

## TIPS AND TRICKS NO 2.

### External Lighting - Strobe(s) / Video Light(s) or Torch(es)

I see many entry level photographers getting good results with a simple point and shoot camera and housing using natural light or the on board camera flash.

A common mistake is upgrading the base camera in the quest for better results. Better camera, better photographs, right? The better camera may give the user greater control over light hitting the sensor. But the benefit is only marginal if the light is still the same.

Greater gains are made with adding artificial light to the system rather than changing cameras. My advice is to generally stay with the existing camera and housing and add the lighting system first. This will dramatically improve your photography. You will have a better quality of light hitting the sensor of a camera system you are already very familiar with. Then when you are comfortable with using your lighting, then upgrade the camera and housing.

A big mistake is to add a torch or torches as they are cheaper than strobes or video lights. Torches have a bright narrow focused beam that is very bright in the centre and becoming duller moving away from the centre. They are not suitable for underwater photography. The focused beam causes whatever the light hits to be overexposed and the sections further from the light to be underexposed. For photography the light must be wide spread evenly across the whole frame. If you are going to buy a torch for underwater photography purposes, don't waste your money. Put it aside and save up until you can afford a quality strobe or video light.

Fortunately with the advent of LED technology and strobe innovation, video lights and strobes no longer cost an arm and a leg and are affordable for most serious underwater photographers. When buying a strobe look to get one that will work with better cameras should you decide to upgrade later on.



External strobes are the optimal solution to light to your subject. Look for strobes that allow you to control the amount of light emitted by the flash. The intensity of the light flash is always the same and control is over the duration of the flash.

So, the question is 1 strobe or 2? The answer is that two strobes are always better, because it gives you more lighting options in your compositions. They will allow you to produce rich colours, eliminate harsh shadows, and establish creative lighting with more control over lighting angles, and general lighting quality. You can still effectively use one strobe, it just limits your creative opportunities.

Another option for lighting is to use video lights. There are now a number of excellent LED video lights available that provide a suitable white light for underwater photography. With a video light there is a reduced backscatter effect as the light isn't as intense as that emitted from a strobe or internal flash.



The use of a video light and strobes is a good combination for night diving. You can use the video light as your primary dive light and the strobes can be used to fill in the shadows from the video light. Be careful though because a number of marine creatures will shy away from a constant white light shining on them so it can sometimes be difficult to get your desired composition.