

Video tips for still shooters

These are compiled from a variety of sources including
Regina McCombs from the Minneapolis Star-Tribune

Expectations:

- The first time you shoot video, it may take you a day to shoot and a day or two to edit.
- When you have some experience, an average story may take about 4 hours to edit.
- If you're really flying, you may be able to edit in about 2 hours.
- Be realistic in scheduling and that will take a lot of the pressure off.

To make sure you get usable video:

- Have at least one portable light source
- Make sure your batteries are charged
- If you are using tapes, make sure you have enough and try not to use the same one more than five times
- Make sure your microphone is working by monitoring it the entire time with headphones – if you can't monitor with headphones on your camera, then tape a little bit and play it back to check for audio.
- Find someone to tell the story – to avoid doing a voiceover later, you need a willing spokesperson to talk while you show cool video.

To keep your video watchable:

- Have a clear purpose. Decide before you go on 3 words that tell the story (one of them must be a verb) and then only shoot video that goes with that. e.g Man bites dog or Girl wins race
- Use a tripod, monopod or some steadying device
- Do Not pan or zoom
- Hold each shot for a minimum of 10 seconds. You're going to want to stop shooting after 2-3 seconds, so either count in your head or watch your counter. You need 10 seconds for editing purposes.
- Shoot many tight detail shots (called cutaways in video talk)
- Shoot everything wide, medium and tight so you have more options during the editing. This can work especially well with someone doing a repetitive action like ice cream scooping. Then, you can toggle between views in the edit.

If you have no audio, you have no video:

- Invest in at least one good quality wireless microphone (Sennheiser is a good brand)
- Use a lavalier mic whenever possible in an interview situation
- Try to get your microphone as close as possible to the source of the sound – it will make a big difference.
- Find out if the mic you want to buy will work with the video camera you own and if not, what kind of adapters you'll need.

Tell me about your experience:

- When you ask questions, make them extremely open ended because this encourages people to respond in full sentences.
- Here are some examples:
 - Tell me what happened.
 - How did that change things?
 - How could that have happened?
 - Tell me about your situation.
- By deliberately not repeating what the situation is, the person will naturally include the context in his or her answer.
- Make sure you respond non-verbally with smiles, head shakes or nods so you don't talk over your audio.
- Don't get fooled! Sometimes when your subject is talking, they'll say things like, "Check out that car over there!" Stay with your subject and shot multiple details of the car later. This gives you more options later on.
- Whenever possible, vary your focal length during the interview. In between answers, zoom in or out to add variety to your shots.

It's not over until you edit and export:

- You should import and edit your own video because you learn what shots and techniques work and which don't through this process.
- You can edit with iMovie or even Windows Movie Maker if your paper can't or won't buy you fancier software. If it's up for you, you might request Final Cut Pro for a MAC and Adobe Premiere for a PC.
- If someone else at your paper is in charge of the official editing, make a director's cut on your own for practice. This is a really important part of the process!

- Generally, daily pieces should be between 1:30 and 2:00. If you don't believe me, surf www.youtube.com and see when your eyes start to glaze over.
- Special projects can be longer and you may consider segmenting a piece longer than 5 minutes into 2 minute chapters.

Confronting the empty timeline:

- An empty timeline and looming deadline can be intimidating.
- Here is a framework for how to put together a basic video.
- Watch your video while importing it and only import the parts you plan to use.
- Start with your ears. Pick out the quotes you want to use no matter what the video is of and place them in the timeline to tell the story.
- If you have good sound-on-tape clips (clips where you plan to use the audio that you recorded with the video) go ahead and put them in now.
- Take a look at your cutaways and/or still photos and edit them down to useable bits – generally 3-5 seconds.
- One main reason you need cutaways is to cover up the fact that you sliced and diced the interview. You need to cover the sudden shift the subject appears to make from one clip to the next.
- Avoid transitions since these can look amateurish. Instead, use jump cuts.
- The other time you would want to use cutaways/photos is when you have something appropriate to show while your subject is talking to break up your talking head shot.
- Add your titles and any other text.
- Have someone else look at your video to check for spelling mistakes and help tighten up your edit. After showing it to other people, I generally cut 10 – 15 seconds of video.

Display your video online:

- There are many websites that will help you set up free video players if you do not have a web designer on staff who knows how to display video.
- Bright Cove www.brightcove.com
- You Tube www.youtube.com
- These companies let you set up a channel for free and each video has a unique URL that your paper can use to make the video look like it's

part of the paper's website. The companies make money by selling ads around your video when it shows up on their site.

- Professional players can be purchased by your paper from companies like Bright Cove, Feed for all, the Fifth Network and VMix. Some of these will also accept user generated content.