Electronic Flash for Dedicated Digital DSLR Photography

Built in Flashes: Generally these units are not sufficient for anything but snapshots and activating wireless remote flashes. Depending on brand you should have several settings in your menu allowing the flash to work in manual, TTL, or Commander Mode. These units are not to be used for Photography II.

Shoe Mount Flashes: Most useful flash units will mount in the hot shoe of your camera and vary widely with features and sophistication. We want to use "dedicated" flashes which are made for specific brands so we can take advantage of the supported TTL flash systems. (Canon has their e-TTL system and Nikon has iTTL). Bounce flash is essential but without walls or ceiling, diffusion is recommended. I recommend 1/60th sec. with the lens set fairly wide open. Most cameras will give a audible or visual (in the viewfinder) warning if the light is insufficient (use a larger f-stop or a higher ISO). Use the auto techniques described for older flashes on the previous page like bounce, bounce with card, or open flash. Note with matrix metering and TTL, your subject does not have to be in the center of the picture as with non-TTL.

Wireless Multiple Flash: Both Nikon and Canon have wireless flash systems, but the Canon system requires an additional, expensive hot shoe controller and only works with their most expensive 580 flash. Nikon has the CLS system. This is an excellent system which works with some DSLR bodies from the built-in flash, but requires a shoe mounted flash on the entry level cameras which most students purchase. The built-in or the on-camera flash must be set to the commander mode where you can control the exposure of the remote unit(s). The remote unit(s) must be set to remote and the proper group and unit. There are many differences with these settings for the various models so be careful and test your results before the event to work out any problems. The remote flashes are tripped with an infrared sensor which must be in sight of the camera. It is on the right side of the flash. Nikon flashes come with an excellent diffuser, a flash mount stand which has a tripod stud socket for mounting, and two filters (85B & 30G) for converting the flash to tungsten and cool white fluorescent respectively. This is especially important for shooting when the flash must mix with the available light. For example, when shooting theatre (dress rehearsals only), I set my WB to Tungsten(incandescent) to match the lights, and put the orange (85B) filter on the flash so it also matches the tungsten lighting. Be certain to check your camera manual for compatibility as older bodies can use the built in flash but have specific requirements for the remote compatibility while the newer cameras support many options. The D50, D40, D40X, and the D60 must be used with an on-camera flash to support the advanced wireless systems with multiple flashes. While this system will allow for the easiest and most creative uses for wireless lighting, it has limitations with distance and compatibility. Most of these and virtually all other on-camera flashes with built-in or attached slave cells will work manually with a more reliable radio controlled trigger like the one we use for the studio. You will need to do a lot more work to get the correct exposure at the remote units (instead of controlling all flashes directly from the camera and a minimum of two RC units are required. With various stands and adapters, these portable flashes many be used with umbrellas and soft boxes. However, there are many limitations due to the lower power of the portable flash units, but can replace big, expensive studio lighting for DSLRs.

Dedicated flashes like ones below, are required for Photography II, III and Professional Photography. On-camera flash photography is assigned for Photography II while advanced classes use multiple wireless techniques.

Flashes for Nikon	*SB900-$500*	*SB600-$220*	*Vivitar DF-383 -$130*	*Bower SFD35N-$70*	
Flashes for Canon	*580 EX II-$500*	*430 EX II-$280*	*270 EX II-$160*	*Vivitar DF-383-$130*	*Bower SFD35C-$60*