

## Top Ten Tips for Shooting Better Video

Some basic rules of thumb for capturing good pictures.

### 1. Use the Rule of Thirds for Well-Composed Shots

To get a better picture every time, use the Rule of Thirds.

- Mentally divide up your viewfinder's image into a tic-tac-toe board.
- Divide the picture into three equal parts vertically and horizontally. The most significant part of the picture should be where the lines intersect.
- You have four choices: top-left, top-right, bottom-left, bottom-right.

### 2. Look Out for the Light

Shoot away from windows and other forms of intense background light.

### 3. Use Zoom-in and Zoom-out sparingly

Zooms are rarely used in professional film and TV. As a rule of thumb: if your eye can't do it, you shouldn't do it. The camera zoom should only be used to frame your shot before taping begins.



### 4. Keep It Steady

Another mark of poor video production is shaky video images. Correct this by using a tripod whenever you can. If no tripod is available, look for fixed objects that you can lean on (or lean the camera on) to add stability to the camera's movements.

### 5. Make the Beginning the End

When you are shooting a video, make it fun and make it a story whenever you can. Often in movies, we see an establishing shot that is repeated at the end of the movie. It sounds simple, but can be a useful technique for any film or video.

### 6. Keep It Short

When you're trying to capture the attention of an audience, it's often easier to give them a lot of short video clips instead of attempting to appeal to their arty side with long, drawn-out shots that are more than a minute long. Shots of 5-10 seconds duration often work very well.

### 7. Mix It Up

When shooting video, get plenty of A-roll (the main event) and B-roll footage (additional shots to complement the A-roll).

### 8. Tell Us Where You Are

Take some establishing shots, which are wide shots of a sign, a natural monument, a historical reference, or any indication of where you are on the shoot. A shot of the Eiffel Tower says to the audience, "we're not in Los Angeles anymore."

### 9. Use Many Angles

Shoot your subjects from a few angles—move around the subject, shoot from below and from above. When you shoot from below, it makes the subject seem larger than life. When you shoot from above, it suggests that the person or subject is smaller than his or her surroundings.

### 10. Try Visual Surprises

Try shooting into mirrors or from a high point of view, or put movement into your material by shooting through tall grass or from moving escalators. This can make for a more fun and interesting video.

# Top Ten Tips for Recording Better Sound

Nothing ruins a video quicker than bad sound—if your audience can't hear what's going on, they won't enjoy your story. Here are some tips and advice to help you get it right.

## 1. Use a Separate Microphone

If you possibly can, get a separate microphone. The microphones built-in to cameras and minidisks are never very good. It'll mean you'll be able to get nearer to the sound, too.

## 2. Avoid Background Noise

Your brain filters out background noises, such as traffic, air-conditioning, or planes overhead. Sadly, microphones don't. If you're recording voices, you'll need to be somewhere quiet. Keep this in mind when you're choosing where to videotape.

## 3. Use Headphones

With headphones, you'll be better able to hear at the time of taping if there is any background noise, or a problem with the microphone. This can help you avoid disappointment later when you listen to your recording.



## 4. Add Music Afterwards

Don't have music playing as you film or record. It'll be a nightmare to edit your video if you do.

## 5. Don't Use Copyrighted Music

You'd have to get permission from the people who wrote and performed them first. You could try making your own music for the soundtrack, or you can obtain music from sources that offer rights to music and other assets at low or no cost to independent filmmakers.

## 6. Make a Silent Movie

Do you even need sound? One option is to add captions or title cards to explain what is happening, or to highlight your main points.

## 7. Don't Expect to Get It All in One Take

If the beginning is good on one take, the middle on another, and the end on a third, just take the best bits from each and edit them together.

## 8. Get a Bit of Atmosphere

Record thirty seconds or so of silence so you have the background atmosphere without anyone talking over it. It'll come in handy when you're editing. (This is called "room tone.")

## 9. Sound Effects

Sound effects can either be done during recording (called "spot effects") or afterwards and added in the edit (called "foley"). If your audio needs background sound effects throughout, such as wind or waves, don't record them at the same time that you record actors or other people talking. The effects may drown out their voices. It'll work much better if you record the sound effects separately and add them in during editing.

## 10. A Few Easy Sound Effects

- A common trick for recording realistic "outdoor" footsteps is to pour a bit of sugar or sand onto a hard floor, then record someone walking on it.
- For the sound of footsteps on grass, if you don't have access to the real stuff, walk on tangles of old video or cassette tape.
- To get the sound of someone bumping into something, try smacking a vegetable like a zucchini or eggplant.
- Crinkling bits of cellophane makes a good substitute for the sound of a crackling fire—just don't overdo it.