Homemade Light Box for Product Photography » StudioLighting.net

The object of product photography is to show details of an object clearly. Lighting an object well brings out details and provides pleasing highlights. One method for uniformly lighting small objects is to surround the object in a light box. The following article describes the process for making your own lightbox for small object photography. From start to finish this project should take no longer than 30 minutes.

Materials

Foam Board

You'll need 5 sheets of foam board, also called foam core or foam poster board. If you go to the local craft / art store you should be able to pick up large sheets for just a few dollars a piece. I have a huge box in my basement and the pieces were $4.99 a piece. The board used in this tutorial was $1.99 a piece (each piece is 30" x 20").

White Tape

The tape I'm using is between 1" and 2" wide white masking tape. Stay away from duct tape, as the heat from the lamps makes the glue really messy. This masking tape is nice and lightweight and if you need to, you can take the tape off to re-adjust.

Lamp / Light Bulbs

I'm using shop lights from Home Depot / Lowe's. You can pick these up for just a few dollars a piece. Of course you can always use a flash and bounce it off the top of the box. I find that sometimes this is too much light and I get by pretty well with just the shop lights.
I've tried all sorts of light bulbs. With your eye they may all look the same, the camera picks up different colors from different lights. The lights I'm using in this tutorial are Sylvania 100 watt Daylight Bulbs. It was $1.98 for 4 bulbs, not too shabby. Sometimes I like to experiment with a little hand held florescent light. It gives off a cool color which can be nice. That's about the extent of my knowledge on lighting so you'll have to experiment and find what works for you.
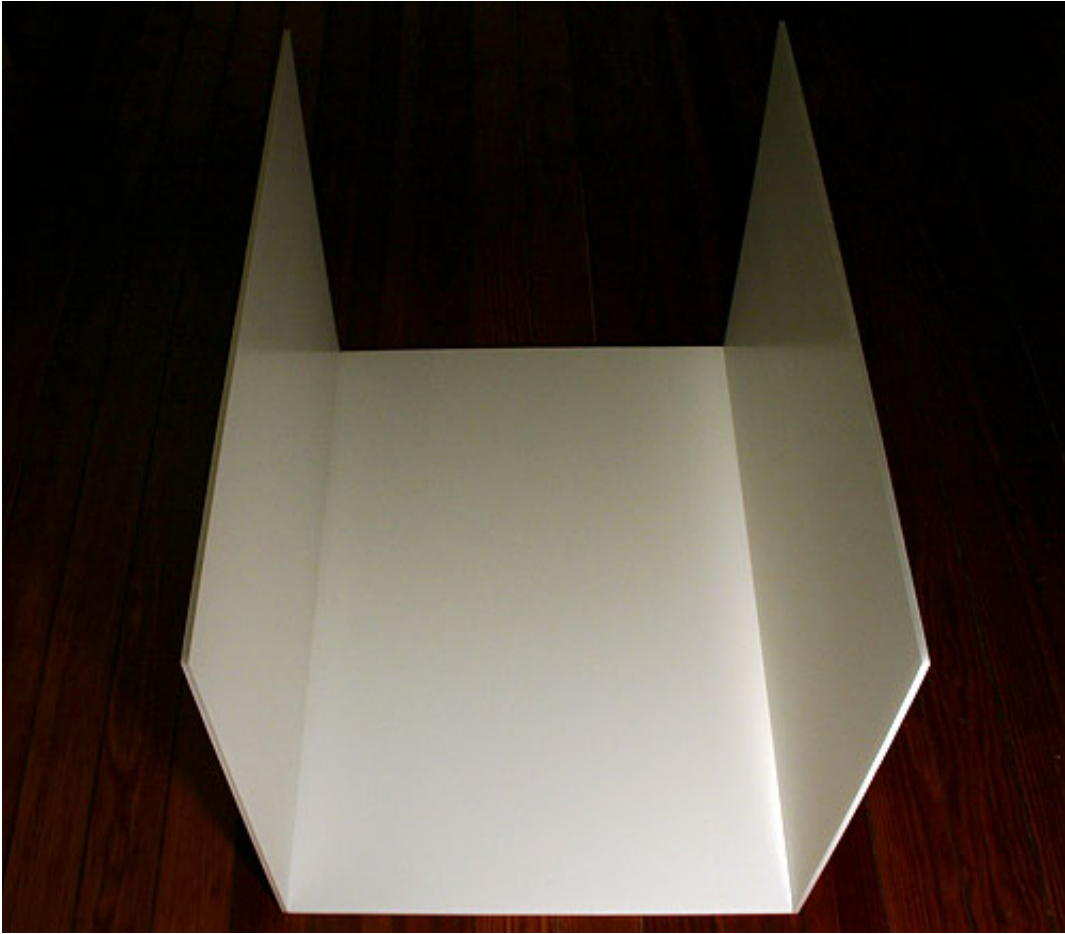
Other

You'll need a razor knife and a straight edge.

1. Attach the Top and Bottom

Here is a quick sample of how I apply the tape. I know it's overkill to show this but I'd rather err on the side of being thorough.

2. Attach the Left and Right

It may be hard to see how it will come together, but I just applied the left side (which is at the top of the photo below). Do the same for the right side.

3. Cut Off Overhang on the Sides

Left: Shows the box with the overhang on left and right side.
Middle: Shows using a straight edge to cut the excess.
Right: Shows the box with the sides trimmed down.

4. Cut Notches in Sides

This is something I just recently started doing. I found that I wasn't able to set the lights deep enough so cutting a notch in the side helps. You may have to skip this step and see the final deal, then you'll get the idea. The notches I cut were only a few inches deep, you could do more or less. Make it work for you.
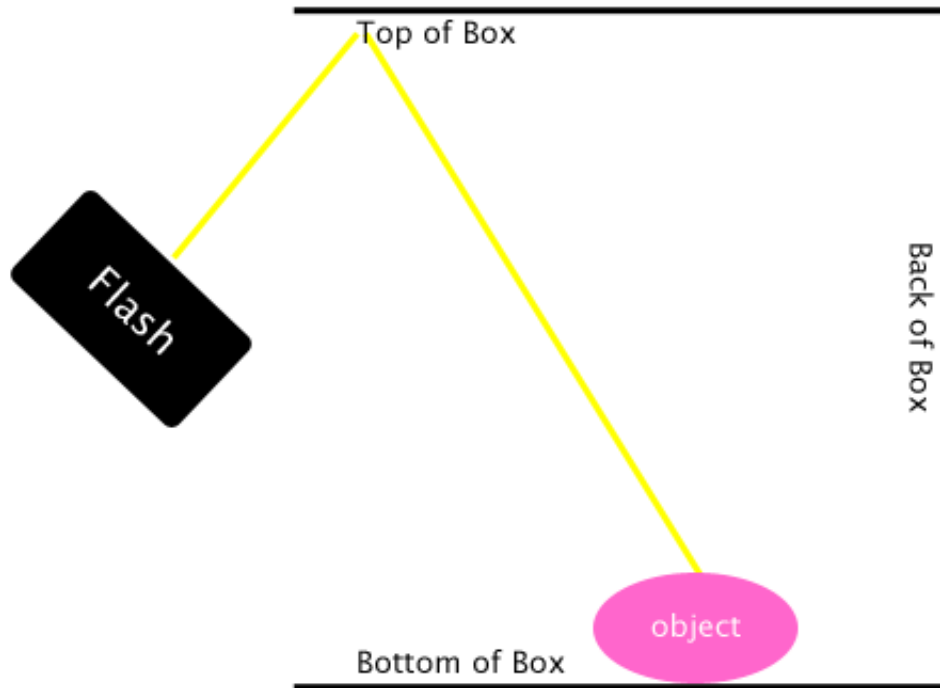
5. Lights

You can see I added a few more lights. The more the better in my opinion.
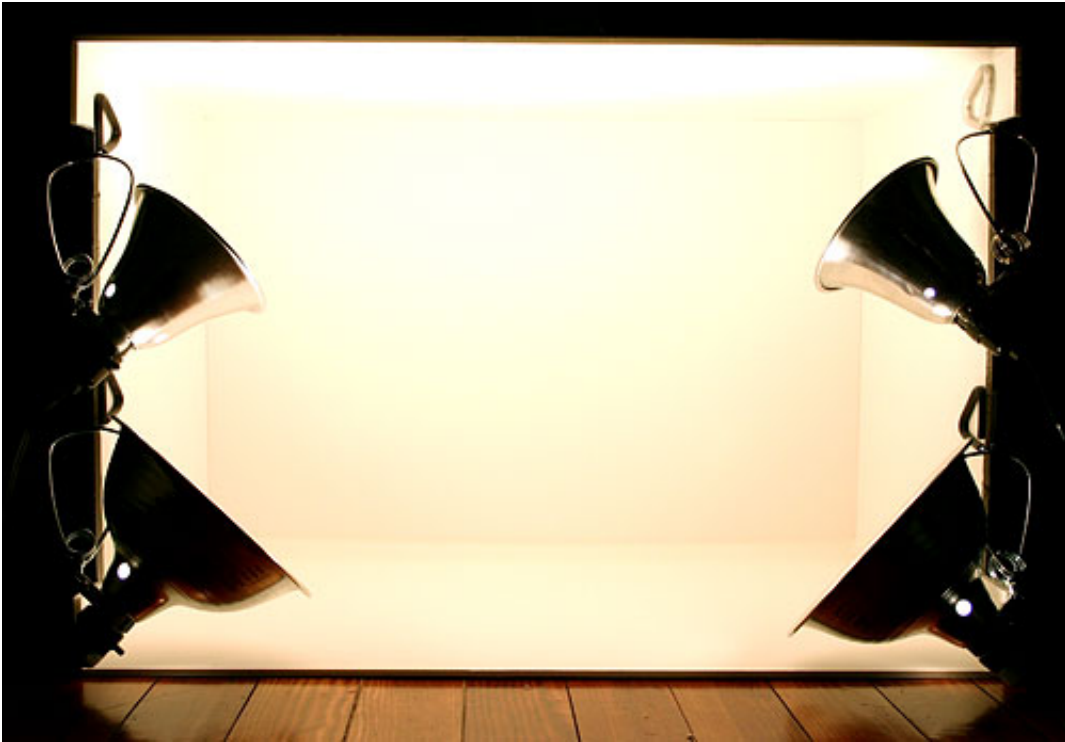

Showing the outside of the box.

Use this light box with a Flash. Here would be a sample illustration of how to use the flash with this setup. This works like a charm.

Optional Step

You can apply a strip of tape to the back seam on the bottom. Apply it so the tape forms an even transition between the two pieces of foam core. Here is a quick and dirty illustration to show what I mean:
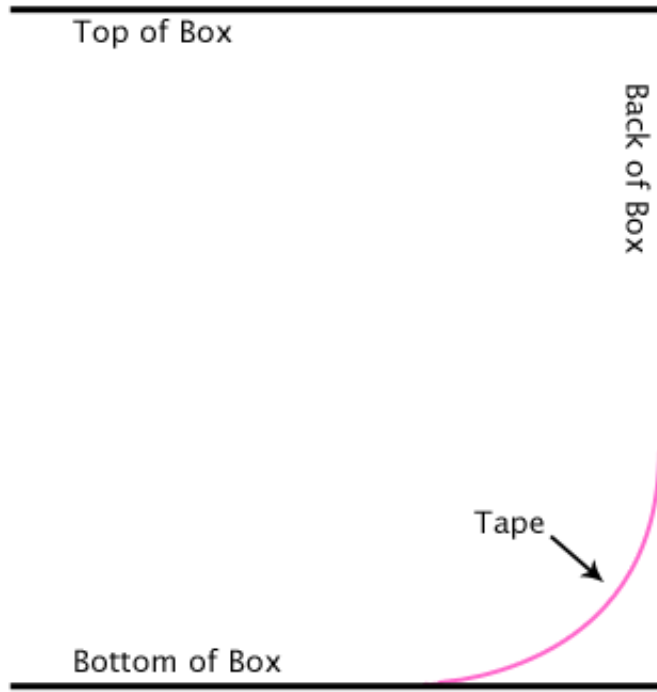
See What it Produces

After literally 2 minutes with the light box and a few snaps later here is a shot I took of one of my lenses. Obvious improvements could be made here but this is just a quick image to show you how simple using this box can be.

But Wait, There's More

Here is another trick I started doing. Sometimes I like to shoot the object from a top view. If you cut a hole in the top of the box, this is possible. Be careful not to cut too much, you'll want to score the part you don't cut, that makes it bend with ease.

Sample Photo

Here is a sample of shooting a necklace through the hole I just cut in the top of the box.