

# Tips and Tricks for Shooting Digital Video

some material adapted from <http://smw.internet.com/video/tutor/videotips/>  
and <http://www.unf.edu/dept/its/tisoli/stream/faq.htm>

## Planning and Recording

### Planning

Think about what you want to capture and plan your video shots in advance. Editing video on a computer system is extremely time-consuming, so you may want to create a bulleted list to remind yourself of everything you would like to cover in the video.

### Camera Movement

Keep all camera movements down to a minimum. Fire-hosing (constant panning) or zooming quickly will not translate well to the screen or web. It is better to tell your story using a series of set shots, instead of multiple zooming and panning. If you are panning, keep the motion slow. Panning or zooming too fast can be distracting and may induce nausea in the viewers.

### Camera Stability

Use a tripod if possible to stabilize your camera. This will greatly improve overall picture quality and allow for smooth, easy camera movement. For handheld shooting, it is important to keep yourself stable. Bouncing motions, in addition to fast pans, distract the audience and may make them dizzy.

### Camera Focus and Lighting

Video needs proper lighting. Although many of the newer video cameras allow you to record low light images, these images may degrade considerably by the time your production has been assembled and broadcast. Keep the camera focused. Crisp, well-focused images are critical to the success of your project. Each stage of video production can introduce problems, but if your original footage is sharp and well-lit, your final result should work well. Poor lighting and blurry images will degrade considerably as the video is processed in production.

### Audio

Don't shortchange the audio. Great video with low or inaudible sound can be worthless. The built-in microphone on the camera may not be sufficient if there is a lot of background noise or if you are a far away from the speaker. In these cases, use an external microphone, so that *all* of your content, video and audio, comes through clearly.

## Editing and Delivering

### Capture

In order to edit your digital video, it must first be captured to your computer. The fastest and simplest way to accomplish this is usually via a Firewire connection directly between the camera and the computer. Capture is in real-time, so it will take 45 minutes to capture 45 minutes of video footage. You will need plenty of storage space for working with digital video - a ten-minute digital video clip can be 8 GB in size.

### Output

Once you have completed the editing process, you will want to render your movie out into some format that will enable you to share it. The format you choose will depend heavily on the content and length of the video and your expected audience.

### Formats

- **Real (.rm)**  
**The RM (Real Media) file is a streaming media file format that plays in Real Media Players, such as Real Player & RealOne Player. This is the main type of streaming video used at UNF**
- QuickTime (.mov)  
The MOV (QuickTime Movie) file is a file format that plays with Quicktime Player. These files also may be streamed.
- Windows Media (.wmv)  
The WMV (Windows Media Video) file is a media file format that plays in Windows Media. WMV files are stream-able.
- AVI (.avi)  
The AVI file provides high video & audio quality, but at the price of much larger files.
- DV (.dv)  
The digital video file is used to send projects back out to tape or prepare for DVD.

## Distribution

### What is streaming media?

In the past, digital multimedia (audio, video, animation, images, text) has only been available through traditional software distribution methods (diskettes/CD's, file downloads over the Internet, etc.), which requires playing it directly from the

media or copying it to your hard drive first before viewing it. Although there are some advantages to these methods, they have drawbacks. Over slow network connections, downloading a large video file can take a long time, and in any case requires space on your local hard drive. Even if the file is stored on a CD-ROM, you must have possession of the disc in order to view it.

Streaming media solves these issues by delivering multimedia over the Internet in a way that allows you to begin viewing it almost immediately, from wherever you are. Instead of downloading all of the content first, it sends it out little by little, in a "stream" of data. The player software that you use to view the content puts the data back together and displays it as it arrives.

Streaming media also enables the ability to broadcast live audio and video over the network (sometimes referred to as "webcasting"), which would otherwise not be possible.

### **CD-ROM**

CD-ROM is an appropriate distribution method for those without access to a computer or a fast Internet connection. It can be tricky though, to produce files that will play cross-platform.

### **DVD**

This is becoming an increasingly popular format as it offers high quality coupled with the ability for playback on most computers as well as DVD players.

### **Ways to use video in class**

Use video to explain context and relationship to new ideas.

Highlight concepts with a list of discussion questions.

Get the class to think critically: stop film and ask students to predict what will come next; show films with divergent views and urge students to stake out a position. Ask students to compare theatrical retelling of classics to the original.

Use the film to learn from students' reactions, responses, surprise to enhance future lectures and lessons.

Reinforce connections between lectures/materials by discussing the material in small groups, in analysis papers and by incorporating material into exams.

From: Davis, Barbara Gross (2001) Tools for teaching "Film and videotape." (San Francisco: Jossey Bass), 331-333.

## Telling a story through video

Remember that video also has the dimensions of motion and sound. Together, these elements can convey emotion, urgency, pathos, anger, etc. Video also triggers memories in audiences. Appeal to senses and the power of memory to prepare more engaging scripts.

When filming, look for strong images and allow them to carry the weight of the storytelling. Original video should contain a variety of images from various perspectives (close-up, mid-distance and far away). Think of the camera as a human eye; changing position changes intimacy and sometimes meaning.

Read copy aloud: The story's narration requires rhythm, but sometimes a little unpredictability is good, too.

Stories need a beginning, middle and end. Order the text and choose transitions to help viewers keep pace visually and mentally. Nail the ending. That's what sticks in viewers' minds. Again, video images do the "heavy lifting."

Write for the ear: Copy should be conversational, but not like a conversation between two full professors. Tell the story as you would to a friend or relative. Make complex ideas simple. Speak as if the listener were sitting next to you.

Keep sentences short, declarative and active.

Choose strong verbs, rather than flowery adjectives to drive the story. The copy "zips" when you've got the right verb, active voice and parallel structure.

Include natural sound, which provides depth.

Make sure narration matches the video. When images and words are out of synch, viewers get lost.

Adapted from: Bunton, K., Connery, T. B. Kanihan, S. F., Neuzil, M. and Nimmer, D. (1999) "Writing with visual and audio images. Writing Across the Media. Bedford/St. Martin's Boston, New York. 155-188