

Bonus Resource by Rob Stewart

Quick and Easy Tips for Improving Your Video

Before we get into key tips for producing great video, let's agree on something...

It's not the camera or mic you're using.

It's not the amount of money you spend to have someone else produce your video.

It's about the message, the script, the story!

Ever seen a movie with awesome special effects, that still seemed horrible?
Ever watched a film that had great actors in it, yet you fell asleep half way through?

If so, it's most likely because the script was no good, the story not engaging.

What you're saying, what your message is, and how you connect with your viewers are the most important aspects of your video.

This guide is not about your script or copy writing, that's another topic that's very worthy of further exploration (and will serve you better than a brand new camera).

This guide is about a few simple tools / techniques that you can start using today to create good looking and sounding videos.

You'll still need to be communicating something useful and engaging, but having a video that looks and sounds good is an essential first step for capturing and keeping your viewer's attention.

So let's get to it, starting with some great news . . .

The HD cameras in today's mobile phones now capture video that's higher quality than a \$75,000 broadcast TV camera from just ten years ago!

Despite the stunning hi-resolution video that these devices are capable of producing, you still need to have a few basic techniques in place in order to produce audio and video that will capture your viewer's attention and hold it for as long as possible.

More good news . . .

It's not that difficult to learn these basic techniques and there's just three key areas we need to "focus" on:

- 1. Shot composition**
- 2. Lighting**
- 3. Audio**

A few simple tips employed in these areas can turn your videos from looking like mistakes into quality productions.

(We will assume an iPhone will be used, but the general practices below are applicable regardless of the phone or camera that is used.)



Shot composition

Never, ever shoot video with your phone in a vertical aspect ratio.

Make sure you turn the phone sideways, so that the resulting video looks like the picture on your HD TV - it's wider than it is tall. With a regular video camera, you only have one choice of how to shoot. Nothing looks more amateurish than smart phone video that was shot vertically. Don't even think about it.

Hint:

If using an iPhone, make sure the front button is on the right when you're framing your shot. this will insure that you're not mistakenly shooting an upside down shot.

Always use a tripod or some other form of stabilization when shooting your video. Do not shoot anything handheld - just don't do it. There are super affordable mini-tripods that you can use with your phone. Get one and get used to using it. It'll make a huge improvement in your video for the smallest cost. If you already have a tripod, you can buy a phone holder that just screws onto the top of it, or you can find a small one to do the job here: [iPhone tripods](#)

Make sure the viewer can see your eyes.

A simple head shot or "medium close up" works best. It's very similar to a shot of a newscaster on the 6 o'clock news. There's a reason they say "the eyes are the windows to the soul." If you want to engage your viewers and get them to trust you, make sure they can clearly see your eyes.

Examples of different shot types, including "medium close up" can be seen here: [Video shot types](#)

Frame your shot with a simple, neutral background.

You want your viewer's attention on you and your message, not what's going on outside your window. Master shooting against a plain wall first, before you start jazzing things up with props. The next step after a plain wall might be a backdrop of sorts that you hang on the wall.

For just a few bucks, you can find all kinds of fun "photo backdrop papers" that you could simply tape up on a wall behind you. Check out examples here: [Photo backdrops](#)

If you're shooting anything wider than a "medium close up", still maintain a simple and neutral background without unnecessary distractions. Keep it simple and keep the focus on your message.

Lighting

Use some sort of light to illuminate yourself.

Ideally, your face should be the brightest thing in the picture. As viewers, our eyes are drawn to the brightest thing in a shot - make it be you.

You may be able to use some sort of light that's around your house (e.g., a lamp with the shade removed, or preferably something more directional, like a desk lamp that you could aim at your subject).

Best case would be to use one or more special lights - if you're only shooting close-ups or medium close-ups, you should be able to get away with just a single light. Here's an example of a very low cost "softbox" light, quite affordable, but good enough to get the job done: [Softbox light kit](#)

If you have a room with fair amount of natural light available, you may be able to use that - just make sure that you're shooting with the light behind the camera and shining on you. Don't try shooting into a lit window - you'll struggle to get enough light on your subject to make it viewable.

Tips for looking gorgeous on camera

Wear a flattering color that is different than your background color, and usually something other than black or white; avoid busy patterns on your clothing or fussy jewelry.

Use matte make-up or blotting papers to avoid being too shiny.

Audio

Get a mic and learn how to use it.

Good audio is important. A simple clip-on mic, also referred to as a lavalier or "lav" mic will always sound better than your camera's built in mic.

You can purchase a lav mic ranging from \$25-\$100 that will plug right into your iPhone's headset jack to use when recording iPhone video. Make sure you get one that's designed to be used with an iPhone (they have special connectors). Here's a couple of examples that should work fine:

[Movo clip-on lav mic](#)

[Rode clip-on lav mic](#)

Hint:

These mics usually come with relatively short cables, ~ 4', so consider spending another \$10 to get an extension cable. you'll need an extension cable that is labelled as "4 position" or "TRRS", like this one:

[Mic / headset extension cable](#)



So that's it! Composition, lighting and audio. Get these 3 things right and your video will be better than 90% of the cell phone video out there. Get these things wrong and your viewers will be straining to hear your voice or distracted by a painting on the wall - not hearing your message, not connecting to *you*.

Practice recording yourself and speaking into the camera. Be yourself! The relaxed and natural "you" will always come across as the most likable and trust-able.

Enjoy experimenting, and you'll be using video like a pro in no time!

