



# A Quick Guide to Filmmaking

Teacher's Notes – by John Coombes



# a Quick Guide to Filming

by filmmaker John Coombes

Filming can be grouped into three stages:

PRE-PRODUCTION  
PRODUCTION  
POST PRODUCTION

WORKING OUT WHAT TO FILM  
FILMING IT  
CUTTING OUT THE BAD BITS

## PRE-PRODUCTION

Planning what you want to film

Careful pre-production planning can save lots of time later on in the filming process.

What are you going to film?  
Where are you going to film it?  
What do you need to film it?



You can do storyboards – draw the shots you want in your film with movement, action and sound effects.

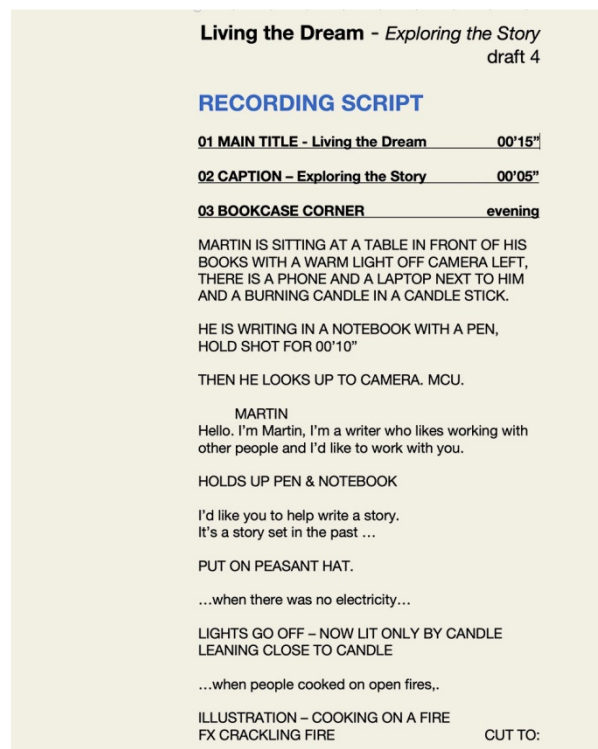
**CHAIN REACTION "SELFIE"**

<p>OPENING CAPTION dur: 00' 04"</p>	<p>02 STEVE MCU SOFA - PULLS SWITCH</p>	<p>02 RECORD PLAYER/DOLL ROTATES</p>	<p>03/04/05 SUN LOTION - ORANGES</p>
<p>05/07/08 ORANGES - OLIVES</p>	<p>09/10/11 SUGAR MELT - PENDULUM</p>	<p>11/12/13 BOOKS, TAPE, HAIR DRIER</p>	<p>12 TO 15 CANDLE, FAN, SELLOTAPE</p>
<p>16 THE BULL ON A SKATEBOARD</p>	<p>18 INFLATING BEACH BALL</p>	<p>19 POSTER DROPS + MCU PHONE</p>	<p>PULL OUT TO WIDE SHOT</p>
<p>WIDE SHOT: PHOTO TAKEN</p>	<p>"INSTAGRAM" IMAGE</p>	<p>If Steve was on Three he could have used his phone abroad at no extra cost. Now in even more destinations</p> <p>CAPTION 00' 07" 2ND SENTENCE APPEARS AFTER 00' 04"</p>	<p>END CAPTION dur 00' 04" PLUS FREEZE FRAME</p>

RUNNING TIME 00' 60"  
SHOT IN CONTINUOUS ACTION - EACH FRAME IS CONNECTED IN REAL TIME  
THE CAMERA WILL TRACK BACK AND FORWARDS TO GIVE CLOSE UPS AND WIDE SHOTS

BIKESHED DIGITAL MEDIA

You can write a script. A script isn't just what people say, it's a list of everything you need to make the film, including sets and props and effects and dialogue.



You can make running orders – a list of all the bits of your film in the sequence they appear and how long they last on screen.

You can make a shot list - a list of all the shots you need to film in the sequence they will be filmed. Think of it as a shopping list.

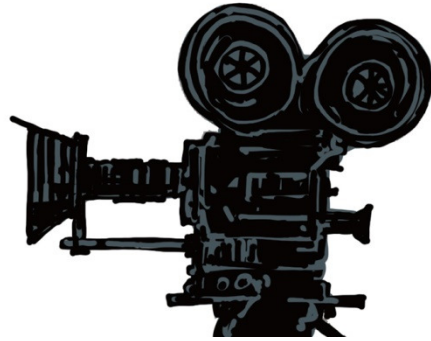
THE FRUIT SHOOT				BIKESHED DIGITAL MEDIA			
client: Image Source				camera: Nikon D800			
art director: Tom Laybourne				lenses: 24-70mm 20mm + 85mm			
models: Riona Green & Jaimie Foster				settings: s50 f2.8 200			
location: Grainger's kitchen				DIT Atomos			
date: MONDAY 15 April 2019				audio: MOS			
				lighting: 3 x Bowens Coolheads + daylight			
Chk	angle	ACTION	move	support	comment		
		<b>NB: back lit when possible</b>					
	MW	establish R & J in kitchen	slow track R	slider			
	MW	R & J in kitchen from behind	slow track L	slider	cheat angle		
	MCU	work top to reveal fruit bowl	slow track R	slider			
	CU	hand takes banana from fruit bowl	static	slider	use slider w/out moving		
	CU	hands - peel / chop banana	slow track R	slider	mix two pairs hands		
	CU	hands - peel / chop orange	slow track L	slider			
	CU	hands - peel / chop Apple	slow track R	slider			
	MCU	R & J peeling fruit and putting it in smoothie machine	static	tripod			
	MCU	R & J looking at each other and laughing	static	tripod	hand on top of machine		
	CU	hand putting fruit in smoothie machine	static	tripod	repeat with different fruit		
	CU	opening milk carton	static	tripod			
	MCU	pouring milk into smoothie machine	static	tripod			
	ECU	spooning yoghurt into smoothie machine	static	tripod			
	MCU	R + J switching the smoothie machine on	slow track	slider			
	ECU	fingers switch the smoothie machine on	static	tripod	nails!		
	ECU	fingers switch the smoothie machine off	static	tripod			
	MCU	R & J pour mixture into glasses	slow track R	slider			
	CU	R / J pour mixture into glasses	slow track L	slider			
	ECU	mixture pouring into glass	Static	tripod			
	MCU	R & J take the smoothies to the table to relax	static	tripod			
	MCU	R & J on iPhones texting and laughing	slow track	slider			
	CU	R & J laughing/smiling, sharing texts & photos on phones	slow track	slider	various		
	MCU	R & J laughing/smiling, sharing texts & photos on phones	static	tripod	push in		
	MCU	R & J drinking a coffee /tea cupping the mug with hands	slow track	slider			
	CU	R on phone, laughing sipping smoothie	static	tripod	straws?		
	CU	J on phone, laughing sipping smoothie	static	tripod			
	MCU	R getting up and saying g'bye to J	slow track R	slider			

# PRODUCTION

All about the actual filming.

## SIX SEVEN KEY POINTS

Film in the landscape format.  
Keep the microphone close to you.  
Place the camera at eye level.  
Hold your camera firmly on a support  
Film in a well lit place.  
Don't make sudden loud noises.  
Rehearse the action and any camera moves.



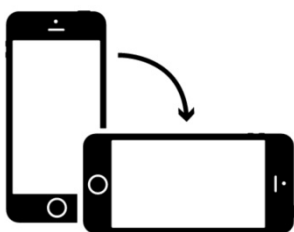
## CAMERAS

There are various devices which can record film, from video cameras and DSLR cameras to mobile phones and Go-Pro cameras. Mobile phones have two cameras, front and back, they are not always the same quality, do a test to see which camera on your phone gives the best results.

## LOCATION / BACKGROUND

Have nothing too close behind you, nor anything distractingly bold. Try to be far enough away from the background for it to be slightly out of focus, unless it is an integral part of your film. Make sure there are no windows or bright lights in shot as this will affect the picture quality.

## COMPOSITION



If you are recording on a computer or a laptop, DSLR or dedicated video camera, the aspect ratio of the screen will be good - just like a TV - landscape not portrait. If you are recording on your phone please turn it on it's side. Consider what it is you want us to see and fill the screen with that. We probably don't want to see lots of carpet, or ceiling, though some plants can add another dimension to the shot.

Find a support to keep your device steady. If it's a laptop, sit it on some books or magazines to bring the camera up to the right level. If it's a phone, a Gorilla pod is excellent [Joby GripTight £16.99] but again raise it up so the camera on your phone is at the correct level. A selfie stick can be used, with the camera switched to the back of the phone. If you are using a dedicated video camera or DSLR camera a tripod will help.

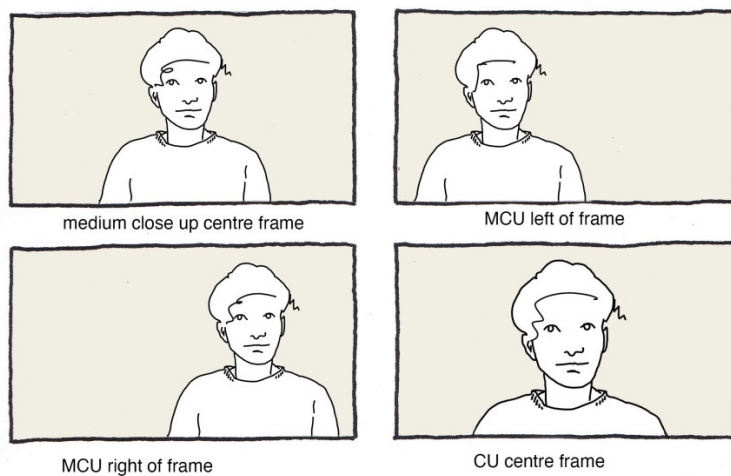




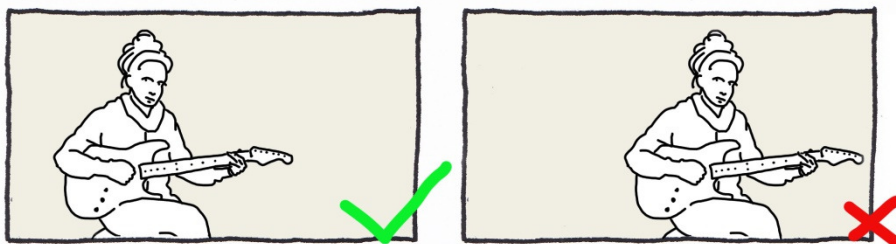
Mobile phone cameras have very wide-angle lenses, which can distort your face if you are too close, so for close up shots, move the phone a bit further back and use a little of the zoom function to compose your shot.

Depending on your subject matter, you should compose the shot featuring the important aspects of your performance. Unlike conventional film and TV, where you can have various shots showing details, here you might have just one shot, so make it work.

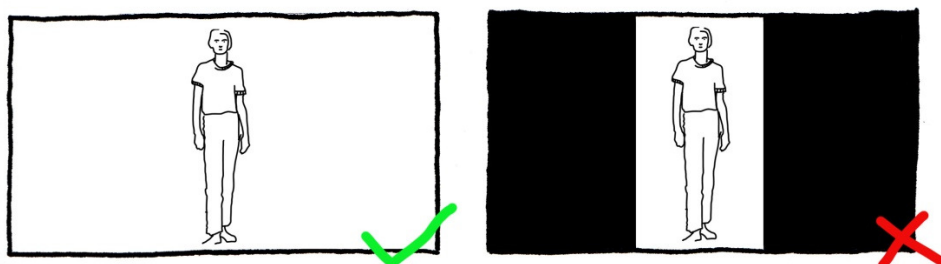
If it's just you telling a story, reading or singing, then a medium close up [MCU] will be good. You can lean in to a close up [CU] for emphasis.



If you are playing an instrument, then include the instrument in the shot. But make sure you are facing into the frame, not out of it.



If your subject is a single standing or moving figure don't be tempted to film in portrait [upright] mode. Though the figure might seem bigger on your phone, in the finished film it will be no bigger, but will have unsightly black or blurred space either side of it.



## LIGHTING

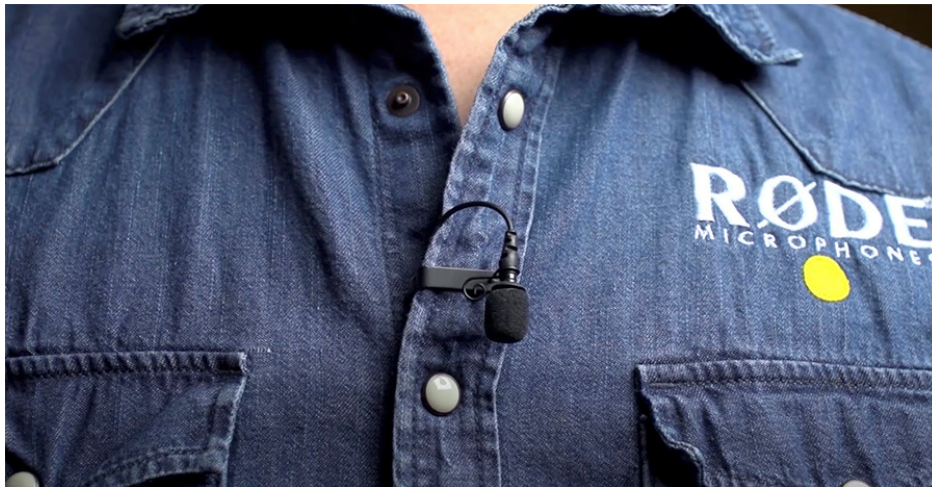
Keep everything well lit. Most modern cameras and smart phones work really well in bright well lit spaces, They will film in darker places but with a significant loss of quality, especially if the camera or subject is moving.

## SOUND

The built-in microphones on smart phones are often better than the built-in microphones on a laptop. These mobile microphones work best up to a metre away, any further and the sound quality deteriorates.

Rode make a lapel microphone [Rode Smartlav+ £50.00] that connects to a smart phone, though if you are using iPhone 8 onwards you'll need a 3.5 mini jack to iPhone adaptor [£10.00]

If you decide to use a lapel microphone it should be fixed to the person speaking like this:



A mobile phone produced in the last five or six years will record good quality sound. If you are using a laptop or a DSLR to record your clips it is a good idea to use an external microphone. Do tests to make sure you can hear what you want to hear.

It is important to make sure you are in a place where the only sounds are the ones you want on your film. To make the sound better have a lot of soft furnishings around, curtains, duvets, rugs, cushions and the like – though probably not in shot.

Be careful not to make sudden loud noises or abrupt changes in volume as these will distort the audio. If you need to shout, for instance, move back slightly first. Prolonged loud noise, or loud music, will dip the audio levels [to prevent peaking] meaning that, after a loud noise, you need to wait a moment for the level to adjust, before speaking.

## ONE SHOT RECORDING

You may be recording your piece in one go. This could involve picking the camera up at some point to show something or go to a different place. Rehearse both the action and your camera moves, so you know what to expect.

## MARK IT

For those taking part it is not always obvious when the device starts filming. So it's a good idea to follow a simple routine, so everyone knows what's going on.

"QUIET PLEASE"

"STAND BY"

Press record and when the red light comes on constantly,  
or the time starts moving, tell everyone the camera is recording.

"RECORDING"

wait for three seconds, then

"ACTION"

At the end of the action:

"CUT"

wait for three seconds, then stop recording

## FILE FORMAT

Files in .mp4 or .mov are all good.

4K is wonderful but isn't always compatible across all platforms and takes a lot of computer memory to edit it.

Film size 1080px x 1920px is most compatible, 720 x 405 is OK but not very good quality, especially for wide group shots.

## FILE MANAGEMENT

If you are filming with your laptop, plug it into the mains if you can. If you are filming on a phone, make sure it is fully charged and has plenty of memory/space as the film files are big - 450MB to 1GB

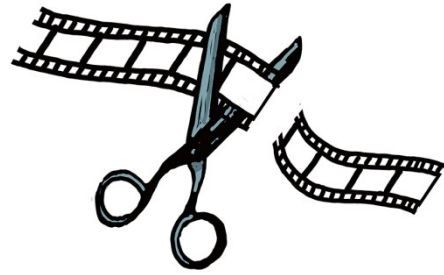
If you have to record two or more sequences, download each sequence to a computer and then delete it from your phone, before you record the next sequence.

Make sure you re-name the files, XX CLIP 1 TAKE 1, XX CLIP 1 TAKE 2, XX CLIP 2 TAKE 1 and so on, as you download them so you can keep track of what you are doing. These file names can correspond to scene numbers on the script for extra clarity.

# POST PRODUCTION

## Cutting out the bad bits

Post production mainly consists of editing the sound and pictures, basically cutting out all the bits you don't want. There are many available software packages that enable you to edit clips, from complex professional packages like Adobe Premiere Pro and Final Cut, to the more basic iMovie, MovieMaker, Lumen5 and Corel Video.



You might have more than one take, so you will need to decide which take to use.

As a general rule, when editing pictures, don't include all the clip. A simple way to remember this is, for each scene: arrive at the scene late and leave early. Only include the action you need to move the story forwards.

Post production also includes adding music and effects to your film, these can help make your film more dynamic. The BBC have put their sound effects library online: <http://bbcsfx.acropolis.org.uk>

You Tube have a library of copyright free music to use in films: <https://www.youtube.com/c/audiolibrary-channel/playlists>

## Copyright and permissions

Ensure that you have written permission to film everybody who is in the film, and if you use music that you haven't written yourselves make sure you have the permission of the person who wrote it, and the musicians who performed it.