



iReport Toolkit tell your story like a pro

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Shoot better video

It can be tricky to shoot a professional-looking video package, but the results are worth the effort. These simple techniques can help you take your video from shaky camcorder footage to air-quality storytelling.

Get plenty of material

When taking video, the general rule is the more material, the better. You need to make sure to have lots of b-roll, or alternate material, in order to add dimension and secondary footage to a story. B-roll helps with cutaways and gives a much more fluid look to a package.

Use the rule of thirds

The rule of thirds, or "golden cut," is a compositional rule to help frame your shots in a more natural and engaging method. Since your TV or computer monitor is a rectangle, you should visually divide it into horizontal thirds, and line subjects up a little bit off center. If your subject is directly in the middle of a shot, it will be wooden and stiff. But if you use the rule of thirds, you anticipate your subject's movement and allow for some background information to be in the frame.



Use a tripod

Many tripods are available at retail stores for \$15 to \$50, and they can be a worthwhile investment. They'll make your shots steady and sure.

Hold your shot

If you hold your shot for at least seven seconds, even if it won't need to be that long, you ensure that you get plenty of usable material.

Always consider the lighting

Have well-lit surroundings, and always use daylight whenever possible. Avoid fluorescent lighting if you can. And don't be afraid to move the shot -- if you're in a poorly lit situation, ask your subject to move outdoors or to a better-lit area.

Don't forget the sound

If you don't have sound with your video, your viewers are missing a huge part of the story. The more natural, or background, sound you can tape, the better. Try pointing your camera at the ground for a few minutes to absorb some natural sound at the event you're covering, whether it's a concert or a protest. You can use that as a bed for background sound later on when you're editing. And check out our audio tab to learn how to get the best possible audio quality.

Avoid pans, zooms and dissolves

You may feel like getting crazy with some of your shots, but every video expert we talked to said video clips are simply better when they use static shots. If you must use a pan, it should be tight and quick. An overuse of dissolves tells viewers that there just wasn't enough material to make the story work. Static shots make a video look cleaner and more professional. And please, no crazy transitions between shots (remember how cheesy that looks in the Star Wars films?).

Bring an extra battery

Don't get caught with a dead camera in the middle of a great story. Batteries run out more quickly than you think when you're filming a lot of material. Other things to keep in your bag: extra tapes, a notebook and pen (helpful for getting name spellings and contact info), and maybe something to eat (just in case).

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Two veteran CNN cameramen explain how to shoot video their way.

[Pro tips for video storytelling](#)

Video stories can take the viewer inside the action like nothing else. Learn how to craft your visual story from CNN video producers.

[Editing video like a pro](#)

It can be overwhelming when you try to turn all that video footage into a cohesive story. These tricks will help you keep your video editing smart, functional and compelling.

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