

Videomaker

INCLUDES:

- Tips for Shooting Video
- Camera Controls
- Lighting Tips
- Audio Recording Tips
- Directing Tips
- Talent Release
- Camera Menu Items
- Location Checklist
- Packing Checklist

Tip Sheet for Videographers




Tips for Shooting Video

Shooting Basics

- To get the sharpest focus, zoom into subject's eyes, focus, and zoom out to compose the shot.
- Record at least 30 seconds at the beginning of a new tape before shooting your footage.
- Shoot pre-roll and post-roll with an extra 5 seconds before and after each shot.
- Keep the camcorder handy with blank tape and batteries charged.
- Set white balance at every location.
- Keep the shot steady (do not overuse zoom or pan.)
- Use a tripod or other camcorder stabilization.

- For handheld stability, imagine that your camcorder is a very full cup of hot coffee.
- Check the audio with headphones to make sure it's being recorded properly to the camcorder.
- Use manual focus if your camcorder has it.
- Keep your average shot length between 5 and 10 seconds.
- When shooting handheld, wide shots will appear less shaky than zoomed in shots.
- Try to keep a log of what is on each tape. Not so much that it is a burden, but more than you can fit on a label.

 For more information on Shooting Basics, visit this article, [Home Video Hints: Common Shooting Mistakes](#).

Composition

- Avoid telephone poles and other objects that can appear to stick out from the back of the subject's head.
- When shooting outdoors, keep the sun behind you.
- Give the subject proper head and looking room.
- Use Zoom in to compose your shot, but avoid zooming while the tape is rolling.
- Move the camcorder only when necessary.
- Use the rule of thirds when composing shots, unless you have a good reason not to.
- Be conscious of tilted shots. Level your camcorder using obvious horizontal planes (horizon lines, desks or buildings.)
- Be careful of shooting a subject in front of a window or other bright sources.

Shooting on the fly

- While shooting, be as inconspicuous as possible to best capture the true behavior of your subject.
- Be aware of soft spoken subjects.

For more information on Composition, visit these articles



[Composition 101: Part 1](#)



[Composition 102: Part 2](#)

Setting up a scripted scene

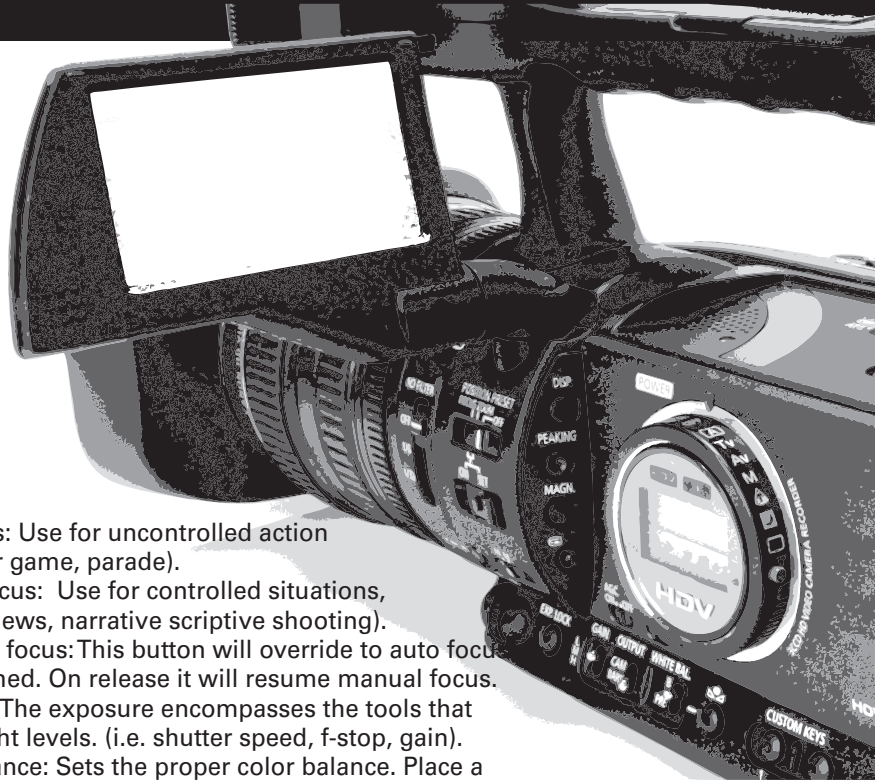
- Consult the storyboard and/or script.
- Time the number of spoken words at about 3 per second.
- Check battery power.
- White balance.
- Sound check.
- Light check.
- Tape check.
- Tripod lock-down.
- Time/date stamp on/off.
- Image stabilization on/off.
- Zoom in/Focus/Zoom out.
- Compose image.
- Rehearse.
- Reference Take 1, 2, etc (held right in front of the lens.)
- Shoot!
- Log takes.



For more information on Scripted Scenes, visit this article [Shooting for the Final Edit](#).



Camera Controls



- Auto focus: Use for uncontrolled action (i.e. soccer game, parade).
- Manual focus: Use for controlled situations, (i.e. interviews, narrative scriptive shooting).
- Auto push focus: This button will override to auto focus when pushed. On release it will resume manual focus.
- Exposure: The exposure encompasses the tools that control light levels. (i.e. shutter speed, f-stop, gain).
- White balance: Sets the proper color balance. Place a white object at the shot site and "set" the white balance button.
- ND filter: Cuts down the intensity of light, but doesn't affect the color.
- Zebra stripes: A tool that displays diagonal lines to show areas of the image that are too bright. Stripes do not show up on tape. Can be set to different IRE levels (i.e. 70, 80, 100).
- Shutter speed: Higher speeds limit light, (i.e. 1/8000) but make fast action shots more clear. Slow speeds increase light, but will blur action shots.
- F-stop: Low number opens the iris (allows for more light, higher number closes the iris (less light.))
- Gain: To brighten image use gain only after maxing F-stop and shutter speed. Gaining makes a grainier image, especially past 6 dB.



For more information on Camera Controls, visit this article, [Buttons and Menus and Dials, Oh My!](#)

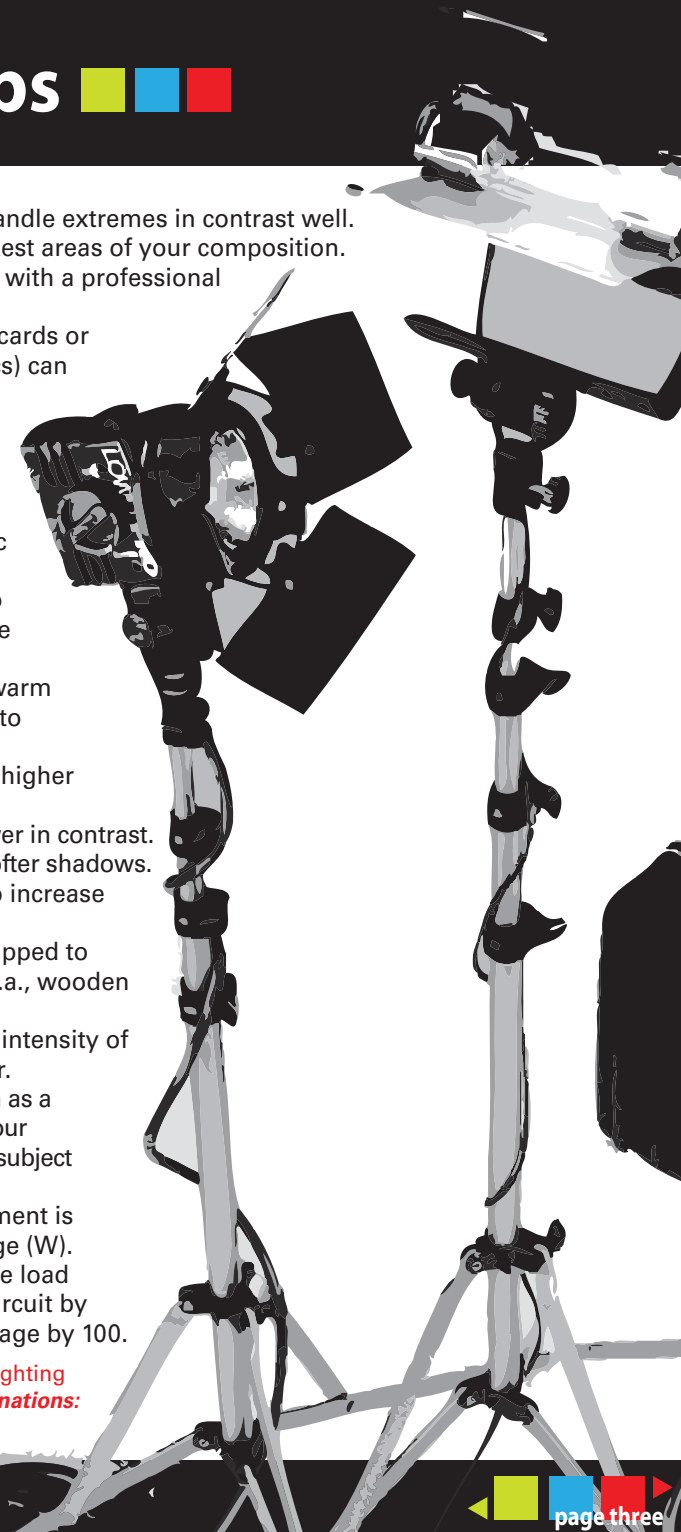
Lighting Tips



- Remember video doesn't handle extremes in contrast well. Limit the brightest and darkest areas of your composition.
- Monitor your lighting setup with a professional monitor or good TV.
- Bouncing light using white cards or reflectors (foldable flex discs) can fill in shadows and reduce contrast.
- Bring extra lamps (bulbs.)
- Soft light will help hide wrinkles.
- Hard light can give dramatic results.
- Lights get hot. Make sure to bring some gloves to handle your lights.
- Gold side reflectors cast a warm light that is complimentary to flesh tones.
- Silver side reflectors give a higher contrast.
- White side reflectors are lower in contrast.
- Diffusion material creates softer shadows.
- Double diffusion material to increase its effect.
- Diffusion material can be clipped to barn doors using C-47s (a.k.a., wooden clothespins.)
- ND filters will cut down the intensity of light without changing color.
- Don't place bright lights such as a window or the sun behind your subject, unless you want the subject silhouetted.
- A light's electrical measurement is usually measured by wattage (W).
- You can roughly estimate the load (in amps) on a household circuit by dividing the total lamp wattage by 100.



For more information on Lighting Tips visit this article, [Illuminations: Applying 3-Point Lighting.](#)



Audio Recording Tips

- Use an external microphone if you have one.
- Get the mic close to the talent.
- Listen through headphones while you shoot.
- Handheld mics are commonly used in news, especially in situations where there's little time to set up mics.
- Lavalier mics are unobtrusive and stay close to your talent, which make them great for interviews.
- Shotgun mics are great for focusing sound in a narrow area and work well at long distances.
- What you need to know about balanced audio is that it shields and phases out unwanted noise and interference.
- Line Level is generally 40-60 dB higher than mic level.
- Unbalanced line levels work well over moderate distances.
- Unbalanced mic levels tend to degrade past 25 feet.
- Don't move mic cables while recording.
- Avoid long cable runs to minimize interference.
- Have extra batteries handy.
- Don't let your talent leave with your mic.
- Attenuators cut down a line level signal to make it acceptable for mic levels.
- Use an attenuator if your camcorder's mic input is mic level only.



For more information on Audio Recording Tips, visit this article, [*Sound Advice: The Right Tool for the Job*](#)



Directing Tips

- Prep Interviewees.
- Rehearse, but roll tape.
- Divide scenes into shorter sections.
- Use cue cards or prompters. If using cue cards, hold them as close to the lens as possible.
- Shoot more than one angle of the same scene. Keep it simple. Don't tell actors more than they need to know.
- Communicate succinctly and give your actors some specific suggestions.
- Clearly indicate where your subject(s) should be looking (into the camera or at an interviewer.)
- Reassure your actors. Explain that this is not live television and that you will simply shoot until you get takes that work for everybody. Nobody will ever see the takes that don't work.
- Don't let all the preparatory details of video production overwhelm your subject(s). Try to have lighting and prop arrangements completed before they arrive on the set. Keep the environment non-intimidating and friendly.
- Put the actors at ease. Keep the set warm and a little loose and you'll probably get stronger performances.



For more information on Directing Tips, visit this article, [*Director's Chair: Who's in Charge Here?*](#)



Talent Release (to be read aloud on camera):

I, _____, give _____ the right to use my name, likeness, image, voice, appearance, and performance in a videotape program. This grant includes without limitation the right to edit, mix or duplicate and to use or re-use this videotape program in whole or part. I acknowledge that I have no interest or ownership in the videotape program or its copyright. I also grant the right to broadcast, exhibit, market, sell, and otherwise distribute this videotape program, either in whole or in parts, and either alone or with other products. In consideration of all of the above, I hereby acknowledge receipt of reasonable and fair consideration.

Spell out name as you wish it to appear in credits

Name _____

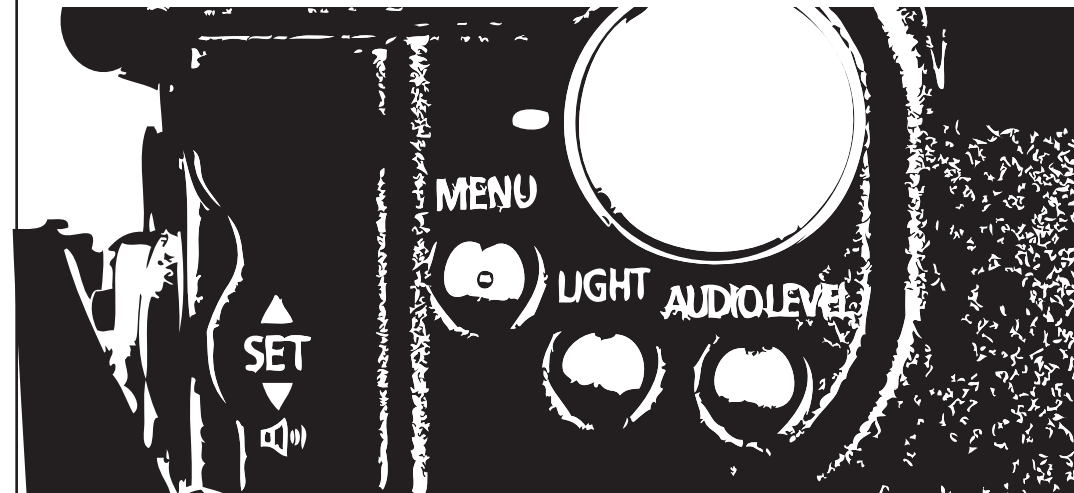
Contact information _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

- Skin detail: Detects the image for skin and reduces the detail in that area, making a subject's skin look softer.
- Zebra patterns: (See Camera Controls section.)
- Vertical detail: Adjusts the images overall vertical detail. Adjust this to low to reduce jagged lines and moire from your image. Backgrounds with high amounts of horizontal detail will likely result in a moire pattern.
- Sharpness: Adjusts the sharpness of the overall image. A lower sharpness can also help reduce jagged lines or moire.
- Spot meter: Meters the amount of light in a specific spot rather than the average of the entire image.
- Recording mode: Regulates tape speed. For the best quality, select SP (short play) rather than LP (long play), unless it's more important to double your recording time.
- Audio mode: For best quality select the highest bit depth and rate. Usually 16-bit, 48kHz.
- Audio level: If manual option is available, use this first and set levels for each scene/subject.
- Image stabilization: If an optical system (OIS) is used, keep on full-time. If electronic (EIS), assess quality, then possibly use only when not on tripod.
- Zoom range: Unless extended range is critical, limit zooming to only the optical range, never digital.

 For more information on Camera Menu Items, visit this article, [Basic Training: Buttons, More Buttons](#).



Need more video related forms?
See [Videomaker's Complete Book of Forms](#)

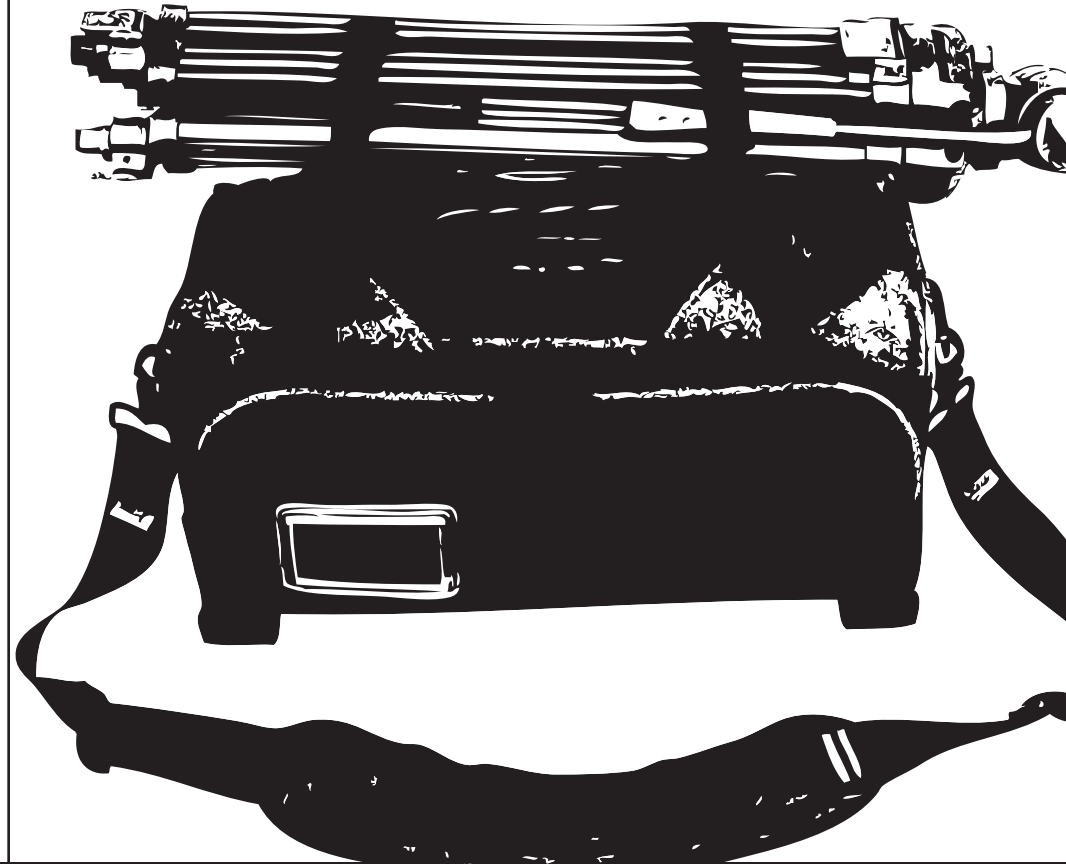
Location Checklist ■ ■ ■

- Choose a location that lends itself to the story you want to produce.
- Scout at the right time. Be aware that location lighting can change.
- Look at light. Most interiors generally feature low amounts of available lighting.
- Check light levels by shooting a few seconds of test footage with your camcorder.
- Check for power supplies. Is there a place to plug in a battery charger?
- Keep audio in mind when scouting locations, i.e. shooting near an airport may reduce quality sound use.
- Weather. Examine the elements, (sun, rain, wind, snow, heat, cold) and check the forecast.
- Decide where to set up. Make sure that there's adequate space for you to set up all of your gear.
- Get permission. Secure permits and other legal permissions to shoot at certain locations.
- Evaluate the area. Is there cell phone reception in the area you've chosen to shoot? If you're driving a long way, have you planned for a breakdown?
- Take notes, still photos or shoot a little video with a running audio commentary.
- Note the time of day, the quality of the light, the sounds in the air, and the things you felt. One day you might return.



Packing Checklist ■ ■ ■

- Camcorder
- Charged batteries
- AC power supply
- Battery charger
- Tape stock
- Lens cap
- Cables
- Lens cleaning cloth
- White-balance card
- Field monitor
- Script
- Tripod
- Tripod camera plate
- Lens filters
- Rain cover
- Gaffer's tape
- Black wrap
- Aluminum foil
- Headphones
- Microphones
- Microphone batteries
- Cables
- Adapters
- Wireless transmitter
- Wireless receiver
- Light kit
- Extension cords
- 3-prong power adapters
- Gels
- Diffusion
- Extra lamps
- Power strip
- Stands
- Sand bags
- Reflector
- Heat resistant gloves
- Clothes pins/C-47s



Additional Videography Resources



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