

# Some simple ideas to improve your videos

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## Using smart phones

There's a number of streaming platforms and hardware for recording but if you're not live streaming consider using your smart-phone as this will give you the best quality. Computer webcams are quite low quality and using streaming services further degrades image quality by compressing it for live viewing.

Here's a quick guide to camera resolution – You'll hear about 4k, 1080, 720, 480, and 360 quality. This refers to the number of pixels in the vertical of the picture. Here's the bullets:

360 Terrible. Avoid.

480 Adequate but only just. Fuzzy.

720 Preferred minimum resolution.

1080 Great quality, allows some cropping in the edit.

4k Fantastic, *but will make for very big files*. Zooming and cropping in the edit very easy to achieve.

You'll have to go into camera preferences to change these settings. While you're there switch on the thirds grid display if you have the option. It will show a grid on your display and it makes getting the picture straight and composition easier.

## Choice of phone camera

You may be tempted to use the selfie (front-facing) camera so you can see yourself as you film but all phones favour the rear-facing when it comes to quality. Having said that. If you do have a recent, high-spec phone such as the iPhone 11 pro, the selfie camera may be 1080 and good enough. This selfie-vs-back camera info applies equally to iPads.

It takes a little longer to set up for using the rear-camera but it's worth the effort. You'll have to position the phone to frame the shot, then walk around and do a quick test film to check you're framed ok. When you are composing the shot give a quick thought to whether your audience will need to see your hand gestures.

## Tripods

It's possible to prop up your phone, balance it on a cushion, strap it to a sleeping dog etc. But, life is so much better if you buy a cheap tripod and phone holder. I use a Joby gorilla tripod with an accessory to attach my phone. They can free-stand but the legs will wrap around and grip to chair-legs, broom handles, flag poles, whatever you have handy. Even if you're filming with the selfie camera don't try to hand hold. Your audience will end up feeling sea sick!



Rear facing cameras



Front facing cameras



# Don't shoot vertical video!

That's pretty much it for this tip. Just don't do it!

## Lighting

First thing is try to avoid back-lighting by filming with your back to windows. If you do backlight, you'll need a very bright light in your face to compensate. If you are filming in artificial light you may want to avoid yellow tungsten lighting and use white or blue/white LED lights. Best to stick to natural light if you can although direct sunlight on your face can be very harsh! Experiment with different areas in your space. You'll be amazed how much of a difference it can make.

## Audio

There's not much you can do here without getting into some serious technical areas, but a soft-furnished room will avoid the nasty echoey sounds you will typically get in a kitchen or bathroom. You may also want to question why you were considering making a video in your bathroom in the first place.

## Presentation

Multiple takes are the key! Even if you think you got it, try it again. Your video will probably come out with you looking more relaxed and less hesitant on your third take!

Leave a second or two before and after each take. There will be editing – if only to snip the beginning and end off each take. It can look odd to see someone reach forward to switch on/off as they stop/start talking.

If you're not being interviewed, you're talking directly into the camera. If you're using a computer, pay attention to where your webcam is. That is your audience's eyes! If you're on a zoom interview, drag the window with your interviewer's face as close as you can to the camera so that when you look at them, you're looking at a point close to their eyeline.

## Don't use digital zoom

Digital zoom is a lie! You're just cropping. We can do that afterwards if you want but its not actually zooming. Just move closer or switch to the telephoto camera if you have the option.

## Composition

Consider framing yourself so that you're off-centre and in line with one of the vertical lines on this grid. Without getting into the whole theory of composition, avoid centering yourself! Also if there is a busy background, bookshelves, foliage etc. try to put some distance between you and it so that you're background won't be as in focus as you are. Try to position the camera level with your face. Your audience will not enjoy staring up at you from a coffee table and its not your best side!

## Sending large files

The downside of better videos is they can be large. I upload to MS One Drive which has huge capacity, then generate shareable links and email these. sync.com is another great file-sharing service with servers inside Canada for FIPPA compliance.

*If you have any specific questions feel free to ask me at [jamie.myers@ubc.ca](mailto:jamie.myers@ubc.ca).*



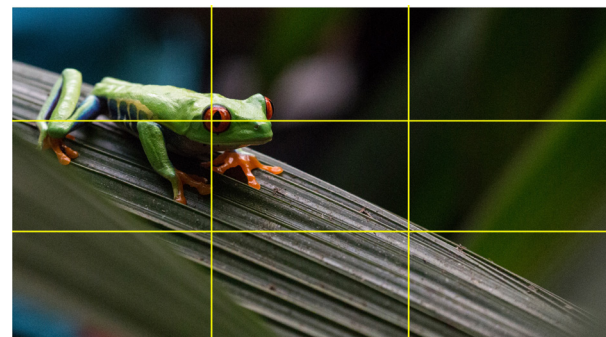
Backlit



Backlit but extra white LED lighting behind camera



Backlit with extra tungsten lights behind camera for that, too-long-in-the-sun look!



A thirds grid and a froggy