

SHAW ACADEMY
NOTES

Diploma in Video



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Lesson 1

Getting started with video

Video is available on nearly every device that we use to capture photos. Most basic phones will have this as a feature. Great videos can be created on any device.

The best way to capture great video is to be prepared. Planning is key. Having an idea of what way you want to tell your story will go a long way to how you achieve your final video.

There are 5 questions that you should ask yourself before starting your video:

1) What device are you filming with?

Know your camera. Cameras have limits and knowing what they are will help you to plan and envision your movie. Some cameras have recording limits. This means that you cannot record continuously for hours on end. It means that you can record for a certain amount of time before the camera must stop and save the footage. After this you can begin recording again. More advanced cameras have accessories available to enhance your video. This does not mean that you need to go out and buy every piece of equipment out there but think about your needs and what you need to capture.

2) Sound.

Sound is 50% of the movie as Stephen Spielberg famously said. Without sound (or quality sound) you can do very little with footage. Most cameras are ill equipped to deal with sound. When starting out the native sound from the camera will do but again it depends on your needs. A basic microphone will go a long way to improving your video quality and increase the experience that the movie has on your audience.

3) Have a plan and Vision.

Imagine what your movie will be like before you create it. Imagine the sequence of shots that you might create to tell your story. Imagine your target audience, how they will react to your footage. This could influence how you create some of your shots.

Storyboards are a great way to plan out your footage. But also allow room for unexpected and spontaneous events!

4) How will you edit your film?

Creating your footage is a very small part of movie making. Editing is where you put the story together. This should be something that you do yourself but you may end up working with a team that handles this part of the process. Having an understanding of this process will ensure that when the final footage is broadcast that the story remains true to how you envisioned it at the start. All editing is done through computer programs now and these can be complex and complicated to use but when you become familiar with them it means you will have another tool at your disposal to create stunning footage!

5) Where is your footage going to be shown?

Think about your audience. Think about how many people are going to see what you have created and how they are going to enjoy it. You may be making something for YouTube or you may be making the latest Blockbuster movie but fundamentally the audience has one need – to be entertained. You may want to educate or terrify the audience and so on but to keep the audience engaged you must entertain them. This is done by being creative with shots and sound and editing!

What Genre?

Video is broad. The possibilities of video are almost infinite and now with the internet becoming the first choice for many people when it comes to entertainment you can reach more people than ever before. Fundamentally all video follows the same basic principles no matter what area you find yourself in. The same story structures, the same composition rules and sound rules all apply. So what might you like to film? You should not limit yourself but as you create you may find yourself drawn to one area more than another. Let's look at some areas and what you can expect from them.

Movies/Cinema

Movies have a profound effect on us. From very young we are exposed to them and often we can recall the very first movie we saw in a theatre. The experience is often unforgettable. And as we all know the movie industry is huge business. Getting into movies can be tough but all you need is vision and determination. Often with movies you will be working in a team. Every area is covered, sound, photography, editing and special effects. So communication is key. Really great directors will have an understanding of all these areas so as to instruct crews of exactly what they want. But communication works two ways. Always listen to and respect the crew you are working with! Movies allow creative expression and freedom like no other medium. In terms of equipment you can create movies with anything. There are no limits!

Nature/Documentary

Nature footage can really inspire audiences and so people just how amazing the world (and beyond) really is. This area is very progressive in how footage is captured, using the latest and greatest technologies out there. It is a very technically demanding area and also an area that requires great patience. Often photographers out in the field might wait 3 or more weeks for a shot of a particular act of nature. But we can achieve this locally. Think about visiting a national park or even a zoo to create some nature footage!

Television

TV has come a long way since its inception in 1926 by John Logie Baird. Often it was seen as a rival for cinema throughout the 20th century but this rivalry propelled cinema and TV to improve in order to meet audience's needs. TV encompasses everything from cooking shows, travel and nature to soap operas and reality TV. Like everything that we have looked at so far all these will still follow the fundamental rules of telling a story. But having a series means you can really explore your characters and develop them.

Alternatively, you may be interested in Advertising. This challenging area requires you to communicate a message in 30 seconds. This has become even faster now with online adverts that might be as short as 5 seconds! Try this yourself; see can you tell a story in 30 seconds.

Social Media/Blogging

Like advertising Social Media requires telling a story very rapidly. This involves quick cuts, creativity and good sound. Many people will use basic equipment such as Phones to tell a story. This is great; phones are ideal for this as the video can be shared instantly. But remember to always film in landscape with a phone, never in portrait! You can create videos for food, travel or just for fun. This is a great way to dive straight into the world of video and an even better way to get your footage seen by as many people as possible.

Of course you are not limited at all with what you can do, these are just some suggestions for areas that you might like to explore. All these areas share a common trait, which is the art of storytelling. You want to get your message across to the audience in a fun, engaging and entertaining way.

What camera to use?

There are lots of options available to us. Each camera has their strengths and weaknesses. Let's have a look at some.

Phones:

Phones are incredibly convenient. The footage can be captured and shared instantly. They are simple to use. Phones also have very high frames rates available, this makes them great for slow motion footage. Where phones are limited is in sound and in range. You can get some lens and sound attachments enhance your mobile phone videos. But as mentioned before, record your footage in landscape, never in portrait mode!

Video cameras:

These cameras are designed with video in mind, rather than being a device that can capture mixed media. These cameras have better imaging chips, for this reason the quality of the video is very high. These cameras also come with large zoom ranges, making them convenient in nearly every scenario. Where they are more limited is in manual control options, these cameras are largely automated. These cameras have been in decline in recent years but with higher frame rates, better sound and better resolution are making a return in the video industry.

Go Pros:

Go pro cameras are synonymous with extreme sports. If you are into cycling, running, motorbikes, racing, diving and so on these are the cameras that you will want to use. They have a fisheye lens. Because this is so wide it means that everything is in focus. But it is not possible to change the lens, meaning that they are limited in this area. However there is a huge array of accessories available for them for every conceivable scenario. Their affordability makes them very popular and you only have to search for footage from them online to see what amazing videos people are creating with them.

DSLRs:

The Nikon D90 and the Canon Mk 2 changed the video industry when they added the ability to capture video as well as stills. The video quality was of the same level as broadcast cameras and it wasn't long before these cameras were being used in the filming industry being far more affordable than professional broadcast cameras. The huge range of lenses means lots of options. Now new DSLRs are being developed with higher quality video in mind. Where they can lack is in sound, this is a big issue with DSLRs, as fundamentally these are designed for still images. So investment in an external microphone is recommended with these cameras.

Prosumer/Professional Cameras:

These cameras are the highest quality in the industry but are very expensive and require skill to operate correctly. Prosumer cameras will have an array of built in features to help you capture the highest quality video – options such as built in ND filters to help with exposure

issues, Zebra striping and Peaking to help with exposure and focusing respectively. These cameras also have very high sound quality. But these cameras are also very costly. Quite often professionals will rent these cameras rather than buy them as the cost can be anywhere from €5000 to €20,000. In the cinema industry studios will own these cameras and invest huge money in having a selection of lenses, monitors, audio equipment and anything else you can think of to ensure that production runs smoothly!

Quick Starting

To get out there and start making recordings straight away there are a few steps that are recommended to take.

- 1) Use a tripod/monopod. Keep the video steady. Handholding a camera will mean unsteady footage. A tripod and monopod will make a difference.
- 2) Record longer than you need. Never cut the footage short. If a scene of action or dialogue has finished, leave a little extra room. This will help at the editing process and you may capture something great that you may not have intended.
- 3) Mix up your angles. Don't stick to one eye level angle. Explore your subjects, move around them. Reshoot a scene in a different way and then when it comes to editing you will have more choices to keep things interesting.
- 4) Leave room in the scene, as you may need to crop in afterwards. This goes hand in hand with recording at the highest resolution available on your camera.
- 5) If you have manual focus, use it! Auto-focus can be noisy and unreliable. Initially it can help to set focus but manual focus is the better option to quickly change focus in a scene and direct viewers' attention.
- 6) Keep spare charged batteries and memory cards. Recording video consumes a lot of power and memory so always carry backups. You don't want to get caught out!

7) Shoot for the edit. Think about how the video will come together after you have the footage. Very few movies are created chronologically. So shoot enough footage so that you can plenty to work with afterwards!

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