

Ten Steps to Create Better Online Videos

1. Keep it steady. Use a video camera with tripod. Even a mini tripod or in a pinch, a pile of books, will work to steady the camera or flip-cam. Hand-held shots will be shaky and distracting.
2. Plenty of light (natural or office, and most video cameras react better to ARTIFICIAL light, not sunlight). Make sure your light source is in front of and above your subject and not behind. Do not shoot someone with a window in his or her back. Try to use either all artificial light or all sunlight, they are different color temperatures and will appear different on camera.
3. Noise: Use a quiet room for interviews. Ambient noise is a video no-no. If you are using the camera microphone, then tape 2-3 feet from your subject and have them speak louder than what feels natural.
4. Keeping the background simple will help avoid an ambiguous or blurry background, which could distract viewers from your message and the content that is really important. Try to keep some space between the subject and the background – putting yourself right against the wall will make the video look like a mug shot.
5. Framing. Position your subject's head $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the screen. That means: get close enough and leave just a bit of room above your subject's head. Once you set the shot, don't move the camera. One clean shot is better than many shots that will distract the viewer.
6. Use close ups. Shoot almost everything closer than you would a TV spot. Online, your computer screen may have higher definition than your TV, but the playback screen is usually smaller and highly compressed (not as much visual detail). You'll need to compensate by framing closer in on shots and people's faces.
7. Text descriptions: When posting a video to SLA-TV or blogging a video include a text summary. Write a brief paragraph or series of bullet points that summarize what the video covers. This is great for people who can't watch the video. Adding text with video is a valuable opportunity to draw the attention of search engines and potential viewers.
8. Length: Online videos should be short, ideally around 2-3 minutes, or even shorter. If you can't keep your content to less than 5 minutes, consider breaking it up into a series of videos, each covering a distinct point. Besides improving the chances that more people will watch it, it also provides the opportunity to focus headlines that fit with different messages within the video.
9. If the video will include b-roll footage (sequences of imagery without synchronized sound), include off camera voice-overs of the script, or illustrative music. The audio tracks may provide the best "sound" cuts against any b-roll that appears on screen in the edited piece. Additionally, if it is to be edited, get shots of the subject nodding, smiling, reacting, etc., for potential additional b-roll to help cover audio edits.
10. Message/action. Provide a call to action whenever possible. (To find out more info, visit www.movies.com.)

And, some general things to think about regarding being on-camera:

- If you are being interviewed, incorporate the question in the answer the interviewer. Example:
Q: What is your favorite color?
A: My favorite color is burnt orange.
- Do not wear any clothing with tight patterns or pin stripes. This causes an optical illusion called a moiré pattern which shimmers on camera and is distracting to the person watching the video.
- Avoid clothing with large patterns or geometric shapes. The audience will watch the clothes instead of the subject.
- Avoid wearing black, white, or red on television or video. Even the best of cameras have trouble with these colors. The best colors are light or navy blue and jewel toned colors.
- Avoid flashy jewelry. It reflects light.
- Avoid jangly jewelry. It reflects light and makes noise that will be picked up by a microphone (this applies whether you are on TV or not).
- Wear eyeglasses if you want (or need to) but avoid shiny frames.
- Wear makeup. Basic powder helps even out skin tones for the lens. For women, neutral color eye shadow versus trendy colors and lip gloss work well. For men, powder the forehead up to the hairline as the top of the head can be shiny as well.