



Storytelling and Filmmaking Basics

What is a story?

- A person encountering obstacles in pursuit of something they want.
- Important elements: Person, goal, obstacles
- Expresses your unique worldview
- For a short film focus on 1 or 2 characters and keep the story simple.
- Twists: Set up our expectations then subvert them. (Example: In Zootopia the main characters are brought to the most feared crime boss in the city, Mr. Big, and he turns out to be a tiny shrew.)
- Use of Suspense and/or Surprise work very well in short films.
 - Suspense = Expecting something to happen that doesn't yet.
 - Surprise = Something happens that you don't expect.

Pre-production

(The most important step in the production process. The more organized you are the smoother your shoot will go, which will be reflected in the final film.)

- 1.) Brainstorm story ideas, locations and characters.
 - You must be able to explain your story in 1 cohesive sentence. And every decision you make on screen should relate to this sentence.
 - What is the point of the video? Who is the Audience?
- 2.) Outline – A document that lists the plot (the series of events in the story)
- 3.) Script – A document broken up into scenes with location, action and dialog. If you're doing a documentary create a list of questions. It's important to think through every moment of the story, even if it ends up changing. If something is missing this is the stage you want to discover it, not in post-production.
- 4.) Shot List – A list of shots per scene. Plan out different angles, cut-aways, b-roll, room tone, voice-overs, etc. Think forwards to the editing room.
 - Long Shot, Medium Shot, Close Up, Extreme Close Up
- 5.) Prepare for the shoot:
 - Bring all the above documents for production and any release forms you will need.
 - Charge the camera. Format the SD card. Set the camera settings.
 - Pack additional equipment, props or wardrobe.

Production

(Film is a VISUAL medium.)

- 1.) Video - Show don't tell: Dialog is important but SHOW the audience information instead of having a character TELL them. (Example: A woman

- rubbing a pregnant belly is more effective for your time and emotional impact than having her say, “I’m pregnant.”)
- 2.) Audio – The most important part of your shoot!
 - Check your levels on the camera and wear headphones. Make sure talent or voice over is facing the microphone. Keep surrounding noise in mind.
 - 3.) Lighting – Work with your available light. Outdoor sunlight is always a nice choice. Keep an eye on the time of day and plan your schedule. Check sunrise and sunset times for the day.
 - 4.) Camera Placement/Movement – Angles, Perspective and Movement all influence the film’s look and emotional impact. The audience views the story through your lens. What do you want them to see? And from what perspective? How do you want them to feel?

Post-production

(The film is the sum of its parts. Everything serves the story.)

Here is a good tutorial series for Premiere Elements 14:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVPLwPGrRqE>

- 1.) Music – You don’t have to use background music but if you do, use stock/royalty free music. Google “stock music” or “royalty free music for film” and you will find several sites, some are free.
- 2.) Use effects, titles and transitions to enhance your story, not to complicate it. Always consider the tone of your piece.
- 3.) Color Correct – correct inconsistencies in color and lighting
- 4.) Graphics – Title, credits, lower thirds. Again, match the style/tone of your story.
- 5.) Audio levels – Again, the most important part! Make sure dialog and/or voice-overs are consistent and clear.