

The most important part of any video project is the acquisition of the source material. If the original shooting is lacking in quality or creativity, no amount of software bells and whistles can truly make up for it.

Camera Movements:

Let your subject create the movement in video, not the camera. Many shooters, especially inexperienced ones, seem to think that it is unacceptable to record more than five seconds of video without a zoom in, zoom out, or pan of some sort. Camera moves should be used when there is a reason for the move. If you are going to pan the camera while shooting, plan the move ahead of time...know where you will start and end the panning. Make the move smooth and deliberate.

Use a Tripod:

Unless you are shooting hand-held for a specific reason or effect, a good sturdy tripod will always improve your results. Of course it's not always possible to use a tripod...in these instances try to improvise by using your body to brace your arms while shooting or leaning against a tree, a building or other sturdy object. Many modern cameras have electronic image stabilizers, which work amazingly well to smooth out the shakes of handheld shots, however these should not be thought of as a replacement for a tripod.

Use different angles:

It's easy to get in the habit of shooting everything at eye level, and while some things certainly should be shot in a straightforward manner such as this, using a variety of different angles can add interest to your video. This is especially important when shooting video of small children or animals. Shooting the footage from a normal standing position will give the viewer the impression of being an outsider looking on...get on one knee, or even place the camera on the ground and the viewer will be put in the position of being part of the action.

Lighting:

Modern cameras are wonderful in their ability to produce video in almost no light, however additional lighting will almost always be an improvement in quality.

Have a Plan:

Know what you want to shoot before you start rolling the camera. While you don't have to have every single shot planned in minute detail, it pays to at least have a roughed in storyboard, either on paper, or in your head, of what you hope to end up with after the shoot. Don't forget to shoot plenty of material for "cutaways" and transitions between important segments or shots. Having the right material for these shots can make the difference between a video flowing smoothly and allowing the viewer to easily follow the action and one that looks chopped up and confusing.