show the world how good it looks, so out to the back yard we go, digital camera in hand.

You snap away a hundred shots and load them up on your computer to find that they don't look anywhere near as good as the real thing.

The big problem area is that the epoxy is so reflective, you get lines, flares and all sorts of problems.

Not to mention old Mrs Smith's bloomers on the washing line in the background.

What to do???

After trying all sorts of angles and natural lighting conditions, I decided I needed help, so I logged onto a photography forum and asked some questions.

The suggestions were

1: Use a polarizing filter on the lens to cut reflection. (Good idea, but my camera is very basic and doesn't accept filters).

2: Use a light box. .... OK... What the hell's that?

A light box is a box into which you place the object you wish to photograph.

In the sides are "windows" which are covered with white cloth. You shine a bright light through the cloth and it diffuses the light throughout the box, thus illuminating the object you wish to photograph very evenly, thus stopping reflections, shadows etc.

Inside the box you also place some white card which must curve from the vertical rear wall to the bottom of the box.

Because it has no corners, it appears to be a solid white background when you take your shot.

I decided to construct one using "Corflute" which is like corrugated cardboard only made from an opaque white plastic which I felt would also diffuse light from the outside and reflect it on the inside. Taking my trusty hobby knife, I scored one side to allow me to fold the box into shape.

I decided to only use masking tape to hold it all together so I could easily collapse it for storage.

Once the box was made I cut some windows in the top and sides and taped white cloth over them.

On the front I cut a "viewing" port through which I would take the shots and on top I made a flap that would allow me to place objects inside and through which I could place the cardboard sheet.

I also cut some slots on the ends like a star so I could slide a rod through without letting too much unfiltered light inside. The box is shown below with a skeletonized drawing shown in Figure 1.



For light sources I visited my local hardware and found some 500W halogen work lamps on special.

These give off a mostly white light. I also bought a twin lamp that is mounted on a tripod to shine through the top of the box.

For better results you can get "natural light" lamps designed for photographic work.

The results were quite promising as can be seen in the photos.

In hindsight I think I will cut two more light ports in the front of the box and illuminate these as well. This should stop the reflection when you can actually see

the camera in the epoxy.

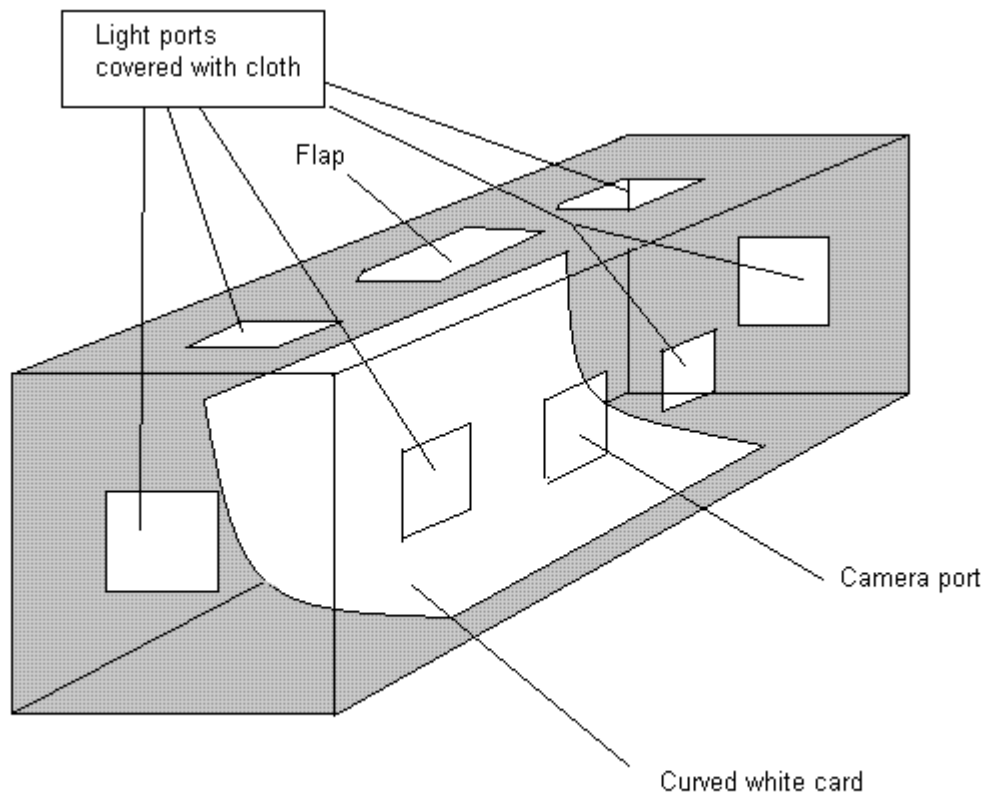
I also believe much better results would come from a digital SLR camera as mine has to be very close to the object to get clear shots which makes it harder to avoid reflections.

An added bonus of the white card background is that the auto focus on the camera doesn't pick it up, so it's easier to get a crisp focus on your object.

You can also enhance the results even further if you adjust the white balance on the camera to overcome any blue or yellow hue from your light source.

Give it a go!

You'll be pleasantly surprised with the results.



**Figure 1**

**A light box can be assembled in an hour from readily available materials.  
It will make a huge difference to your ability to show your work in its “best light”.**

Rod building components with white card background



A quick change to blue card gives us this



A selection of other photos I've taken in the light box.



This tutorial is squarely aimed at the novice photographer who wants better photos of their rod building pursuits.

There is much more to good photography than I am qualified to speak about.

At the very least, you should sign up on a photography forum and get yourself some digital photo imaging software.

For basic touchups and resizing I use **Irfanview**, a free windows program which is great for the basic touchups most of us need.

For more advanced editing you can turn to something like Photoshop® , or you can try one of the great freeware offerings like GIMP.

Nearly all digital photographs should at the very least have a sharpening filter applied.

Then you can experiment with white balance, brightness and contrast levels and so-on.

You don't need to get so advanced to "air brush" the image like modeling magazines do, but it gives you the tools to show your work more closely to what the naked eye would see.

Have fun!

Owen Dare

<http://www.pictoweave.com>

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