



Tips for Shooting Video

Not every subject can be captured in video. Before you decide to put together a video, consider the subject. Would you want to watch a video on this subject? When you think of the subject, do images pop into your head? If the answer is, “No,” then don’t try to force it; the subject may not be one that can be taught visually. Figure out an alternative method to convey this information to your students.

Subject and Scope

It may be that scope is an issue. Many times, the subject may be too large to cover in a video that people would watch. A good example is the subject we are discussing now: How to Make a Great Video Training Piece. This subject is much too large to cover in a single video. When you think about the subject, too many images pop into your head; a sign that conveying this information to a student would be too difficult for a single video. Narrow the scope and consider making a video for each narrow subject. Together, these videos will help a student learn the overall subject of how to make a great video training piece. There might be a single video on setting up lighting for shooting indoors, another video for selecting the proper audio recording device, a third video covering the types of lenses that are best for shooting, etc.

Above all, always remember that videos should be used as a supplement, not as the sole source of training. This should greatly reduce your stress associated with tackling a video project. Come into the project knowing that you will never be able to cover everything, so your script...and therefore your video...should only cover a tiny section of the big picture.

Take-Away Message

If you have selected the proper scope for your video piece, there should be one real take-away message running through the video. Sure, you will have small, individual pieces of information, but only one take-away. Your learners will stay engaged with the subject better this way and you will have an easier time creating videos.

Actors versus Talent

Too often, people making video training want to over-script. Remember, we are rarely dealing with actual actors, so our scripting and shooting processes must reflect that realization.

Non-actors freeze up and become very awkward onscreen when asked to repeat very specific lines or movements. Even professionals do this...we refer to them as bad actors e.g. Pam Anderson. Consider making an outline for the subject you want to cover, develop bulleted points of what you NEED to cover, and then work with the onscreen talent to come up with lines that are best suited for them. Try multiple takes and allow

some lateral movement with the way the lines are presented. If you work with your talent properly, the filming process should be comfortable, easy, and draw upon their natural skills as a professional in their industry. They will likely never be trained actors, so try not to force them into that role.

Camera

Cameras, surprisingly, are not the most important part of your equipment list. In fact, just about any camera that can shoot HD will work for low-budget filming. To put it into perspective, many of the shows you see on TV are being filmed on cameras that cost 1/50th of what they did just a few years ago. These cameras are readily available online or at a local photography store.

There are just a couple of things to keep in mind:

- Audio input
- HD
- Good in low light (the larger the sensor, the better)

Microphones

A good mic is indispensable. Even on the best cameras, the internal microphone should only be used as a last resort. People will watch bad video, but they will not listen to bad audio; it's too much of a struggle to decipher what people onscreen are trying to say. If you have a limited budget, make sure you set aside enough for a good lavalier mic at the very least.

Audio needs to keep in mind:

- Lavalier mic
- Shotgun mic
- Wind guards

Lights

Lights are mandatory, but they do not have to be expensive. Even purchasing a “chicken light” with a large CFL bulb can help a great deal. Avoid lighting that is either too warm (yellow) or too cool (blue). Shoot for a natural look and make sure you have multiple sources of light to reduce shadow.

- Lighting needs to consider:
- CFL vs. LED vs. Traditional
- Color temperatures

Tripod

A tripod should be sturdy and adjustable. Price typically goes up with sturdiness and with the lightness of materials.

Rig and Accessories

Rigs are relatively new to the consumer video market, but they are a welcome addition. Cameras are smaller than ever and lenses can only drop down so much due to the limitations of glass and focal needs. This creates an oddly shaped video camera that necessitates, for lack of a better word, handles and balance. A rig gives you handles, balance, and the option to add accessories like a follow focus or zoom control lever, lights, a shotgun mic, or just about anything else. Rigs make handheld shooting steady and more manageable.

Rig and accessory components to consider:

- Baseplate and rails
- Rig with handles
- Focus and zoom control
- Audio accessory mounting

Telling the Story

When telling a story with video, think chronologically, but don't worry about shooting it that way. If your onscreen talent mentions specific components that make you want to move the camera over to that item, don't; leave it to the editing process to show everything. Start with a wide shot of your entire scene and consider breaking up information by changing the camera angles and set up. After shooting is done, make a note of everything mentioned during the wide shot (review your footage). Go back and take pick-up shots of everything. You'll be happy to have these extra bits when cutting back and forth between close up views and the wide shots. Remember, you always want to keep your final footage moving, so try to shoot that way from the beginning.

Comfort, Curiosity, and Interest

If you are interviewing an expert onscreen, stay engaged. Too often, interviewers come prepared with a set of questions to ask and forget to listen. Ask a question and try to forget about your own knowledge of the subject, remember, this is the expert you are interviewing. If they say something that prompts another question in your own mind, or a need for clarification, great...this is your next question. Take a genuine interest in what they are saying and continue a conversation accordingly. Don't be a, "Waiting to speak," type of interviewer. The best interviewers are typically the best listeners. The interview process should become a conversation between friends and the expert and the audience will feel at ease. The more curious and genuinely interested you are, the more information transfers onscreen.

Natural Light

If possible, select days with good natural lighting for shooting. It is counterintuitive, but sunny days necessitate bringing along extra lights. You will need to balance out shadows

from one light source (the sun) with another (your extra lights). Try to shoot on uniform overcast days if possible. The light is still there, but it's diffused by cloud cover.

Location

Locations for shooting video training pieces can be difficult to find. You are likely working on a limited budget and few people know who you are and what you're trying to accomplish. It's up to you to do the legwork and set up a location that will work for your video. No one wants to watch a video of you standing in front of a classroom...find a suitable location (something interesting to look at) and don't be afraid to ask land owners if you can shoot there; most are very willing to help out if you simply explain to them what you're trying to do.