



Important Tips for Shooting Video

1. Always ask permission before you film anyone - If you are interviewing them, have them sign the Gatherer Institute "Release" form. It gives us legal permission to use their image in our productions.

2. Always record 5 seconds before and after the shot you want. This is so you have some room to edit with when you put shots together.

3. Try not to use autofocus - Use manual focus if at all possible. Always make sure your subject is in focus. To be absolutely sure, zoom in on the subject, focus, and zoom out. Autofocus hunts for stuff to focus on, so if someone walks through the shot it will try and focus on them, getting your subject out of focus. Autofocus also uses up a lot of battery power, so using manual focus and push focus (a button you can press for autofocusing) makes your batteries last longer.

4. Leave that zoom button alone! Zooming is your ticket to bad film-making. Try not to zoom in on your subject while recording. By all means use it to set up a shot when the camera's not rolling, but leave it at that.

5. Shots You Need to Know About: a) Long Shot, b) Medium Shot, c) Close up and d) Cutaways

a. Long Shot - Always get a long, wide shot of the location or setting you are filming. This is called a "long shot" or "establishing shot" that lets the audience know where you are or the context of a scene.

b. Medium Shots are 5-10 feet away from the subject

c. Close ups are 2-5 feet away from the subject - for interviews you want the camera to frame the picture from the shoulders to the top of the head. Ideally their eyes are about one third from the top of the screen. Get as close as you can to your subject without getting too close - zoom the camera lens out to get the widest angle possible.

d. Cutaways (also known as B-roll footage) - Shoot plenty of cutaways (shots to cut in at any point - closeups, buildings, reactions of other people). Shoot visual details that can tell the audience what is unique about the scene or subject... be creative... cutaways often make all the difference for making a good film, great!

6. Avoid Backlighting - This is where your subject is standing with the sky or a window or white wall behind them. The camera goes 'Hey, loads of white I better set my exposure to that', so when you come to look at your footage all you can see is a silhouette of your subject and you can hardly see their face. Solution - turn around, and use the light from the wall/window to light your subject.

7. Try not to appear in your own film - You want to try and avoid appearing in your film as...the camera operator! ...but feel free to film other camera operators. Avoid fingers near the lens or long hair draping into shot. Equally be careful when shooting through glass, mirrors or shiny objects not to catch a view of yourself.

8. Switch the camera on before you take the lens cap off - you may damage the camera's CCD chip if you take the cap off then switch it on. Equally don't point your camera at really bright lights i.e. the sun, nuclear explosions etc

9. Check your sound if you can - Most cameras have headphone sockets so you can monitor what the camera is picking up. Recording without checking your sound is like shooting and not looking down your viewfinder. Remember : your ears are great (they can filter out all that extra noise and focus in on just one voice) - your camera isn't, it'll pick up on every squeak and rumble.

10. Protect your equipment - You've got to keep it safe from two things - the environment and from it getting nicked. Keep your gear clear from dust and dirt (use a cover to protect it from the rain). Keep your camera close to you, make sure its insured and know its serial number if it does get pinched.

11. Tape Care - Always use the best quality tape you can afford. You can only capture an event once tape once. The great thing about tape is that you can record over stuff but be careful you may need footage again in the future. Remember, keep all your footage!

12. Batteries - Always carry fully-charged extra batteries, otherwise you can bet that you will lose power halfway through the most important shot of your film. Bear in mind that batteries have a shorter life span in the cold. Hug them to keep 'em warm (and show them that you love them).

13. Shoot loads! - Tape is cheap. Use it. When you get around to editing you might just need a certain shot, so shoot everything.

14. Shoot with both eyes open -- like the news cameramen do. It takes some practice but it allows you to see what's going on in the viewfinder as well as around you.

15. Avoid the horns of satan! - Try to keep an eye on what is in the background of your shot. You want to try and avoid plants sprouting from peoples heads etc. Especially steer clear of backdrops where there's visually exciting stuff going on - a video game running in the background as you can guarantee that your audience will end of paying more attention to this than what the person is saying or doing. There's a classic clip I've seen where two policemen are talking about what a quiet night it had been with no arrests. Outside in the background are two guys beating each other to a pulp.

And finally, **have fun!**

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