

## WRITING

Once you have an idea for your video, write it down on paper. This will help you organize your thoughts and allow you to share your ideas with others.

Your script contains all the words that will be said in your video. This includes introductions, the story line and voice-overs. Interviews will not be scripted by you, although the interviewee should have a very clear idea of what they would like to say.

Some tips to remember when writing your script and preparing to story board:

- ◇ Your audience will probably have only one chance to hear your script and see your video. Make sure your sixty to eighty seconds say exactly what you want it to say.
- ◇ Try to make your writing sound conversational. Leave out unnecessary words or phrases. Your time limit is too short to add extra information and your audience will be more satisfied if your video is informative, easy to follow and interesting.
- ◇ Remember that this is a visual message as well as an auditory one. Let the pictures tell the story as much as possible and never say something when the pictures can do it for you.

As you're writing your story, keep reminding yourself of the message you're trying to convey. Read it out loud and get feedback from friends and other teachers to ensure that you have a clear and complete message.

### Exercise in Writing

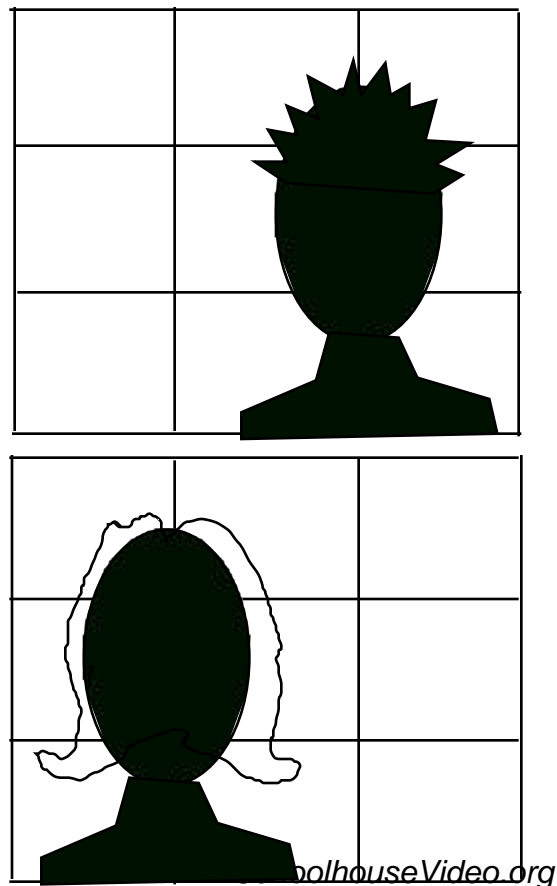
Ask your students to write down the major ideas that they wish to convey in their video. Label these ideas from highest priority to lowest priority. Create a list of their ideas from highest priority to lowest priority with the least interesting facts at the end. Create a "Hook" to grab the viewer's interest!

## COMPOSITION

Composition refers to the placement of your subjects in the frame so that it's balanced and does not draw attention to extraneous information. Remember that your focal point will be that image in the frame that draws the viewer's attention. Close-ups of students' faces are very important in Schoolhouse Video, and you should try to capture these as often as possible while adhering to a few simple rules:

- ◇ Leave room above the subject's head in the frame
- ◇ If the subject is walking forward, leave room in the frame in front of the subject
- ◇ If a teacher is talking in front of a chalk board, have the subject to one side of the frame, leaving room for what he/she is writing on the other
- ◇ If shooting more than one subject at once, bring them as close together as possible for your close-up shots
- ◇ If shooting three or more subjects at once, place them in a "V" and place them as close together as possible so you can get the close-up shot
  
- ◇ Remember the Rule of Thirds. If you drew an imaginary tic-tac-toe chart on your frame, place your focal point any point where the lines intersect.

### Rule of Thirds



## story boards

After you've written your script and thought about how you want your video to look, it's time to create story boards that specify the details of your project. The purpose of your story boards are to help you decide the types of shots you want to take, as well as the length of the shots, location of the shots, and finishing touches such as music selection, transitions and voice-overs. The better you plan your story boards, the less time you will spend shooting, editing and re-shooting. Take the time to make your story board as well as you possibly can. I was fortunate to see the actual story boards for Jurassic Park and these showed every angle of every dinosaur that was shot. Your drawings can be as simple as stick figures, but they should tell the story that you want to tell.

Some important questions that need to be answered for each shot:

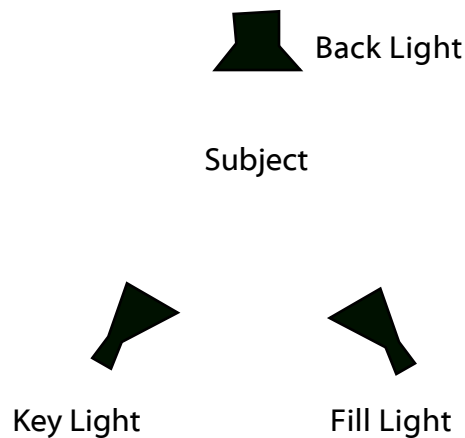
- ◇ What is the subject that will be in the frame?
- ◇ Type of shot? Establishing shot? Close-up? Extreme close-up? Medium Shot? Over-the-Shoulder Shot? Two Shot? Wide Shot?
- ◇ How long will the shot last?
- ◇ Position of camera? Low to the ground? Eye level? High in the air?
- ◇ Will the subject move? Will the camera move?
- ◇ Will there be any words or graphics on the screen?
- ◇ Will there be voice-overs during this shot?

After you draw your pictures in the story board, write down narration, voice-overs and sound effects on the space below.

**(Blank Story board and Completed Story board Samples)**

# LIGHTING

The lighting you choose for your shots will in large part determine the quality of your final video. Generally, lights are classified as either spot lights or flood lights. For indoor and outdoor lighting needs, the professionals will oftentimes use a three light arrangement: a Key light, which is the main source of light; the Fill light, which shines from the opposite side from the Key light; and the Back light, which lights up the subject's hair and shoulders and gives a three-dimensional effect to your subject matter. These lights are usually spotlights and can be of different colors to change the environment. Floodlights are sometimes used to highlight backgrounds or to remove unwanted shadows.



Although the concept of key, fill and back light is an easy concept, it can be more difficult to do. Place the key light 25 to 45 degrees to the left or right of the camera, and 30-45 degrees above the the subject. For your fill light, use these same angles on the opposite side of the camera, but it should be dimmer than your key light. The brighter your key light, the dimmer your fill light. If these two lights are of equal intensity, focus the fill light away from your subjects, or move it farther away. A screen can also be used to soften the light. Your back light should focus on the head and shoulders of the subject as this sets it away from your background. When shooting outdoors, you can use reflectors to direct the light from the sun onto your subject.

Whenever you're filming, remember that you will always have challenges with lighting. Outdoors, do some test filming in the bright sunshine as well as on an overcast day. Also try filming at different times during the day. For instance, take a few kids out at 10:00 AM, 12:00 noon and 2:00 PM. Show the video on your TV. Which of these times provides for the best lighting? At 10:00 in the morning, you may find additional lights helpful to light up your students' faces. At noon, you may struggle with the bright sunshine and the contrasting dark shadows. At 2:00, you may have to use supplemental lighting again. Lighting doesn't have to come in the form of light bulbs, as you know. Try using white poster board or crinkled aluminum to reflect light back onto your students' faces to diminish shadows. Cardboard can be used to block some of the

sunlight over the video camera or to allow the student to face the sun. The sun is the biggest and brightest light source we have. Learn how to use it to give the effect you need. This just takes practice.

We found it much easier to shoot our video on an overcast day, or in the morning before the clouds cleared. We added lighting to our students' faces and didn't have to worry about the bright sunlight or the dark shadows.

Remember to pay as much attention to darkness and shadow as you do to lighting. If everything in the picture is lit the same, your video will appear bland and boring to the viewer.

The new digital cameras shoot fairly well under indoor fluorescent lights for close-ups, but medium and long shots become dark. Make sure you add lighting when necessary. Also set your White Balance on your camera before shooting (see your instruction manual). Hold a white card up in front of your camera to set your white balance and your camera will automatically adjust the color and light levels so that you will get the best video picture possible. If you don't set the white balance, you will oftentimes end up with pictures that look more gray than vibrant.

It is highly recommended that after you create your story boards and are preparing to shoot, you and your students experiment with different lighting arrangements. This diminishes the time you have to spend having students stand around (or mess around!) when the actual shooting begins. This will also help ensure that your video is of higher quality and suitable for broadcast on TV.

## Checklist for lighting

- ◇ Are you getting a 'low light' signal? If so, adjust your lighting.
- ◇ If you are filming outdoors, are you filming during a time of day that will give you the best possible picture? Do you need supplemental light sources (lights, white cardboard, crinkled aluminum) that will help your video.
- ◇ Avoid big shadows.
- ◇ Is your lighting highlighting the most important aspect(s) of your video? If not, make the necessary changes.
- ◇ When filming indoors under fluorescent lights, medium and long shots will appear dark unless you use supplemental lighting.

## CAMERA SHOTS

Camera shots determine the distance the camera will be from the subject for each shot. Here are some recommendations for Schoolhouse Video camera shots, followed by definitions and illustrations for those shots.

### STORYTELLING EXAMPLE

Establishing Shot:	Shot of the front of your school or school sign (or both). This should be a medium or long shot.
Introduce Narrator(s):	Close-up of narrator(s). If you have more than one narrator, you may have to place them with overlapping shoulders to produce the close shot that you need.
Introduce Story:	Close-up shot of the narrator(s) or start showing video of activity that is the center of the story. Narration will be voice-overs if the latter is chosen.
Development of Story:	Close-ups as much as possible. Medium shots, if needed.
Interview(s):	Close-up(s) of the subject.
Conclusion:	Close-up of the narrator(s) as they give conclusion and closing remarks.

### “BROADCASTING” EXAMPLE

Close-Up Shots:	All interviews, with subjects alternating from looking to the left and to the right of the camera. Do not have the subject look directly into the camera. Avoid distractions in the background. Do not have the subject hold a microphone - use a wireless microphone or have someone hold the microphone off camera.
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## interviewing techniques

One of the most successful interviewing techniques is to remember to ask your subject, "Why?" Explanations will be much more interesting to listen to than simple, "Yes" or "No" answers.

Interview your guests thoroughly at least one day before shooting. Ask probing questions so that you can find out the most interesting things they have to say and then prepare them for the types of questions you will be asking during the shooting.

If they have props that they would like to share during their interview, encourage them to bring them to the shoot. You will need to determine if they can be used in the video or not.

Keep your interviews short. For the purposes of Schoolhouse Video, this will probably be 10-15 seconds maximum.

If you're creating a video survey by using the BROADCASTING TEMPLATE, tape a series of interviews with people answering the same question. For instance, you might have your students out at lunch time asking the question, "What do you like best about school?" or "Who is your hero?" or even, "How have the events of September 11th affected you?" During the editing process, mix up the responses to keep the viewers interest. For example, there will be endearing answers, silly answers, serious answers, and perhaps even confused answers. The editor will need to decide the order in which the interviews should be shown to get the desired effect.

# footage log

Program Assignment \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Time

Shot Description

## tips before you shoot

Check to make sure your battery is charged before you shoot.

Have an extra, fully charged battery available.

Avoid using audio/video equipment near a magnetic field.

Get Release Forms signed **before** you shoot.

Don't let the students use the camera until their script and story boards are complete and approved by you.

Test out different lighting situations before the day of the shoot. Play the video onto your television to determine if the quality is what you are trying to achieve.

Many digital camcorders have a single button for PLAY and PAUSE. Make sure that the camera is actually in PLAY mode when you are shooting video.

Students will usually relax and perform their best after five or six takes. Keep shooting re-takes until you get the relaxed effect that you want.