

How to

make a film

We all know that film is an increasingly effective way of getting campaign messages across as there are some people who will watch a short film (two minutes or so) rather than read a campaign leaflet or factsheet. Now, with more digital cameras offering a video option, and video cameras becoming more generally accessible, more people have the opportunity to make films themselves.

It is important that any film you make looks professional and is an effective campaign tool, so below you will find a few handy hints to help you if you want to have a go.

Tell a story, Jackanory

You are not just taking a picture with the camera, you are telling a story. Think about the finished film and how it's going to be edited. Maybe you want to show a well-known local building to show where you are or if you interviewing a cook then film him working in the kitchen. Cutaway shots are very important to build that story.

Equipment

Always make sure you have enough tape stock/memory cards and your batteries are fully charged.

Use a tripod, use a tripod, use a tripod

Avoid camera shake. Camera shake makes for bad videos.

Shooting on a tripod will improve your video 100%. Don't shoot "hand held" if you can avoid it.

Hold shots for about 10 seconds

Hold on your subject for at least 5-10 seconds. This will give you nicely timed shots for your edit. If you're interviewing, give five seconds before and after the interview. But never shoot long drawn out shots as these bore the audience try to keep them short.

Shoot with the sun to your back

Shooting into the sun will cause any interviewee to appear dark in the foreground unless heavily lit.

Learn when to pan, zoom and use other techniques

One of the most common video mistakes is making constant movements and adjustments. Be deliberate when making adjustments; don't make changes without a reason. Take a shot of something and leave it there for 10-20 seconds, stop the recording and take another shot. Don't quickly pan the camera from one subject to another. When panning and zooming, use slow, smooth, and deliberate motions. This will make your videos much more watchable.

Go easy with the zoom

Try not to zoom in or out too much and avoid zooming if at all possible. But don't lose a shot by avoiding zooming altogether. Just do it as gently as possible. And, once you have zoomed in or out, hold that view for a few seconds.

Pan slowly and only when you're on the tripod

Panning is the movement of the camera from side to side. Take it slowly. Don't jerk back and forth during the pan. If you make a mistake, start over again. Hold the shot steady for a few seconds before you start the pan. Hold it steady for another few seconds when you are done. If you do pan make sure you are ending on something. Pan onto something of interest.

What settings should I use?

Check what settings are appropriate for the way you want to use your film. HD, imovie, pcs may require different settings on your camera.

Shoot at eye level

If you are doing an interview make sure the camera is at the eye level of the person you are filming. Also frame the person to one side not in the centre of the frame.