



Bringing Stories to Life through Video.

BE CAMERA READY

Now that you've clarified your message, you're ready to get in front of the camera. But before you hit record, there are a lot of things to consider, and the informed choices you make now will greatly benefit the quality of your videos.

Before we get into all the aesthetic and technical considerations (I'll make that simple and easy to follow, I promise!), we need to address the most crucial step regarding being in front of the camera – getting out of your own way! You have an amazing message to share in a way only you can. Believe that and trust in that fully.

It is so easy to get caught up in our own heads when starting a video. *“What do I say?” “How do I look?” “What will people think?”* Let it all go! You've done the work with your message, so you know what to say. You'll look fantastic, and I'll show you tips and tricks to make you look even better on camera, so don't worry! All you should be thinking about is making a connection with the audience. Be yourself, and it will all come.

Once you learn the tips and tricks I've outlined here, all the production aspects won't be a worry, and it will get better with practice. Soon, you won't even be thinking about where to shoot or your lighting, etc. and you'll be free to just focus on your message. Remember, throughout this entire process, your message is the most important thing. Your videos don't have to be perfect!

Creating your own videos can be an overwhelming thought, but this tutorial is about breaking down that overwhelm by showing you easy ways of having everything in place to create awesome video before you hit 'record.'

You don't need thousands of dollars of equipment or a crew of dozens. All you need is a few fundamentals and things to be aware of. Let's get started.

WHERE TO SHOOT

Obviously, you want to record somewhere that looks pleasing to the eye and is an environment you feel comfortable in. Those are huge considerations, and will go a long way in the quality of your videos. However, there are other considerations that have to be taken into account that will save you a ton of time and headaches while filming and editing. The more work that goes in at this time in the process, the less time you'll have to spend later, and you have much more options available to you before you shoot as opposed to trying to fix what you already have.

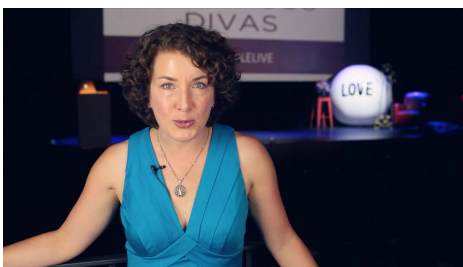
You want a controlled environment, or as close as you can get to it. Whatever noise and light you can control the better; you don't want any noise distracting the viewer.

This where shooting outside is nearly impossible, unless you can find a spot with peace and quiet. Shooting indoors allows for more options.

Don't pick a high traffic area or one that is noisy. Try and pick an area where outside noise such as traffic won't be an issue, and control inside sound as much as you can, such as turning off air conditioning or other noisy things that will take away from your message. Make sure your phone is on silent!

Now, backgrounds. I see a lot of entrepreneurs putting themselves right up against a blank wall. While the wall is a boring backdrop, sitting or standing so close to the wall gives a cramped feeling and doesn't add any dimension. Situate yourself with plenty of room from a wall or obstacle to give some separation.

You don't want a setting that makes it difficult to focus on you – you need to be front-and-centre. A clean, simple background is your best choice. Decorating the setting with items that highlight your message or compliment the tone of your video can add subconscious emphasis to what you are saying.



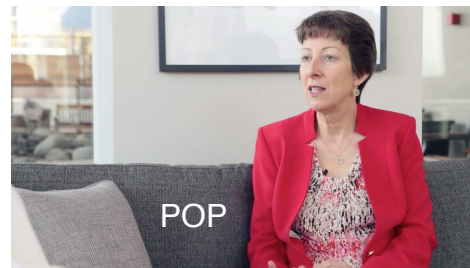
Choosing your background will also inform your choice of what to wear.

WHAT TO WEAR

First and foremost, choose clothing that you are comfortable in. Don't try and dress to fit a certain portrayal you think you have to achieve. If you've ever had to dress for an occasion or in a certain outfit you weren't comfortable in, I'm sure you remember how you felt. That will come across on video. Be confident in your own personal style. There are no dress codes for video. If you want to wear sweatpants, do it!

There are a few tips to help choose what to wear, that you can play around with.

If you've chosen a background with a lot of one particular color, try not to dress in that color so that you can stand out. You can choose complimentary colors or dress from the colour palette of the background to blend nicely, or you can choose something that will make you pop.



Let's talk about what not to wear. Crazy patterns or stripes don't come across on video well. Don't choose colours that compete with your complexion. Some of this may sound complicated, but it's not. In fact, you probably already are aware of these things instinctively, even if you don't know it yet. I'm sure you can think of a few colours you feel are "your colours" and some you stay away from.

Go with your gut.

Try to stay away from very loose fitting clothing because you'll look bigger than you are, and don't choose something very tight fitting because you will be uncomfortable. If you wear glasses, be aware of the reflection in the lenses and go without them if possible.

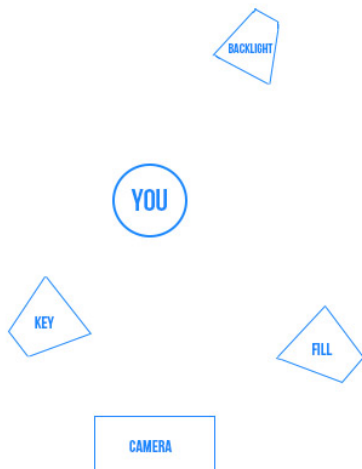
Choose solid colours that compliment your complexion, and if you want to layer, pick things that offer a contrast, like a light coloured shirt and a darker blazer. Go subtle with make-up and jewelry, and make sure to dress for your personality and tone of the video.

Alright, you look fantastic! Now let's look at some technical considerations.

LIGHTING

Lighting is so important in video. It is what sets good quality video apart from poor quality video. Having dark areas in the frame or heavy shadows on your face makes video redundant, really. If we can't see what we're looking at, what's the point? As well, shadows or dim light are not flattering, so its important to light yourself evenly. Too much light, and you'll lose highlights and definition in the video. Getting it right is easy if you know how!

The tried-and-true lighting method in film, tv and online video is the *3 point lighting technique*. 1, Your main light, the *key light*, positioned to one side at about a 45 degree angle, relatively close to you. 2, a second light, the *fill light*, a little farther away at a 45 degree angle on the other side of you to fill in the shadows and light you evenly. And 3, a light behind you, a *backlight* or hair light, to create separation from the background.



THE 3 POINT LIGHTING SET-UP

This configuration is your best bet for even lighting, but play around to find what best suits your environment and the lighting available to you.

Use your strongest light as the key. Traditionally, the backlight is not seen on camera, but you can even use a lamp etc. as your backlight, and it will not only serve as a backlight, but also give some flair to the background. If you find that your background is too dark behind you, point another light at it behind you or angle your backlight towards it a bit.

You don't need professional lights, although, if you feel it is a worthwhile investment if you plan to shoot a lot of video, visit Amazon or eBay and search "video lighting kit." You'll find affordable options that work very well for \$150-\$300. If you want to go all the way, search for LED kits. They are more expensive, but they are smaller and lighter, don't get as hot as the other lighting kits, and you don't have to fuss with the big bulbs. If you want to truly DIY, use lamps or a window or whatever lighting is available to you. Play around until you find what looks best. Remember, you don't want so much light that you are washed out. If this happens, pull the lights back. If there are shadows, reposition your lights until the light is even across your face. OK, you are lit perfectly, now we want to hear you!

SOUND

Just like lighting, sound is crucial to awesome video. Remember, your message is the most important thing in your video, so it must be heard!

Poor quality audio can be put into 2 categories:

First, in-camera audio that is tinny or muddled and second, clear audio that is ruined by external, avoidable sources.

Shooting outside can add a dynamic element to your video, but trying to get good sound outside is a painstaking and time-consuming process, especially if you are just doing it yourself without someone to monitor the sound for you. Indoors, shut off noisy machines and close your windows. While there are technical factors to having awesome sound, there is so much you can do by limiting outside noise which goes much farther in your video quality than having a nice microphone.

As a secondary audio source, I also use a DIY lavalier microphone that was made from a \$9 pair of smartphone headphones – the ones with a built-in microphone. Get yourself a pair of these, cut off the ear buds and wires above the microphone, attach double-sided tape to the microphone and voila - great sound at a great price. Some audio options:

FOR SMARTPHONES OR TABLETS: The *Rode Smartlav*, which retails for about \$60, and is a lavalier microphone designed to work with your smartphone. The app I use when using my iPhone as a recorder is *Voice Record Pro*, which is a free app that gives you the ability to see the record levels and is versatile in exporting the audio files once your done, including uploading to Dropbox, Google Drive, sending via email or downloading to your computer via wifi.

FOR YOUR DSLR CAMERA: Lavalier microphones for your DSLR can be pricey (go with the smartphone headphone DIY trick), so the cheaper option is a shotgun microphone. Search "shotgun microphone DSLR" on Amazon or eBay and you'll find a decent one for \$50-\$150, and your local electronic stores will have the same stock as well.



YOUR FRAME

First, consider if you want to sit or stand. In the hundreds of videos I've done with clients, I've seen a lot of them drain away their energy by being seated, and when that happens, I get them back on their feet and they get re-energized. Standing up brings vital energy and can make you feel much more confident and powerful. If you can bring that energy while sitting down, good on you, and have a seat! The most important thing is to do what works best for you and what makes you most comfortable.

You can certainly play around, but the camera at eye-level brings the best results when speaking to camera. You are able to look straight into the camera at the audience and they will, even subconsciously, feel a direct connection. Make sure to look at the lens and not at the display of yourself. I see this quite often in entrepreneurs videos, particularly vlogs they do on their phones, and it is disengaging for the audience because you're basically just talking to yourself!

In the video, I demonstrated some exaggerated angles for you to stay away from, and of course you won't shoot like those examples, but be aware of not shooting up at yourself or down at yourself. They are not flattering angles for you, and for the audience, they hold subtle subconscious cues of the balance of power. That's why cinema uses angles to their advantage, as they have a visual language of their own that a lot of the time we are not aware of, but we are affected by them nonetheless.

An aesthetic rule in filmmaking that can greatly benefit your videos is the rule of thirds. This rule of thumb states that for visually pleasing images, objects of focus should be arranged and aligned with imaginary dividing lines that break the screen into thirds, top and bottom. That's a mouthful. Basically, this rule means that when shooting, try to have yourself on the left or right side of the screen rather than smack dab in the middle.



The Rule of Thirds Layout

In Western culture, our brains are accustomed to taking in information in a left- to-right manner, so the most pleasing image to our eyes and brain are those that sit in the right third because it's sort of like a resting position for our brain. This is another film trick that utilizes our subconscious minds. Good guys enter the screen from the left, and bad guys enter from the right moving against the grain, which displeases our brain, already setting us up to dislike this character before he/she says a word.

I'm not saying to avoid standing in the centre of the frame at all, but just play around with it and see for yourself what you like. If you have a close up of your face and want to emphasize the connection you are making with the audience, having yourself in the centre of the frame can be effective. Yes, there are "rules", but they are made to be broken. Create a style that works for you!

Here are a few examples from my work of good usage of space in the frame:



WHERE TO LOOK

The last thing to consider is where to look when shooting your video. Of course, the way to make the most impactful connection is straight at the lens, speaking directly to the audience. We all appreciate eye contact in conversation, and your Heart of Your Business Video is the start of what is hopefully a long conversation.

That being said, you may not be comfortable talking to the camera or at least, at this stage in your video making. That's totally OK! Remember, you are striving to portray the truest, most honest self, so if you're trying to do something you are uncomfortable with, that won't ring true. There are quite a few tricks to making talking to the camera easier, though. One long lasting one is to imagine that you are talking to a friend or loved one instead of the camera. I've also heard of people naming their camera and creating a friendship with it to get rid of any awkwardness. Hey, whatever works!

One other way to talk to the camera is to think of it like an interview. Have a friend behind the camera so that you can look at them while you speak. While you're not looking directly at the camera, it is still an engaging visual. In fact, while you have your friend there, have them ask you questions to prompt your answers, and you'll find that the answers come more easily to you because of the cues, and what you say will come off more genuine and less rehearsed than your prepared material.

Here's a tip I use every time I step in front of the camera: start with a smile before you hit record. That smile, even if it's done before the audience sees you, will come across in your voice and in your body language. It feels too good not to smile, so share it! When you are (finally!) shooting your videos, if you flub your words or lose your train of thought – no big deal! Gather yourself and bring yourself back to the connection with a smile. It really works!

It's all about you being comfortable. Comfortable enough to launch out of that comfort zone and into vulnerability! Yes, that word again. Embrace your vulnerability. It is your greatest asset, because there is nothing but truth in vulnerability, and the audience will respond, trust me on that.

Here's some homework (yep, I'm not letting you off this easy!). Watch online videos like the ones you want to create. Watch your favourites and note what you like and what works for it. Also, watch some online videos you don't like to learn what you want to stay away from. It's all a learning process, and your peers are a huge resource! Learning from other people's successes and mistakes is invaluable.

Well, here we are! You are finally ready to shoot! I'm so excited to see what you come up with. I know you're going to do awesome stuff. Good luck!

I'm Adera, and I dare ya to get rolling!

SOME MORE THOUGHTS

If you remember my advise to get a Joby or a similar stabilizer for your smartphone, get one if you haven't yet. If you are using a DSLR camera, invest in a tripod. You can get a simple one for around \$50.

Do a test run.

Record yourself using all that you've learned here talking about anything you want - what you want for dinner or a good movie you just watched. Then, watch it. Get comfortable with seeing yourself on camera!

Now go to it!