



Practical Video Production Tips to Make Professional-Looking Content

By Peggy Peiyao Zhao & Jian Chen

In the time of COVID, many organizations are looking for new ways to engage with their audience and connect from far away. Creating videos, especially for social media, provides a unique way to spread ideas, build your brand, and communicate globally. Video is a powerful storytelling tool and one of the most dynamic forms of online content. Use the following tools and tips to improve your organization's video storytelling.

Getting Started: Pre-Production Checklist

Before you start rolling, make sure you've done the following:

Identify your target audience

When identifying your audience, it isn't always about reaching the largest community, but the right group of people. When you understand your audience, you will be able to produce the content that resonates with them.

Determine your filming goal

This should be based on your organization's needs, whether that's to inform your audience about a new tool or teach them how to do something. You can dream big for a longer-term goal, but also set a realistic goal to help you analyze the video better through the whole process.

Map out your story

Having a general idea for a story isn't enough — you need to have a concrete plan before you start shooting. Be sure to draw a storyboard and have a clear picture of what you'd like to capture before you start shooting. You should also:

- **Learn the script-writing essentials.** Think about your story and characters. A compelling story includes an eye-catching beginning, touching peak, thought-provoking ending, and unforgettable characters.
- **Reduce dialogue time.** Video is a visual medium, so always replace verbal language with visual image if it is possible.
- **Remember that all scenes serve one ultimate purpose:** to move the story forward. Therefore, try to make videos as straightforward as possible, especially for short commercials.
- **Ask yourself these questions** when shaping your story:
 - Who are we making this video for?
 - What should viewers learn from the video?
 - What do we want to achieve through this video?
 - What's our call-to-action?

Choosing Your Equipment

Shooting Equipment

For those who are new to video production, fancy cameras and lenses are definitely not necessities to step into this industry. Here are some recommendations for beginners:

- Canon Rebel SL3 / 250D
- Nikon D3500
- Pentax K-70
- Nikon D5600

- Canon Rebel T7i / EOS 800D
- Canon Rebel T6i / 750D
- Canon 77D / EOS 9000D
- Canon Rebel T7 / EOS 2000D
- Pentax KP
- Canon Rebel T6 / EOS 1300D

Audio Equipment

If possible, get a microphone, because high-quality audio is essential. Here are the top 10 best microphones for DSLR video cameras based on reviews:

- Rode Video MicPro Compact Directional On-Camera Microphone
- Shure VP83F Lens Hopper Camera-Mounted Condenser Microphone
- Canon Directional Microphone DM-E1
- Saramonic VMIC Recorder Super-Cardioid Video Microphone
- Audio-Technica Dynamic Microphone AT8004
- Sennheiser MKE 400 Shotgun Microphone
- Tascam TM-2X Stereo X-Y Microphone For DSLR Cameras
- Shure VP64A Omnidirectional Handheld Microphone
- Zoom SSH-6 Stereo Shotgun Microphone Capsule
- Azden High-performance (SMX-10) Stereo Condenser Microphone

Shooting Tips: Make the Most of Your Lighting

If you have limited resources when making video content, knowing how to make the most of natural lighting can help your shots look great without expensive lighting tools.

Here's how:

- **Shoot during blue hour:** Blue hour and the golden hour are ideal times for shooting outside. Blue hour refers to the hours when the sun is at a significant

depth below the horizon, such as twilight. During that short period, the sky is deep blue and the landscape is covered with bluish light, which is perfect to shoot nighttime scenes without using lights.

- **Shoot during golden hour.** Golden hour is the period of daytime shortly after sunrise or before sunset, during which daylight is redder and softer than when the sun is higher in the sky. Golden hour is good for your shooting in general as it provides a soft and warm light, which envelops your scene with beautiful golden color.
- **Use reflectors and flags.** If you don't have high-end lighting equipment, reflectors and flags can be makeshift sources of light. [Here's how to use them.](#)

Tips for Post-Production Checklist

Editing software

If you're new to video editing, these tools provide solid editing functions and help produce high-quality videos:

- Microsoft Movie Moments/ Apple iMovie.
- VideoPad: For people who are creating videos especially for YouTube.

For those who want to craft videos at a higher level, we recommend:

- Adobe Premiere Pro/ Final Cut Pro X
- Davinci Resolve: Top-quality color correction and audio mastering software.

Background Music

Background music and sound effects enhance the quality of your videos along with visual images. It's important to understand if and how your music is copyrighted before using it in your video. For free options, we recommend [Purple Planet](#) and [Vidooly](#).

About The Authors:



Peggy Zhao is a content creator who is passionate about crafting stories through cameras and lenses. After earning a Bachelor's degree in Journalism, she gained experience working as a journalist, anchor, and social media coordinator in various media companies throughout Asia, Australia, and the U.S. She is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Communication in Digital Media at the University of Washington. She loves food and regards herself as a hungry storyteller as well as a genuine foodie.



Jian Chen is a photographer, editor, and he leads the video production team from the Raindius Media. He specializes in script-writing, cinematography, and post-production. He is a full-time student in the Master of Communication of Digital Media program and is now working on building a media platform that serves as a cultural bridge between Eastern and Western.

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