Updated November 2026

Darkroom (W20-426) Guidelines

These guidelines explain how to safely and responsibly use the equipment and materials in the Darkroom. Following them keeps the space safe, protects shared equipment, and ensures every student has access to the tools they need. Please read them before using any equipment or materials in this space.

If you have questions about these guidelines, or about how to use a specific piece of equipment or material, contact your instructor.

Film Loading

When loading film, change the door sign to show the film loading room is in use. Reset the sign when you're finished.

Chemical Safety

Wear gloves when required. Gloves are optional for conventional black-and-white processing but required for certain alternative processing techniques. Follow guidelines given by the instructor for PPE.

Use only approved chemicals. Use only the processing chemicals provided for your class. Do not bring in outside developers or toners without instructor approval.

Dispose of spent fixer correctly. Collect spent fixer in the carboys in the marked Satellite Accumulation Areas. Never pour it down the drain.

Find safety resources. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are available in the orange binder above the chemical station in the enlarging room.The eyewash station is located above the Satellite Accumulation Area in the far corner of the enlarging room.

Chemical Hygiene

Keep wet and dry areas separate. Anything in contact with processing chemistry that has not been fully washed and dried is "wet." This includes prints, test strips, trays, beakers, tongs, tanks, and reels. Keep wet items out of dry areas, including enlarging stations and any countertop that is not stainless steel.

Handle and carry wet prints only in a tray. Do not allow prints to drip on the floor or other surfaces of the darkroom. If chemical residue does drip onto the floor or other darkroom surfaces, clean it up.

Prevent cross-contamination. When processing prints, ensure that contamination does not travel from later stages of processing to earlier stages of processing. If the tongs from one bath touch the fluid in the next bath, rinse them well before replacing the tongs in the first bath. In particular, developer must be discarded if contaminated with stop bath or fixer. Fixer must be discarded if contaminated with permawash.

Wash prints fully. Wash prints for the full time with running water before placing them on drying racks or in the drying machine. Doing otherwise will contaminate drying areas. The wash time only starts when the last print is added to the bath. Wash all prints for the longest time required by any paper in the wash. For example, if a wash includes both resin-coated and fiber-based prints, wash everything for the fiber-based time.

Dry Prints & Film

Dry prints and film may be moved from the racks or drying cabinet to the bins near the light table in the entry room. If you cannot find your film or print, check the bins.

Clean Up & Shutdown Procedure

When leaving the darkroom, make sure:

- Film leaders and canisters from film loading are in the trash.
- The lid to the spent fixer collection carboy is closed.
- Trays, beakers, funnels, tongs, reels, and tanks are washed and dried in the correct locations (unless still in use):
    - **Trays:** enlarging room sink
    - **Beakers and funnels:** enlarging room pegboard
    - **Tongs:** container at the end of the sink, or the mats near the pegboard if the container is full
    - **Reels and tanks:** drying mat in the film room

Enlarging room: enlargers and timers are off, safelights are off, and room lights are on.

Entry room: the "main power" button is off and the film loading sign shows that no one is loading film.