



Strobism Bitesize: TTL flash

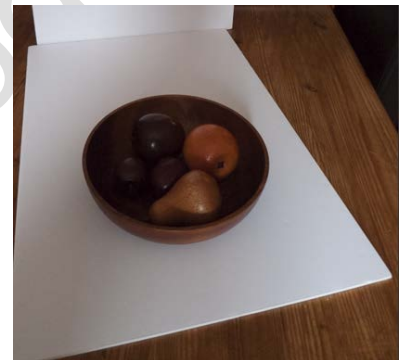
TTL is an acronym for 'through-the-lens'. Each camera manufacturer has their own version including Canon's E-TTL, Nikon's i-TTL and Pentax's p-TTL but the principle is basically the same.

The flashgun make a pre-flash and the camera's sensor reads the resultant light 'through-the-lens' and then adjusts the flashguns output to provide the correct amount of light based on the cameras current settings. The flash then fires again with this modified output as the camera takes the shot.



Of course, all this occurs in milliseconds and you would be hard pressed to actually distinguish the pre-flash from the main one.

To see how well it works I have set up a bowl of wooden fruit on a piece of white card:



This is a shot without any flash and with the subject just lit by the daylight coming through the window behind me.

There are some quite strong shadows behind the fruit and one annoying shadow from the edge of the bowl cutting across the pear.





Let's look at a shot taken in TTL mode with the flashgun attached to the camera's hot shoe and the head of the flashgun pointing towards the subject.



The top of the fruit is lit nicely now but very harsh shadows have been created underneath the fruit and the bowl.



Actually the hot shoe of your camera is probably the worst place to put your flashgun since it is very close to the lens and so tends to create very harsh lighting and provides very little 'depth' to the shot.

One way to improve matters is to tilt the head of the flashgun (if you have this facility) so that the light bounces off the ceiling and so diffuses the light. (This only works with white ceiling otherwise you end up with a colour cast).





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This is much better. Subtle shadows have been created which give a nice depth to the shot.



If you want to be a bit more creative and use shadows to give a moodiness to your images the best option is to remove the flashgun from the camera altogether and hand-hold it (or put it on a stand) some distance away from the camera.

However, to retain full TTL metering (i.e. to allow the camera to 'talk' to the flashgun) you will need an off-camera flash cord - which is usually coiled but will stretch to about 1 metre long.



One end slides onto the camera's hot shoe and the other end has another hot shoe which allows the flashgun to be fitted. These can be purchased for anything between £10 to £50 but make sure you get the correct pin configuration for your brand of camera.





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You can now play about with numerous configurations only limited by the length of the cord.



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