

Video Shooting Tips

Stabilize the camera

Using a tripod is an excellent way to minimize camera shake and make the video easier to watch. If the scene calls for a moving camera, be sure to be zoomed out all the way to minimize shake. Walk with your knees bent, and hold the camera as still as possible. Placing the camera operator in a wheelchair is a common means of getting a smooth “tracking shot” down a hallway.

Use camera moves sparingly

When videotaping, be deliberate about camera moves. Avoid zooming or moving the camera unless there is a specific need to do so. If you do zoom or pan, rehearse the move a couple of times so you can execute it with confidence.

Choose the background carefully

Select a background that is uncluttered, and not much brighter or darker than the subject. Try to include key elements that define the location, such as a sign or landmark.

Move the camera closer

If you are using the in-camera microphone, you should try to get the camera as close to the talent as possible in order to get the best sound. Also, you will have fewer problems with focus if you are close to the subject, and zoomed out to a wide shot.

Remember to get “pre-roll”

Start taping before your subject speaks and let the tape run a few seconds after your subject has finished speaking. Instruct the talent to hold their position during these intervals (as opposed to looking at the camera, laughing, etc). This will give you room to do fades and dissolves, and prevents cutting off words. If your talent can't seem to stop “jumping the gun” turn off the beep indicator and/or put tape over the record light so they don't know when you're pressing record.

Finger slates

In order to keep track of which take you're on, you can hold up one, two or three fingers in front of the lens before each take (indicating take one, two or three). This will make logging the footage for editing much easier.

Practice with the equipment

Check the camera out and learn to use it. Practice doing short video under a variety of conditions. Keep notes on your experiences. (You may even wish to consider reading the operators manual 😊)

Think in shot sequences

Try getting sequences of shots. For example, you might shoot 10 seconds of a wide shot of a location, pause, then shoot 10 seconds of a medium shot of the talent in action, pause, then shoot a close up of the talent speaking. When edited together, these sequences can be an effective alternative to zooming.