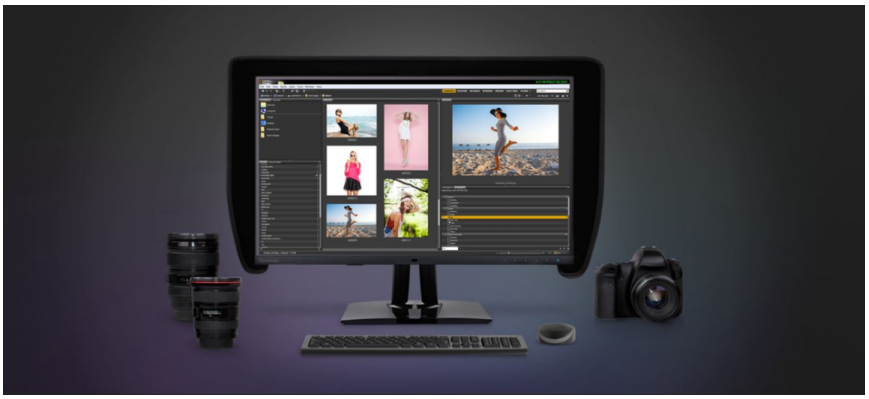
WHY YOU SHOULD BE USING A MONITOR HOOD FOR EDITING

Gouldian Finch | September 13, 2018 Photography



This annoying glare is taking up half of my computer screen!

If you've ever used a computer in a well lit room you've most certainly faced this problem. It usually involves jostling your screen about every which way until the glare is gone.

For us photo and video editors out there, this problem can be much more limiting since it can affect the quality of our work. Fortunately, there is a solution. Today we'll outline all of the reasons why you should be using a monitor hood and how your editing will turn out better as a result!

Should I use a monitor hood?

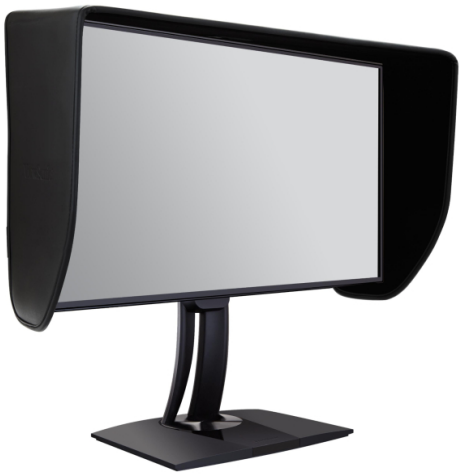
If you've never seen one before you may be asking yourself, what even *is* a monitor hood? As the name implies, a monitor hood is a computer screen cover that helps protect from, and block out, external ambient light.

So why would you need to use one? In the case of professional image editing, having accurate color, contrast, etc. on your screen make all the difference in ensuring the quality of your work. This is one of the main reasons why using a monitor hood is part of a good color management workflow.

External elements on your screen are actually able to affect the way you perceive color, contrast, etc. on your screen. **It for this reason that monitor hoods should be used by all editors who take the quality of their work seriously.** After all there's no point in having a nice IPS monitor if you're not going to see elements on your screen accurately.

More specifically, if you're working in an environment where there are many light sources, such as windows or ceiling lights, it is important to find a way to block them out without necessarily sitting in total darkness. This is where investment in a monitor hood becomes a capital idea.

To best understand why you should use a monitor hood, however, you should have an understanding of the underlying issues that may be present when it's not in use. Below we'll outline these problems and explain how monitor hoods excel at putting these avoidable problems to bed. At this point, if you're still asking yourself, "why should I use a monitor hood?", then perhaps greater depth into the concept at hand would be of some use.



Screen glare

Unless you've been living in a cave, chances are you have some type of ambient lighting in your editing workspace. External light sources, direct or indirect, can *and will* cause varying degrees of screen glare. Read on below to find out the main sources that cause glare on your computer screen.

Sunlight and interior lighting

Sunlight is the largest culprit, as the contrast between the brightness of your screen and the sun is quite stark. While it would be easy to assume that this variant of glare can only occur when sunlight is direct, it may also be caused by ambient, or indirect, sources.

These can include sunlight refractions from workstation surfaces, or perhaps from the windows of the office building next door. Forgetting the sun for a moment, other causes of screen glare could be from sources generated in your vicinity, such as lamps or ceiling lights.

They're everywhere and they reflect off all manner of metallic furnishing, thus making room lighting a difficult hurdle to overcome. To be clear, the issue isn't just that the glare can be annoying, but rather that **it can impact both your productivity and even your eyes**.

Although glare can be easily ignored at first, it gradually becomes more bothersome as your eyes begin to tire from the (sometime subconscious) effort. If left unchecked for too long, this strain could result in **headaches, ocular damage, dry eyes, and fatigue**. If you are trying to concentrate on your work, then this is not a desirable turn of events, as such pain can quickly begin to affect productivity.

In terms of a solution, there are several options. While many, including activation of auto-brightness and sitting in the dark, can be effective, they are nothing more than stop-gap measures. To truly eliminate the risk of glare, and its potential health risks, a monitor hood is the only way to go.

Reflections

Just as with glare, reflections occur when working in an overly or improperly lit area. While glare manifests as a bright spot on the screen, reflections refer to annoyances concerning the screen's mirror-like qualities. This may be especially notable if there are many bright colors and different types of furniture in your surrounding area.

Some examples of reflection causers include:

- **bright clothing**
- **conspicuously colored furniture**
- **chrome-colored office accessories**
- **vibrant paintings**
- **flowers**
- **etc.**

Reflections are guilty of being a hindrance to productivity and can even affect the way you see color hues on your screen. Luckily, there are several solutions that you can try.

When it comes to lighting and its resultant issues, angle is everything. If you're dealing with reflections, try re-angling the screen or changing your seating orientation.

Other methods may include dealing with the computer itself, whether by cleaning the screen to reduce reflective material or by adjusting the brightness. Using a monitor with a matte screen finish like these professional monitors can also help reduce reflections.

If none of these options work for you and you would prefer to not sit in total darkness, then it would be wise to consider accessory-based solutions. Monitor hoods are, again, the best, as they block out all incoming light directed at your computer screen.

Color variance and uniformity

Without a monitor hood, monitors and their displays are subject to a variety of visual kinks. Whether caused by glare, reflections, or natural light, these flaws are a possible obstacle to the completion of your workload. Although, in many cases, such problems may be solved using short-term solutions, certain larger issues do require the light blocking attributes of a monitor hood.

One such issue has to do with color variance. This refers to the appearance of color on your monitor. When using a professional monitor under normal conditions, colors on your monitor should always look the same. Dark blues will stay dark blues; light yellows will remain light yellows, and so on.

Another issue involves brightness uniformity. This is the consistency of brightness output by your screen under typical circumstances. When working on a professional

monitor, your brightness will be fairly uniform across the entire display – from the center of the screen to the edges.

When not using a monitor hood, on the other hand, these 'normal conditions' may go by the wayside. At the wrong angle, light can hit your display in such a way that upends these normally stable elements.

In the case of color variance, the colors that you are used to seeing can start to look different. Brightness on your screen could also be at risk, wherein some parts of your screen may seem darker or lighter than others.

For those of us employed in a visual field, a properly functioning display is imperative; our guide on how to choose the best monitor for editing covers this topic in more detail. In the case of photo editors, the use of a screen experiencing brightness uniformity and color variance issues would cause them to make very different color, shade, and contrast-related decisions than if their displays were working normally.

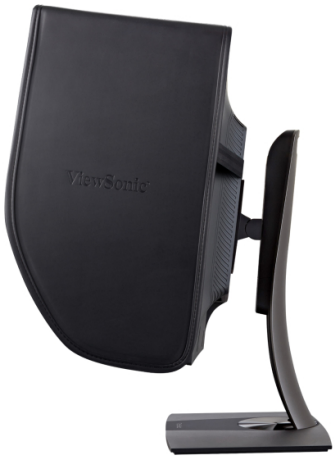
Since optimum screen function is a reasonable thing to want, the use of a monitor hood for editing is strongly recommended. Using one is an easy way to ensure the quality of your edited work.

Distracting elements

Sometimes, it isn't just screen issues that necessitate the use of a monitor hood. If you work in a bustling environment, monitor hoods can assist in blocking out external distractions and help you focus on your work.

Windows with views to the outside are a common type of distraction. Believe it or not, even having a brightly colored wall in your line of sight can impact the way you perceive colors on your screen!

The result of using a monitor hood here is a win-win situation. You're able to keep distractions at bay while also helping you focus on work. Personally, I've found that when I use a monitor hood, I'm able to really zero in on my project to meet any sort of upcoming deadlines I have coming up.



Choosing the right monitor hood for you

If you've decided that you're in need of a monitor hood, the next step is to choose the right one for you. Some people opt for the DIY monitor hood route however quality is not guaranteed and will vary from person to person. In some cases you may even be left with nothing more than a partially functional monitor ornament!

Fortunately for us though, professional monitors like those from the ViewSonic VP professional monitor line are available for screen sizes of 24", 27", and 32". Complete with a light absorbing black velvet interior and integrated calibrator slot, they're more than capable of getting the job done.