

# Video Production Tips

These are my notes from watching the DVD: “How to Set up and Shoot Awesome Interviews with LED Lights” (links to this are at the bottom of this document). I have added some of my own tips. The DVD has a really good section on lighting a set; the coolest part is using cardboard cutouts to make the background more interesting.

## Set, Video and Lighting Setup

- Where will the talent be placed? And direction facing?
- Place chairs, tables, and other set items. And use a “stand in” person for lighting. Do not make the talent sit for the lighting setup.
- Decide on camera positions (blocking), based on talent's location, number of cameras, and number of camera operators. Minimum is one camera with fixed cover shot, and second camera with operator, for tight and moving shots.
- Set up light poles, and place lights: Key, Fill, Back, Background.
- If green-screen then move talent away from it, and light it evenly.
- Lighting check: place talent(s), and look in cameras (white balance them). Adjust the lights, and camera positions, and mic levels
- Director and talent should plan for where talent should look or what to do. Our recording technique is to have all cameras rolling. Post editing will choose the active cameras. But the director will have an idea of what cameras shots they will want to use, for each scene.
- If needed, put tape markers on floor for talent.

## Audio Setup

- Setup mics, and mic stands, and central recording station
- Wait for power cords to be laid
- Lay mic cables to recording station
- Connect mic cables mixer and/or recorder
- Educate talent on mic use, if they are new:
  - do not say, “can you hear me?”, into the mic, just talk. If it is not working, wave to the audio technician.
  - do not touch the mic, except for a light rub to test if it is on
  - do not drop mics, or slap your hand on top of mic, they are fragile
  - do not eat the mic (4in to 12in from mouth is fine)
  - to mute, use off switch, do not cover the mic, **or it will sequel**
  - if there is no off switch, move away from mic to talk (**do not unplug it**)
  - **if squealing, do not cover the mic EVER, or it will sequel LOUDER**
  - if squealing, move mic behind or away from speakers that are squealing, then glare at the audio technician, who should have turned down level.
  - assume mics are always live
  - if a mic has a battery, turn them off or remove them, when done
- Mic check: Put mics on or near the talent. Have talent talk or play. Balance the mics and levels. Adjust mics as needed.

## **Starting Shot/Takes (scenes)**

- Number the "shots". You should have a script or story board and a shot list. Change the number for each "take", if redoing a "shot". Put the shot/take on the clap board
- If lighting has changed, all cameras should adjust white-balance (use white paper or clap-board)
- Start a new sound file.
- Director calls out "rolling".
- Start all cameras, and start the sound recorder. Signal to the clap-board person, that you are ready, and your camera "sees" the board.
- Clap the clap-board loudly in front of all cameras. Also announce the shot/take, before the clap.
- Director calls out "action" (when the clap board is out of the way). The talent can then start.

## **Ending a Shot/Take**

- Director calls "cut".

If there is too "much time" (more than about 5 min) before another "take" then:

- Stop all the cameras and the sound recorder.
- Save the sound recording and note the time and the shot/take for the file name.

## The Shots - Camera

- Shot types:
  - Cover – usually full setting
  - Two shot – include two people
  - Chest shot – chest to top of head
  - Tight shot – shoulder to top of head
  - Extreme tight shot – neck or chin to middle of forehead
- Composition
  - Rule of thirds, vertical and horizontal (i.e. do not center everything)
  - Chopping top of head is OK, chopping chin is not OK
- Zooming
  - Slow zooming is best for live shots
  - Zoom fast to move between shots that will be edited out
  - Do not pan to another subject while zoomed in:
    - Zoom out from current subject,  
then zoom in to new subject.
- Lead the action
  - Put more space in front of where a person is looking or walking
- Moving the tripod
  - When you move, be sure to grab the camera or at the top near the camera. If going a long distance, take the camera off of the tripod. This prevents large physical shocks to the camera.

## **The Shots - Director**

- Director tells talent what he/she wants to see
- Director and talent agree on common hand signals (which camera to look at, talk louder, etc.
- Director tells camera people the shots he/she wants.
- Director and camera people agree on common hand signals (if there is no intercom system)

## Strike the Set

- Put away the expensive stuff first. Cameras and mics
- Take up cables in reverse order. Mic cables then power cords.
- Coil up cables professionally, so that they will last. **Ask if you don't know how**—it is not the usual round and round, that most people do.

For mic cables: use 1/2 twist over, then 1/2 opposite twist, then under.

For power cords, use figure-8 from palm to elbow (or over/under method).

For small wires, use figure-8 on fingers.

Use ties on cable, rather than wrapping cable around self.

Source for most of this:

How to Set up and Shoot Awesome Interviews with LED Lights

<https://www.probroadcastsupply.com/how-to-set-up-and-shoot-awesome-interviews-with-led-lights-instructional-dvd-vm-leddvd/> - \$53

Or: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/interviews> - \$35 to rent for 6 months

(File: video-tips.odt Version: 1.6)