

Video Guide

What is video?

Video is a string of moving pictures, usually combined with sound, that can be edited to tell a story.

Why video?

Video can be a powerful medium for storytelling because it captures motion and movement. It is best for stories with strong visual components, especially action. Video can convey strong emotions quickly to viewers.

Why not video?

Video has problems conveying certain types of information, especially stories with lots of numbers. Viewers' attention spans are limited with video when compared to print stories or audio pieces. Video is the most complex and taxing form of media to produce. Editing a short video can take hours and there are technical hurdles to overcome.

The Components of News Video

A-Roll The interviews and direct film of actions that will provide the skeleton and structure of a news story

B-Roll Film of the subject's atmosphere, actions and other elements that will be used to cover edits in A-Roll and to provide a visual interest to the narration.

Natural Sound Sound is an important element of video and it should be gathered to match with B-Roll and with action-based A-Roll

Narration Some news videos have narration, a reporter or anchor's voice reading from a script to describe what is happening in the video. Increasingly online, fewer and fewer videos have narration.

Matched action Two or more shots from different angles that illustrate one action or parts of a series of actions. When recording in the field, it is imperative to move the camera often to collect matched action shots for editing.

Sequence A series of matched action shots is called a sequence. A large part of editing is creating sequences of B-Roll to compress the time an action takes or to illustrate a full action of the subject.

Types of shots

There are essentially three types of shots you can gather while recording, but the look of these shots changes, depending on the context.

Wide Shot encompasses the whole scene and gives the viewer a sense of the environment. Depending on the context, a wide shot can be very wide, like a cityscape:



Or just wide enough to show all of a person's body:



Medium Shot is an intermediate shot, good for showing interactions between people or people acting in their surroundings. Once again, what makes a medium shot depends on the context.

It could be part of something large:



With people, it often shows your subject from the waist or chest up:



Tight Shot also known as a close-up. A tight shot will focus the viewer's attention on some detail. Close ups are often the end result of sequences as shots often move from wide to medium to tight, but this is not a rule.

Again, tight shots depend on the context. It could be a small part of something big.



Or it could be something very small and specific that you want to show your viewer.



Tight shots are the best type of shot to show a person's emotion, because they will allow a viewer to focus on the subject's face.

Special types of shots

Tight shots are also often used as **cut-aways**, a special type of shot that is very important in the editing process. A cut-away can be used to condense time or transfer between different parts of a sequence. Tight shots make good cut-aways

because they divorce the action from its context and allow time to pass without the viewer noticing.

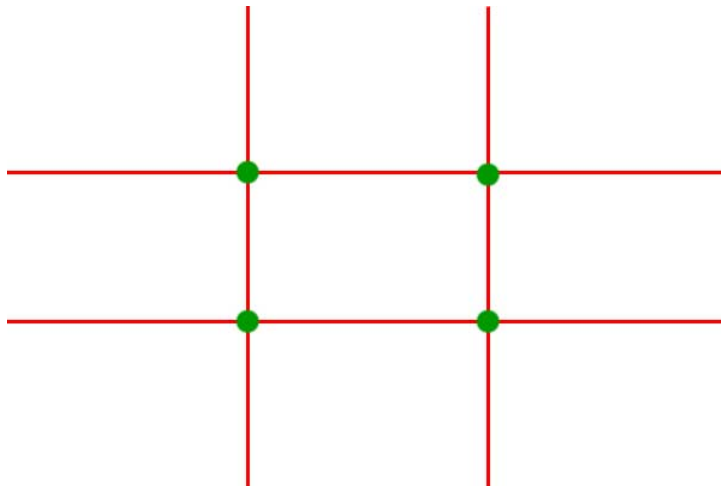
When filming interviews, you can also film cut-aways by taking a few seconds at the beginning of your interview to film your subject's feet or hands or a wide shot of them speaking. These types of cut-aways should be used as a last resort (Solid B-Roll is always preferable, but they are good to have.)

Cut-aways don't have to be tight shots. You can also use very wide shots that don't allow your viewer to see the details of what the subject is doing.

Another important type of shot is the **establishing shot**. The establishing shot is simply the first image you present the viewer in your video. It should give them a strong sense of the place and subject of the piece while also being visually compelling. Often, this is a wide shot. But this is not always true.

Setting up the interview shot

It's important to achieve a natural framing with the interview shot so the viewer will not be distracted. Remember to frame your shots using the rule of thirds:



This means, our interview subject should not be in the center of the frame but offset to one side. Their eyes should be above the center line and, ideally, placed on one of the green dots above, like this:



The space on the right is called **look space** or **lead space**. Your subject should always be looking into the frame. You should position yourself and your camera to achieve this framing.

Finally, the location of your interview is important. Locate your subject away from windows to avoid backlight. Place them in the context of the story. If you are doing a story about a swimmer, interview them in front of the pool. Use available so it is on their face and not behind them.

When shooting, match the way your eyes work.

Eyes do not move smoothly from one image to next. Your focus shifts quickly from big pictures to small details. This is how we gather the information we need to avoid danger or assess situations. Your camera work should match the way eyes work.

That means you should NOT use:

Zooms a camera function that is editorial. Your eyes don't zoom.

Pans moving horizontally across an image. Instead use a wide shot, followed by a medium shot of something in the picture.

Tilts moving vertically across an image.

Zooms, tilts and pans are attempts to make a boring image more exciting. It never works.

Also, even when you are walking or riding in a bouncy car, your eyes process a smooth image. This means you should:

ALWAYS USE A TRIPOD OR SOME FORM OF STABILIZATION

Tips for conducting a video interview

1. Ask your subject their name at the beginning, BUT ask it as a two-part question, i.e. "What is your name and what is your position?" or "What is your name and what did you have for lunch?"

This will force your subject to state their full name as part of a sentence.

2. Ask open-ended questions. Asking specific questions that have a specific answer can lead to uneditable video.

NO

Q: How many people work for you?

A: Fifty.

YES

Q: Can you describe your business for me?

A: Well, we have fifty people working here...

The first is good for nothing. You have video of your subject saying the word fifty. The second is perfect for editing.

3. Ask questions multiple times in different ways. This will allow people to gather their thoughts. One version will always be clearer than the other.

Types of News Stories

The following are types of stories commonly used to put together a typical newscast. They all assume a reporter or anchor (person on camera in the news studio) is narrating the story using a script.

Reader The anchor simply reads a script describing the story while the camera stays on her. There is often a graphic, called an **over the shoulder** or **OTS**.

Voice Over or **VO** The anchor reads a story while b-roll gathered in the field is played on screen. Often 30 seconds.

VOSOT stands for voice over – sound on tape. The anchor reads a story over b-roll and then there is a quote, a piece of a-roll, timed to the narrator's script which comes in at a predetermined point. Often 45 seconds.

Package A package is the basic form of a TV news story. It is reported and produced by a reporter with their narration underneath. The anchor will read a lead-in or introduction to the story. Then, the pre-edited package will begin to play. A package is a collection of the best b-roll and a-roll with natural sound that the reporter gathered in the field.

Oftentimes, packages will include a stand-up, a shot of the reporter on-screen talking about the story. These stand-ups can provide a narrative bridge for some part of the story the reporter is missing.

During stand-ups, the reporter should do something illustrative or interesting.

Instead of stand-ups, many television stations now use **live shots**. The anchor will **toss** to a reporter in the field who introduces her own story. A package with a live shot at both the beginning and the end is called a **doughnut**.

A Few Words About the Relationship Between Shooting and Editing

- When editing a news story, the images on the screen should match the words being spoken. Listen to your subjects and make sure to gather footage that matches the words they are saying.
- A typical shot lasts about four to seven seconds. When filming, you should set up your shot, press record, count to 10 and then stop recording. This will give you time on either side for shaky shots or out of focus shots.
- Edit as you shoot. Edit BEFORE you shoot. The more video you have, the longer it will take to edit. Think of the shots you need before you start shooting. Make a list and go get them.
- Things you MAY be able to fix in the editing process:
 - shots too dark or too bright
 - shots too long, need to be edited
 - bad sound (rarely)
- Things you CAN NEVER fix in the editing process:
 - shot out of focus
 - shot too short
 - no sound! and most bad sound
 - shaky footage

Some differences between Web video and television

Closer interview shots, bigger titles

People watch Web videos on small windows in small laptop computer screens. To see your subject, you need to get close.

Less narration

Web video tends to follow a more documentary style that allows the subjects to speak for themselves and leaves the reporter out of it. Of course, all television video also exists on the web. So this is not a rule, only a tendency.

Music

Lots of Web video tends to favor the construction and mechanics of movies. This means many packages have music underneath. No stealing!

More creative framing and production

There are less rules in Web video and often a more passionate audience. This means videographers have some room to experiment with framing and shot selection. Also, on the Internet, depending how you look at it, the deadline is always now, or there are no deadlines.

This means that many web videos are longer and have more post-production values because the journalists are operating independent of the daily deadlines that television journalists face.

What Makes for a Good Video Story

Preparation Video requires more of both the journalist and the subject. Be prepared to ask your subject to take at least an hour out of their time to tend to your needs. Know what you want to get to illustrate the story. Make a list. Go get it.

Check your equipment before you go.

A Person Video stories are at their best when they can show emotion or tell a personal story. Video does not lend itself to telling big-issue stories, because they are difficult to illustrate. If you want to tell a big issue story, you need to tell it through one person or a few people.

Visual Interest It's always better when the person does something that can be captured on film, something physical and visual. If the person sits at a desk all day, they will not make for good video.

Conflict Stories require conflict to be good. This doesn't necessarily have to be war or fighting, but there needs to be some sort of struggle in the story to make it great.