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How to make effective videos



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INTRODUCTION

To make good videos you need good equipment, but beyond the qualitative aspect of the image, if you want to obtain interesting and captivating videos you must make shots that keep people's attention alive, encouraging them to continue watching. Not secondary is the post-production phase (assembly/editing).

In the following paragraphs we will briefly address the different aspects and steps related to the production of effective videos.

1. EQUIPMENT

1.1. Basic tools

- The main tool for making video footage is the large **digital video camera**.
- You can work with an interchangeable lens **camera** with a Full HD system.
- You can still use the cheaper **compact cameras** or an **action camera** (for shooting on location or on the go).
- If you take static shots, perhaps in front of the PC screen, a good **HD webcam** may be enough.
- The cheapest solution is to use the **smartphone** which, although it does not give many possibilities to customize the shots, still guarantees very high quality nowadays. It is advisable to use the camera located on the back of the smartphone, which has a much higher quality both in terms of number of pixels and lens quality.
- For shots from above, you can evaluate the use of a **drone** with a camera.



1.2. Accessories

- **Tripod** – It will serve to support the camcorder, camera or smartphone. The camera should be positioned at eye level for a neutral shot and to free up your hands. If you work with light equipment, even a cheap one will be enough. It is advisable to make a small investment by buying a good "head" which will allow you to perform more varied and professional movements.
- **Microphone** – It is necessary if you decide to make the video with a smartphone, since, if the video quality is generally decent, the audio is often of poor quality. So, it makes sense to invest in a microphone, not necessarily an expensive one. There are three types: handheld, shotgun and lapel. The latter are perhaps the most functional and cheapest.
- **Lamps** – Lighting is essential in order to produce high quality videos. In the absence of good natural light, artificial lights can be used to allow more flexibility while shooting. You can choose a ring light (circular LED lights), or opt for a much more practical solution, a very simple cold light LED bulb (which has the same color as daylight), with an E27 socket, to be mounted on lampholders (better two, one on the right and one on the left).



2. THE “STRUCTURE” OF THE VIDEO – INDICATIONS FOR DESIGN

2.1. A "story" to tell

Think of a "story" to tell and organize it following these steps (a):

1. **Intrigue.** The first few seconds are essential to capture your viewer's attention, it takes between 3 and 15 seconds. You have to create expectations.
2. **Introduce yourself with very few words** that hit the mark and let your viewer know where they are and what they can expect from you. The ideal duration is five seconds.
3. **Debate and come up with interesting content**, it's time to demonstrate all your skill and competence in what you are telling. It's definitely the longest and thickest part of the video.
4. **Conclude.** Find a teaching that goes beyond the technical and practical aspects you talked about, try to associate values.
5. **Ask.** If you have managed to add value to your viewer's life, if you have taught him/her something new, if you have offered him/her a different perspective, your viewer will be happy to leave you a "like", a comment or his e-mail address. This is perhaps the hardest part.

(a) This formula applies to YouTube. Surely capturing attention in the first seconds unites all social media to a certain extent but there are distinctions. On YouTube you can rely on the words you speak, on Instagram and Facebook instead you have to focus exclusively on the visual aspect. Even the operating algorithms of the platforms are very different: on YouTube, in fact, we tend to look for answers; Facebook suggests videos based on your tastes and those of your friends, so the virality of a video works.



2.2. Think about the script

A fundamental rule is to mentally construct the video before even pressing the record button.

- **The story-board** - Having a minimum of storyboards in mind makes it easier for us to choose shots, shooting times and movements. You can find many models, examples and indications on the web to create a *story-board* (filmora.wondershare.com/video-editing/storyboard.html, www.canva.com/create/storyboards) and surely there will be several that adapt to your project. In the construction of the *story-board* we must keep in mind what our gaze would do and then repeat the same movement with the camera. Let's not forget that the human eye is attracted to **movement**, so it is advisable to insert movements in the video to keep the attention high.

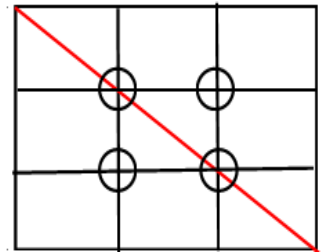
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3. “TECHNIQUE” - VIDEO SHOOTING

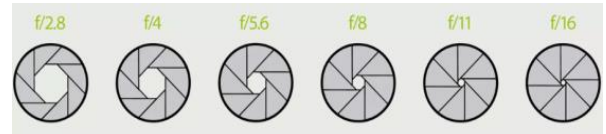
- **Movement** – Following what we have already noted in the story-board, we will perform the same movements with the camera as our gaze would do. It is not advisable to delegate all the movements of the shot to the zoom alone, which could generate boring and uninvolving shots. It is necessary to move to vary angles, viewpoints and scenes. Never settle for the first attempt. You should take a couple of different shots, then choose in the post-production phase which one to keep. You should look for unusual and original visual angles, naturally without exaggerating.



- **Framing** – To obtain a good framing, a very useful procedure consists in dividing the framing into three vertical and three horizontal portions. In this way, we will obtain a rectangle divided into nine parts and four intersection points of the lines. These represent the points that most attract the human eye and, consequently, those on which it is virtually necessary to position the subjects.



- **Lighting** – Images should not be underexposed, i.e., too dark. To remedy poor light conditions, one can: “add light” using lamps (*) (or flash when taking photographs); adjust the aperture to “let in” more light (If you are using a camera, you can also adjust the shutter speed). The devices we use automatically regulate these parameters, so we just need to check.



(*) Try to diffuse the light similar to what umbrellas do. Position the lamps higher than the head so that the light comes from above. The CRI value of the color quality should be around 90-95.



- **Image quality** – The images must not be “grainy”: if, by chance, the definition of the images is not sufficient, online services, computer programs and apps for mobile devices could be used which allow you to increase the pixels of the images.
- **Audio** – It is possible and, sometimes, advisable to record the audio at a later time using specific software for multi-track and multi-platform audio editing, such as *Audacity* (audacityteam.org). There are different sites where you can legally download music for background music, acronyms or special effects (www.soundbible.com, www.freesound.org, www.freemusicarchive.org).

OTHER MATERIALS

Whatever the topic, you can find objects, images, drawings and texts that can exemplify and explain what you want to communicate.

4. EDITING THE VIDEO

Once the video has been designed and the necessary materials have been prepared, at least all the main ones (new materials can still be produced as the assembly proceeds, in relation to the needs and assessments in progress), we will move on to the assembly phase by using video editing software.

There are video editing programs suitable for all needs and software platforms, from professional editors to "home" applications.

4.1. Choice of video editing software

We will indicate a few, which could also be suitable for the less technological. They are not all free, but even the paid ones can be used at no cost for an initial trial period (usually 30 days):

- Multiplatform programs
 - Adobe Premiere Pro
 - Wondershare Filmora
 - Lightworks
 - Avidemux

- Android programs
 - InShOt
 - VidTrim Pro
 - Clesh Video Editor

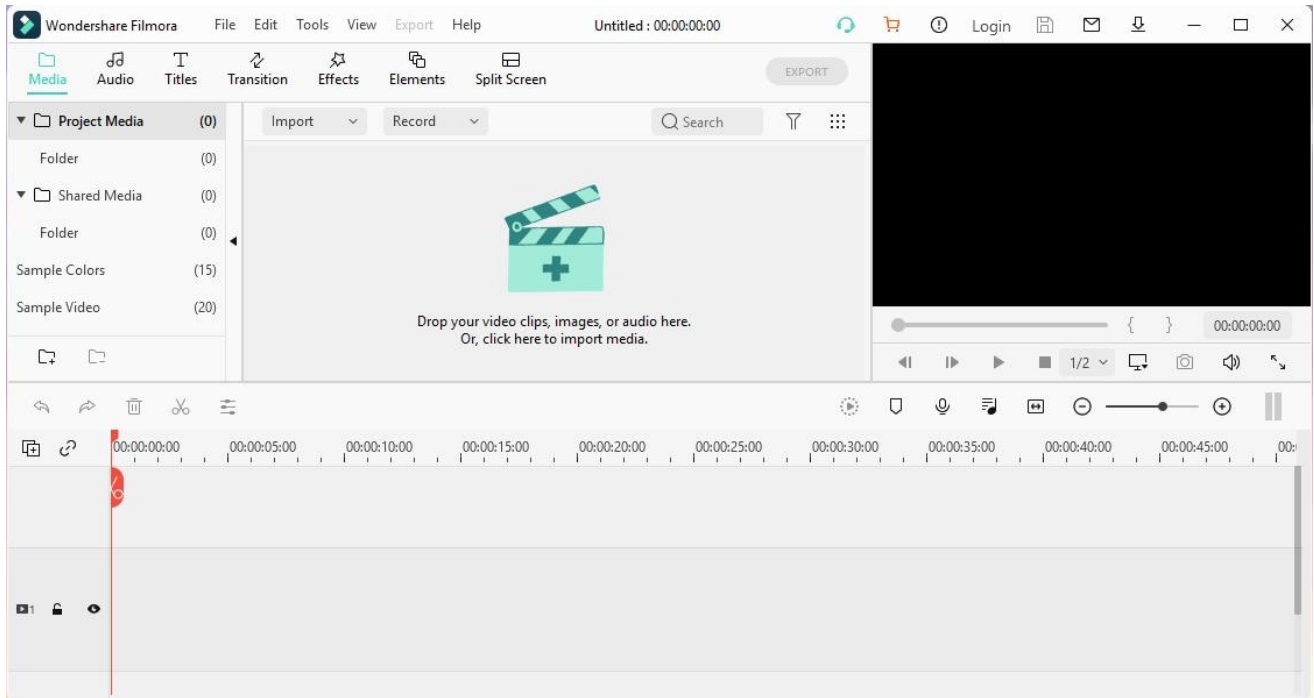
- Windows programs
 - Windows Movie Maker
 - EaseUS Video Editor
 - ZS4 Video Editor
 - VirtualDub Mod
 - Pinnacle

- macOS programs
 - iMovie
 - Final Cut Pro

Functions common to all video editing software

Any video editing software offers the following basic functions, such as:

- drawer for the "materials" to be loaded (video clips, photos...)
- multiple timelines (audio, video, texts, ...)
- editing functions (trimming, transitions, ...)
- copyright-free content (sounds, music, ...)
- preview
- export to various formats, special effects, filters, etc....



Errors to avoid

Whatever the video editing software, here is a list of "errors" to avoid:

1. Too many transitions, or too many different types of transitions.
2. Too many fonts: try to use no more than two different fonts in a project.
3. Too many colours: use no more than two colours.
4. Quirky animations: it is better to use classic animations such as a fade or a side entry.
5. Position of texts: you often see texts positioned in places where they clutter the image.
6. Black borders: they appear when you insert images that have a different aspect ratio than the video, it suffices to crop them appropriately.
7. Music too loud: when music and audio overlap, you have to choose at every point in the movie which is the protagonist, whether the dialogues or the music, and adjust the audio or music accordingly.



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