

DIY Softbox

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Something a little more professional looking than a bunch of foam board stuck together... Costs about \$40 bucks.

Step 1 Get your parts

7



I've been trying to take some headshots of myself and I've been in need of another light. The problem with this is that I'm piss poor broke (the reason I'm not just paying for headshots) so i decided to make my own softbox...

Let me preface this by saying that i know i could have just done this with a few pieces of foamboard and a lamp kit, it probably would have been cheaper, but i didnt want to have to find a place to store something that large. With that in mind, i decided to build something i could break down when i needed to... hence my plans.

Onto the tutorial, kinda.

Materials I used:

- Ouside flood light kit - 9.97
- Replacement tent pole kit - 5.47
- Black Duct tape - .97
- White material i found at wal mart - 1.00 (1 yard)
- Black wal mart material - 4.00 (2 yards)
- 5/16 wooden dowl - .39
- 20 foot extension chord - 5.97
- Heavy duty male universal plug - 1.97
- Grommet Kit for making tarps and such - 6.97 (included tools)

Note: I didnt use everything in this pic, i thought I'd have to, so there are some extras pictured.

Step 2 Form bracing

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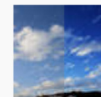
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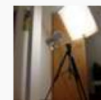
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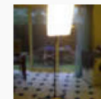
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First order of business was to get the tent poles put into the flood light housing... To do this, i just stuck them in in a tic tac toe pattern putting the fiberglass end in and leaving the metal part out. I tried to use conduit holders but they bent. I weaved the poles when i put them into the box (over one, under the back) to give it a little more stability.

Once I had the poles laying in there I bent them to what I deemed an appropriate angle. what do i know though, this is my first time donig this.. .

Step 3 Make the diffusion panel



Next, (once i had the measurements) I cut out a square of my white fabric. Actually I cut 2 ssquares simultaneously. I didnt think it was diffused enough. In retrospect, i would have only used one sheet.

Step 4 Trim the panel with tape for stability



After that i taped the edges of the material with duct tape to give it a little strength. I used 1/2 the width of the duct tape on each side so that it kept the 2 sheets together nicely.

Step 5 Trim and rivet



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Once i had all 4 sides done, i went back over it on one side with a full width of duct tape to finish it off and make it look good.

The next step was to put gromments in each corner with my trusty tool kit. The kit includes everything but the hammer

Finished with the front panel. My theory here is that the gromments are going to hold dowels coming out of the tent poles and keep everything square.

Step 6 Secure front panel to frame



Now, i cut a 5/16 dowel into 4 pieces about 5" in length and put them into the metal ends of the tent poles. Generally, this is where you'd put the other pole to extend it through the tent.

Once that was done, i threaded the dowls through each of the gromments and then cut the duct tape off to test my theory on it holding together... It seemed to work great.

****NOTE**** you can see in the picture above how the tent poles were arranged in the housing.

Step 7 Status pics



This is a pic of it at this point with a regular incadecent bulb installed and a horrible white balance setting on my camera...

Step 8 Make a canopy



This part is easily the hardest part of the whole process.... making the sheath that conceals the rest of the light!

I can't sew for crap, so i elected to use mroe duct tape. You will without a doubt, get a better result with a sewn canopy but like i said.... i can't sew.

Basically what i did was cut 4 trapezoids and taped them together... haha. I know that it's ghetto, and I'm working on a better solution because this one isn't cutting it for me. I think I'll have my grandma sew me a sheath.

To attach the canopy to the frame i extended 4 tabs of duct tape off of each intersection of cloth and put another gromment in. This way i could stretch the gromment over teh frame and thread the forward facing dowl into the gromment and it would be stable.

My craftsmanship on this portion was less than perfect. It was 3:15 AM and I was tired. I'll be redoing this to make it fit better (apparently my forward measurements were off by about an inch). There are currently some light leaks, but that can be fixed with some velcrow for the time being until i get my new sheath.

20 comments [Add Comment](#)



janak999 says: Nov 20, 2011. 1:27 PM
hey , great help with posting this DIY . I have to make a softbox for a school project and i stay in Dubai and was wondering where exactly i can get the flood light kit , it would be really kind of you to post a link . Thanks in advance

[Reply](#)



SplineGod says: May 11, 2010. 4:09 AM
whats the name of the fabric you used?
Thanks!

[Reply](#)



wjparris says: Feb 17, 2010. 8:00 PM
Great idea! Would definitely want to add some heat resistant fabric on the inside. Instead of the flood light maybe keep the housing and attach a thermoset medium base clete socket - then use a E-27

adapter to use with g-6.3 or g-5.3 two pin halogen type bulbs. Then you could use Ushio DVY 650 watt Halogen Lamp. Also, instead of the "white fabric" you could use Lee 434 quarter grid or Lee 432 Light Grid Cloth or Lee 430 Grid cloth. Attach velcro to your filter and your box so you can easily switch out the diffusion. All these items can be purchased online at filmtools or look for a cheaper option else where online. Might be difficult to find cuts of the diffusion but would be well worth it!

[Reply](#)



hedgiehog says:

Feb 23, 2009. 3:51 AM

I noticed when i was in Canaidan tire that when they sell tents, they have little tiny models of them, about the same size as yours, if you could get ahold of one, and put in a new bottom, you'd have a softbox, i guess

[Reply](#)



PRO MechanicalMashup says:

Jan 15, 2010. 9:43 AM

AWESOME! Hegeiehog, you gave me a great idea! You can get small tents for kids at IKEA that would be perfect for this! PERFECT! FWIW I have a lble on a much more work but brighter softbox [here](#)

[Reply](#)



medaltaman says:

Apr 8, 2008. 8:04 PM

Check Step 5, 'next step to put gromments in each corner'; Step 6, 'the dowls through each of the gromments and then . . .'; Step 8, two more 'gromments'. Sorry, but they so tend to distract from your presentation I felt someone should mention it.

[Reply](#)



medaltaman says:

Apr 8, 2008. 9:15 AM

Nice idea -- detailed steps, however, Y not use a deevise kalled spelchek? Aside from the typo's, what about e.g. 'dowls', 'chord'and'gromments'?

[Reply](#)



mr2monster (author) says:

Apr 8, 2008. 10:11 AM

What's a gromment? I don't see that anywhere in my instructions.

[Reply](#)



sparkster says:

Jan 3, 2008. 6:28 AM

Great idea! Have you thought about attaching your light to some kind of tri-pod?

[Reply](#)



PRO laernmoer says:

May 14, 2007. 2:24 AM

How'd your shots come out? If your head shots look good, then this thing works fine. I do agree that the 300W lightbulb may be a fire hazard, but just don't leave it on for long periods of time - you may have some problems with browning on your diffusing material.

[Reply](#)



mr2monster (author) says:

Dec 13, 2007. 10:31 AM

The pictures didn't turn out too bad, but I opted to buy a softbox anyway because of the light leak and better diffusion material. Unfortunately, I dont have any pics because my laptop crashed and took them all with..

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denilsonsa says:

Dec 13, 2007. 4:40 AM

I also wanted to see how the photos came out. I would like to see what effect this causes on photos.

[Reply](#)



clicheasfuc says:

Dec 5, 2006. 4:20 AM

what about an emergency blanket? on the inside? so it would bounce off more light and not catch on fire? not sure if emergency blankets catch on fire though. just a thought.

[Reply](#)



PRO stonehenge360 says:

Oct 1, 2006. 9:53 PM

looks really cool but i wouldnt leave it on when ur gone and keep a bucket of water by your bed lol i would suggest either adadpating it to a bunch of bright white LED's or puting one of those flourescent bulbs that go in normal sockets in cause both of those create much less light than an incondesent

[Reply](#)



Shadyman says:

Oct 18, 2006. 11:14 PM

Hmm, good idea. Those twirly flourescent bulbs make a whiter light, maybe that's what you'd want.

[Reply](#)



jammis says:

Sep 21, 2006. 11:16 PM

good job i like it. Nice to know people around here just want to hate on you. :(

[Reply](#)



friezer says:

Aug 10, 2006. 6:52 PM

I applaud your efforts, but there's a lot more to a softbox than simply stowing a light behind a diffusion panel. A run of the mill softbox is generally parabolic in shape. Your design, even with reflective backing, won't efficiently use all of the light your pumping out of that 300W bulb. Not that efficiency is your primary goal... still, you'd get essentially the same effect (with a lot less ghetto factor) if you simply positioned a diffusion panel in front of a bare bulb. Heck, if you made your panel larger, the effect would probably be even better.

[Reply](#)



Alex.Mik says:

Aug 10, 2006. 1:26 PM

EXTREME FIRE HAZZARD!!!! and with that said, you want to go to a craft or costume store and purchase metallic fire-resistant cloth. This will not only help you not start a fire during your photo shoot, it will reflect all the light out the front for a true diffusion effect.

[Reply](#)



mr2monster (author) says:

Aug 10, 2006. 4:20 PM

I've had it on for more than 3 hours at a time now and I've had no heat issues with it. I'm using a 300 W incadecent bulb, so it generates some heat, but the cloth stays cool due to the window at the rear. also, I plan on using a car window reflector to cover the inside.

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atkulp says:

Aug 10, 2006. 1:10 PM

Nice idea. Looks like it came out pretty well. I wonder if the duct tape will come apart over time with stress of the poles though. Thanks for sharing!

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