

# TENT APPLICATION GUIDE

## ALZO 100 TENT KIT USER GUIDE

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### 1. ALZO 100 Tent Kit Lighting Overview:

ALZO Photography Tents work well with reflective subjects by decreasing the harshness of the lighting source in comparison with more direct lights. You could almost compare direct lighting and tent lighting with direct/hazy sun with a cloudy day. On a cloudy day, the lighting is very soft and unidirectional, creating almost shadow less lighting. Certain subjects, highly reflective in particular, almost always benefit from a tent to reduce the strong reflections in the subject themselves. Direct lighting of highly reflective subjects usually results in strong blown out highlights and very dark loss of detail in other areas.

Much also depends on the surface that the subject is placed on. Highly reflective subjects act as potentially flat or curved mirrored surfaces, reflecting or showing everything that it "sees." A tent creates a large consistent white surround that reflects more evenly in the surface of the subject. Direct light without a tent creates hot spots in curved reflective surfaces and much of the area of the studio is reflected as dark or as odd reflections of the shooting area.

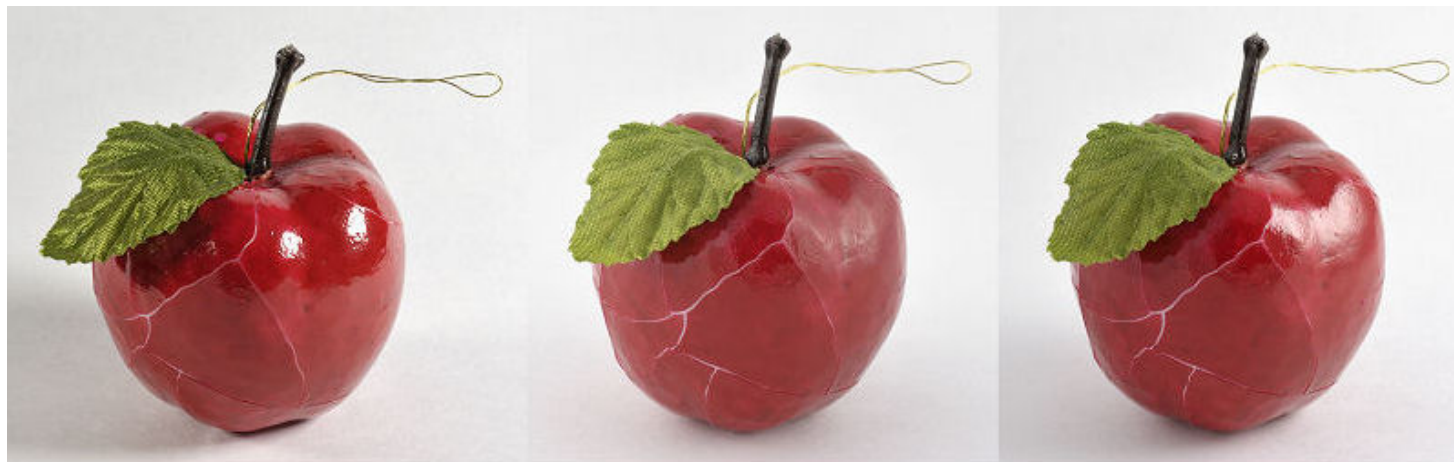
The background the subject is placed on also reflects in the subject to the degree of reflectivity of the subject and how much background surrounds the subject. Lighter backgrounds will show as lighter reflections around the base and sides of the subject and help to even out whatever type of lighting is being used. In a tent, it will even out the reflections much more than a direct source. Even if the subject is not so reflective, a photography tent can simplify the lighting of a product to make it easier to rapidly shoot a variety of products, one after the other. The resultant lighting may be less dramatic than other non-tent types of lighting, but it would most likely help to speed up the photography process. For extremely dramatic lighting, lighting using a tent is probably not the best solution. In that case, direct lighting (diffused or not) along with various reflectors is the more suitable solution.



### 2. ALZO 100 Tent Kit Lighting Theory

The evenness of the tent lighting is dependent on size, distance and number of the lights used to illuminate the tent itself. The more lights, the larger the light sources and the further away the sources are, the softer the light will be inside the tent. For example, if you take a small light source and aim it at one side of the tent, depending on the distance to the tent wall, the "circle" of light created on the tent wall can be made larger or smaller. The larger the "circle," the softer the light becomes inside the tent. Light that goes through the walls of the tent also bounces around inside the tent, softening the lighting even more.

Even though the light inside the tent is generally even, there is some controllability regarding directionality of the light within the tent. If you use just one light source to the side or top of the tent, different reflections and lighting directionality can be created to add more interest in the subject. A fully lit tent can flatten the lighting on the subject as to make certain subjects appear very flat and lifeless. By using a single light source or adjusting the distance and direction on each of multiple light sources, sometimes more dramatic reflections or subject dimensionality can be accomplished.



**Direct light**

**Light Tent  
Both Full Walls Illuminated**

**Light Tent  
Left Full Wall & Spot on Right Wall**

Another way to boost the drama on a subject in the tent is to use varying small pieces of colored paper inside the tent to create new reflections in the subject that would not appear through use of the tent alone. The 8" reflector that is included with the ALZO 100 Light is small enough to create a somewhat adjustable "circle" of light to help control how the subject "sees" the side and/or top of the tent. A larger light source would not give that same amount of control. If the objective is to obtain the most even lighting possible, then the solution other than moving the ALZO 100 further away from the tent so the "circle" completely covers the walls and/or top of the tent is to go with larger light sources and/or add more lights. Adding lights on the top and one on each side of the tent will produce the most even lighting but this may not produce the best result as total even lighting reduces dimension and perspective in the product image. Depending on how the camera and subject is positioned, whether or not the background is used fully up the back of the tent and the type of subject, a fourth light can be positioned to aim from behind the tent as well.



**Direct Light**



**Light Tent**





**Direct Light**



**Light Tent**

### 3. ALZO Background Paper vs. Cloth Background:

The paper backgrounds supplied with the ALZO 100 Cool Lite Tent Kit are made of strong paper and not cloth/nylon material as in other brand tent kits. Even though the cost of supplying paper adds cost, the convenience of use and smoother curves of the background are well worth it. The paper is much easier and quicker to install inside the tent, allowing for more productive shooting time. The paper also has no wrinkles and does not need ironing as cloth/nylon materials do. Some cloth/nylon materials can be very difficult to iron based on temperature sensitivity. Paper also does not collect lint as does other types of materials and is easier to brush or blow dust from its surface. To a certain extent, paper is more rigid when formed into a curve and holds a much smoother and more consistent horizon curve. It also lays flatter in the bottom of the tent to provide a smoother base for your products. If the bottom tent surface is not tight and tends to either sag or become slightly wrinkled, the paper will correct this issue

### 4. ALZO 100 with Point and Shoot Cameras:

While the intensity of the ALZO 100 lights supplied with the tent are suitable for point and shoot cameras, a tripod is

highly recommended to keep camera movement to a minimum. When shooting small items close up to fill the frame, a decent amount of depth of field is necessary to keep the entire subject in focus. If you have manual exposure settings on your camera, most likely you will want to close the lens aperture down (smaller aperture hole) to gain more depth of field. As a rule of thumb, the higher the aperture number, the smaller the aperture hole and the more depth of field you will have. The more depth of field you have, the more in focus you will have from the front edge of your subject to the far edge.

In addition, the more you close down the lens aperture, the less light will be transmitted because the aperture hole will be smaller in size. In that case, the smaller aperture hole with less transmitted light means a longer shutter time you will need to get the same total amount of exposure. The shutter speed may not be fast enough to hand hold the camera without getting camera shakes, even by boosting the ISO setting on the camera. If you boost the ISO setting too much to get a hand-holdable shutter speed, the noise (graininess) of the image might be unacceptable. You are better off using a tripod so you can keep the ISO setting low and get a much better image with less noise.

If you are using a point and shoot camera without manual settings, perhaps you can use aperture or shutter priority settings, if available, for some semblance of adjustability. If you have these settings, go with the aperture setting, set it to a high number and let the shutter speed adjust itself. If you don't have those, then Program mode is probably what you will end up using. Hopefully, there will be some program settings that will allow for more depth of field. There might even be a closeup mode as well. If you are using one of the auto exposure modes, the exposure may not be accurate, depending on your subject and the lighting in the tent. Make adjustments using the +/- exposure adjustment setting to lighten or darker the exposure as needed.

When using a shutter speed slower than 1/60th of a second, the best way to minimize camera shake distortion is to use a tripod and some sort of remote shutter release. If you can get a remote trigger of some sort, that is best. Otherwise, try using the self-timer with a setting of at least 5 - 10 seconds. That will allow any camera vibration to settle down for a few seconds after pressing the shutter release. If your camera has optical image stabilization this can be used for hand held shots where the shutter speed is faster than 1/30 sec. Otherwise it is best to use a sturdy tripod, turn off OIS and also use a remote shutter release or the camera self timer.

#### **5. Fixing Color Problems with an ALZO 100 Tent Kit:**

If you are correctly setting the white balance on your camera but your images have color issues the QP Color Card system is an affordable color correction method. After you set the best white balance in the camera you then simply insert the QP Color card in the tent and take a shot of it. Then continue your product(s) photography task. You then transfer your images to a single directory in your computer. Open the QP color software and then open the image with the QP color card that was photographed. When the software has captured the color profile file you instruct your computer to process all of the image files in the directory. This process perfectly color corrects all of the images and you are done.

If you have a RAW color format setting on the camera, you might want to use it if you desire better image control. It will give you tremendous control over your color and exposure versus shooting Jpegs. Once you shoot a Jpeg, the color settings are now part of the file and making large color adjustments may distort some of the colors. The RAW file allows you to adjust the color easily after the image capture. That being said, it's best to get the color as accurate as possible from the start. Auto color settings are hit or miss, depending on your light source. If you know exactly what type of light you are using (daylight, tungsten, etc.), set that on the camera. It will generally get you much closer in color accuracy than the auto color setting. The closer you are to the true color, especially with a Jpeg, the fewer adjustments you need to make after the shoot. Make sure you turn off the camera's flash when shooting.

#### **6. Using an ALZO Clear Riser Platform with an ALZO Tent:**

An ALZO clear riser platform adds to the versatility of the tent and provides for shadow less product photography. By placing the background paper below the surface of the ALZO clear riser platform, the clear surface lifts the subject away from the background and lets any minimal shadow move away from the subject, thereby either eliminating it completely or softening it to a greater degree especially when the light is coming from mainly overhead. When the ALZO clear riser platform is illuminated in the tent with the highly unidirectional light, it basically disappears, allowing the subject to float.

The vertical back of the ALZO clear riser platform can be used to hang certain subjects, such as necklaces and then allow for back lighting in the tent to promote a pure white background. Make sure you balance the side and/or top lights to illuminate the subject balanced with the back light, either by changing the distance of the lights or using lights that are stronger or weaker than the others.

More than likely, the light used for backlighting will need to be much weaker than the others as the light is coming

directly through the back wall of the tent into the camera lens. You also want to make sure that the tone of the backlit wall is just barely going to pure white. Any more than that and the subject will start to get a flare or glow around it that will obscure the edge detail of the subject or flare the lens and create softness and very low contrast in the image.

The ALZO clear riser platform will also allow a solid base in case you wish to use the tent in an under lit setup. By placing the tent directly on a sturdy glass table, the subject will sit on a solid flat surface (Clear Riser) instead of the subject just sitting on the bottom of the tent itself. By carefully under lighting your subject, you can completely eliminate shadows and create a pure white background to float your subject. The background paper would not be used in this case as it would block any under lighting. Again, as in the back lighting technique, only make the under lit exposure strong enough to make the background just pure white and not any more than that. Under lighting will require an extra light underneath the table as well as the other lights you wish to use to properly illuminate your subject from the top and/or sides.

## **7. Using an ALZO Black Riser Platform with an ALZO Tent:**

An ALZO black riser platform riser offers some unique possibilities inside the tent. Because of the unidirectional lighting within the tent, the black riser takes on a slight tone lighter than black, but produces a dark reflection in front of the subject for a dramatic look. If you use a circular polarizer, you can change the reflection in the black riser to some degree. You can also hang certain subjects, such as necklaces, from the vertical back of the riser. Because of the reflective nature of the riser within the tent, you may end up with an odd reflection of the face of the tent with the opening and/or camera lens showing around the subject. To minimize that issue, perhaps turn the riser slightly inside the tent and shoot at a slight angle or remove the face of the tent for a more even dark reflection that blends with the camera lens (try to keep excess light from hitting you or your camera to keep the reflection as dark as possible).

The other option is to remove the riser completely from the tent and use diffused direct lighting from the top and sides to light your subject properly. Another option with the black riser is to turn it 90 degrees inside the tent so the back of the tent is now exposed. By backlighting the tent with certain colored gels or even just white light, you can create an even more dramatic reflection in the bottom of the riser. Again, adding some controllability by moving your backlight and/or using a circular polarizer. Since you are only using the bottom section of the black riser for this technique, the back edge of the riser might create a visible horizon line. To eliminate that, try to keep the subject within the bottom area of the riser. It may also help to raise the camera angle a bit if the subject can be photographed that way. That would in effect give you a deeper riser base from front to back to contain your subject better.