

Editing tips

Find a fast computer

Video editing is demanding, and not very practical on slower machines. At least one gigabyte of RAM is recommended for most programs.

Get an external hard drive

One hour of digital video uses about 20GB of hard-disk space. To have enough room to edit the video, you'll need at least 60GB of free storage space. Purchasing an external FireWire hard drive will allow you to store your files, move them to other machines, and will lessen the demand on your CPU. A fast hard drive (7200RPM) will allow you to capture directly to it.

Add a FireWire card and software

The most effective way to get video in and out of the computer is a FireWire port, found on most digital camcorders and newer computers. If your computer doesn't have one, you can add a FireWire card for under \$50.

Log your footage

After shooting, create a log of all your shots, including time code or counter numbers, name of the shot, and comments. Only digitize what you need.

Name your clips

After importing, many of your video clips will look alike. Save yourself time later giving your clips meaningful names now.

Basic editing

Some prefer to bring all the clips into the timeline, and trim there. Others prefer to trim the clips in the import window and then drag them to the timeline. In any case, the goal is a "rough cut" that shows all the major action.

Be objective

No matter how long you worked on certain part of the script, or how difficult a shot was to get, you have to be ready to let it go if it doesn't support the objectives. Don't be afraid to remove something that doesn't work; viewers can usually fill in the gaps.

Seek input

This is a good time to let others offer input. Fresh eyes can often provide excellent feedback, and it's much easier to make adjustments now than after you have spent a lot of time perfecting the details.

Adjust the look of each clip

Some of your clips may not match the others. In that case, you can use the editing program's filters to adjust brightness, color, and contrast so they match. (These filters aren't perfect, so hopefully you won't have to do much tweaking)

Add transitions

Transitions between shots can smooth rough edges and add impact. Most editing programs have a dazzling array of transitions, and there may a temptation to "enhance" your video with eye candy. Most stories are better told using basic fades and cuts and perhaps a dissolve here or there. (Of course, if you're doing a spoof on a 1980's appliance store ad, go for it!)

Add titles, graphics, and motion

Remember that you can bring still photos into the video. Charts, illustrations and other graphic can be created in Photoshop or a similar program. Be sure to begin with an image size that is appropriate for your video format. Slow motion may be useful in making a too-short clip a bit longer in order to fit.

Add music

You should be able to import MP3s and other common audio formats, such as .wav files, into your video. Be sure to use copyright free music, or seek the rights to the music you use.