DK / shadow guide

Shadows are important to make any cut-out images look real, tangible, and "precious". This guide is a starting point but considerations such as series style, aesthetic, and usage should be taken into account for each new project. Shadows are generally 1-colour, black-only as this maintains consistency in the asset library and when used together on a spread.

Height of an object. If an object is tall or deep it would cast a longer, paler shadow, e.g. a bowl. If an object is flat the shadow would be tighter to the edge of the object, e.g. a plate.

The bowl is relatively deep so would cast a long shadow as seen from above. This looks realistic.

A short shadow makes the bowl look shallow – more like a plate. This looks incorrect.

Shape of the object. Think about how the shape of the object would cast a shadow. The shadow in the original photography may be able to help as a guide.

Distance from the object to the surface. The closer to the surface it is the darker and 'harder' the shadow will be, the further the object the paler and 'softer' it will be.

Darker / harder shadow   **Lighter / softer shadow**

DK / shadow guide

Objects may be photographed either lying down or standing up. Sometimes it's possible to use either way by changing the shadow (however it is preferable to use as shot / intended). The cast of the shadow will dictate which parts of the object are grounded or standing.

Drop shadow - overhead, lying down

Pool shadow - standing up

Direction of lighting in the photograph - make sure your shadow matches.

Generally DK object photography is shot with the light coming from top left (11 o'clock) position, therefore the shadows will be cast bottom right.

(Supplied photographs may not be lit from 11 o'clock, if a bottom right shadow looks wrong, an alternative direction is acceptable)

All projects are different and some may require a more bespoke approach to creating the shadows. If you are unsure about shadow requirements please discuss with **Tom Morse** in **CTS.**

DK / shadow guide – examples

This crude shadow is too uniform and doesn't describe the shape of the object correctly.

Shadow is sensitive to the shape of the fish and the way it lies on the surface.

paler where the fish would not be touching the surface

darker where the fish would be closer to the surface

a small, tighter shadow makes this bowl look flatter

a longer, more difuse shadow makes this bowl look taller and more convincing

The shadow fails to describe the correct angle of the plane/surface that the object is sat on and looks floaty.

The correct shadow describes and follows the correct angle of the plane / surface it is sat on and looks grounded.

No shadow at all makes the object look flat, unrealistic, and ungrounded.

A diffuse shadow over a wide area grounds the object and makes it looks 3-D.

DK / **shadow guide** - examples

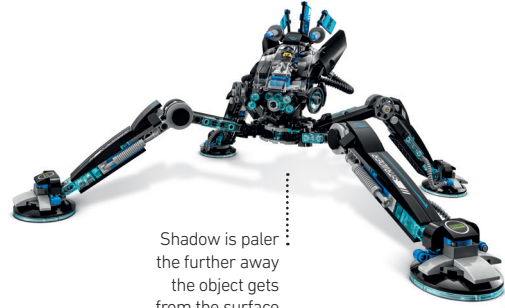Consider how an overhang would cast a shadow

A pool shadow under the tyres may be preferable sometimes as it may be less heavy on the page and provide more space for text elements.

In reality the shadow under a car would be present underneath the whole body and helps to define how far off the ground it is.

DK / shadow guide - examples

Shadow is paler
the further away
the object gets
from the surface

Consider how a
shadow would look
even if the object
does not touch the
ground

Often, shadows can be too big on flat objects making them look floaty.

A flat object still casts a shadow but this will be darker and narrower than taller, fatter objects.

The bottom of this object is not flat and the shadow looks odd

Understanding how the object sits on a surface helps create a more realistic shadow and image.

DK / shadow guide - examples

End of spear
casts a very
.... soft shadow