

Simple tips for better video

Today's digital cameras and smartphones are capable of taking amazing video. But like all cameras, whatever you shoot with is just a lightproof box with a lens in front that captures an image. The most important part of a camera is the person behind it.

With a little forethought and practice, anyone can improve the quality of their videos, no matter what kind of camera they use. Here are some tips that can help.

1.) **Plan ahead.** Give some thought to what you want to show and say, and think through what you need to depict in your video to tell your story. What's the point of your video? Why are you making it? What do you want to convey?

While you don't need a formal script, outline the key points you want to make. Videos feel more genuine when your subjects are talking naturally and not reading from a script.

Before you jump into shooting video, make a list of the shots you'll need, then make sure you get them all.

2.) **Shoot horizontally.** While "vertical" video is fine for video chatting, it doesn't work well for presenting on a big screen (or on YouTube, for that matter). Learn to use your camera in "landscape" orientation.

3.) **Keep it steady.** Try to avoid jumpy, shaky video by using a tripod to stabilize your camera. You can also brace your camera against a table, chair or wall. If you need to handhold your camera, keep as still as possible. And use image stabilization if your camera offers it.

4.) **Look for the light.** Remember, when taking photos and video, it's all about recording light. Digital video cameras and smartphones respond best when they have plenty of good light to work with. Shoot in bright places, with the light falling on your subjects. Avoid shooting against windows (i.e. your subject standing in front of a window) as this will cause them to go into silhouette. Shooting in rooms that have white walls can also affect the quality of your video, so find places that have colorful backgrounds.

5.) **Pay attention to the audio.** Sound in video is often more important than the images themselves, especially when interviewing someone. For interviews, get the microphone on your camera as close to your subject as possible. Avoid shooting someone talking from across the room. If you're in a noisy place (and when you're shooting action, this is often the case), make sure your subject can be heard over the background noise. If you have the capability to use an external microphone, do it; it can really improve your audio.

6.) **Think like a still photographer.** While you want to show motion and action in your video, find a good perspective and hold the camera steady when shooting. Too much camera movement can be disorienting and jarring to your viewer. Show action from one angle, then stop, recompose from another angle, and start again.

7.) At the same time, **don't be afraid to move around**. While single shots work well, you can also do slow movements around your action. Just avoid quick, jerky movements.

9.) **Edit, edit, edit**. Effective video is concise, to the point and doesn't drag on. Keep the parts and edit out the superfluous. Editing software for smartphones and computers is widely available, easy to learn and does a surprisingly good job of polishing video.

10.) **Be creative and have fun!**

In addition, please keep these in mind when making video to share online:

1.) **Shoot in 1080 or 720 resolution**. Check your camera/smartphone's video settings. Set it to 1080i, 1080p or 720p. Please do not shoot in "4K," as this will make for huge video files and make it difficult to integrate with the other videos we receive.

2.) **Get permissions**. Ask those who will be in your video for their permission to be recorded. Let your subjects know what the video will be used for and where it will appear, and get a simple release from those who will be in your video (see the attached video release form as an example) Check with your church or camp office to see if there is a blanket release for your congregation or camp (most do), in which case you won't need individual releases.

3.) **Respect privacy**. With many of our activities, we're helping people in the community, some of whom may be reluctant to be seen on video. Shoot your video in such a way as your clients are not identifiable. At the same time, clients who are willing to tell their story or be included in the recording can be powerful additions to your video. Just be sure to get a release.

4.) **Celebrate!** This video you're creating is highlighting the work your church is doing to be the hands and feet of Christ. Be upbeat, excited and positive when telling your story.

Developed by Mike Riess, IBOC; for use with 2019 Moravian Day of Service