

# Video Production Guide

This guide was created to provide you with tips and tricks that will help you produce thoughtful videos. Try not to get too hung up on following every tip. The most important thing is to get out there and practice and find what works for you!

## Video Ideas

- *My Inspiration*--tell the story of someone in your community who inspires you; this can be a student, family member or friend.
- *Culture Is*--detail an aspect of culture that interests you including, but not limited to, ceremonies, weddings, traditional dress, food, time, family structures etc.
- *Day in the Life*--make a movie that shows what a community member does daily.
- *Tell a Tale*--act out a local myth or story.
- *Instructional Video*--teach how to perform certain cultural activities, like dances or handicraft.
- *Photo Montage*--string together still frames creatively to express culture or your interaction with culture.
- *Time Lapse*--create an interesting time lapse that relates to culture.
- *Use a mix of these ideas sprinkled with your own!*

## Translating Your Idea to Film

The first step in filmmaking is deciding how you are going to translate your idea to film; this will dictate how you prepare for the video. Different types of video storytelling include interviews, demonstrations and staged performances.

**Interview** – “Tell Me” - This documentary styled video focuses on speaking with a person of interest while a camera captures the conversation. Here are some tips:

- The interviewee sits facing the interviewer.
- The camera is situated behind the interviewer on a tripod.
- Prepare your questions beforehand.
- Ask the interviewee to rephrase your question in their answer.
- The interviewer should not look at the camera; it is awkward.
- Before filming, make the interviewee as comfortable as possible, many people are afraid of speaking in front of a camera.
- Film a variety of people using the same questions. Choose the best shots in post-production.
- Consider interviewing several people at once.
- Stop the interviewees from rambling. Establish a “stop” signal.

**Demonstration** – “Show Me” - This video technique follows a person as they discuss a certain topic. This is the technique used in many travel shows and on reality television.

- The camera follows the subject, filming while they speak.
- The camera is handheld.
- The subject must feel comfortable speaking for a long period of time, so discuss beforehand to plan talking points and movements.
- The best lines happen naturally.

- This method requires a lot of b-roll (see definition below) for visual appeal.
- Be aware of microphone distance to your subject. If the only microphone you have is on your camera, it will have difficulty picking up sound if the subject is facing away from the camera.

**Staged** – “Act It” - Film subjects as they perform a pre-written dialogue or scene. This technique is used by most movies you see in the theaters.

- You need to prepare the script beforehand.
- Make sure the actors are comfortable and know their lines.
- Film from a variety of angles for visual appeal. (See below for tips) Combine the different angles when editing.
- Camera can be handheld or on a tripod.
- Don't be afraid to do many takes.
- Chose an interesting setting.
- Watch for continuity: details like clothing, positions, or lighting need to match up or change as a scene dictates.

## Planning

### Participants

You need to decide who will be involved in your project.

- Make sure all participants consent to being on film.
- Discuss your concept thoroughly with your participants so they are comfortable.
- Some people are not very good on camera. Have back-up options.
- Make sure participants know where and when filming will take place to avoid delay.
- You may need to feed the participants and reimburse them for travel.

### Environment

You need to decide where to shoot your movie.

- You need to choose a location that aligns with the concept of your film.
- Choose a setting that has interesting visual components.
- Make sure you have permission to shoot at the chosen location. You may need to get permission from local authorities.
- Curious people may show up and watch you as you film. Be prepared to control the crowd.
- Make sure bystanders do not walk into the scene accidentally.
- Be aware of ambient noise: wind, people talking, and cars, for example.
- When composing the shot be aware of lighting. You want the sun to be behind the camera that is facing the subject.

### Schedule

Video projects often take much longer than expected; prepare ahead of time.

- Decide on a filming date that works for all participants.
- Finish planning everything prior to the decided date. Making decisions the day of the shoot will cause complications in post-production.
- You may run into issues during the shoot. Be flexible.
- You may need to push the shoot back because of bad weather.
- Aim to stay on schedule!

## Story

When making a video you are essentially telling a story. So before you even get out the video camera you need to write a plan detailing what will happen on screen. It is very important, to plan out your movie before you begin production; poorly planned videos look amateurish and will make editing more difficult. See below for potential components of video planning.

*Script* – A script is the written translation of exactly what will be on film. It includes descriptions, transitions between clips, environment, movement of actors and finally, the dialogue.

Here’s an excerpt from a script:

FADE IN:

EXTERIOR: HOMESTEAD – CLEAR DAY

Family members dressed in traditional clothing are performing their morning routines. Njabulo (25) with dark hair, dressed for work, walks out of his hut carrying a bundle of books. Njabulo notices his host brother Vusi.

Njabulo - - Sawubona bhuti!  
Vusi - - Yebo, uyapi namuhla?

*Shot List* – A shot list is a list of all of the shots that will be used in the movie. Planning this out is a good way to design a schedule of the day of the shoot. Items to include: scheduled time, type of shot, participants involved, description, location and potential B-roll.

| Time               | Participants     | Camera   | Description                                     | Location                 | B-roll                                |
|--------------------|------------------|--|---|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Monday@<br>11:00am | Njabulo,<br>Vusi | Wide shot<br>zoom to a<br>medium bust<br>shot. | The two<br>discuss their<br>day, in<br>SiSwati. | kaGinindza<br>homestead. | Scenery,<br>cattle kraal,<br>chickens |

## Filming

The day of the shoot has arrived. How you compose your shots when filming is very important and there are many options to choose from.

### Types of Shots

You can choose from a variety of shots to enhance the visual appeal of your movie.

*Wide Shot (long shot)* – This shot frames the entire body of the subject and often includes background scenery of the environment. ‘Long shot’ refers to the fact that the camera shoots the subject from a far distance. You may use this as an “establishing shot” to set up a location and to give the viewer perspective.



*Medium Shot* – This shot frames only a portion of the subject, usually from the waist up. It is often used for interviews because you capture the body language of the person you are interviewing as well as some background.



*Close-up Shot* – This is a framing technique that focuses on the detail of a subject and not the background. The camera shoots the subject in close proximity. This shot is often used to show facial expressions.



*Over the Shoulder Shot* – This is a camera angle that frames the shot over a person's shoulder or head. It is considered a third-person perspective. It is commonly used when filming a conversation between two people. This shot is also very useful during "demonstration" videos, because the viewer feels like they are included in the scene as the camera follows the subject.



## Camera Techniques

*Zoom/Zoom-Back* – This is when the focal length of the lens is adjusted. Zoom brings the background to the foreground and isolates an object or person. Zoom-back pushes away from the background framing the object or person in a wider context.

*Pan (Panorama)* – This is a movement of the camera from left to right or right to left or vice versa. This can be used as an establishing shot, to set up a scene or location.

*B-roll* – This is a technique of cutting away from a scene to show additional footage or still images. The soundtrack of the original clip continues as you cut to other shots. The purpose of b-roll is to enhance visual appeal; maintaining one camera angle for an extended period of time is boring to watch. B-roll also provides viewers with a visual representation of what the subject is referring to.

## Framing Techniques

Now that you have an idea of the types of shots that are available, you need to know how to orient people or objects within the confines of the viewfinder. The techniques that will be discussed below are simply suggestions for how to think about composition. Interesting or unique cinematography can really improve the quality of a video.

*Rule of Thirds* – This rule guides composition. The rule of thirds divides a frame in to nine rectangular sections. The rule says you should try to place objects that you are filming on the vertical and horizontal axes or at their intersections. For example, you can place horizons along the bottom horizontal third. It is common to line the top horizontal third with the eyes of a subject. You can line trees or building with the vertical thirds; it is often more visually compelling to situate vertical subjects off to one side.



*Foreground/Background* – The foreground is the front of the frame. The camera is located in front of a person or object shooting in close proximity. The background is behind the main subject; this can include scenery or a building. You can focus the foreground and background separately. The foreground can be in focus and the background out of focus or vice versa. If both the foreground and

background is in focus this is called “all focus”. You can put unfocused objects in the foreground to make the viewer feel like they are included in the scene.



*Forced Perspective* – This is the illusion where objects in the distance are made to look smaller than objects in the foreground. People often use this technique comically, making people look bigger than things in the background. You also see this when looking at a road that goes off into the distance; it looks as if the road becomes smaller as you look farther away.



*Empty Space* – This is the part of the frame that you leave empty. This can have a very powerful effect to the composition of your shot.



*Full-Frame* -- You can also fill the frame completely. Repetition in a frame can be very interesting.



### **Wrapping Up**

We hope this guide helped you think through some possibilities for your film. Now get out there and have fun making your video!