

## How to Make a Video

There are three basic steps to making a video: preproduction (planning), production (filming), and postproduction (editing). Read through the following tips and commit the principles to practice in order to increase the effectiveness of your final video. As you work through each stage, return to this document and use the suggestions as a checklist to ensure that you are attending to the necessary components of effective modern video.

### 1. Preproduction (Planning)

- Determine your goals. What is your persuasive proposal?
- Determine your expected audience. What do you know about their needs/values/experiences?
- Analyze the genre of video. What can you learn from other videos in similar contexts?
- Identify your assets and opportunities. For example, are you proposing a change to athletic event pricing? Is there a game on campus during the assignment time frame that you could go to? Or maybe there is a visiting lecturer on campus who has expertise in your subject that you could ask for an interview?
  - The better you understand your topic and goals, the easier it will be to see your available persuasive options. Maybe you are speaking about mortgages, for instance, which might mean filming at a bank, in an office-like room somewhere on campus, or maybe in front of a “For Sale” sign across town.
  - Explore your campus resources to know what assets you might take advantage of. You might have a green screen already set up in an academic department that you

can use to expand your options in a low-cost way. Or perhaps there is a well-lit or aesthetically pleasing room in a building you don't typically frequent that might be just right for your video purposes.

- Develop your argument. Given what you know about your rhetorical situation, frame and argumentatively support your proposal in a way that you can accomplish within your video's time limit. Remember that most communication best practices, like strategic rhetorical organization, engaging delivery choices, and audience-centered decision criteria, apply to creating a video as well.
- Storyboard your entire video. A *storyboard* is like a comic strip that shows what each shot is going to look like in the video (see Figure 1). It will help save you a lot of time. Check out these resources that will teach you how to storyboard:
  1. Tubular Insights. (2012, June 6). *How to create a storyboard for your video shoot - ReelSEO* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgDwNxGIuCQ>
  2. Rivera, D. (2015, April 1). *Storyboarding basics for your business videos* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kL2sit98fPs>
  3. Haran, R. (2019). *20 pre-production tips to create successful video content* [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.singlegrain.com/video-marketing/20-pre-production-steps-to-video-content/>

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**Figure 1.** Storyboard template.

- Reminder: Most good video has diverse footage, including b-roll, a medium shot, and a close-up shot at a minimum (you can have other types of shots). Plan these in your storyboard (for tips and details on these type of shots, see the resources listed with each):

1. B-roll (footage that sets the scene but does not have the main speaker speaking on camera, like scenic footage panning over a landscape, close-up shots on a piece of technology, footage of people's feet as the narrator talks about walking down the street, etc.): Science Filmmaking Tips.

(2015, November 17). *How to shoot better b-roll: Quick filmmaking tips* [Video file]. Retrieved from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uex34HSLu5c>

2. Medium shot (your waist to the top of your head): Close-up shot (just your head): Arizona State University Applied Learning Technologies Institute.

(n.d.). *Basics of video shooting*. Retrieved from

[https://www.asu.edu/alti/ltlab/tutorials/video/basics/type4\\_ms.htm](https://www.asu.edu/alti/ltlab/tutorials/video/basics/type4_ms.htm)

- Schedule when you are going to complete your shooting and editing. Start early. Most people really enjoy the creative, even if challenging, and gainful experience of making videos; but they take time. A lot of time. Seriously. Make sure you start sooner rather than later.

## **2. Production (Filming)**

- You will need:

1. A camera (it could be as simple as your smartphone; modern phone tech can take some beautiful footage)

2. Your subject (who's speaking on camera)
  3. Perhaps some basic audio equipment
  4. A good location
  5. A storyboard to follow
- Make sure to have multiple takes of each shot. Even if the speaker delivered the lines perfectly, the camera might have had a glitch that you were unaware of, or maybe there was a spider crawling across the screen. Multiple takes will make editing much easier.
  - Audio is one of the most important considerations when you are shooting. Be mindful of the wind that rushes across the camera's microphone, causing it to have a hiss or crackling noise. You can prevent this by having a friend hold up a large piece of poster board from the dollar store to block the wind.
  - A lapel microphone (a *lavalier mic* often shortened to *lav mic*) is typically the ideal way to record the person speaking on camera.
    - If you do not have access to a lav mic (check with campus tech resources), you can easily make your own using your phone's headphones. Most earbud-style headphones come with an in-line microphone built into the cord so that you can talk on the phone via your headphones. This can be your lav mic.
    - Here are the simple instructions for using what you already own:
      1. Simply plug the headphones into your phone and run the cord inconspicuously behind your clothes (so that the footage still looks nice on camera).

2. Use a tie clip or a binder clip from your office desk to clip the microphone part of the cord up near your face, perhaps along your collar or near the top buttons of your shirt. Be sure your hair or fabric from your clothes isn't rubbing right over the top of it.
  3. If you want to make your own lapel mic without the headphones, here are instructions for doing so: Sold With Video. (2014, February 6). *How to get a wireless lavalier microphone for under \$20 - DIY lapel mic* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nITukeOL44M>
  4. Go to Voice Memos or another audio-recording app on your smartphone and hit record. This will be your audio file (see the above link for editing it).
  5. When you first start each new clip you record, have your subject (whoever is going to be on camera) clap loudly so that both the microphone hears the clap and so that the camera sees the clap. When you are editing, being able to match up the clap movement and sound will make it a lot easier to nudge the clips back and forth so that the vocals match up with the speaker's mouth movements exactly. You may want to start and stop the audio after each take, or you can just let it record for a long time and splice up the audio later.
- Lighting is very important in your shot. You may want to shoot outside on a cloudy day (clouds diffuse the light well), or you might need to borrow every lamp you and your neighbors own to shoot inside. Or maybe you will want to go to the home improvement store and buy a few simple DIY lights.

- Use a three-point lighting setup to light your shots well. This means having the following:
  1. One light focused on lighting your face (the *key* or critical light, which might be a lamp in front of you off to the side, or it might be a window you are sitting near). If your key light is angled to one side of you, it can help create subtle shadows on one side of your face. This can be a good thing, giving your face depth (and solving part of that saying that “the camera adds 10 pounds” caused by the flattening that happens when lighting isn’t slightly brighter on one side).
  2. Other light that fills the rest of the room. Different lights will create different colors in the room. An open window will make the room look more blue, regular light bulbs tend to be yellow, and fluorescent lights (which you should avoid, if possible) can give a greenish tint.
  3. Ideally a light that is beyond or above you and pointed at the back of your head (a *hair* light) so that you get a little bit of visual separation from your background.

You should spend some time testing your lighting by taking sample video shots and adjusting your lights a little to avoid common problems like backlighting yourself as a silhouette or accidentally having the room too dark. Check out these tutorials to catch the learning curve even faster:

- DiCasa, S. [DiCasaFilm]. (2012, April 6). *Filmmaking 101 - Three point lighting tutorial* [Video file]. Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j\\_Sov3xmgwg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_Sov3xmgwg)

- Allan, P. (2015). *How to improve your photos and videos with affordable lighting*. Retrieved from <http://lifehacker.com/how-to-improve-your-photos-and-videos-with-affordable-1-1715963400>

□ Be purposeful about your composition. Think of each shot like it's a photo that you want to hang on the wall. Make it look engaging so that your argument is given its best possible platform.

### **Composition pro tips:**

- When you shoot with a smartphone, make sure to turn it landscape (longways, not tall ways). You may watch videos with your phone vertical, but most computer screens are oriented in landscape mode.
- Use the *rule of thirds* to make your subject more visually interesting in the shot. Browne, M. (2010, August 21). *The rule of thirds* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSSOZxLnNyc>
- Watch for debris behind you in the shot. Are there dirty dishes on the edge of the shot? A chair that's sitting empty for no good reason? A car trying to parallel park while you speak on the sidewalk? Be purposeful with not only what is in the shot, but also what you need to remove.
- If you plan to use titles (text) in your shots, make sure you leave room for them on the screen.
- Take ownership of the area. Do you need to rearrange your living room for the shot? Borrow a stack of books from a roommate to fill up that empty shelf?
- Create depth in the video. If you shoot in front of a wall, take an extra couple steps forward. The extra space between you and the background will give the



video depth. Also consider using vanishing points in the shot instead of having a flat background. Maybe stand in front of the corner of the room/building, or stand on an angle so that the lines on the road go off into the distance instead of running flat and horizontal behind you.

- Simple, even blank, backgrounds can be one way to focus attention on you and to give yourself lots of space for adding content later in editing. You can achieve a blank background by hanging a taut, well-ironed black or white bedsheet up and by sitting a couple feet in front of it, making sure that it is lit well so that there are no shadows cast on it behind you. When you are editing later, you will simply turn up the contrast on the video so that the black or white sheet seems to disappear.
  - Use a tripod or some makeshift tripod, like a stack of books or a fence post, to get a steady, unshaking shot. This will keep a wobbly hand from skewing your composition.
  - Once you have a good setup, consider how you might use the same lighting/composition for multiple shots. Spending time on making sure you have a few really good setups instead of droves of mediocre ones can save you time and help ensure visual consistency.
  - If you can, check the footage (including the audio levels via headphones) while you are in the field so that you can make sure that the look of shots is turning out the way you need before you head back home.
- Film in small chunks at various depths (some close-ups, some medium shots, etc., of the same clip). The variety will make it easier to splice different pieces together

during editing, and it will make it easier to record; you don't have to get all 3.5 minutes perfect in just one take.

- Speak naturally into the camera—somewhere between the tone you use at the lunch table and the tone you would use for a professional presentation. A memorized or read style will make a video uncomfortable to watch. Shoot two or three sentences at a time instead. After you get a few good takes of those lines, do the same for the next two.
- If you have to reshoot a scene or finish filming on a different day, put on the same outfit again, style your hair the same way, and make it look like you did all in one take.
- Ask for help. Maybe even work in a team. Share the responsibilities with friends or others making their own videos so that you can support and learn from each other. Video making is much more enjoyable and a lot easier when you have other hands to help you.
- Direct the talent. If you have others helping you or others on screen, give them directions. Ask interviewees to repeat answers, to rephrase their statements to capture the question, and to adjust their bodies for the best shot. Be professional and polite, but don't be shy about asking to do it just one more time so that you have the footage you need before leaving the field. Having multiple people, each tasked with a key area (such as lighting, wardrobe and set, and interviewing) can help ensure high-quality, usable shots.
- Interviewing subjects is a great way to get personal and expert testimony in your video. Place your camera at eye level, make sure your subject has a mic set up for her

or him, and direct the interviewee regarding eye contact with or away from the camera. Eye contact into and through the camera lens gives a personal connection; eye contact away from the lens at a two-thirds angle gives a sense of objectivity. It is your choice which is best for your product. When you are interviewing, be quiet and resist the urge to vocally respond while the interviewee is talking. Your “mm hmm” will make it very difficult to edit if picked up by the microphone. Simply nod your head to keep your subject talking.

### **3. Postproduction (Editing)**

- Once you have your footage, you need to edit it with care. Give yourself ample time to complete your edits. While the process is not particularly complicated, it can be tedious.
- Push yourself to use the right tool for the job, even if you are not as comfortable with that tool at first. Once you start editing, you will find that just about any editing software is pretty easy to use.
- Preinstalled software like Apple’s iMovie and Window’s Movie Maker can be useful tools for simple edits. They have limited features, so you will be closing off options if you choose to use them.
- Professional-grade programs like Adobe Premiere, which is for PCs and Macs, and Final Cut Pro, which is just for Macs, typically have free, 30-day trials of their full programs.
  - Adobe. (n.d.). *Free trials*. Retrieved from <https://www.adobe.com/downloads.html>

- Apple. (n.d.). *Final Cut Pro X*. Retrieved from <https://www.apple.com/final-cut-pro/trial/>
- If you do not have access to more robust programs like Premiere or Final Cut, consider a free or freemium program, like the free version of Lightworks, in order to achieve the robust set of editing tools at a low cost or at no cost: Lightworks. (n.d.). *The complete video creation package*. Retrieved from <https://www.lwks.com/>
- Most contemporary videos are made by splicing together different clips of different takes in order to make the video sound and feel like one fluid flow of your whole script (or at least sections of your script). When you edit, be sure to carefully and cleanly trim and hide your seams. You can hide them by zooming in on the second clip, even if it is from a different take or by putting b-roll over it so that your audience only hears the audio of you speaking while a different scene plays on the screen during the voice-over. If neither of these work, consider a simple fade transition so that you acknowledge to your viewers that it is a different take. Alternatively, you can choose to fully embrace the modern jump-cut style like in this video: vlogbrothers. (2010, September 6). *I hate pennies!!!! (Also nickels.)* [Video file]. Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77C47XYm\\_3c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77C47XYm_3c)
- Discovering how to unlink video from its audio track in your editing program can be very useful for expanding your editing options.
  - Inserting audio and video separately can allow you to have separately recorded voice-over narration or background music over b-roll to insert b-roll you captured with your video camera right over the top of a clip of you speaking into the camera. This can be a great way to add information for the viewer and/or to hide

editing seams. If you plan to record voice-over narration, record it in the same manner you recorded all of your other audio in order to ensure that it all sounds consistent.

- If you have recorded audio separately from your video (such as with a lapel/lav mic, as suggested above), you will need to link that audio with just the video. This is often referred to as *syncing your audio and video*. Having that clap in the shot will be very useful. You will need to insert both files into your editing program and then find the sync or merge feature in your editing program to link the mic's audio with the camera's video. You can do a web search for "how to sync audio and video in [insert editing program name]" for a step-by-step tutorial.
- Use the features in your editing program judiciously. Just like when developing a PowerPoint slide deck, you want to avoid using the program's bells and whistles in ways that will decrease your product's overall professionalism. Avoid clipart, cheesy sound effects, and unnecessary transitions.
- Titles (the video jargon that simply means words on the screen) are an effective way of adding or highlighting information on the screen for your viewer.
  - Modify the default formatting your editing program gives to titles so that your video does not look like everyone else's.
  - Adding subtitles/captions is an important way to increase the accessibility of your work. This can be done permanently by adding titles on the screen, but the better approach is to use the video-editing software or your video hosting site's captioning features, so that viewers can turn the captions on/off as they choose. Simply do a web search for "how to add captions in [insert your program or

hosting name here]” for step-by-step instructions. Be careful with a program’s or host’s auto-captioning feature, as these features are notorious for creating wonky errors.

- Citing content in videos can be achieved by placing a citation in the bottom right corner (like you would for a PowerPoint slide deck image) while you mention a source or while content from an external source plays on the screen. Another option is to have one or two single, nonscrolling credit screens at the end, created by adding a title (text) on a blank black frame for 2 or 3 seconds.
- Background music can help add energy to an otherwise subdued video. Be sure the volume level is low enough during speaking portions of the video. Using instrumental-only music will help keep the music from being a distraction. Be sure to respect copyright requirements.
  - Using material with a Creative Commons license is a great solution to copyright concerns. Be sure to give the necessary attribution.
  - For instructions on what Creative Commons is, when to use it, and where to find Creative Commons music tracks, check out this page: McCo Productions. (n.d). *How to find free music for videos*. Retrieved from <http://mccoyproductions.net/free-music-for-videos/>
- Stock b-roll can be found online as well, though you should strive to create your own. Check out this page for where to find free footage: Greer, D. (2011). *20 free online stock video sites!* Retrieved from <https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/20-free-online-stock-video-sites/>

- Advanced editing features like color correction and brightness/contrast settings can improve the final look of your video in editing.
- As cliché as it may sound, when you have questions about how to accomplish something in editing, the best way to find your answer is to Google it. In all likelihood, someone has already posted the same question on a message board.
- Uploading your video can take time (especially when you ensure the upload is in HD). Plan for that.