

Making a Film – Key Stages

Pre Production

*You might want to just get out there and get filming. However, doing this is a bad idea. If you shoot your film without taking the time to plan it, chances are you'll not have got the right shots and end up frustrated with an average film. **So, to make a fantastic film, here is what you need to do before filming...***

1. Decide on a theme / topic for your film and consider the following:

- **What** do you have to say that is interesting?
- **Who** are you trying to reach with your film?
- **Why** would they want to watch your film?
- **Where** will they watch your film?

All films tell a story of some kind. What's your film's story? Make sure your film's story and message is clear and that it has a beginning middle and end.

2. Thorough research

- **Your favourite films** – Watch them again. Why did they work?
- **Get inspired** - Watch films, trailers, music videos to help you with ideas. Remember – you're looking for inspiration, not to just copy!
- **Is your idea original?** You may have a great idea... but so might have someone else. Try to say and do something new and original.

3. Storyboards

Think of the storyboard as a comic strip. It's a template for your film. The picture or diagrams don't need to be masterpieces – just stick figures will be fine. The storyboard is a way of visually explaining your film so that the whole production team have a clear idea of the shooting set-up. The storyboards should also contain the following:

- **Type of shot** – e.g. Close Up / Medium shot / Long shot
- **Dialogue** (the full script isn't needed here – you just need an idea of what will be said.)
- **Sound and visual effects** you will add in post-production.
- **Music** that you plan to add in post-production.

4. Shot list

This goes with the storyboard, and is a list of **all** the shots that you need to film. It is essential to ensure that you have all the footage needed when you come to edit your film. When making a shot list ask yourself the following questions;

- **Does** each shot contain new information? If not, why is it there?
- **What** does the shot tell the audience and make them think / feel?
- **Are** the shots telling the story you wanted to?

5. The legal stuff.

Before you start filming make sure that you:

- **Secure a location release form** – If you are filming on private property you need permission. Most boroughs have a local film council who can offer advice.
- **Secure release forms from all people in the film** – Anyone in the film needs to sign a form saying they were happy to be in the film. We have template forms for you to use. You can also do this on the shoot.
- **Music licences** – It's simple really if you do not own the music (as in – you did not make it yourself) you will need permission from whomever did. Why not be creative, make your own tunes or ask local bands or musicians. If you are editing using our online system we have free music that you can use.

6. Health and Safety:

Think about the dangers that your shoot might involve. These include:

- Fire hazards
- Tripping over wires
- Adverse weather conditions

It is best to draw up a risk assessment

Although this stuff isn't as fun as say, making a film, it's crucial if you want to put your film online, sell it or screen it. If you plan for your film to go places you need to have done these things!

Production

*OK. You've got your idea. You've got your storyboards and shot lists. You're almost ready to hit record, but here are a few tips before shouting **ACTION!***

1. Don't overshoot

When shooting it's easy to overshoot and end up with hours of footage but remember – everything you shoot – you'll have to watch in post-production! To avoid this **plan** your shots carefully and do rehearsals for actors and camera operators before hitting **record...**

2. Lighting

- **If we can't see it – we won't watch it!** When shooting your film it's crucial that it's lit properly. Ask yourself if you can see the detail on the actors' face? Is it too bright or dark? If so, adjust light or shot so you can.
- **Be creative** – Lighting your film properly not only makes it look better, it helps you tell the story by helping create a mood and feel to your film. You should try to use the right lighting to help tell your story. For example; a slight bluish light in the film can give it a cold or strange mood or a slight reddish light could give the feeling of danger.
- **Do it yourself tips** – You don't need hundreds of expensive lights to create the look you're after. With some good planning you can just use what's available whether shooting inside or out. Here's a few examples;
 - **Inside** - Lamps, torches or mobile phones. (You can even **bounce** the light to off a wall to make the light less bright and softer on the film).

- **Outside** – Just by shooting your film at the right time of day can help give you the light you need. Sunrise, sunsets, full-moon.

Try and think of some yourself...

3. Sound

- **If we can't hear it – we won't watch it!** (Sound familiar?) It's crucial that your record good audio. You can't clean up bad sound in post-production so record good, clear sound – otherwise your film will be missing crucial information about the story. Can you hear everything clearly?
- **What's that noise?** – Microphones can pick up sounds you didn't want in the film. Is there any background noise – cars, planes, wind? If so either wait until the noise has gone or move location.
- **Don't ruin a good take!** The camera's running, the actors are delivering a great performance... and then someone's phone goes off! Turn off your phones; make sure the whole production crew knows that you are recording. Shout ACTION before each take.

4. Don't be scared to stop

Without turning into a total perfectionist, don't be afraid to stop filming if necessary. If you are observing something happening or shooting an event it might not always be appropriate. However if the sound isn't right or something goes wrong with the shot (for example, a loud motorbike zooms by and you can't hear what's being said or someone is messing about in the back of the shot) it's better to stop and start again.

5. Teamwork rules!

Working well as a team is essential. Diva doesn't work. Everyone has a different skill to bring; different experiences and you need to accommodate this. It's a great skill to be able to select the best ideas, encourage each other and create the best piece of work you can. It's great to have differences – but don't let the differences turn into disagreements and ruin your project.

Post-Production

OK. So you've shot your film. Now it's time to put the story together. But to help see you through to the finish line here are a few editing tips;

- **Have your original notes with you** – Before you begin to edit the film make sure you have your storyboards and shot lists with you to help you remember your original ideas.
- **Watch all the footage that you have filmed!** You've just watched a shot you love, but before beginning to edit the film continue watching your footage first as there may be an even better shot you've forgotten about.
- **Be creative** – You can add special effects, music, titles but remember that less is more – The story is the most important thing – the effects should just be helping you to tell it.
- **Don't give up!** – The most important rule when editing. There may be times when you want to quit or times when you hate your film. What this really means is you need a BREAK. If you are still stuck ask a friend to watch it and see if they can help.

Distribution

OK. You've shot your masterpiece. But what are you going to do with it now? Here are just a few ideas to help get your film out into the world.

- **Get your film online** – The easiest and cheapest way to get your film seen by anyone with a computer! Upload your film to video sites such as vimeo / YouTube / Truetube/ BoldFace Productions. Spread the word when you've done this via your facebook and twitter.
- **Enter into film competitions** – There are thousands of film festivals all over the world – many of them are free, have prizes... and most importantly – get your film seen!
- **Submit your film to digital / online channels** – Online is the new world and there are now so many more channels that may screen your film. In addition to uploading your film onto your own vimeo or YouTube account – upload it to established channels such as 4docs, Current TV, Community Channel, TrueTube and BoldFace Productions.
- **Organise a screening** - Screen it at your school/college/youth club/work place. You'll be surprised how many people will turn up – everyone loves free events!
- **Contact local cinemas** – There is no harm in asking – what's the worst that can happen? Independent cinemas can be more flexible than the bigger chains. Also go in person and ask - talking to someone face to face can go a long way (especially if you smile!).
- **Encourage feedback** – It's important that you find out what people think of your film. Even bad news is good news – as you can learn what you did wrong to help you when making your next film!

Well done! You've made your film. Now go back and do it all again. Practice really does make perfect!