

# HOW TO CREATE GREAT VIDEOS ON A BUDGET



Video has suddenly become more important than ever before. If you aren't already utilizing video in your donor relations strategy, you should be! There is a common belief that good video has to be expensive and expertly produced, and that's simply not true! You (yes, you!) can create great videos from home with a few simple tricks. We asked our network of experts to share their best video tips for beginners. These tips are for shooting around your house with what you probably already have or could easily acquire on the cheap.



# PRIORITIZE YOUR LIGHTING



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Place a light source in front of you so that your face is clearly seen. This could be natural light sitting in front of a window (FACING the window), good overhead lighting in a room, or you can move a lamp in front of you (behind the camera). If you need to remove the lampshade to enhance the brightness, that's fine (the lamp won't be on camera). Try to use warm and natural light rather than harsh white light.

If there's one thing you can do to increase your video quality, it's to have sufficient and proper lighting. Do you know all those phone commercials that are entirely "shot on [insert favorite phone]"? But then, you can't replicate that incredible video quality? We can pretty much guarantee they are also using professional lighting behind that camera lens.

We've all seen or been on video chats where you can barely see the person, and they look like a shadowy silhouette against a well-lit wall behind them. This is particularly exasperated if you are in front of a bright light source behind you (such as sitting in front of a window on a sunny day).



For backgrounds, avoid sitting/standing in front of a window with direct sunlight or another bright light source. Remember, you want to be FACING the window.

If you want to film outside, consider where the sun is positioned. If it's behind you, you may be a silhouette. An overcast day is good for shooting outdoors as it filters and scatters harsh light. Sunrises or sunsets can create amazing lighting opportunities.

Give some depth between you and the background source. You can actually have some warm lighting behind you--and sometimes a window, if it's not direct sunlight--as long as you have proper distance between you and that light source. In fact, a little warm ambient light (such as a table lamp) can add a LOT to your video.





# GET GOOD SOUND



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You have good lighting, now get good sound. Don't overlook your audio source. Too many times people ignore HOW they sound.

You don't want to sound grainy and echo-y. Not only is it distracting, it can also make it hard to understand you.



Use an external microphone rather than a laptop/phone/camera mic if you can. Built-in mics just aren't of high quality; they have never been. Use an external mic. If you are able, do some research on Amazon to find a quality mic, such as a podcast or shotgun mic; they are fairly affordable and can be used in a number of ways. (In fact, we've linked one in our video kit below). Also, do some earbuds (such as Apple's) have a mic on them as well? This is better for video chats than shooting a pre-planned video, but they can make a big difference. Also, don't forget to remove loud pets (and children) from the area.

# THINK ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND



On a video chat? Put your laptop on a table or counter where it won't move; avoid your lap. Shooting a video with your phone? Get a tripod; don't try to hold it steady. You can get a phone tripod on Amazon for \$10 and up. A steady shot makes a better shot.

Of course, some video chat platforms can help here. You can hide your messy background with a fun background. Skype allows you to blur your background.

If you don't like these options or are shooting a video rather than getting on a chat, consider what's behind you. You don't want that pile of laundry behind you. Do you have nice artwork on the wall? A colorful accent wall? A lovely outdoor seating area? Think outside the box. Consider the message you want to convey in your video.

# STEADY YOUR CAMERA



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# ASK ABOUT THE VIEWER



The more distance between you and the camera, the more likely it'll be hard to hear you. Try to frame yourself into the camera so you're waist up with your head fully in the frame. The reverse can be true - get too close to the camera, and you'll end up looking like the girl from The Blair Witch Project!

Make the video a two-way street. Even if the video delivers a specific message, ask your audience how they are doing. Leave a way for them to reply with their own video or email response.

5 Tips for Crafting Your Next Interviewee Video



# DON'T BE TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE CAMERA



# STRIKE THE RIGHT MOOD



Don't be afraid to add a little levity. We should never downplay people's legitimate fears or personal pain, but sharing something uplifting or positive will go a long way.

Listen, no one expects you to be a perfect videographer. The biggest thing to remember is that you don't need to be perfect. It's about the message, not the packaging. But do your best. Make an effort. Learn something new. With a few simple adjustments to your surroundings, you can make a video people will want to watch.

# DON'T BE TOO CRITICAL OF YOURSELF



# ETHICAL STORYTELLING

We can move hearts and minds without manipulating or exploiting people.  
The key questions to ask yourself are:

1. Am I putting the person first and the struggle second? (Your answer should be "Yes.")
2. Am I being manipulative? (Your answer should be "No.")

## The DO's and Don'ts Checklist

- Be respectful
- Be inclusive
- Be responsible
- Don't sensationalize the suffering of others
- Don't perpetuate negative stereotypes or harmful tropes
- Don't Fear monger

Stirring Hearts, Not Manipulating Minds





# A FEW MORE TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE ON CAMERA:



1. Look straight at the camera, and try not to use too many notes—you look distracted
2. Be casual and imperfect; it harkens to genuineness
3. Be honest and vulnerable
4. Demonstrate need without seeming needy or desperate
5. Treat your audience to behind-the-scenes content or something from personal insight
6. Use short, concise sentences with relatable wording; now is not the time for jargon (is there ever a time for jargon?)
7. If you can include a transcript or close caption, the video is even better!
8. Have something in your sights that brings joy, something behind the camera that will make you smile!
9. Try to get it in one or two takes; after that, you can literally feel the anxiety creeping into the screen
10. Use "you" in your video as much as possible instead of the organization's name
- 11. BE YOURSELF!**