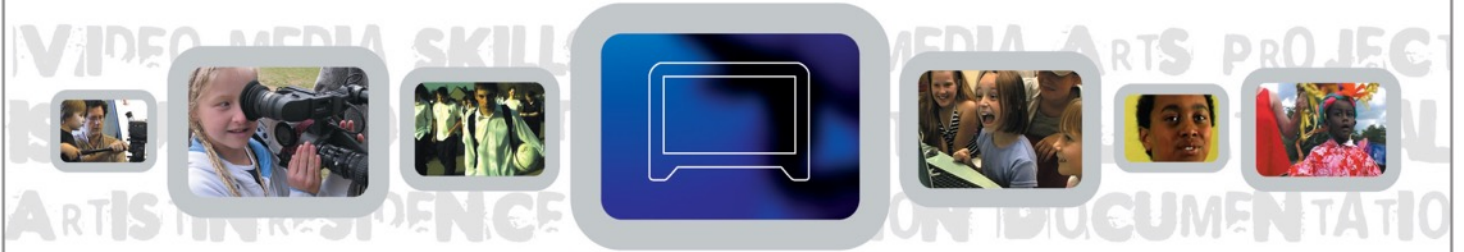


CATCHER MEDIA
MAKING MEDIA MATTER



MEDIA PACK

RESOURCES & TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL-FILM-MAKING

BY

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of resources is designed to help you to make successful films. They have been well used in my 20 years of film-making, training and participatory video projects, and have worked well with children, young people, and adults from across the UK, Europe, Africa and India.

(1) Development

This is where when the research is done and the concept for your film decided. You can then determine how to structure that concept into a narrative by using a script, storyboard or shot list.

(2) Pre-Production

Once you have an agreed script, storyboard or shot list you can use these as guides to everything that is required for the filming, or production. Logistically you need to decide whether you have enough time and resources to do what you had originally planned or restructure your plans if you do not. Rehearsals and camera tests can be carried out too.

(3) Production -The Shoot

The stage at which all the shots and assets you need for your script are filmed.

(4) Post-Production – The Edit

All the filmed shots and assets are assembled onto a computer or device and structured into the final film using the script and storyboards as a guide. Special effects, music, voice-overs, animations, titles and text can be added at this stage.

(5) Upload & Screening

The final video is distributed and now you want to get it screened and seen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick created Catcher Media, which was established in 1996. They are an award-winning media company whose values are rooted in community, participation and creativity. Based in Herefordshire, they have worked for 20+ years enabling children and adults to participate in exciting, hands-on media projects with a strong social or educational ethos.

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A RECIPE FOR A SUCCESSFUL FILM

RECIPE CHECKLIST	
1. WHAT'S THE BRIEF? (1) Subject (2) Context (3) Time limit	
2. A GOOD IDEA - (1) Think up a great idea (2) Decide genre (3) Create a script, storyboard and/or shot-list (4) Do you need a pitch or treatment? (to convince others to support your project).	
3. GOOD CAMERA COMPOSITIONS - Focus, exposure, composition, tripod, interesting angles and compositions.	
4. GOOD SOUND - clear sound without background noise + foley sound effects.	
5. GOOD CREW - each crew person has a job & they all work together.	
6. GOOD DIRECTION - the director uses their imagination to give the film an exciting style.	
7. GOOD ACTING / INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE - Interviewers or actors need to know their lines, rehearse their actions or prepare questions.	
8. GOOD PRODUCING - Makes sure the production runs smoothly e.g. is the location free? Are props and costumes sorted? Are crew & actors available?	
9. GOOD LOCATIONS - Find a great location or make a set or book a room!	
10. GOOD PROPS, COSTUMES & MAKE-UP	
11. GOOD MUSIC - A good soundtrack and sound effects have a big influence on the finished film. Have you got copyright clearance?	
12. GOOD EDITING - Good pace which matches the music and the action. Make sure the meaning is clear. You will need to add titles, visual effects and credits too.	

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FILM

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Know your target audience. Think about the message you want to convey and the best and most effective way to communicate this message.

GENRE

Know the conventions of the type of film you intend to make e.g. news report, thriller or documentary. Watch other examples for inspiration.

LENGTH

Consider the duration of your film. Shorter is better. Time limits may be dictated by competitions, broadcasters or film festivals.

SHOW DON'T TELL

Do not rely exclusively on talking heads i.e. people talking to camera. Use interesting camera angles and a variety of shot types to interest your viewer.

CUTAWAYS

Visually represent what is being described e.g. if a doctor is talking about a hospital you can present exterior and interior shots of a hospital. This gets interesting when you want to show abstract concepts or emotion.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Don't play safe too much. An audience is thrilled when a film goes that little bit further.

SOUND

Good quality sound is as important as the image, if not more so. Obtain best sound with external microphones and/or always monitor using headphones.

PLANNING

A well thought-out script and storyboard not only help to focus your creative thoughts but they also highlight logistical requirements e.g. locations, props and interviewees.

BE REALISTIC

Be realistic about your filming schedule - don't be over-ambitious.

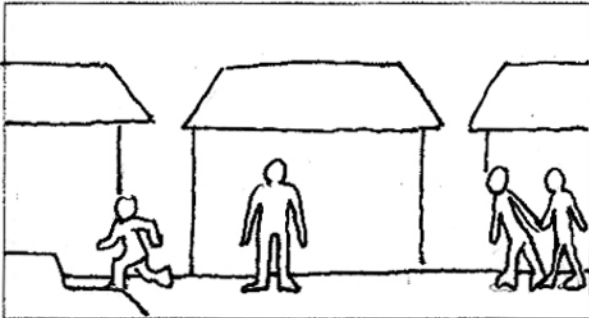
BE OBJECTIVE

When reviewing your footage to select best takes, watch the material with a fresh eye.

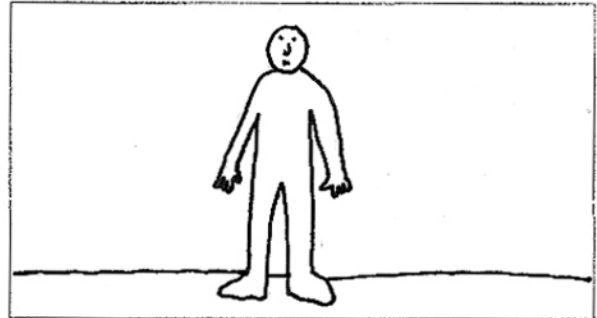
GET FEEDBACK

Ask people who know little about your project what they think of an edit or script. People may make good points but may not know how to fix the perceived problem - that's your job!

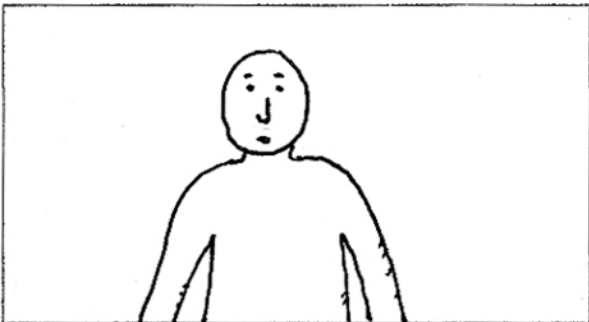
SHOT TYPES



WS - Wide Shot. Establishes where action takes place



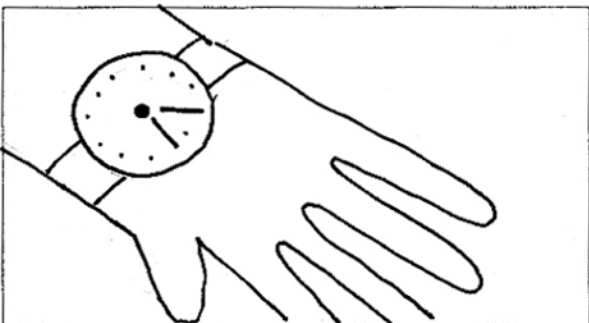
LS - Long Shot. Used for action. Good for telling us what a character does



MS - Medium Shot. Used for dialogue, interviews and pieces to camera



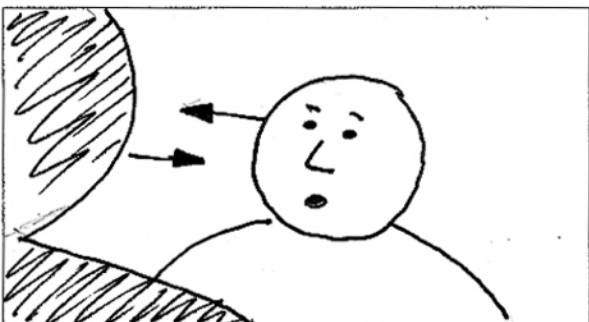
CU - Close Up. Good for emotion e.g. shock, worry or love



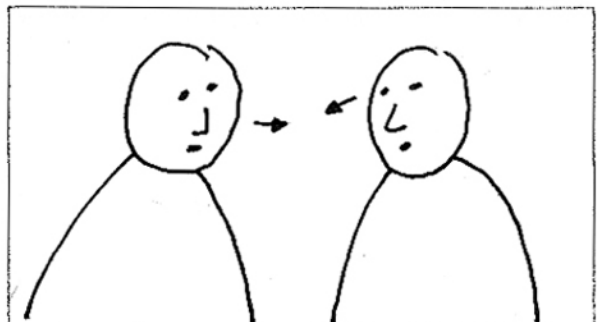
CA - Cutaway. A shot related to the main action



ECU - Extreme Close Up or BCU - Big Close Up



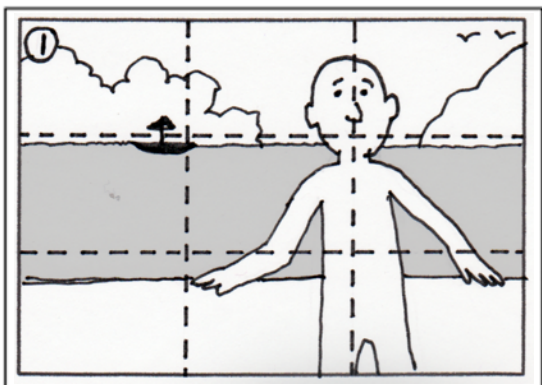
OS 2S - Over the Shoulder 2-Shot. Used in dialogue and interviews



2S - A 2-Shot or shot with two people in it

GUIDELINES FOR VIDEO COMPOSITION

Composition is about making beautiful images and giving it a “Wow!” factor. The guidelines below will help you films look better but capturing the performance is also essential. Many of the following rules will also apply to stills photography. NB: The subject is the actor, interviewee or main area of interest i.e. wristwatch or church spire.

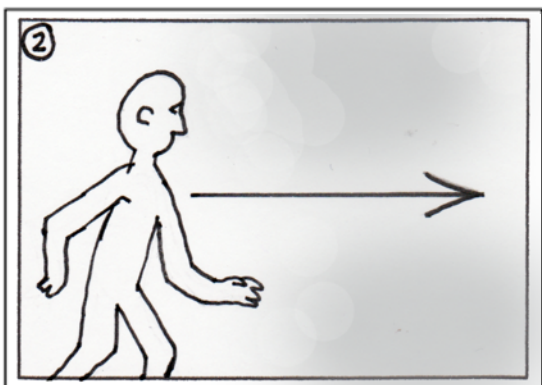


Rule of Thirds

Imagine your frame is divided into 9 rectangles, 3 up and 3 across (Image 1). By placing the subject along these lines (or where they intersect) and with space left in the other areas, you can get good compositions. This works well when filming in widescreen. Failing this get your subject centre of frame!

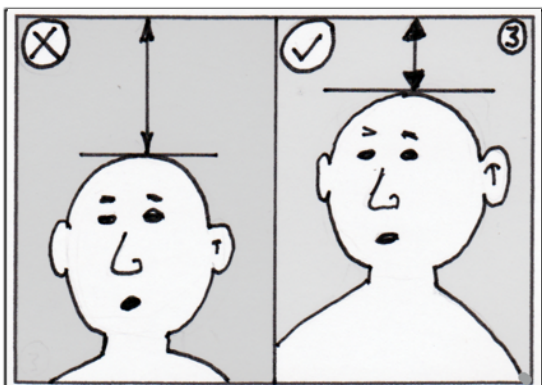
Avoid Vacuuming

Your film will look much better if you don't just follow action randomly. By planning your shots and rehearsing any camera movements, your films will improve dramatically. Get the actors to move within the frame (give them markers on the ground if necessary). Hold your shot for at least 5-10 seconds. Do not cut straight away at the end of the action, you can edit down later.



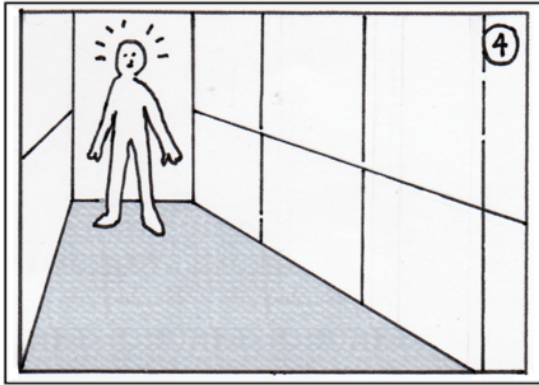
Lead Space

The camera should give the subject enough space to walk 'into' by anticipating their movement within the frame, especially if your subject is walking or running (Image 2). Rehearsing with everyone knowing the beginning and ending of framing can give your video a professional feel.



Head Room

In a MS or CU give your actors enough head space within the frame, but not too much as it weakens the composition (Image 3). You can crop the top of the head (but not the chin) for a EX CU but ensure the actor doesn't move out of shot. In all cases, the eyes should align with the top line (see Rule of Thirds).



Leading Lines

Strong lines within the frame can direct the eye to the important subject matter (Image 4) e.g. roads, paths, patterns, shop fronts, ceilings and railways can all be used to lead the eye to the main subject.

The Eyes Have It

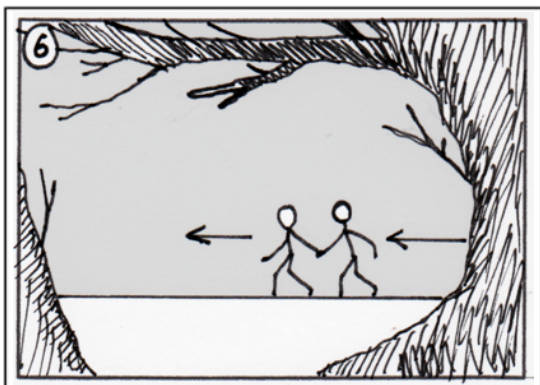
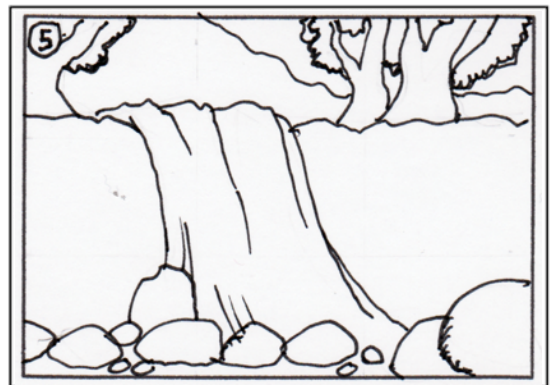
The viewer looks at a subject's eyes (and want to know where that stare leads). This is very powerful on film if an actor keeps their eye movement to a minimum.

Backgrounds

Beware unintentional action in the background drawing the attention away from your subject e.g. street sign growing from the actor's head, someone making faces, an entertaining dog, a large poster or very messy background.

Depth

Give the feeling of depth in your shots by adding foreground and background interest, especially in cutaways or shots without actors e.g. for a waterfall shot (Image 5) place your camera so the pebbles (foreground) and the trees (background) add interest to your composition.



Frame Within the Frame

Use objects in the frame e.g. trees at the top of frame or a building viewed through an arch, to frame your main subject (Image 6).

Symmetry

Balanced symmetrical compositions can be striking too, especially when used sparingly e.g. reflections and architecture.

Use the Classics

Directors and cinematographers have always referenced painting and sculpture e.g. Greek art, the Renaissance and the Dutch school, using it as inspiration for lighting and composition: so can you!

Don't just stand there!

It's tempting to just plonk your camera/iPad in front of the action at the same distance and height for every shot, but this gets boring for the viewer and makes editing your film harder. Get creative and people will enjoy your film more!

SCENE

SHEET NO.

A SHOT-LIST

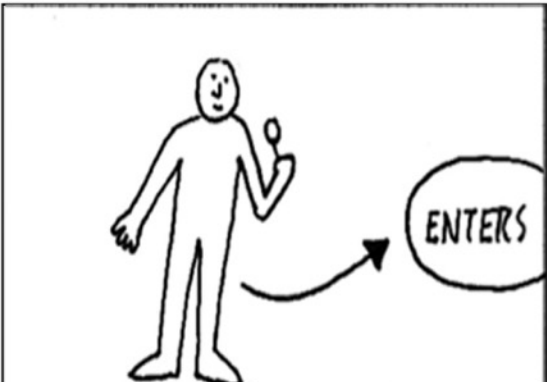


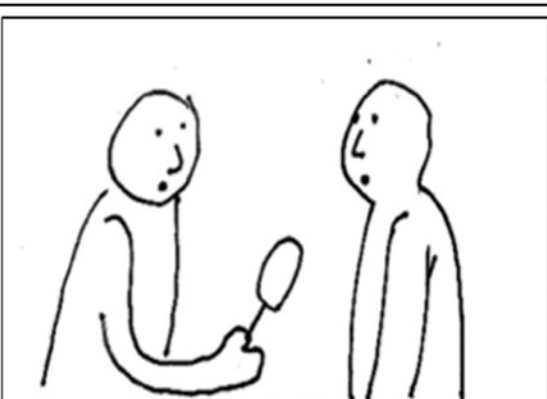
Sometimes a shot-list will suffice. Here is the shot list for a short news report. It's a good idea to script what you're going to say on-camera.

SHOT-LIST	NOTES
Shot 1 - LS Presenter enters - introduces subject e.g. Artisan Papermaker, Peter Foulds	
Shot 2 - A Graphic Title appears: Papermaking in Weobley Marsh	
Shot 3 Video - A Sequence shots showing Peter papermaking (or montage)	
Shot 3 Audio - Presenter gives some biographical background to Peter's papermaking activities	
Shot 4 - M 2S Interview with Peter covering the current state of his business - it's hard for him to survive but he's determined	
Shot 5 - MS Interview with Professor about history of papermaking	
Shot 6 - Local people say how much his business brings to the local area and what a highly respected local figure he is	
Shot 7 - A Graphic Subtitle appears: How much artisan-makers contribute to the UK economy and possible gloomy forecasts	
Shot 8 - LS Presenter sums up his feelings on the subject, then exits past...	
Shot 9 - (not on storyboard) LS Peter in his studio working away as the door closes. Music	

SHOT-LIST	NOTES
Shot 1	
Shot 2	
Shot 3	
Shot 4	
Shot 5	
Shot 6	
Shot 7	

A SCRIPT STORYBOARD

A film with an emphasis on interviews and pieces to camera, a script storyboard like the one below may be the best option.

	<p>LS Long Shot of Presenter walks into shot in front of papermaking studio - INTRO to Camera:</p> <p>Today we are talking to an artisan papermaker called Peter Foulds who has been working in his studio in Weobley Marsh, in a remote part of rural Herefordshire for some 15 years. We want find out how important a small craft business like Peter's, is to a rural area and its economy.</p>
	<p>Title Sequence Motion Graphic: Rural Lives</p> <p>Sub -title: Papermaking</p> <p>Music: Track 15 Intro</p>
	<p>MS Medium Shot of Peter in action. Leads into montage of making paper.</p> <p>Presenter Voice-Over: Peter trained with a master Japanese paper-maker after leaving his job as a bank clerk over 20 years ago. Once he completed this exacting process which took 6 years, he came back to the UK determined to popularise papermaking here.</p>
	<p>M2S Medium Two-Shot Presenter walks into studio to interview Peter.</p> <p>Questions/Topics: Basic History of papermaking How long his business had been going What he makes with paper Importance of small business to rural economy</p>

IMAGE

SOUND

RESEARCHER'S ROLE

In the course of your media research, you may uncover a bewildering selection of potential interviewees. However, before you begin filming you need to prioritise who is best for your film. It's easy to get lured into an interview with a fantastic conversationalist with great life experiences, but ultimately their story must enhance the film you are making.

Interviewee's name:

Stories the interviewer can tell:

Stories that are good for your video (prioritise the best ones first):

Is there anyone that can tell this story better?

Schedule: Are they available for filming? When?

How long will filming take?

SCHEDULE



PRODUCTION TITLE _____

DATE & TIME	SCENE	LOCATION	ACTORS	CREW	PROPS

Record each take with this **SHOT LOG** on your shoot (very handy during editing):

[illegible]

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

A good interviewee is someone with a story to tell. A good interviewer doesn't get in the way of that story but tease it out of a person while they are on-camera. Interviews form the basis of documentaries, news items and all other forms of reportage. A good interviewee will need to make an informed and individual contribution to your programme that he or she alone can tell. It helps if the interviewee has an engaging or charming personality. Find a quiet place to conduct your interview.

QUESTIONS: Discuss the nature of the programme and the questions with the interviewee beforehand. Most interviews contain a core of 2-3 key questions.

STAND-IN: Allow the crew to set up with a stand-in first and bring in the interviewee as late as possible. Sitting in front of a camera can make interviewees very nervous.

AT EASE: Put the interviewee at ease by talking to them before filming.

EYE LINES: If the interviewer is not in the shot, sit them as close to the camera as possible to ask questions so that the interviewee's eye-line to camera looks correct.

OPEN QUESTIONS: The interviewer doesn't want 'yes' or 'no' answers. Ask open questions e.g. "Tell me about your experience working in the NHS" or "What makes you say that?" or "What happened next?" or "What does that mean?" or "Can you give me an example of that?" or "What's that like?"

NODDIES 1: Explain to the interviewee that as they answer questions the interviewer will just nod ("noddies") maintaining eye contact. This is to reduce extraneous noise, allowing for clean sound and options for the editor.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS: It may be a good idea to 'warm-up' your interviewee with a simple question at the beginning.

PUT THE ANSWER IN THE QUESTION: If your interviewee is confident, ask them to try and 'put the question in the answer' when they reply as the interviewer's question may be edited out of the interview.

SOUNDBITES: If your interviewee has made a good point ask them to summarise their thoughts, this may make statements which are more concise and easier to edit a second time around i.e. soundbites.

NODDIES 2: After an interviewee has left, it is possible for an interviewer can record a series of 'noddies' where they appear to listen to/ ask questions of the absent speaker.

MID-SHOT: Although a medium shot is the convention for interviews, feel free to vary the shot type at a natural pause in the interview. You can try MCU, CU or ExCU.

CROSSING THE LINE

This is an important filmic convention which helps your videos work well especially for interviews or dialogue scenes. Additionally you can say “I think we’re crossing the line here” on set to the cameraperson sound impressive!

PANEL 1:

There is an Interviewer and Interviewee. We draw an imaginary line between the two people. Camera Position 1 is filming the Interviewer.

PANEL 2:

The camera places the Interviewer to the right side of the shot, giving them space on the left to look at the Interviewee.

PANEL 3:

Conversely, Camera Position 2 is filming the Interviewee.

PANEL 4:

The camera places the Interviewee to the left side of the shot, giving them space on the right to look at the Interviewer.

PANEL 5:

Camera Position 3 films both in a wider shot

PANEL 6:

In the wide shot the Interviewer still looks to the left and the Interviewee still looks to the right.

NOTE: Camera Positions 1,2 and 3 stay the right side of this imaginary line of action, and they will all edit together well.

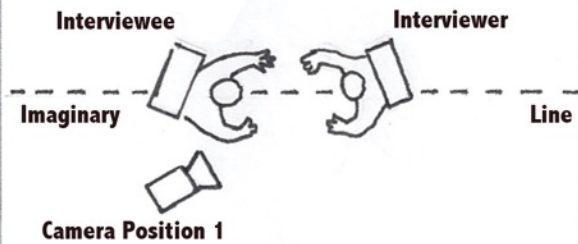
PANEL 7:

Camera Position 4 also films the Interviewer - but this camera has ‘crossed the line’ between our subjects.

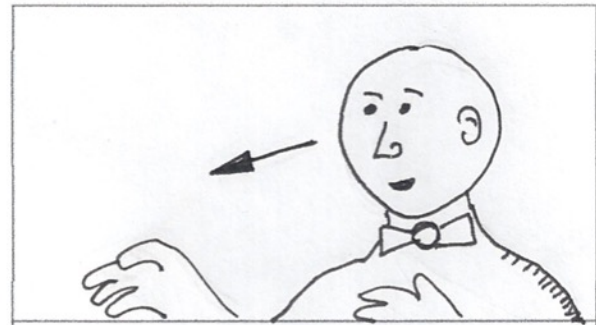
PANEL 8:

The camera now places the Interviewer to the left side of the shot looking to the right at the Interviewee. This will look incorrect when edited together with the shot of the Interviewee (see PANEL 4) as both people will be looking off in the same direction at no one in particular. It will not cut with the wide shot (PANEL 6) as the Interviewer will be looking in different directions between shots.

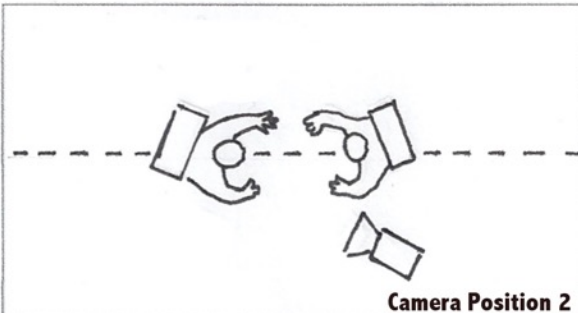
SEEN FROM ABOVE:



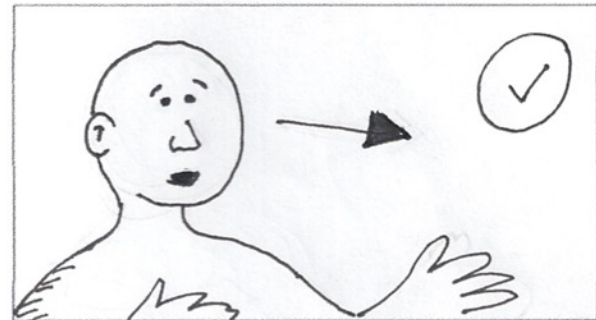
1. Camera Position 1 is filming the Interviewer



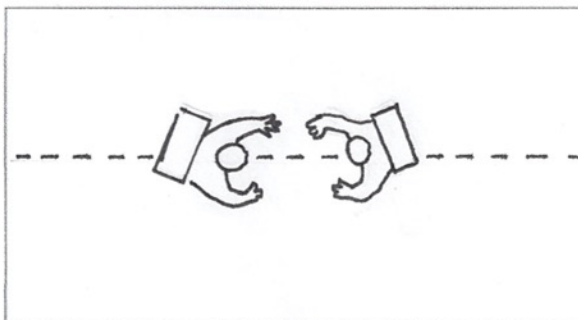
2. The camera places the Interviewer to the right side of the shot looking on the left to the Interviewee.



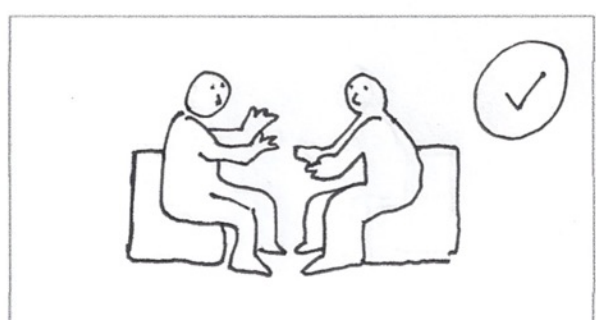
3. Conversely, Camera Position 2 is filming the Interviewee



4. The camera places the Interviewee to the left side of the shot looking to the left at the Interviewer.

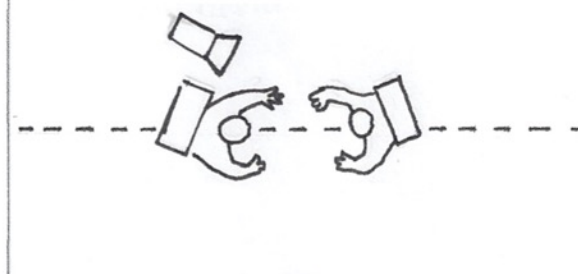


5. Camera Position 3 films a Wide Shot

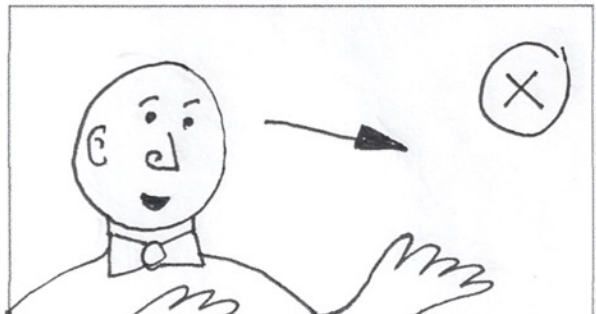


6. In the wide shot the Interviewer still looks to the left and the Interviewee still looks to the right.

Camera Position 4



7: Camera Position 4 also films the Interviewer. The camera has 'crossed the line' between our subjects.



8. This will look incorrect when edited with the shot of the Interviewee (PANEL 4)

GUIDELINES FOR RECORDING GOOD SOUND

Sound is more important than the picture

Audio recording is highly important to your film but can sometimes be seen as being secondary to the visuals, or even worse completely neglected. This is a mistake as bad quality audio is distracting to a viewer and can spoil your film.

Microphones don't discriminate

Microphones (or 'mics') record sound differently to the way we hear things. Our brains selectively favour sounds we are most interested in and pay less attention (where possible) to competing sounds, whereas a microphone will not discriminate. Different types of microphone are designed to be more selective, but in general (and especially with on-board mics) they will record a motorbike, distant aeroplane or a background conversation without favouring the particular sound you may want for your film i.e. an interview.

Get Close

Get the mic (or the camera's internal mic) as close as possible to your sound source e.g. interviewee's mouth or footsteps along a corridor.

Location

Find somewhere quiet to film, or the quietest spot in any given location.

Getting into Position

Wait until the camera person has framed the shot - only get into position when everyone else is ready.

Monitor sound on the shoot

It is easier to get good sound by using headphones to monitor what sound the camera/iPad is actually recording. You are much more likely to detect buzzing sounds or other distracting noises this way.

Quiet

Ask for quiet on set.

Wind protection

Use wind protection when filming outside e.g. wind sock or make-shift glove.

Equipment Care

When using external mics and cables be careful they are not knocked or trodden on as they are relatively fragile. Be aware too that they can be trip hazards - disconnect if you are moving to a different set-up.

QUICK TECHNICAL CHECKLIST	
(1) CAMERA / iPad	
Tripod or Hand-held?	
Is camera level?	
Auto or manual mode? If in manual mode, check exposure, shutter speed and white balance.	
Is your shot in focus?	
Is your shot interesting?	
Has the subject enough space in the frame to move?	
Does the background work with the subject?	
(2) POWER: Has your equipment sufficient power or charged batteries?	
(3) MEDIA: Do you have enough disk space for the filming you intend to do?	
(4) LIGHT: Is your subject is well lit?	
Can you use natural light or incidental light e.g. lamps?	
Have you got enough time to set-up studio lighting?	
(5) SOUND: Have you done a sound check?	
Is someone monitoring the sound through headphones? Is there a healthy audio level?	

Ass. Director: QUIET ON SET

Director: ROLL CAMERA

Camera: CAMERA ROLLING

Director: ACTION!

(& AT END OF THE SHOT)

Director: CUT!

EDIT WORKFLOW

(1) Transfer your media - Bring your media and assets into your computer. For an iPad this is done automatically.

(2) Assembly edit - The editor or director will follow the script or storyboard to assemble the best shots and takes, and to arrange these in correct order on the timeline.

(3) First Cut - A first cut is about removing what doesn't work, and shaping the film. The story will be told in a linear way following the script at this point. Screen to selected people. Listen carefully to feedback.

(4) Fine Cut - The fine cut is the shape and look of the final film. The editor may change the order of sections at this point so that the film works really well, and to make the story more interesting.

The image is fine tuned with colour correction, filters or transitions. Sound effects are added and the audio levels are balanced so the right sound mix is achieved. Add credits. Show to selected people before screening.

(5) The Final Cut - the finished film ready for screening and distribution.

(6) Screening / Celebration - participants attend a screening with friends, family, local media and dignitaries. A chance to highlight the hard work and issues involved in making the film.

(7) Export - Export the film to keep and then export a copy of the file to be uploaded for viewing on websites and mobiles.

(8) Archive - A high quality of the original exported film needs to be kept by the film's makers on a computer, hard drive or cloud storage e.g. OneDrive, Vimeo or YouTube.