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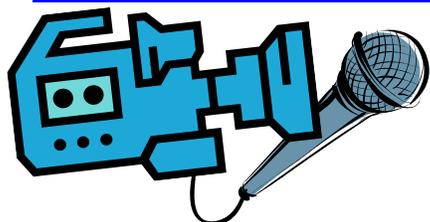


Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

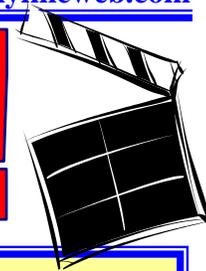
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Easy Video: 1-2-3!



Easy 1-2-3 Video is about being confident using equipment available to organize multimedia projects, producing results with minimal work, and maximizing fun. This is achieved by organizing each and every project into three parts:

- 1. Planning.** Setting objectives, outlining content, establishing style, defining "success" and determining a workable path to get there.
- 2. Production.** Capturing the plan. Strive to be efficient and productive. The plan guides production. Experience guides planning.
- 3. Post-Production.** Here's where we use the "magic of digital video" to put together multimedia and make it sound great. If steps 1 & 2 are done carefully, this final step is the easiest!

Note: *This is not strictly a linear process. With experience, one learns to use available equipment/technology for best result, impacting each step of the process.*

Planned Video Productions Versus Real-Time Events

Sometimes we are covering an event. Sometimes we are producing a short educational piece for a lesson. Be careful with projects that cover events (**Tip:** *This writer suggests you AVOID providing videography for events if you are getting started. Everything in our *Easy Video 1-2-3* process applies, however, steps 1 and 2 need to be done "on the fly", often scrambling to "catch-as-catch can"*).

It is not easy to improvise and fully anticipate production and post-production needs at "live" events. It is also easy to shoot far too-much video, much more than can possibly be used for a short, targeted production. Be thoughtful with the camera.

Videography services for weddings and family events are expensive; there are good reasons for this. If possible, don't create videos about events unless you have a strong personal interest or connection.

And remember, "impromptu planning" is a form of planning too!

Powerful Tool: Teacher-Produced Videos

Multi-media is a powerful classroom tool when the content is targeted towards specific learner outcomes because it allows educators to quickly present/review information with students in three distinctly different contexts/teaching modes:

1. Introduce ideas/concepts in a selected video
2. View video that has been created around a limited set of ideas in a specific lesson
3. Review, discuss, and/or apply the content of that video

Notice that for this formula to fully-work, videos need to be produced exactly around lessons and activities. Teacher/media specialist-produced videos can fully support a given class lesson. Shorter, targeted videos are better. They more-fully meet students' needs and more-fully meet production needs of busy education professionals.

Creating short, targeted videos is the key to keeping production easy. Producing short videos forces us to plan presentations with collaborators and talk about effectively using equipment, time, and technology. Short videos minimize production time. Organizing projects and producing them properly minimizes "post-production".

Videos of up to 8 minutes (approximately the longest at "YouTube") work well. While many are available online, please be respectful of copyrights. Students respect when we model societal expectations for honoring the intellectual property of others. If we expect students to respect copyrights, we must also respect intellectual property rights.

More importantly, multi-media underlies the more interactive way people use the Web. When we look past emerging technologies for delivering media, we see that the fundamental skills are those that empower us to create multi-media.

Step 1. Planning

This needs to be no more involved than necessary to document a workable plan and communicate with all collaborators and stakeholders how it is achieved. Start by:

- 1. Reflecting on what has worked in previous projects.** Plan for success by planning around strengths. Think about what has not worked and find ways to plan to avoid these problems.
- 2. Begin by thinking about audio (remember, radio with pictures!).** How will you get clear, clean audio with what you have access to work with?
- 3. Think about lighting.** In most cases, supplemental lighting is not an option. Plan to take advantage of available and appropriate lighting.
 - Avoid "backlit" scenes – do not shoot with windows or bright light sources directly behind your subject
 - Use natural light when possible. Be aware that some artificial lights create

issues. Some cameras need to be adjusted to accommodate differences between what we see and how a camera sees light.

- Let experience be your guide – keep track of places that have worked for previous productions where lighting has been adequate. Use these places.
- Try using reflectors to bounce available light back onto your subject. (**Tip:** *Carry white "gator board" and hold it off-camera, reflecting light back onto faces or other subjects, providing highlights*)

Planning creates a track to excel on. The process is valuable in-and-of itself. More importantly, it more-fully ensures success because we have thought out what we are going to achieve, how we are going to achieve it and we have identified potential problems, proactively identifying ways to avoid or resolve them.

- Do not expect people to be able to fully-articulate their "vision" for a video.

Most of us have little or no experience sharing ideas for video/multimedia. It is difficult to describe in words the visual impact we want to create and the style through which we strive to achieve it.

- Full scripts are not necessary; however, this writer rarely produces anything without scripting dialog.
- A written outline may work; it can be short and only needs to be as detailed as the situation demands.
- Those more artistically-inclined can create storyboards (**Note:** Popular software like *MS Word* has an enriched clip-art gallery and drawing features. Many storyboards could be created with clip-art).
- The planning process should include how a video will be produced and edited. Time spent in this initial phase, planning, saves time later.

Step 2. Production

Nothing is worse than being responsible for producing multimedia and suddenly realizing that the project cannot possibly be adequately captured with the technology at hand!

All planning needs to be done based on prior experience in production. Always note any production problems, issues, and glitches so that they can be avoided in future planning. Keep three things in mind during production:

1. **Video is “radio with pictures”.** It is not possible to meet our standard “*fit for purpose*” if the audio is inadequate. Unless you have experience in post-production fixing audio problems that have occurred in a “shoot”, DO NOT assume you can “fix it in post” (**Hint:** *With quality video-editing software, it is not difficult to re-dub video/audio, even lip-syncing to previously shot footage. The biggest challenge is making studio-produced audio sound like audio shot in the field.*).
2. **The camera sees EVERYTHING,** even when we are not paying attention. Experienced camera operators learn that framing their shots and keeping action in the “hot spot” is not enough. Monitor what happens around the action of prime interest, especially when working with HD.
3. **Professional video/multimedia uses A/B roll.** This is what makes editing possible and allows a story to “move” and maintain visual interest.
 - The primary video, called “A-roll,” defines most of the story and lets the audience get to know the

characters, setting, context, etc.

- Secondary video, called “B-roll,” include all types of footage that you put over the “A-roll” or use as “cut-aways” between them. B-roll defines the quality of a video, giving shape and dimension to the story.
- When working with one camera, think in terms of A and B-roll, shooting the different types of clips (**Hint:** *If done carefully, this process organizes a “shoot”, saves time, provides opportunity to “re-shoot” as needed, and creates a framework to make post-production easier.*).

Let the plan guide production. Let production experience guide the plan. Working most-effectively with available technology means understanding what “works” and what may not. Go with your strengths and avoid potential problems.

Save yourself a TON of time – learn what you have to work with, what it can do, and what you can reasonably do with it while always keeping an open mind to new ideas and different ways to try things.

For example, flipcams/cell phones are popular; however, they inherently have limited ability to capture narration/audio. “Nose shots” work best. Other types of shots may work visually, but may fail to adequately capture audio, especially if an extended dialog is important.

The “nose shot” can be the A-roll and look great if there is a lot of B-roll (**Hint:** *Photos work great for B-roll. Pay attention when watching TV to the many ways graphics enhance video. Called CGs, computer graphics are a major part of video production. If you like PhotoShop, you will LOVE video editing.*).

Step 3. Post Production

This is where it all comes together. If **Planning** (step 1) and **Production** (step 2) go well, then “*post*” will be a dream.

When getting started, accept that there are limitations to what can be “fixed” in post-production. It is easier to capture something properly than it is to fix later in “post”. Know when to “fish and cut bait”.

Experienced professionals learn how to use a variety to digital tools to enhance video and audio, however, it can take more time to learn these techniques than it takes to capture audio/video right in the first place. Consider redoing problem audio.

Windows Movie Maker and other “freeware” may get you started producing videos. Use what meets your needs; use what works. Eventually, video producers will see limitations in the simplest consumer grade programs. Being able to work with multi-tracks (video & audio),

audio equalization & compression, and digital effects/enhancements are necessary to produce higher-quality videos. Having powerful tools at your fingertips saves time too.

On a PC, consider *Sony Vegas Movie Studio* or *Adobe Premier*. On a Mac, try the *Final Cut Express* (**Note:** *Many consider Apple’s Final Cut Pro to be the industry’s standard, however, Sony is a major player in all media and electronic markets, largely pioneered digital audio technology, and has a solid reputation in audio production and film.*).

There are 2 approaches to video editing:

1. Capture a large segment of video/audio onto a computer and “edit out” all the parts that will not be used (rearranging as needed). This is analogous to starting with a huge marble block to create a sculpture. *Michelangelo’s David*, you say? Easy – just remove all the stone that doesn’t look like Dave!
2. Identify clips from a “shoot”, (called “*batch capture*”) bringing only those that will be used onto the computer. Then, put clips together on the timeline, adding transitions, effects, adjustments, and enhancements as needed. (**Hint:** *Try this approach. It is consistent with Easy Video 1-2-3.*).

When learning video editing software, keep in mind: we must walk before we run. Start with simple projects where, if planning and production go well, post production involves little more than identifying clips, doing a “batch capture”, and stringing the clips along the timeline per your plan.

When starting, learn how to equalize and compress audio to make it sound great. Experiment with effects (plug-ins) that enhance or clean up audio.

Becoming familiar with different ways to enhance audio will be helpful someday when marginally-captured audio needs to be cleaned up to work in a production.

Develop an ear for what sounds good. Learn how to use equalization tools to bring out the deep tones of voices and the bright sounds of phonics.

All professional produced media, music, TV, radio – virtually everything you hear is highly compressed. This is a “digital trick” to even-out dynamics and “level” variance in volume across an audio track or music recording.

Compression makes narrations easier to understand and is essential to getting an easy-to-listen-to “studio” sound. Start learning video-editing software by learning ways to enhance audio.