

## TIPS FOR MAKING GREAT LOOKING VIDEOS

The footage that you shoot/produce and how you edit it together determines the overall quality of your video and the attention that your finished product attracts. From a production standpoint, you control your studio setup, lighting, audio and video recording. The editing stage — how you package up and enhance your raw clips before uploading your finished product — is where the real artistry and creativity comes into play.

For this guide, the tips provided focus on the production part of the process.

- 1.) Design your set to have the character you desire. What do you want your background to look like? If you want a clean background, you will likely need a backdrop background. If you are planning some sophisticated virtual background, you will need a green screen setup. If you want a set decorated theme, set up the room to be nicely organized and achieve the aesthetic you desire (e.g. kitchen for cooking vlog, or gym for a fitness vlog, or library, etc.) For a background blur effect (i.e. out-of-focus), consider using a wide-angle lens up close to the subject with low f-stop aperture. There is a lot of latitude here to do something creative and unique.
- 2.) Set up your video shoot, in the same way, each time, so that you get consistent results with your audio, video and lighting. Consider writing down your setup details so that subsequent setups can be done quickly.
- 3.) Place your main subject in the frame following the photography rule of thirds. By dividing the screen into nine equal parts of the same size, you will have four intersection points. Place the subject in any one of those four points. Of course, this is just a guideline for better visual balance. All the elements in the frame need to be taken into consideration. You might like to position the person in the frame so that the eyes are in one of the top intersection points. In a green screen solution, this nicely facilitates more space to place special effects beside the subject.
- 4.) Use the photography three-point lighting strategy for lighting the core subject with the main light (to create shadows), fill light (to fill the shadows) and back light (to emphasize the separation of the subject from the background). Also, consider an extra set of lights to light up the backdrop evenly, especially if you are creating a green screen or white backdrop for the background. (See section on Lighting in this guide.)
- 5.) If using a DSLR solution, use the right lens to frame the subject properly - head and shoulders or waist-up. I use both a 50mm prime lens and 24mm wide angle lens with the tripod at different distances to get the results I desire. When I use a teleprompter, I need to be reasonably close to it for me to read. In this scenario, I use my 24mm wide-angle lens. If there is more than one subject in the frame, you will need to change the lens and modify focal length as well.
- 6.) Record better audio by using an external microphone instead of the built-in camera microphone. This can be accomplished by connecting a lav microphone or a shotgun microphone to the

microphone input jack on your camera. If the camera does not have an external microphone jack, consider recording on an external recorder and then synchronize the track in post-processing.

Set the camera audio control to “manual” and play with the levels on both the camera and the external microphone to get the optimum setup to minimize noise and maximize the signal quality of what is being recorded.

Depending on the room acoustics, you may desire to add acoustical treatment to improve on the room echo or room reverberation. Treat to address what can't be addressed in post-processing audio editing.

- 7.) The closer the subject is to the recorder the better the quality of the signal.  
If the microphone is too far from the subject, the signal might be too weak, and consequently, the ambient room noise would be proportionately louder.

In addition to proximity, also be sure that you have warmed up your voice and you are projecting well. Remember, it takes a lot more energy to stare into a camera and speak than it does in a casual conversation.

- 8.) Minimize environment noise.  
Turn off any background noise-generating devices or appliances that can affect the recording such as heating or air conditioning. Also, consider recording at a time when you can minimize external noises. For example, don't record at dinner time when lots of cars are driving down the street returning from work.

- 9.) Mark synch points with claps so that you can easily line-up your audio and video track in post-processing. Consider leaving several seconds after each clap so that you can see the clap as a separated element.

- 10.) Start each track with a five-to-ten second recording of just the room sound so that you can have a noise “floor print” to use in post-processing noise reduction.  
This tip assumes that your process involves addressing noise reduction issues as part of your post-processing work.

- 11.) If you are recording music on the same track as the voice, make certain that the music doesn't overpower the voice. Once the voice and music are together on the track, you can't separate or adjust one independent of the other. By comparison, managing music volume is easy if the music is added to the video during the editing phase, rather than recorded at the same time as the voice of the speaker.

## MESSAGE FROM GORD

Although many of the ideas in here will help you “technically” improve the visual aspects of your video production, these improvements do not displace the core requirement for success that you need - to create engaging quality content. Your ability to hook the viewer, engage them and keep them interested to watch your video through to the end are paramount because if you aren’t interesting or engaging, no one will stay to watch, regardless of how great the video looks and sounds.

I hope you have benefitted from the information provided here!

I’d love to hear your feedback and comments about what you’d like to see expanded upon or included in future versions of this document. You can contact me at [gord@gordisman.com](mailto:gord@gordisman.com) or on Facebook at <http://fb.com/gordisman> . My YouTube Channel is <https://www.youtube.com/c/GordIsman> .

To your video success!

Cheers,

Gord

