VIDEO PRODUCTION:
A SHORT GUIDE TO BETTER RESULTS

RU TECHNOLOGY IN LEARNING CENTER
PRE-PRODUCTION

Whether you are planning to produce a podcast episode, a 30-second PSA, or a short instructional video, the first stage in the production process is planning.

Thinking about what you are going to produce ahead of time will save you time and effort, and will minimize your chances of falling victim to a disorganized production, which almost always results in a poor or incomplete movie.

As a rule, larger projects take more planning than small ones. A good first step is to:

1. **List available resources, develop a budget, scout location(s) and develop a production schedule**

Resources include:

(a Camera (s) and related equipment such as a tripod, headphones and videotapes, as well as additional gear such as a light kit or boom microphone.

(b Other people to help you operate a camera equipment, act on camera, help you transport materials or develop sets, costumes, etc., Visit possible shooting locations to investigate lighting and other environment issues such as noise, public distractions, etc. Finally, develop a timeline for what you want to do and how you are going to go about it, and draft a production schedule that reflects this timeline.
(c Post-production editing equipment – typically, this is a computer w/ video editing software on it. If you foresee the need to edit and format your footage for distribution via YouTube, DVD, videotape, etc., this is an important consideration to make. However, if your source tapes will be used as-is and require no editing, then this step is not a concern.

2. Proof of Concept

Once you have an idea of what it is going to take to produce your movie, sometimes it is an invaluable idea to perform a proof of concept. This could be something as simple as shooting a 30-second mock-up of a scene, setting up your camera equipment at a location you’ve picked out and seeing how everything works together. If there are any details you’ve overlooked, they will be revealed here. Once going through this, you will be better prepared for your shoot.

3. Script

A script is generally always good idea. Even if all you are doing is conducting an interview on camera or shooting as observation, it is a good idea to plan your shoot by way of a script. This typically includes a brief description of the scene, the characters in it, and any dialog they have (could also be interview questions, etc.). You may also note the location, placement of the camera, the subjects being filmed, and any other important information pertaining to the scene.
PRODUCTION

When you reach this point, you have made your schedule, attained your resources, and are ready to start shooting videotape. Throughout this process, it is a good idea to ALWAYS test equipment before going live – to make sure the camera is operating properly and audio is working properly, turn everything on after you set up and do a 10-second test recording.

If you are shooting multiple tapes worth of footage, make sure you date and label everything. This will become invaluable if you plan to edit your footage into a more ‘produced’ movie. And if you are really motivated, you may choose to spot your tapes and note good shots, bad shots, poor audio, etc., at the appropriate time code marks so that you will know what to capture during post-production...

POST-PRODUCTION

This section covers basics of capturing and editing footage using Apple’s iMovie...

When shooting has wrapped, you are ready to spot your tapes, make notes, and start capturing footage into your computer for editing. Unless you are dumping all footage on a tape en masse to a computer to convert to a type of file (i.e., for YouTube, iPod, etc.) or to burn to DVD as is, it is NEVER a good idea to capture everything and decide what to keep during editing. Video files tend to be large, and require a fair amount of processing power to work with. Other reasons for this:

(a. Capturing excessive footage takes up valuable space on your hard drive, and if you run out of space before you are finished capturing – and have not even commenced editing – you have a problem!

(b. Long video clips are cumbersome to work with, and force the computer’s processor to work harder each time a clip is scrubbed through or referenced. This increases the likelihood of program crashes and data loss.

Of course, if you are only working with a small amount of footage, then the space issue is not such a large one for you.
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*log sheet*
Apple’s iMovie application is included w/ every Macintosh computer, and provides a simple and easy way to work with digital video. Following are simple steps for capturing and editing footage.

1. Importing

Using a FireWire-enabled digital camcorder, capturing clips is as easy as connecting the camera, turning it on (in playback mode) and using iMovie to capture clips. If you have a built-in iSight camera, you may to choose it by clicking the camera icon on the capture/edit mode switch (alternatively, you can use a camcorder to record straight to the hard drive by simply turning it on in camera mode, recording to tape and simultaneously importing the image into iMovie):

Using a digital camcorder, you can control playback using the controls in iMovie. When ready to capture, click 'Import' to begin recording. Click it again to stop. Use this same process for all clips you capture from your camera. If your videotape contains time code breaks (i.e., places where you stopped recording and then started again), iMovie will automatically create a new clip each time it detects one.

As clips are captured, they will appear in your clips panel.

Why capture footage in clips vs. just capturing one long clip? Well, it's easier to deal with individual clips, rather than having to scroll through a long one each time you need to find a particular section. In addition, the computer actually has to work harder if iMovie requires it to constantly reference spots in a single clip each time you make an edit, copy or delete something, etc., and this increases your chances of a program crash.

Thus, it is a fine idea to spot your tape ahead of time, making notes of what footage is usable, where it's located (timecode) and how long it is.
2. Editing

Once you are finished capturing, you are ready to start editing clips and putting them together. Like most video editing applications, iMovie is a time-based editor. Notice the timeline running the length of the bottom of the program window. To begin sequencing clips together, simply drag and drop them from the clips panel to the timeline:

You can apply traditional cut/copy/paste editing to video clips, just like you can do in word processing. By clicking on a clip in iMovie, it appears in the preview window, which doubles as your clip editor. You can use the playhead to scrub (scroll) through the clip by clicking and dragging it with the mouse. Use L and R arrow keys on the keyboard to move frame-by-frame.

In addition, you can use the mark in/out heads to drag a selection of the clip to cut, copy or delete.
3. Adding Titles

Using the Editing panel, you can add title slides to your movie. They can appear over a black background, or you can choose to superimpose them in a piece of video or an image (bear in mind you must have adequate footage for the latter).

Click to choose a title style, and an example appears in the viewer. Using the titling controls to type the text for your title, as well as to set font size, face, color, etc. Finally, click 'Add' to insert the title into the timeline at the playhead's current position (you can move it afterward, if necessary). If you're superimposing the title over an image, it will be applied to the currently selected clip.

4. Adding Transitions

Also on the Editing panel is a tab for adding transitions, which can be placed between clips to create a sense of style of forward motion:

To add a transition to the beginning, end or between two clips, drag and drop it from the Transition list to the clip(s) in the timeline. Notice the controls for each transition located near the bottom of the panel; these can be used to determine how quickly a transition occurs, etc. Keep in mind that you must have enough footage in a given clip to use a transition.

5. Adding Effects

By choosing a clip and clicking on the Editing panel, you can click the Video FX tab to reveal a list of different filters that can be applied to your video clips:
Click to choose a filter, and a preview is applied to the currently selected clip. Each filter has a set of controls, located near the bottom of the panel. To apply it for real, click 'Apply.' Audio FX work the same way with audio clips.

6. Printing/formatting the final copy

Using the Share menu (or, File > Export), you can prepare your movie for whatever distribution format you need: printing the movie back to tape, DVD, iPod (podcast), streaming video, etc.

iMovie makes it easy to share your video to other applications on the computer (e-mail, iDVD, iTunes, etc.). However, if you need to save your movie as a file to upload to YouTube, iTunes U, etc., exporting to QuickTime > Expert Settings, and choosing ‘iPod’ for the format, is the quickest method.