Video Production Tips and Tricks

Audio

- Avoid windy or noisy areas. It might not seem noisy when you shoot, but you will hear it when you edit.
- Make sure your audio levels are not peaking while recording. Keep your audio around -6db.
- Capture natural sound. Listen for sounds that help tell the story.
- Remind subject to sit still. Clothing makes sounds that can be heard on the recording.
- Use external audio for cameras without XLR input or if multiple microphones are needed.
- There are three main types of microphones.
  - Handheld (cardioid): best used up close, can’t be hidden
  - Shotgun: best used just out of frame, less ambient noise
  - Lavalier (omnidirectional): very close range, can pick up clothing rustle
B-Roll

- Use a tripod to ensure steady, smooth movement.
- Get closer. People like to see details. A door-knob is more interesting than a whole door.
- Consider an establishing shot. A wide-framed shot of b-roll helps the viewer understand where the story is taking place by showing major landmarks.

Camera

- Before you hit record, check your **exposure**, **white balance** and **focus**.
- Think about your exposure. Use low ISO (sensor sensitivity) in bright conditions and high ISO in dark conditions. Use the lowest ISO you can get away with.
- Think about aperture. Aperture allows more or less light into the lens and affects depth of field. Larger aperture/smaller F-numbers mean shallower depth of field and brighter image.
- Think about shutter speed. Always double your frame rate. (e.g. 30 frames per second = 1/60 shutter speed)
- Using a neutral-density filter allows shallow depth of field without overexposure.
- For white balance, match the temperature of your light source for “normal” color.
- Frame rate is the number of frames per second. Pick your frame rate and stick with it.
  - 24 fps – cinematic
  - 30 fps – broadcast standard
  - 60 fps – hyperrealistic
- For slow motion, increase your frame rate and adjust shutter speed accordingly. While editing, adjust speed of clip to match the frame rate of your other video.
- Hold your shot longer than you think you should. You can always edit down later.
- If you’re syncing your audio, clap on camera for each take.
- Follow 180 Rule. Do not cross eye line of subject.

Exposure Triangle

180° Rule
Interviewing

• Be conversational with your interviewee. Speaking on camera is stressful.
• Treat your interview as a friendly conversation. Respond to your interviewee’s answers before asking your next question. It will make them feel more comfortable and prompt a more natural response.
• Most people in natural conversation affirm what they are hearing by saying “uh-huh,” “yeah,” etc. Be mindful to not interject when your interviewee is speaking, you will not have clean audio. Try nodding instead.
• Pause a second or two after the interviewee finishes talking before you ask your next question; it will make your job editing a lot easier.
• Ask your interviewee to start their answers by restating the question so you can get a complete sentence for their response.
• Avoid questions with “yes” or “no” answers. Instead, try: “What are your thoughts about...?” “Can you elaborate on that?,” or “How does that make you feel?”
• Sit or stand next to the camera with your face at about the same height as the lens.

Lighting

• Light your subject first. Then light the scene.
• Use light to shape the scene.
• Raise your lights on the stand to remove glare on eyeglasses.

PBS Wisconsin Producer/Videographer Trevor Keller shows Memphis Cleveland and Kim Leadholm of the Black River Falls Student Reporting Lab a few tips about camera setup at Black River Falls High School.
Interview Setup

• Ask the interviewee to talk to you and not to look into the camera.
• Be mindful of distractions in the background of your interview setup. Avoid any signage that might draw the attention of your viewer, like exit signs or restroom signs.
• Record ‘room tone’ (30 seconds or so of quiet in the space). You will use it to fill in your edit later.
• Be mindful of composition. Give your subject enough headroom and talking room. Follow the Rule of Thirds.

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PBS Wisconsin Education is a proud SRL mentor station, providing in-person and remote support to Student Reporting Labs across the state.