Photography & Recording Tips for Video Production

Video production is typically divided into three stages: pre-production, during production (recording), and post-production. To help you make high-quality videos, follow the tips for each stage.

PRE-PRODUCTION (PLANNING STAGE)

Storyboard

Create a storyboard before your photo or video shoot. This will save you time and money, making sure you efficiently get all the photos and video clips you need while on your shoot.

Draft the narration and interview questions. Plan a potential sequence of visuals (images, video clips, graphics, text, etc.). Plan other audio as needed (i.e. sound effects and music).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Images, Video Clips, Animations, Text</th>
<th>Narration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What the audience will see</td>
<td>What the audience will hear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recording / Shot List

A recording/shot list is essential for your photo and video shoots. Base it off your storyboard and include all the potential shots you need to take or record.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Still Image or Video Clip</th>
<th>Shot Description</th>
<th>Supplies Needed</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which will best work with your narration? Ex. Still image</td>
<td>Describe the angle of and what needs to be seen in the shot Ex. Close shot of gate lock</td>
<td>Supplies needed for the shot Ex. Gate lock</td>
<td>Potential location(s) to get shot Ex. Gate closest to driveway</td>
<td>Other helpful notes; you can also take additional notes during the shoot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DURING PRODUCTION (PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO RECORDING)

Photography and Video Recording Tools

- Smart phones
- Point-and-shoot cameras
  - Most point-and-shoot cameras include the ability to record video.
- Digital SLR or DSLR cameras
  - DSLR stands for "digital single-lens reflex camera." They are like a point-and-shoot but with interchangeable lenses, high image quality, and the ability to fully customize photo and video settings.
Recording and Shooting Strategies

Shot Options (for photo and video)

Use three standard types of shots to ensure you have multiple options of the same shot. This provides more choice during post-production (video editing).

- **Wide shots** show the subject from top to bottom; for a person, this would be head to toes, although not necessarily filling the frame. This shot is best when you need to show an action that isn’t focused in one specific area of the scene.

- **Medium shots** show part of the subject in more detail. For a person, a medium shot typically frames them from about waist up. This is one of the most common shots and can generally be used for a variety of situations.

- **Close shots** fill the screen with part of the subject, such as a person’s head/face. This shot is best when you want to focus primarily on one area of a scene or when the action being performed in the scene is particularly important.

Recording Video

Before you record, select one of these resolutions. On smart phones, these settings are usually accessible in the camera settings (through the camera app).

- Record in a 16:9 aspect ratio (AR).
  - This setting may be under a "size" setting, as opposed to an "aspect ratio" setting within the camera app.

- Record the highest resolution possible.
  - If available, record in 1080p (full HD) resolution.
    - 1080p is a set of HDTV high-definition video modes characterized by 1,920 pixels horizontally and 1,080 pixels vertically
  - If 1080p isn't available, record in 720p (HD) resolution.
    - 720p is a progressive HDTV signal format with 720 horizontal lines and an aspect ratio (AR) of 16:9
      - Any resolution that is less than 720p is workable, but quality is significantly decreased, and aspect ratio is changed to 4:3, which limits your clips’ edit-ability.

Photography

Before you take photos, select one of these resolutions. On smart phones, these settings are usually accessible in the camera settings (through the camera app).

- Take photos in a 16:9 aspect ratio (AR).
  - This setting may be under a size setting, as opposed to an aspect ratio setting within the camera app.

- Take photos at the highest resolution possible.

Hold your smart phone horizontally.

When photographing or recording video with a smart phone, always hold your smart phone horizontally (as opposed to vertically). This gives you a wider shot and more space to work with when editing.
Stabilize your camera/smart phone.

- Use a tripod or monopod that is made specifically for your recording device. If you don’t have one, steady your camera/smart phone on a stable object, such as a table. The more still you keep the camera, the better.
- Many DSLRs (and some point-and-shoots) have an auto-stabilizer option. If your camera has that option, make sure to turn it on. (But still use a tripod!)
  - On DSLR’s the auto-stabilizer option will be on the lens and not on the camera body or in the camera settings.
- Smart phones may also have a video stabilization option within the camera settings.

Audio Considerations

Microphones

Most cameras and smart phones come with a built-in microphone. For professional-sounding videos, however, you will want to use an external microphone.

There are various types of external microphones. The most common types include:

- Lavalier Microphones (wireless or wired)
  - A lavalier (also known as a lav, lapel mic, clip mic, body mic, collar mic, neck mic or personal mic) is a small microphone used for television, theatre, and public speaking applications. They usually come with small clips for attaching to collars, ties, or other clothing. The cord can be hidden by clothes and either run to a radio frequency transmitter kept in a pocket or clipped to a belt or routed directly to the mixer or a recording device.
- Mobile Microphones
  - These microphones that are similar to lavaliers but have the ability to connect directly to smart phones.
- DSLR Shotgun Microphones
  - A shotgun microphone is a highly directional microphone that must be pointed directly at its target sound source for proper recording. A DSLR shotgun microphone attaches directly to the camera without the need of connecting a separate microphone to the person you’re recording.

In most cases, microphones can be attached to smart phones and DSLR cameras with various accessories. These accessories differ depending on what device you’re using to record. Research what accessories you’ll need (and test them) prior to recording any audio.

Voiceover vs. In-Field Recording

- It’s best to record your voiceover/narration separately rather than while you’re recording video clips. This will ensure your voiceover is clear and high quality and will allow you to edit your voiceover separately, so you can remove any unwanted sounds or long pauses.
  - The only audio you should be recording in the field is ambiance (background sound) or the answers to questions asked in interview-style videos. Recording ambient sound can give the illusion that your voiceover was recorded with the video.
  - Example: While recording video clips outside, you hear birds and trees blowing in the wind. After you finish recording your video, record an extra minute of just the sound to drop below your voiceover during editing.

POST-PRODUCTION

After a photo/video shoot, you may have a lot of files to sift through. An important tip to remember is that not all images or video clips need to be usable, and you should only upload / share the images or video clips that are usable.
Follow these steps for easy organization and sharing of images and video clips:

1. Go through your video clips and images. Choose which are usable and which are not. Either delete the unusable files or put them in a separate folder.

2. Come up with a naming convention for the files that is easy to understand. It should contain an explanation or a short description of what is going on in the image or video clip. Rename each usable file.

3. Create folders in Box or another storage system. Carefully name them so you will be able to easily access your files in the future. [Note: If you are working with the Digital Education Team, upload the usable files to the Box folder provided to you.]

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