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## Video Tips

Think before you shoot!

Editing is time-consuming and often frustrating, so organize your shots before you shoot. (You will also get better footage this way.)

Also, think about who will view the video and plan accordingly. It is far better to record a little video that you will actually watch rather than record large quantities of video that will never be viewed. This is not to say that you should be trying to make a Hollywood movie. You are, however, collecting data and it is important to think about the ways in which you will analyze it later, before you start.

Remember that the camera person is responsible for deciding what to shoot, which means that he or she will not be able to pay close attention to everything that is happening. If you cannot have a separate camera person, do not assume that a camera on a tripod sitting in the corner is just as good. You will have to make an explicit trade-off between a distracted, but intelligent camera person and an undistracted, but non-intelligent camera.

**Keeping track:** Prepare a label for the tape case and the tape itself. Also, pre-print other title cards so you can use them as needed.

Tape Case: Title, date, activity, participants

Tape label: Title, date, activity, sticker ("original", not "dub" or "master")

**Preparing the tape:** Shoot a title card to provide an internal label for your tape, in case the case or external label are lost. Shoot the initial title card for at least 20 seconds with a voice-over identifying the project name, date, activity and participants. You can preprint title cards in advance or hand-write them at the moment, but do not forget!

**Setting up the camera:** Always try out the camera in advance and be sure you understand how the basic functions work. Most special settings degrade the image, so use them only if necessary. Otherwise, turn them off.

Steady shot	on	Hand-held shots only
	off	Tripod or monitor screen shots
Digital zoom	on	Rarely -- only for long-distance shots
	off	Hand-held, tripod or screen shots
Record light	on	Always - this tells the subject the camera is recording.
	off	Never
Date/Time	on	Only if you you'll be using on non-Sony players.
	off	Usually
Night shot	on	ONLY in very dark situations with no light
	off	Today's video cameras operate at very low "lux" - if you can see, so can the camera.

### Quick tips:

- For interviews and observations, start with an "establishing shot", to show the general layout of the office/setting, then focus on the activity itself.
- Shoot over the user's shoulder so you can see what he/she is discussing.
- Avoid shooting towards a window or strong light source.
- Limit zooming and panning as much as possible.

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## Videotaping someone sitting at a monitor:

You must decide whether it is more important to see the person or the monitor; since it is difficult to optimize the camera setup for both.

The monitor is tricky to shoot: you are essentially shooting at a large light bulb with a repetitive flicker. Most cameras can only record a quarter or less of the screen, requiring zooming in and out to see the whole screen, or panning from one side to the other. Neither is particularly easy to watch; the viewer very quickly loses the context of what is on screen. If you are recording data (as opposed to recording clips to be edited into a video demonstration or other video presentation), it will be difficult to provide this context. (If you have access to editing equipment, you can cut to a wider view, then cut back to the screen. Zooming back and forth is more likely to make the viewer seasick, unless done carefully.)

You will need a tripod. Turn off all extra camera settings (i.e., no digital zoom, no steady-shot, no night-shot). Even if you do not have a tripod, you should turn off steady-shot; the scan lines on the monitor screen will be less intrusive.

Normally you will need to see both the person sitting at the computer and close-up shots of the screen. This will require some advance framing, to make sure you can zoom in quickly and accurately, without moving the camera. A rule of thumb: You will only be able to read text on the screen if you zoom in to one-quarter of the screen. (Test this in your particular situation, though, since text size can be changed, and monitors differ.)

### 1. Setup

Place the camera on the tripod at a height slightly higher than the user's head. Normally, you would like an over-the-shoulder view, that, when fully zoomed out, shows the user's head, shoulders, hands and the monitor.

### 2. Framing

Use the small screen to adjust the framing. Begin by zooming out to the maximum view. Then, practice zooming in to a close-up of the screen. Normally, you will want three basic levels of zoom: full out will show the person and the monitor, medium will show the full monitor, and close will show a readable section of the screen. Adjust the tripod and camera position until you can get these three shots from one press of the zoom button.

### 3. Shooting

Explain to the user what you are doing and let him or her see what the shot looks like by turning the small screen around. (The image will flip over, giving the correct perspective from the other direction.) If you haven't already taped the title card, do so now. Tape at least 15 seconds if you are at the beginning of the tape.

Begin with an establishing shot, the full-out zoom, to show the person and the monitor. Usually, it is a good idea to have a voice-over explanation of the setting and the purpose of the shot. Try to avoid moving the camera. If it is necessary to move it, do so only in the close-up view and reposition the camera in the standard place before zooming back out. This will be least distracting for the viewer.

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## Video demonstrations

If your goal is to create a video that illustrates a project or a scenario, plan to edit in the camera. A small amount of planning will result in a much more watchable video.

### 1. Prepare title cards

Using your favorite text editor, prepare a title card and a credits card. I suggest using 48 pt helvetica text. The title card usually has the project name and date. The credits card(s) contain the authors names and any other relevant information. Try printing or copying these onto colored paper.

### 2. Prepare the video tape

If you have analog equipment, is a good idea to prepare the tape by recording a blank signal, to make it easier for the camera to make precise edits. Turn the camera toward a wall or leave on the lens cap to get a black image and record for at least 10 minutes longer than you plan the final tape to be. At the beginning of every tape, record at least 20 seconds of the title card. This will enable you to make copies on almost any VCR. If you have a “photo” feature on the camera, you can freeze an image for 5 seconds. If not, shoot using a tripod and tape the title card to the wall or shoot down onto a table. Some computers have a video-out that will enable you to record directly from the monitor.

### 3. Shooting

Usually when you edit in the camera, record your shot, then press the red button to pause the camera. You now have (about) 5 minutes to shoot again. If you take longer, the camera will automatically stop and release the tape from the heads, making a precise edit more difficult. If you think you need more than 5 minutes to prepare for the next shot, shoot an extra 3-5 seconds at the end of the clip. Before you shoot again, go into player mode (or edit search), rewind, then play forward until you reach the end of the clip. Stop, go into record mode and press “pause”. From there, you should be able to start recording again without a “jump” in the tape.

#### a. Establishing shot

The “establishing shot” gives the viewer some context. Usually, it’s a good idea to avoid zooming. But starting with a wide shot and zooming in to the subject you will be concentrating on can work well.

#### b. Subsequent shots

If you will be showing movement, try to practice first, before videotaping, and frame the shot so that the entire movement will occur within the same frame. You can usually do a separate close-up shot later, if you need to. If you plan to show a series of different clips or if you want to make a presentation, prepare a series of slides in advance, like the title cards. Shoot about 5 seconds each (or more if you will be talking over them). If you print these dividers on different colored paper, it will be easier to find the related clips later.

#### c. Final credits

Shoot the final credits slide in the same way you did the title card and the divider slides. 20 seconds should be enough.