

# PLANNING AND PRODUCING VIDEOS: A TWO-PART WORKSHOP ON WRITING SCRIPTS & MAKING VIDEOS @YOUR LIBRARY

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## INTRODUCTION

At Indiana University South Bend, we have produced several short instructional videos to meet specific instructional needs. These videos either introduce a concept such as Boolean operators or demonstrate how to find a specific type of material in the library. The videos are generally 3-4 minutes in length. Videos are beneficial for library instruction because complicated concepts can be explained more thoroughly and effectively in a multimedia presentation. In addition, the availability of instructional videos on the library website enables users, whether they are on-campus students, distance learners, or anyone around the world, to learn about a specific concept or topic whenever they need the information.

## PRELIMINARY PLANNING

Planning is the most important part of the video production process. Good planning will take approximately 70-80% of the time allotted for a given project. The four preliminary planning steps are listed below:

1. Needs assessment: Phrase the purpose of the video as a response to the need of a specific group of individuals. For example: *"Incoming students need to know how to find a government publication."*
2. Audience Analysis: Define the audience more narrowly. Include factors that will help plan the video, such as amount of experience with and level of interest in the subject matter. For example: *"First year college*

*students who are highly motivated to learn the subject, and who have no prior experience doing so."*

3. Learning Objectives: Spell out exactly what the audience should be able to do, know, or believe in a measurable way. For example, *"After viewing this video, the learner will be able to locate a government publication in the Schurz Library without assistance."*
4. Treatment: Write a brief narrative description of the way the program will appear on the screen. For example: *"A student approaches the circulation desk and asks a librarian how to find a government publication. As the librarian explains, we see screen shots and close-ups illustrating the concepts. The pair walks to the government publications area and finds the publication."*

## SCRIPTWRITING OR STORYBOARDING

Once the initial planning is completed, the process of writing a script or drawing a storyboard can begin. The script or storyboard is a comprehensive blueprint for every element of production. Because video is a visual medium, it is important to think of pictures that tell the story and then include words that best enhance that story line. Many people prefer to draw a storyboard: a series of small boxes similar to cartoon frames that visually depict the story with narration included. Others prefer to use a two-column script form that includes visual cues on the left (such as locations, scenes, camera moves, transitions, etc.), and audio information (such as scripted lines, music and sound effects) on the right.

Regardless of which format is used, there are some basic guidelines to follow in writing the script:

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1. **Write for the ear:** Because the audio will be heard rather than viewed as text, it's important to keep the script lines short and to the point. It's also important to use active voice and put statements in positive form. One way to test a script for "listenability" is to read it out loud, or to record it and listen to it.
2. **Write for the eye:** The viewer will appreciate more visual information than talk. Include a range of camera shots and backgrounds. Remember to include people in the shots.
3. **Other tips:** Use pauses and transitions to allow the viewer to absorb information or switch locations or concepts. An ideal length for an instructional video is 3-5 minutes. A single camera shot should be no more than 6-7 seconds long.

In terms of camera terminology, there are a few basic shots that will be sufficient for most instructional video production:

1. **Establishing Shot:** The opening picture of a program or scene. Usually, a wide and/or distant perspective that serves to orient the viewer to the overall setting and surroundings.
2. **Wide Shot:** The camera view of a subject or scene from a distance, showing a broad perspective.
3. **Medium Shot:** Defines any camera perspective between long shot and close-up, viewing the subjects from a medium distance.
4. **Close-up:** A tightly framed camera shot in which the principal subject is viewed at close range, appearing large and dominant on screen.
5. **Two-Shot:** A camera view including two distinct subjects.

Once the script is written, the next step in the planning process is to plan for filming the video. It's important to carefully consider both the location for the filming as well as casting talent for the production.

## SCOUTING THE LOCATION

Before the shoot, it's important to visit the designated location. The project manager or director should make notes on the location of power sources, available lighting, including natural light, and what the level of noise is in the location. There may be times of the day when the light is best, or when the ambient noise level is most tolerable. In addition, it's important to evaluate the area chosen as a background for unnecessary clutter. While the eye skips over clutter in the natural environment, clutter on film is more noticeable, and the viewer may question if it has some meaning to the purpose of the video. Here are some other

suggestions related to scouting the location:

1. Sit quietly in the shoot location and go through the entire script in your head. Bring a notebook to record your thoughts or to draw additional pictures.
2. Make a list of the video equipment and props that will be needed for the shoot.

## CASTING

There are several options when casting your talent. Depending on your time frame and budget, you can choose to:

1. Have an open audition for talent, posting notices and inviting campus and community people to try out.
2. Work with faculty in the theatre and/or film departments on your campus to identify students that might be interested in acting in your video.
3. Hand-pick students that you know to serve as the talent for your production. These might be frequent patrons in your library or student assistants that work for you.

Regardless of the method you use to select your talent, there are some important considerations as you cast. While theatre students are trained to use the large stage and audience space for their performance, the camera prefers smaller movements and a still, quiet demeanor. Consider these issues as well as limited facial expression when casting.

## SHOOTING THE VIDEO

Once the script is written, the location has been scouted, and the casting is completed, it's time to begin the shoot. One of the major considerations in video quality is lighting. Video cameras like light. The easiest way to add light is to bounce the light off the ceiling so that you're not creating harsh shadows. While professional lighting equipment is expensive, there are some cheaper alternatives for the amateur budget. Lowell makes durable and relatively inexpensive quartz halogen light kits (such as the "tube kit"), and most home supply stores carry halogen work lights for under \$40.

Here are some basic guidelines for using your video camera to best advantage:

1. **Stabilize the camera:** Using a tripod is an excellent way to minimize camera shake and make the video easier to watch. If the scene calls for a moving camera, zoom out all the way to minimize shake. If you don't have a tripod, walk with your knees bent, and hold the camera as still as possible. Bracing your elbows against your torso is a good way to stabilize the camera. Placing the camera operator in a wheelchair is a common means of getting a smooth "tracking shot" down a hallway.

2. **Use camera moves sparingly:** When videotaping, be deliberate about camera moves. Avoid zooming or moving the camera unless there is a specific need to do so. If you do zoom or pan, rehearse the move a couple of times so you can execute it with confidence.
3. **Move the camera closer:** If you are using the in-camera microphone, you should try to get the camera as close to the talent as possible in order to get the best sound. Also, you will have fewer problems with focus if you are close to the subject, and zoomed out to a wide shot.
4. **Remember to get “pre-roll”:** Start taping before your subject speaks and let the tape run a few seconds after your subject has finished speaking. Instruct the talent to hold their position during these intervals (as opposed to looking at the camera, laughing, etc). This will give you room to do fades and dissolves, and prevents cutting off words. If your talent can't seem to stop “jumping the gun,” turn off the beep indicator and/or put tape over the record light so they don't know when you're pressing record.
5. **Finger slates:** In order to keep track of which take you're on, you can hold up one, two or three fingers in front of the lens before each take (indicating take one, two or three). This will make logging the footage for editing much easier.
6. **Practice with the equipment:** Check the camera out and learn to use it. Practice doing short video under a variety of conditions. Keep notes on your experiences. (You may even wish to consider reading the operators manual.)
7. **Think in shot sequences:** Try getting sequences of shots. For example, you might shoot 10 seconds of a wide shot of a location, pause, then shoot 10 seconds of a medium shot of the talent in action, pause, then shoot a close up of the talent speaking. When edited together, these sequences can be an effective alternative to zooming.

## EDITING THE VIDEO

Once you have completed shooting the video, you're ready to begin the editing process. There are a variety of video editing software products available. Final Cut Express is an excellent tool for Apple computers, and Adobe Premiere works very well for PC.

1. **Find a fast computer:** Video editing is demanding, and not very practical on slower machines. At least one gigabyte of RAM is recommended for most programs.
2. **Use an external hard drive:** One hour of digital video

uses about 20GB of hard-disk space. To have enough room to edit the video, you'll need at least 60GB of free storage space. Purchasing an external FireWire hard drive will allow you to store your files, move them to other machines, and will lessen the demand on your CPU. A fast hard drive (7200 RPM) will allow you to capture directly to it.

3. **Add a FireWire card and software:** The most effective way to get video in and out of the computer is a FireWire port, found on most digital camcorders and newer computers. If your computer doesn't have one, you can add a FireWire card for under \$50.
4. **Log your footage:** After shooting, create a log of all your shots, including time code or counter numbers, name of the shot, and comments. Only digitize what you need.
5. **Name your clips:** After importing, many of your video clips will look alike. Save yourself time later giving your clips meaningful names now.
6. **Basic editing:** Some prefer to bring all the clips into the timeline, and trim there. Others prefer to trim the clips in the import window and then drag them to the timeline. In any case, the goal is a “rough cut” that shows all the major action.

## POSTING THE VIDEO ONLINE

When video production is completed, it is time to think about how to make the videos available to patrons. There are three major channels to share your instruction videos with others: uploading to general purpose websites, video sharing websites and social networking websites.

On all website types, the major benefit of posting instructional videos online is availability and flexibility. Online videos are available 24/7 and users may view them based on their personal schedule. Also, as most of the video sharing and social networking websites provide a search function, this enables the instructional videos to reach users who will never visit the library website. Additionally, the “click to share” functionality facilitates the sharing of a useful videos to other users, which further increases the exposure of the instructional videos.

## GENERAL PURPOSE WEBSITES

1. Library website
  - Downloading: Need to download the complete file before viewing
  - Streaming: View video while downloading still in process; video needs to be in a streaming media format and is required to be housed at a streaming video server.

- Internet Archive: Open Source Movies [<http://www.archive.org/index.php>]

## VIDEO SHARING WEBSITES

- YouTube [<http://www.youtube.com/>]
- TeacherTube [<http://www.teachertube.com/index.php>]

	<b>YouTube</b>	<b>TeacherTube</b>
File size	Up to 100 MB	No Limit
Length of video	Under 10 mins	No Maximum
Type of video	Any	Educational only
Tagging	✓	✓
Rating	✓	✓
Comments	✓	✓
Embed on website, blog etc.	✓	✓
Permanent URL	✓	✓
Other features	Provide HTML embed code	Upload support documents in .doc, .ppt, .pdf etc.

## SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

- Facebook [<http://www.facebook.com/>]
- MySpace [<http://www.myspace.com/>]

	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>MySpace</b>
File size	Up to 300 MB	Less than 100 MB
Length of video	Under 20 mins	No Maximum
Category	✗	Up to 3
Tagging	✓	✓
Rating	✗	✓
Comments	✓	✓
Embed on website, blog etc.	✗	✓
Availability of video application	Need to add Video application	Default

Note: ✓ represents the option is available  
✗ represents the option is unavailable

All presentation materials and additional resources are available at:  
<http://www.iusb.edu/~libg/loex/2008/index.shtml>