

CHAPTER 6

Working with Video

INTRODUCTION

The potential power of mobile-phone journalism was shown during coverage of the 2011 London riots. Using just an iPhone, Sky News journalist Mark Stone captured some of the most striking footage of the riots. His confrontations with the looters engaged viewers and the impact of his work was immediate: his footage led bulletins on Sky and was used by rival TV networks across the globe. Online he was trending on Twitter within an hour of the video being filmed. Within 24 hours his video material had been viewed by nearly a million people online. You can see his video at:



Stone's reporting earned him a lot of admiration. Here are some of the Twitter responses to his reports:

- 'Have to say, what a great job Mark Stone is doing tonight. Very courageous journalism' – @skynews via @HayleyRockss
- 'Mark Stone is super brave. He's reporting from all over with his bike and camera phone' – via @6inchstilettos
- 'Love it, my colleague @stone_skynews is currently trending worldwide on Twitter for his reporting' – Mark Stone via @fieldproducer

In this chapter we look at how to put video news online. To work effectively with video you need to bring a range of skills together. You need to be able shoot video, record sound effectively, record a 'piece to camera', script,

voiceover and edit. Most importantly you need to bring words and pictures together to tell the story in the most compelling and informative way.

While production standards in video outside the mainstream national media are often quite low we encourage you to adopt a high standard in your video-making as there is no doubt this is the way the news industry is going. To be a competent video journalist (VJ) takes a lot of effort, but the reporter with good video skills opens many career opportunities. Not only is the ability to make a video news package essential to working in TV news, it also opens the way to current affairs, documentary and factual programming. Researchers for TV are expected to have good video skills.

Learning the TV news model – those well-established practices that make television news eminently watchable – is the most effective learning method for the VJ. Watch and analyse how TV journalists deliver the news engagingly with a synthesis of words, pictures and sound.

>>OBJECTIVES<<

In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- 1 use a video camera;
- 2 record sound for package including voiceover;
- 3 write to pictures in a script;
- 4 use a video-editing software program;
- 5 include user-generated content.

VIDEO JOURNALISM FOR ONLINE

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There is no doubt that video is an incredibly engaging format for information, news, and entertainment – well, for anything really. A video can much easier explain a complex topic than text alone as people can see and repeat what you do. You can show instead of just telling or hoping people read what you painstakingly wrote. (Christian Heilmann, Mozilla, 2012)

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In the UK we have some of the highest professional standards for producing video news in the world. Look at any news programme on a major channel and you will see brilliantly made news packages.



Figure 6.1 A video camera is best held on a tripod to avoid shaking. (Source: Dreamstime)

Online video journalism versus TV journalism

There is a running debate about online news websites copying the TV model. The American new media guru Jeff Jarvis (a visiting professor at London's City University) (2012) says that online sites should not copy TV. He believes they should innovate with new forms of video delivery:

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I think they are still making a big mistake in trying to imitate old time TV. They are trying to do stand-ups. They are trying to do B rolls [the supplemental footage intercut with the main shot in an interview or documentary] and establishing shots because TV did it. There is no reason to.

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The basic concept of the VJ is of a reporter who goes out on their own, with a camera, and shoots, scripts and edits their own work. News teams working on websites tend to be smaller than their equivalent in traditional media. However, the introduction of video journalism online has been gradual. It is mainly a resources issue as most websites operate on very tight budgets. Even with modern hardware and software a video package takes longer to prepare than its text or audio or even a photo-gallery equivalent. It also requires some training and this has deterred many local newspapers.

The rise of the VJ

About ten years ago the video journalism revolution in the UK started in the traditional media – in the then well-funded BBC TV news. The BBC believed that one person making news packages could be more flexible and productive. It began training reporters to be video journalists, mostly on regional news teams for TV news. Hundreds have now been through the training scheme. Some journalists became video journalists as they found making their own videos was the best way to persuade news desks to broadcast the stories they covered. Many video journalists love the freedom of working on their own. David Heathfield (in Heathfield et al., 2011) from NATO TV says: ‘I like to work myself and camera, making the whole thing from start to finish.’

Karen Thayer, Multi Media Journalist and Change Manager at the BBC (in Heathfield et al., 2011), says: ‘Where I’m coming from, video journalism is about the storytelling and unless you have something to say don’t pick up the camera. The more difficult thing is to work out what I have to say, what is the story I want to tell.’

Connected TVs arrive in the living room

One thing is certain: video will become more and more important as audiences become more and more interested in visual delivery. We are witnessing the rise of digital streaming media players – using digital set top boxes, such as Apple TV, games consoles and a new breed of smart TVs. These allow users to watch online video on their living-room TV sets from sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, BBC iPlayer and Channel 4oD, which mean there will be more demand for content in video format. We are also witnessing the rise of specific title video channels. The US-based *Wall Street Journal* now has a very effective video channel featuring high-quality business news. The video journalist might also be delivering text, photographs and audio versions of the story, and may also provide stories by social media as well as online. Sometimes the video will be the only medium used to deliver the story. On other occasions the journalist might decide not to use video at all.

By comparison to TV news, the quality of video on the websites of most regional and local papers is still often average and sometimes very poor, consisting of a wobbly interview shot by a reporter on an iPhone with barely audible sound. A growing number of newspapers like the idea of using a

fuller interview on a video as part of the online presentation of the news story if only a few quotes were utilized in the actual news piece. The interview gives added value to those members of the site's audience who are really interested in the story.

Editors are very conscious of low professional standards of the video on their website and are requiring new reporters to have video packaging skills. It is worth noting that the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) – the body which sets the training standards for reporters based on industry requirements – now has a video for online unit in its new diploma. These modules require aspirant reporters to be able to shoot, script and edit a news package that achieves a standard very similar to what one might find on a regional TV news bulletin. There is convergence of the newspaper reporter and the VJ of regional TV news. In both cases the reporter is a one-man band who has to record, script and edit as well as deliver a purely text version of the story.

We were told by the then head of the *Guardian's* multimedia team, Tom Happold (2012): 'I am sure that if you are applying for a job on the *Guardian* as a news reporter and you have the ability to shoot and edit video, this will give you the edge in getting the job. It is important to us.'

User-generated video content

Video news doesn't just come from staff and freelance journalists. Members of the public will offer video to you. Members of the public frequently film dramatic events and this is known as user-generated content (UGC). If you watch any of the numerous 'fly on the wall' documentaries about policing, for example, you will notice at any late-night fracas bystanders busily capturing events on their mobile phones. They are very often happy to share their video with you. Steve Punter, a freelance VJ (in Heathfield et al., 2011), says: 'I think we are about to enter a golden age of new media, but whether it is TV, I doubt it. It will be mobile, it will be on the web, it will be pro-am and completely disruptive of ownership.'

HOW NEWSPAPERS USE VIDEO

There are a growing number of sources of video material to use online. There are agencies that supply basic clips of any event. ITN is one of these.

The staff journalist can then use the material and edit it into a package. There is a wide range of different types of footage online. At its most simple the reporter might edit and upload footage shot by a member of the community without any voicing. For many news reports, the reporter simply writes and voices a script to the pre-supplied pictures.

Here is an example from the *Southern Daily Echo* where the reporter has written a script to pictures supplied by the local emergency services: www.dailyecho.co.uk/video/87129/.

Another example of scripted footage from one camera is: www.dailyecho.co.uk/video/87076/.

One of the simplest versions of a package is a short script that the newsreader or presenter reads 'out of vision' to accompany a sequence of shots. In TV this is known as 'an OOV'. They are often used for scripting 'found' footage. This is footage provided, for example, by the police as in a piece of CCTV of a crime taking place or by a reader. It may also be a jolly, if embarrassing, piece of video in the spirit of 'You've been framed'. Here's an example of CCTV footage from a shop recording a theft: www.dailyecho.co.uk/video/107716/.



Figure 6.2 A reporter at the *Daily Telegraph* newsroom presents a video report. (Source: Steve Hill)

CCTV footage works well for local newspapers as it is cheap and often very popular – particularly footage of bank robberies and late-night pub brawls.

It also allows local newspapers to ‘cross-promote’, for example from a text report in a newspaper to an associated video on its website. It’s an increasingly common practice.

Another technique used on online sites is to link to free pre-packaged content on YouTube or similar hosted site. This takes little effort on the part of the journalist. This video content is often very popular with users, even though it is not at all exclusive content. It is sometimes more popular than painstakingly produced video packages made by a journalist.

With the proliferation of CCTV and the ubiquity of mobile phones there is a wide range of video available and much of it is free. If you are working on a news desk the editor will expect you to be able to create and utilize video to enhance the website and grab the attention of users. The news editor will want you to make sure that the footage belongs to the person who is providing it to you. They will also want to make sure you consider privacy issues – for instance was the video recorded in a private place and did the person who recorded it have permission to be there. Here’s an example of a high-quality piece of a trainee journalist’s work that has been used on a professional newspaper site:
www.buckinghamshireadvertiser.co.uk/south-buckinghamshire-news/local-buckinghamshire-advertiser-news/2012/03/14/why-people-feel-so-strongly-about-hs2-82398-30535893/.



Figure 6.3 Emergency services rescue crane driver after crane collapse in Southampton docks.
(Source: *Southern Daily Echo*)



Figure 6.4 Man threatens to jump from 120 foot high crane. (Source: *Southern Daily Echo*)

FINDING THE STORY

Finding a story is a skill. We know at first, many trainee journalists find this hard. Often student journalists lack confidence and find it hard to speak to people they do not know. With effort that reticence is overcome. First, think through what is the most topical aspect of an event and what is the best way to tell the story. Something has happened but there will be different 'angles' to the story. An 'angle' is the particular way you choose to tell the story. You want to tell the one that is most topical, or is most important or is most dramatic. But you must not bend the truth to get your angle. Accuracy is a keystone in good journalism. Think about it.

WRITE TO PICTURES

Writing for video is different from audio and pure text. The same basic rules of news-writing apply as we detailed in the early chapters. But writing for broadcast (known as writing to pictures) is a synthesis of words and pictures. You still have to deliver the basic news information. The pictures can do a lot of the work and reduce the need for everything to be explained in the words. Like all news, every video story needs a different treatment but there are some basic rules. These rules are well proven and if you want to break them you need a good reason to, and you should be sure that you have found a better way of telling the story. Writing for video is not a question of writing a script and then adding pictures. Neither is it a case of just getting pictures and then writing the words. It's about creatively bringing the two elements together to the best effect. That takes a bit of getting used to and is a matter of practice.



Figure 6.5 The police will often supply CCTV footage to local newspaper websites. It is a good way of catching criminals and generates traffic to the website. (Source: *Southern Daily Echo*)

Sometimes the picture does most of the work and you need few words. For example, a story about a train being derailed at high speed with pictures of the derailed train lying on its side does not need a script that says ‘a train has been derailed’, because it’s obvious to anyone viewing. Use what you write in the script to complement the pictures. Tell the audience who was injured, how many were in the train, how fast it was going, where it was travelling from and to. Use your script to add information, not to repeat to the audience what they can already see.

A very simple example of writing to pictures was on the BBC1 10 o’clock TV news on 26 April 2012, in an item about Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt’s controversial links with News Corp over the BskyB bid. It opened with a picture of Cabinet Minister Hunt who was out jogging. The commentary started: ‘He can run but he can’t hide.’ Simple but effective writing to pictures.

Video lends itself to the great interviewees. Sometimes rather than the reporter opening the piece with their intro lines setting the story, the

interviewee does it better. Starting with the interviewee in this way throws the viewer right into the story.



One major difference between TV news and online video packages is the way they are introduced. Think of all the TV news you have watched. On screen throughout the news you will have one or more studio-based presenters. Their job is to introduce the news. Typically they will introduce a story with two or three sentences, ending with something like ‘Our reporter Jane Smith is at the scene’.



Figure 6.6 Luke Karmali's video. (Source: Trinity Mirror)

CREATING PACKAGES WITH DIFFERENT LENGTHS

For most online reports the video will be stand-alone, delivered by the reporter alone. This means the reporter has to find a way to explain the

story from the start. There is no help from a presenter. As a reporter working for the main TV channels you will be required to produce 'reversion' – a range of different format packages from one story. Say you are sent out to cover an armed robbery. You may be required to make the following versions:

- A 90-second version for the main evening news TV bulletin. This will need a cue written for the presenter. This might include one piece to camera (PTC).
- A three-minute stand-alone version for the online site. This might include two pieces to camera.
- A 45-second version for a short news bulletin.
- An audio version for radio news. This might be 30, 45 or 60 seconds.
- The reporter will also have to write a short text link for the online page to encourage browsers to watch the video version.

While the reporter can use much of the same information, each package will need to be scripted slightly differently and a range of editing decisions made. The experienced reporter will know that they are likely to have to re-edit their story for a range of formats so they will think carefully about how to make sure they have all the right material available. They will do this before they start filming. The professional might shoot too much material to give themselves room for manoeuvre.

As a journalist you need to learn to make packages of different lengths. You should be able to make packages of one, two and three minutes. In our experience, one of the biggest problems trainee journalists give themselves is not recording enough material rather than recording too much.

If you are asked to cover a news event and produce a video package there are a range of possible basic ingredients:

- 1 interviews;
- 2 vox pops;
- 3 general views (known as GVs) – shots that show the place or person at the centre of the story;
- 4 commentary (known as COMM) – this is the reporter voicing the story;
- 5 reporter talking on screen ('piece to camera', PTC) – this is another

method of delivering the script;

- 6 found footage – someone might have recorded dramatic footage of the event you are reporting; and
- 7 graphics.

Remember the job of the reporter is to bring an eyewitness account of events wherever possible. It's not possible in every case but even when the reporter can't be on the scene, their job is to get there and find eyewitnesses to give the best possible account of events. The reporter's 'piece to camera' at the scene is important as it brings authority and authenticity to the report.

INTERVIEW: KURT BARLING, BBC LONDON REPORTER

Kurt Barling is a highly experienced reporter working for BBC London News. His main outlet is television but he also services other platforms. 'BBC London News has 1.5 million viewers a day and so that has to be our paramount focus.' He has access to other London BBC platforms. 'Quite often you will see a good line coming off the television item which could be used as a talking point on the radio station 94.9FM.' He will do a radio package from his material. Then he looks to online. 'If the story has more layers and can afford more context you might also do something online like a 750-word treatment for online, and the benefit of online is that you give your television work a secondary market.' Kurt likes the fact that once you get a video package online, 'It stays there in perpetuity', unlike the ephemeral nature of television. He often gets feedback on packages he made online from people who have only just seen it many months later. As a BBC reporter, he says, 'You are always alive to the possibility that your piece can thrive and survive across all three platforms.'

How does Barling choose his stories from all those that come into the BBC London news desk every day? 'First thing you ask is whether there is a story there. Sometimes a story comes in and you look at the lines and there is no story there.' But every day there is a story that will work. He used as an example the on-going story of the shooting of the young north Londoner Mark Duggan by the police in controversial circumstances which sparked off the 2011 riots. 'An obvious public interest story, an obvious story for me to do because I have very good connections in London's minority communities. It is an area in London I know particularly well as I have done

a lot of work there in the last 25 years. So it's a natural place for me to go and look at the story.' What does he do next? What questions does he ask himself?



Figure 6.7 BBC reporter Kurt Barling. (Source: Kurt Barling)

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What are the lines of the story? Well the obvious lines of the story are the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story, starting off with Mark Duggan. Who shot him? Where did they shoot him? When did they shoot and why did they shoot him? And trying and explore all those fundamental questions. And in order to animate those questions you have a number of different potential sources. Clearly you have a number of official sources although in a shooting like that the officials will clam up pretty quickly and just give you the official line.

Then you might find yourself with eyewitnesses in the community who can offer you some insight into what they saw. So you're reporting directly what they saw in the incident. Then you can turn to other people in the community who have their own pathways of intelligence. They can give you a little bit more insight into who saw what and when although you would have to be careful how you report that because it is not necessarily 100 per cent accurate. You will go to the scene and gather pictures of the scene, of that incident from whichever vantage point you can get to. In the end television is about pictures. No pictures – very difficult to tell the story.

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Barling says it is very hard to keep a video story alive if you don't have

fresh pictures.

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The one thing you had with Duggan is that you constantly had fresh pictures. You could go to the family to get a new line. You could get the family at the coroner's inquest for a new line. And that new line was constantly pushing that story along. The inquest was a fresh line.

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He summed up the method:

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In terms of going out and gathering material, though, you identify the key lines of the story, the key characters who are going to animate that story and get their story on tape. Any story for television needs pictures, that's self-evident. I would hasten to add, many times, it doesn't stop a story because you don't have fresh pictures, but the story gets tired very quickly if you don't have pictures.

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LEARN TO REALLY SEE

In Chapter 5 we emphasized that you have to learn to listen to make good audio. With video you really have to learn to see. When you are filming, what is it you really see? What will your pictures really say to the viewers? What is the background?

Have you seen video footage where the interviewee appears to have a lamp-post growing out of their head? This happens when we don't look carefully and think 'What does this say to the viewer?' and 'Does this look OK?' If you are recording someone on screen, avoid situations where something distracting is going on in the background.

Be careful not to let the words and pictures contradict each other. You might be writing a story saying that a council fell behind with rubbish collections over Christmas causing a build-up of rotting rubbish in some streets. If that is true, don't show just a couple of bags of rubbish in the street as that undermines your story-line. You need a large pile. Don't show refuse collectors picking up the rubbish as that will contradict visually what you are saying in the commentary. If you are talking about a hosepipe ban being introduced because of a drought don't start your package with a reservoir of water. You can bring that in later in the story, perhaps to explain that the reservoirs are only half as full as they should be. But don't

use that shot at the beginning. At the beginning you need something that signposts drought – perhaps cracked earth or grass that has gone brown or crops that are dying.

For example, if your editor tells you to produce a video package about a council that has withdrawn subsidies to a rural bus service, you will need the following video material:

General views (GVs) of one of the bus services that are threatened as a result of the cuts. This footage should make it clear that the bus is a rural service. So a good shot would be a shot that swings around from fields to a bus stop as the bus draws up.

Interview 1: perhaps with a family from an outlying village that relies on the bus to get them to the nearest major town and will be cut off without it. It might be a mother and son. The boy might tell you he uses the bus for school and to see his friends at weekends. The mother might say she cannot afford a car. A good place to film the interview would be on the bus.

Interview 2: optional – perhaps with an elderly person who relies on the bus to take them on weekly visits to the hospital or to do their shopping.

Interview 3: with the councillor who is responsible for the decision to cut the subsidy. This is important to make sure the story is correct and to make sure that it is balanced. The council may be under tremendous financial pressure to cut back and would have to cut back other vital services if this subsidy is not cut.

Interview 4: with a spokesman from the bus company, who might explain that without the subsidy the service is not financially viable. They might have some surprising information perhaps disclosing that only a handful of passengers actually use the bus service in question.

Vox pops: You might get some vox pops from people at the bus stop.

Piece to camera (PTC): A sense of authenticity will be conveyed if the reporter reports from the scene. A good place to report would be from the moving bus where you can see the background is of the countryside. You would prepare some script for the piece to camera so you can learn it and deliver it. On the BBC College of Journalism site, reporter David Shukmann (Shukmann, n.d.) says he does not write and learn the script. He writes some rough notes and then records a spontaneous piece to camera. He believes this makes his PTCs very easy to listen to and prevents them from

sounding rehearsed. We think this is great, but only for the experienced reporter or for the reporter who finds talking to a camera very natural. Most people don't at first and a script is generally the best way to look and sound professional.

When you come back to the newsroom with your recorded video you are looking for the best way to tell the story. You will have written the top of the story – the intro that outlines the story. That might be:

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Rural bus services in the West Darley area are likely to be severely cut following the council decision to remove £1m worth of fare subsidies. Arriva – the bus company running the services – say that at least ten routes will have to go if the subsidies are withdrawn.

A spokesman for the council says they were necessary in order to protect the provision of elderly people's care.

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You then develop the narrative. You might choose to broaden the story to other cutbacks in transport in the whole area. Or to explain which other cuts they may be considering.

SIGNPOSTING

Certain shots are what we call signposting shots. A signpost shot reinforces the words and is a visual representation of a key point of the story. The first shot is often known as an 'establishing shot'.

If you are talking about cutting back bus services it is usual to show a bus.

CHOOSING A VIDEO CAMERA

A journalist should always carry a video camera even if it is just your mobile smartphone. As we have seen with Mark Stone's riot footage, the video camera feature on a smartphone can produce gripping content. This material was technically not really broadcast quality but was used for broadcast as they were the only images from the scene that were available. When you are in this situation, sound quality and camera shake are likely to be your two biggest problems.

A suitable video camera will have manual settings – especially focus and exposure. This enables greater control in difficult conditions such as poor light. We have all been in rooms where blinding natural light floods in and yet some parts of the room remain relatively dark. Manual exposure helps you keep the image in a constant light. Automatic exposure may dim and brighten making the video difficult to watch.

In busy streets an automatic focus camera may respond to an event peripheral to your subject. It might try to focus on a bus moving behind your interview subject. Sticking to manual focusing really helps.

The iPhone 5 is capable of video recording HD (1080p) up to 30 frames per second with audio. This is a great improvement and other smartphones are very good. Camera phones are OK but because of their thin size lack the ability to give a good depth of field (DOF), as well as some other important features. Depth of field is the distance between the nearest and farthest objects in a scene that appear sharp and clear in an image. Although a camera lens can focus at only one point in the distance at a time, the decrease in sharpness is gradual on each side of the focused distance, so that within the DOF, the lack of sharpness is imperceptible under normal viewing conditions.

In some cases, it may be desirable to have the entire image sharp, and a large depth of field is appropriate. In other situations a narrow DOF may make for a more powerful image, emphasizing the subject while de-emphasizing the foreground and background.

Flip cameras are also improving. These look like mobile phones but are dedicated cameras using the extra physical space (not having to have telephone electronics) for additional features. They have many of the elements that more expensive video cameras have. Phones and flip cameras are not good on stability. If you are going to use a camera phone – for interviews – we recommend you buy a camera stand. It will make a significant difference to the quality of the video you capture.

We strongly recommend a reasonable quality dedicated camera. Canon DSLRs are very good, and in particular the Canon EOS 600 DSLR at around £500. This has a much higher resolution than a mobile phone and is capable of capturing good-quality HD video as well as superb 18 megapixel digital still images. It is important that the camera has an external microphone input and headphone socket so you can monitor the sound. It is also

important that the sound quality is good. You will know from audio recording that it is important to get the microphone close to the source of the sound. When interviewing, the microphone needs to be close to the interviewee's mouth – usually a few inches below.

Stability is a key issue. A larger camera is easier to hold steady and fit onto a tripod. There is a very good guide on how to shoot and edit video for the web when using an iPhone, iPad or iPod out in the field or covering breaking news on Journalism.co.uk (www.journalism.co.uk/skills/how-to-shoot-and-edit-video-on-an-iphone/s7/a545443/)

Before you set out there are a number of things you need to do. Make sure the equipment is all working properly. Are the batteries in your equipment fully charged? Do you have spare batteries? Is the microphone working? Are the leads working well? A dodgy microphone lead can ruin your sound. Professionals still find themselves with equipment problems. It is almost a rite of passage for a trainee video journalist to come back and discover that a vital interview was not recorded because of a flat or low battery.

CAPTURING GOOD VIDEO

Video rules are very similar to those for using a stills camera in Chapter 4. If outside, don't film into the sun.

Rule of thirds

If interviewing use the rule of thirds to frame the interviewee. You make sure the person's eyes are located in the place one third from the top and one third of the width from the side. It can be either left or right but it is good to have interviewees on different sides.

When recording a piece to camera, it is usual to place the reporter in the centre. But when you film an interviewee you should offset them to the right or left. Their eyes should be one third from the top and one third from the side of the frame. Alternating interviewees right and left is very useful in editing to keep the video visually interesting. The interviewee should be looking at you – slightly to the side of the camera – and not looking directly at the camera.

As Stephen Quinn and Vincent Filak (2005) explain, the rules for video are

similar to that for stills photographs: 'You should usually avoid placing the subject in the centre of the frame. People read left to right so their eyes are conditioned to naturally go to a point about two-thirds up the page.'

Allow yourself some footage to play with in the edit so let the camera run for a few seconds before you or your interviewee speaks – likewise at the end.

When you start filming keep the camera still – don't start panning or zooming until you have practised and can make this type of shot work.

Know where your material is going to appear

If it is going to be a small format, low-resolution online format or for mobiles, shoot close shots especially of interviewees. The closer the shots are, the better they'll look on a computer screen as wide scene-setting shots tend to get lost on a small screen.

Camera techniques: distance and angle

Wide shot (WS) – shot which shows all or most of a fairly large subject (for example, a person) and usually much of the surroundings.

Medium wide shot (MWS) – with an interviewee, the lower frame line cuts off his feet and ankles.

Medium shot (MS) – in such a shot, presenter of interviewee and its setting occupy roughly equal portion of the frame. In the case of the interviewee, the lower frame passes through the waist. There is space for hand gestures to be seen.

Medium close shot (MCS) – the setting can still be seen. The lower frame line passes through the chest of the interviewee.

Close-up (CU) – a shot that shows the interviewee's face so that it fills the screen.

MCU (Medium close-up) – head and shoulders.

BCU (big close-up) – forehead to chin. Close-ups focus attention on a person's feelings or reactions, and are sometimes used in interviews to show people in a state of emotional excitement, grief or joy.



Figure 6.8 A range of distance shots. (Source: Paul Lashmar)

Camera moves

A pan or zoom can be visually very effective. You might have a vicar talking about his church – you can pan down the church and move to him as he speaks and that is a much more interesting shot than a static frame. When you pan and zoom you need to work out the timing of what is going to be said in that shot. You should always begin and finish statically. Cutting into a moving shot when you edit is ugly and unprofessional. Don't jerk your body around when filming. If you decide to pan, use a steady motion so you aren't giving your audience a headache. As you become more skilled you can use movement shots. It is generally agreed that viewers like dynamic news footage. Even where the story does not lend itself to moving shots you can inject energy by panning and zooming. If you are shooting piles of rubbish in a street try to have some movement, even if it is of passing cars or

pedestrians. White and Barnas (2010) say about filming, ‘avoid zooms and pans unless there is some important reason to zoom or pan on to something ... it is better to cut from one shot or another’. Avoid ‘hosepiping’ – do not move your camera backwards and forwards or shoot and move. Movement shots should start statically, move evenly then stop. When using a camera which has an electronic zoom, use your body to zoom in. Don’t use the actual zoom unless you absolutely have to as the footage gets more pixelated the more you zoom in.

Why that shot?

When you shoot think about how you are going to edit the video footage. Think about editing and about creating sequences so the footage works together and has a harmony.

EDITING

At the simplest level there are a range of very basic video editing packages like Apple’s iMovie, or Windows Movie Maker. Sometimes they come pre-installed on your computer. One of the benefits of using iMovie is that it has pre-settings for both YouTube and Vimeo uploading. They are for the home-users and lack some elements that we feel are important in a professional context. We have found accurate editing can be difficult and frustrating.

There is a range of high-quality editing programs on the market for a reasonable price. Very popular is Final Cut Pro which is only for Apple computers. Another is Pinnacle Studio. Pinnacle has incorporated the Avid system which is well regarded in the TV industry.

It is often worth getting some basic training on these programs. They appear dauntingly complex but for most news packages you only need a few functions.

The first move is to upload your footage onto the computer so that your editing software can access the material. View the material and log your best material. If GVs, which are good clear stable shots? Which are useful for signposting the story? What are the timings on your pans and zooms? Once you have the pictures logged, look at any interviews – what are the good quotes? Draft a rough on the basis of what you have seen.



Figure 6.9 Pinnacle editing screen. (Source: Paul Lashmar)

When editing you should know that every story needs a different approach. There are rules but you need to develop the confidence to know when to break them. Always think – what is the best way to tell the story?

The sequence

A news video package will consist of a number of sequences. Where you need to use a range of images to tell a distinct part of a story you might construct a sequence. (A sequence expresses one of the thoughts that together make the story.) You need to think in sequences to plan your shots. For instance, the reporter may be at the opening of a new sports stadium. You will want to shoot video that shows them moving through different parts of the building. They may be reporting to camera but talking about another part of the stadium. You need to shoot video of that part of the stadium so you can put them together to tell the story well.

Example of sequence

If we take the West Darley bus service cuts story – one sequence will be about the family we are interviewing. So our sequence might be:

- 1 Camera on path in front of bus stop. Wide shot: bus pulls into bus stop family gets on board.
- 2 Camera on bus. Wide shot: family getting into bus and finding seats.
- 3 Medium shot: interview with family.
- 4 Camera outside at town bus stop. Wide Shot: family gets off.

Cutaways

You will also need some shots to act as cutaways for when you edit the interview. These shots allow you to cut interviews without nasty jump cuts. What you do is edit out what you don't want. This usually means joining two sentences. To hide the edit you use a shot that 'bridges' the sound edit. One important rule of cutaways for editing interviews is that you should not be able to see the face and especially the mouth of the interviewee. Typically, you video them from the back or perhaps you shoot a close-up of their hands gesticulating. Never 'clip' a sound edit – that's where you cut into a word. Sound edits should always be clean – between words.

Make every shot count. BBC guru Vin Ray (2003) counselled, 'never use a shot – any shot – as "wallpaper". Never write about pictures as though they weren't there'.

Captions

The caption should usually be located across the bottom quarter of the screen and be big enough for the viewer to read easily.

SOUND

Recording the voiceover is quite a simple process and is essentially the same as you learnt in Chapter 5. Most editing packages have the capability to record sound so all you have to do is plug the microphone into the computer, check your levels and record the commentary of your script. This is often referred to as a voiceover. When you are using a mix of voiceover, interviews, general views and pieces to camera it does get more complex. The better-quality editing programs usually have four or more audio tracks so you can put the voiceover on a different track which makes it easier to edit.



Figure 6.10 How a caption should look. (Source: Steve Hill/Solent University)

An important don't: when you cut between shots it is often a good idea not to allow the sound to cut so dramatically. You might let it run for a fraction of a second into the new shot. Or you might run some 'wild track' across the edit to smooth out the sound.

Wild track

As with audio you should always record at least 30 seconds of wild track. This is recorded at the end of filming at each location to get the background sound or ambience and is an important tool for smooth sound edits. Wild track can also be recorded sound that 'places' the story, e.g, the sound of Big Ben to suggest the House of Parliament or seagulls to suggest that the story takes place at the seaside.

Sound effects can be useful to develop a story. There are a number of places online where you can get sound effects free. We list a number on the companion website, plus some useful links explaining how they can be best used.



GRAPHICS

Graphics can help. In the case of the bird-watching story the reporter uses graphics to help liven up the story. Bear in mind this is a BBC breakfast news programme so it can be quite light-hearted. The reporter turns to his

advantage the fact that he has no footage of the rare bird by getting the graphics people to superimpose the graphic of the bird wherever he goes: in his hand, in the local pub and local grocery store where businesses have boomed since the bird arrived. The reporter is having fun.

Graphics, used with care, can help visualize a story in all sorts of ways. You might use the occasional graph or fact or quote. Typing large screeds of text onto the screen is a no-no. Keep it simple as in the example below.

UPLOADING VIDEO TO THE WEB

When you have finished editing you will need to ‘render’ your edit. This brings it together as a finished package to either upload online or to broadcast. The usual choices are usually either to use .avi format or .MP4. The .avi uses a lot of bytes and is high quality. Mp4 uses compression (see below) to reduce the amount of bytes used and is good if you need the material to be seen on iPhones. Part of the decision will depend on how your media organization presents video online. Some use YouTube or Vimeo to act as a remote server. You then take the link offered and embed it into a news page, so it appears alongside any text or still images you have. If your organization hosts video on its own server then you will need to upload onto the server and link onto the page. It is always better to use a system that has the video immediately visible on screen rather than requiring you to click and download before viewing.

Embedding your video

Most online news sites need a text caption on the page explaining what the video is about. Search engines can’t read the content of the video itself, so you will need to describe what is in the video. Embed tags – these could be names of people interviewed, places, etc. – in your web page to explain what is in the video. These text tags can be read by search engines and are easy to create in popular CMSs.

The latest versions of Final Cut Pro (this is version 10 or X as we write this) and iMovie include the best settings for a range of video outputs (including YouTube, Vimeo, mobile, tablet computer or TV). These can be found under the ‘share’ heading in the main toolbar. It is normally best to stick with these headings.

If you want the option to be able to show your video at full screen you will probably need to render to high quality .avi. Unless you have a very powerful computer and fast broadband connection, optimizing for the web and then uploading even a relatively short video to YouTube can take up to 30 minutes. YouTube is a popular site and at busy times videos can take another 30 minutes or so to appear online.

If you want to host the video on your own server and keep it simple – use Quicktime or Adobe’s Flash. Flash has been hampered by the dispute between Apple and Adobe – which means that it does not work on iPad. This is a problem for news outlets that use Flash.

The great thing about YouTube is that it is very simple. You can choose whether you want all or some YouTube viewers to see your video by selecting the suitable privacy controls. If you want viewers only to see it on your media site you can use the private setting.

The downside of Flash video

One of the reasons that online video news has been slow to take off is that it has had a negative reputation – mainly because it was often slow to load and choppy. Flash video, embedded on the page, certainly made things easier. But Flash of course needs a free browser plugin (the Flash Player) which needs constant updating.

HTML5 looks promising, and includes new ways to stream video for mobile. In November 2011 Adobe announced that it will discontinue development of Flash for mobile devices and reorient its efforts towards developing tools utilizing HTML5.



HTML5 may do away with the need for any extra browser plugins, and video will be much simpler to watch. You will know if your package works. If the story flows and the words and pictures work together you will feel a great sense of professional delight that you have done the job well.

- 1 Video journalism is a dominant form for delivering the news. Mastering video skills is vital for anyone entering the news industry. *Guardian* reporter Paul Lewis (2012) emphasized the importance of video for all media. The *Guardian's* coverage of the London riots in 2011 won awards. Lewis says it was the two news videos of the riots the *Guardian* placed online that had the greatest impact with their audience.
- 2 You can't make one video news package and expect to be a video journalist. Video journalism is a complex set of skills that need a lot of practice. Repetition is everything in learning journalism skills.
- 3 Writing to pictures is not a case of writing a script and then adding pictures. Nor is it a case of laying the pictures and interviews and then writing words to match. You need a synthesis of words and images that work hard without repeating. Ask yourself: What is the best way I can tell this story?
- 4 In Chapter 4, we reminded you of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*. It is easy to get complacent about the familiar and fail to notice things we can see. Ask yourself: What do I really see?
- 5 Never go out without a camera. Know the rules but be prepared to break them and innovate. That stimulates your imagination, keeps you creative and is what makes being a journalist such great fun.

EXERCISES

- 1 Filming: Find a friend or classmate and record an interview with each other outside on a subject of mutual interest. You should record enough to get a good one-minute sequence. Make sure you get some cutaway shots and some 'wild track'. Then look at the footage and listen to the audio. How professional is it? Now edit into a one-minute video.
- 2 Filming: There has been a huge rise in scrap-metal thefts as prices rise. To get used to filming general view shots, film a wide range of metal street furniture including bollards, manhole covers, war memorials, cables and so forth. Try to make the pictures as interesting as possible.
- 3 Package: Find a local scrap-metal story. You should be able to use the

footage you recorded in Exercise 2. The minimum you need is:

- a scrap-metal story with an example of theft, preferably recent and topical;
- at least one interview with someone key (e.g. a person who has suffered a theft, police, British legion rep, local) – you need expert opinions, so do not interview a student or a friend;
- a drafted script; and
- a piece to camera with you as reporter.

FURTHER READING

Boyd, Andrew, Stewart, Peter and Alexander, Ray. 2008. *Techniques of Radio and Television News*. Sixth edn. Oxford: Focal Press.

This is the best basic primer for making video news.

McAdams, Mindy. 2011. *Reporter's Guide to Multimedia Proficiency*: www.jou.ufl.edu/faculty/mmcadams/PDFs/RGMPbook.pdf

This free download has useful practical tips on all forms of online video journalism.

Ray, Vin. 2003. *The Television News Handbook*. London: Macmillan.

This book is very orientated to television, but is written by one of the best exponents in the BBC.

Thornburg, Ryan. M. 2011. *Producing Online News*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

This guide to multimedia journalism has an excellent section on online audio and video.

BBC College of Journalism: www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism

This BBC training site has video tutorials and plenty of advice on good news package technique.