

## Here's The Equipment You Will Need to Get Started.

Camera (one with firewire capabilities)	Tape
Power source (battery or charger)	Tripod
Microphone	Headphones (and adaptors?)
Firewire	Computer (one with a firewire port)
Video editing software	

## Tips For Shooting A Great Video.

### Permissions

Make sure to get the appropriate permissions. A detailed treatment on the need for a release is beyond the scope of this document but a few pointers are in order:

- Public places like a street or park will probably not require a release. If you show private property of an individual you may need a release unless the use is incidental. A release for this type of activity is called a location release.
- Shooting people at anything other than long distance will probably require a release. A release may be general in nature or it may be a talent release if you are filming some sort of performer.
- If in doubt, request a release.

### Equipment

Never underestimate the power of an owner's manual. Your camera's manual cannot only teach you how to work your camera and its features, but it also tells you what your camera is capable of doing during filming. At the very least you need to learn to turn your camera on and off, load a tape and begin recording, white balance the camera (especially important if lighting changes), how to focus and how to zoom. For more advanced features such as iris control and adjusting audio levels, practice before the shoot is strongly recommended. Use a tripod if possible. If you do not have a tripod, see if there is something you could use in place of one. For example, a table or school desk could work in a pinch.

### Lighting

Make sure to have good lighting. Things to avoid include:

- backlighting (a silhouetted image)
- too much light (you don't want your actors to squint the whole time)
- shadows (especially across peoples' faces).

If you have a light kit or other artificial light sources, remember the three-point rule. Have one key light on your actor, have one fill light to help keep the shadows away, and have one backlight to separate your actors from the background. Remember to white balance the camera before you start filming and whenever lighting conditions change.

## **Audio**

Sound quality is one of the most overlooked aspects of video production. Use a microphone if at all possible, and use the best quality microphone available to you. You have to be aware of the natural sound in the shooting location. A fountain may make a great background, but could cause problems if the trickle of water in the background noise is distracting to the listener.

Monitor your sound by taking advantage of the headphone jack found on most video cameras. Wear a headset at all times so you know what type of audio quality you are recording. Many “prosumer” cameras have a headphone jack where you just plug in your headphones.

If you have a small camera that doesn't have a headphone jack you can still monitor sound using the AV out cable that came with the camera. Connect the white and red male RCA plugs on the AV out cable to an adaptor which combines these two and has a female mini stereo plug (3.5mm), then plug your headphones into this adaptor. These are very inexpensive (under \$5) and allow you to monitor sound as you record. You should always try to use headphones which cover the entire ear – earbuds or “cheapie” headphones are not very reliable when used for monitoring sound during recording. Headphones are not neck warmers – wear them!

You must be aware that what you hear may not be what you record. You should pay attention to your audio levels on your camera display. A headset's volume may be adjustable and noise canceling headphones should never be used, they will alter what you hear. You never want your audio to peak, but you want to keep it loud enough to hear cleanly. On a digital audio meter you want to try to keep it between -25 and +8, and on an analogue audio meter you want to keep it between -12 and +6.

## **Shooting a Speaker**

There are two ways to shoot someone giving speech; with a single camera or with multiple cameras. If you use a single camera you can either choose not to edit it and use a single take, or you can videotape the speech multiple times from multiple angles. If you use more than one camera make sure you have them at different angles (but do not cross an axis).

If you want to add a little variety to your video try shooting in front of a background that makes your speaker stand out, like a blank white wall, or uniform, non-distracting background. Any background (without a design) could work well. You could also have your speaker stand (preferably without a podium), sit on a stool (or other prop), or walk around a few steps (as long as the camera stays still).

When you are framing your shot try to imagine the screen divided into three horizontal rows. The eyes of your actor should be right on the line between the top and middle sections. Just below the imaginary line between the bottom and middle section is where your titles should go. Remember not to cut off the head of your actor and to give some lead room between the edge of the screen and the direction that they are talking (or walking). For a speech, the speaker can look directly into the camera because he is talking to the audience.

## **Other Shooting Tips**

An interesting trick you can do to keep the focus of your speaker, even when you zoom, is called critical focus. Zoom in as far as you can on what you want to stay in focus. Use the focus ring to get a sharp focus. When you zoom out the speaker will stay in focus the entire time. However, you really don't need to zoom for a speech, pick a nice waist to head shot and stick with it for the entire speech unless you are using multiple takes/cameras.

The camera's iris (or aperture) is what allows light into the camera. You may need to adjust the iris to keep your video from being too dark or too bright. Many cameras have zebra lines that you can turn on to help judge your video's brightness.

Avoid "crossing the axis". Different angles can make a video more interesting, but try to stay on one side of the action. If you are looking at a speaker from a right profile and suddenly see the same speaker from the left profile you will quickly lose track of the positioning of the subject and get distracted. Pay attention that you do not do this in editing as well.

When you plan on editing your video, be sure to record a little extra video before and after the shot you are filming begins and ends. This is called a handle (or tail). This allows you space for editing and transitions. With a speech it is probably better to keep the camera recording for the entire speech even if you don't always have a shot. Tape is cheap, take multiple takes of each shot so you have plenty to work with when you are editing.

## **Editing.**

Use a firewire to attach your camera to the computer. You can capture your footage right into an editing software program. Most computer editing systems use a drag and drop feature. You can pick up the thumbnails of the clip you want to put onto your timeline and drag and drop it where you want it in your video.

Transitions help smooth out your overall video. A longer, fade to black helps convey a passing of time. A cross dissolve helps blend together subjects or places. Be careful, an excessive number of transitions make your video hard to follow. For a speech you can probably use straight cuts (no transitions) because you are not changing subjects or location.

Avoid jump cuts. These are a noticeable and abrupt edit in the video. If someone is walking down the beginning of a hallway and the next shot is suddenly on the other end of the hallway, that would be considered a jump cut. There is no visual cue or explanation about how that actor got to the other end of the hallway; this will be confusing to your audience.

Normally, to prevent losing viewer interest, you keep the shots to between 3 and 6 seconds in length. This is a good general rule, unless you need it to be longer because of some action taking place. With a speech it is better to let the speaker finish a line before changing camera angles. However, you do not have to change angles at the beginning of every new sentence. Don't forget you have a purpose. Don't add a bunch of extra video or information. It will only bore your audience, and they'll stop watching.