



Filmmaking guide

**See, Think, Imagine,
Make, Influence,
Inspire, Change**

FILMMAKING GUIDE

Conceptualized by



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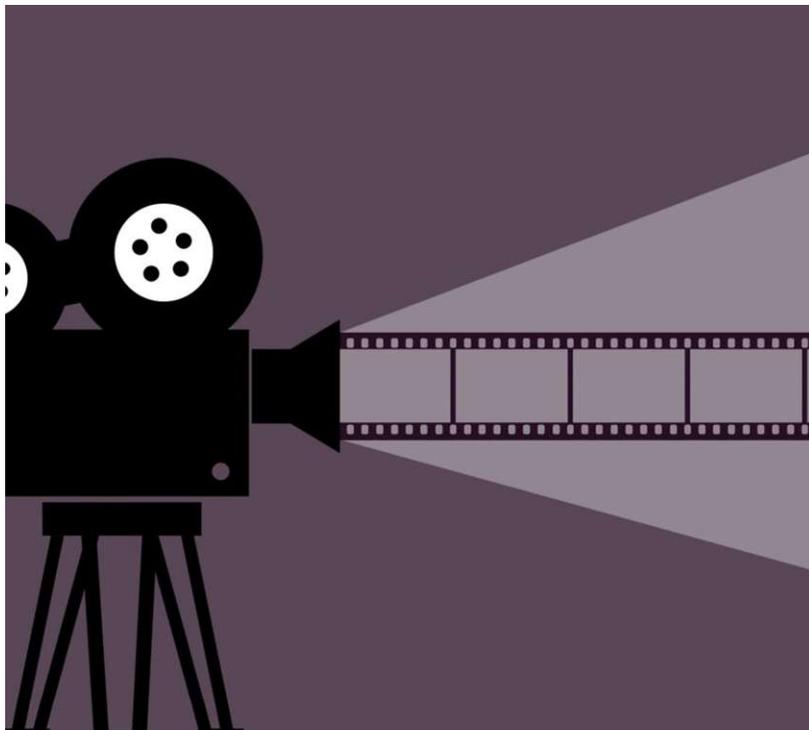


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1. INTRODUCTION TO FILMMAKING



Making films doesn't have to be really complicated and expensive. You've probably already got enough basic gear to get started. Here are some ways to make sure you get good results, and to make the process manageable and enjoyable.



Keep it short

The number one rule for good filmmaking : start short and simple before you try making longer films. Making long or complicated films is a sure way to get learners fed up, bogged down or bored. The first films they make while they are learning shouldn't be more than half a minute long. (You'd be surprised how much work it takes to make a really good 20 second film.) They can go on to make longer films once they've learnt the basics.

Build skills

- Get started with simple activities so you can discover things like:
 - What the different shots are for, and how to use them
 - How to work together in filmmaking teams
 - How to shoot good video, and how to tell if it's good
- Be clear about the film You will find things a lot easier if they know exactly what kind of film you're going to make, what it's for and who's likely to watch it.

hey, Them, Their

re being referred to the group, participants, students etc. learning filmmaking



Cut the choice

It might seem odd, but one of the best ways to bring out your creativity in filmmaking is to stop them doing things. Set really tight limits and they'll really have to think hard. Tell them the film has to be twenty seconds long, they can only use five shots, or they've got to use two closeups, a long shot, a mid shot and a low angle shot.

Let them copy

Young filmmakers can learn loads by trying to copy 'real' films. Choose a very short scene from a film the club has watched. Then get them to make a shot-by-shot copy and see how close they can get to the original. It's a real challenge.



Work with your gear

There's nothing more frustrating than trying to make a film with equipment that isn't up to the job. But it doesn't mean you need more expensive gear, it just means you need to make films your gear can cope with. No microphone? Don't try and record live sound, make the soundtrack on your computer or tablet afterwards. Basic camera? Shoot outside or in rooms with plenty of light. No tripod? Zoom out and get in close

The Separate sound

It's hard to record good live sound, particularly if you've only got basic equipment. Even if you've got better gear, you'll probably still get better results by forgetting the sound while you're filming and making a soundtrack on your computer. You can include natural-sounding effects, music and voiceovers, or you could record the voiceover first and edit the pictures to fit.



2. WARM UP ACTIVITIES

Here are some basic ways of getting skills and understanding of film up to scratch before they start serious filmmaking.

Learning to act (Performing exercise)

- people can be shy – or silly – when they are filmed for the first time. Get them used to acting, and build their confidence, with activities that include the whole group . You could start with the Magic Floor. Get them to stand on one side of the room and tell them the floor is magic. Then tell them how they've got to cross it: for example "you're on a tightrope", "a monster is chasing you", "you're wading through a swamp".

Learning about cuts (Editing exercise)

- Play a short film sequence. Get the learners to guess how many separate cuts there were in it.
- Play it again and get them to clap on each cut. Get them to count the number of times they have clapped.
- Get them to talk about why there are so many cuts.



Freeze frame (Camera exercise)

- Pause a short sequence on each shot. Get groups to talk about what's in each shot and why it's there. They could also discuss what kind of story it is, where they think it's set, and what they think will happen next. If you're in group, you could get them to write a story sentence based on each shot.

Sound with no picture (Sound exercise)

- Choose an opening sequence with a good soundtrack and a variety of different sounds. It could have just diegetic (natural/real) sounds, or it could have music as well. Play the sound without the picture. Get groups to list everything they hear, and what it makes them imagine about the place, the people, the time of day or year, and the story.



Framing with the camera (Camera exercise)

Set each group the task of shooting examples of different kinds of shots with no camera movements or zooms (e.g. one person shoots a long shot, the next person shoots a closeup, and so on), then screen and discuss what they've filmed.

Storyboarding (Pre-production exercise)

Use the Lumière Brothers film *L'arroseur arrosée* (available online or on the BFI 'Early Cinema: Primitives and Pioneers' DVD). Get the students to guess when it was made, and discuss how it's different from a modern film (it's all filmed in one take). Then get each group to storyboard a modern version of the film, using different shot sizes and camera positions.

Editing rushes (Editing exercise)

load some unedited film clips ('rushes'), including examples of different shot sizes into your editing programme and get learners to edit them into a sequence.



3. FILM, LITERACY AND THE CURRICULUM

English

- Make a very short film adaptation of a key scene from a novel.
- Create a trailer for a film adaptation of a novel.
- Make a film which explores the imagery in a poem.
- Make a short advertisement using persuasive language.
- Film a place in the local area and create a voiceover using metaphor or personification.

History

- Make a documentary using archive footage.
- Create a film using techniques from propaganda films.

Geography

- Make a documentary film about a site in the local area or one visited on a field trip.

Modern Foreign Languages

- Make a fiction film of an everyday activity, e.g. shopping, using appropriate vocabulary.
- Make a 'digital story' about yourself and what you like doing: create and record a script and illustrate it with video and still clips.



Science

- Use film to record and present experiments, using techniques like closeups, time-lapse and slow motion.
- Make a film about a scientific debate, including interviews.

Design and technology

- Use filmmaking to explain the rationale for a product or to record building, testing or disassembly.

PSHE/Citizenship

- Make campaigning films, documentaries or short fiction films about issues and problems.

PE, Dance and Drama

- Use film to record performance and correct technique, or to explain techniques in detail.

Music

- Create a music video.
- Make a short drama film and create a score for it.
- Make a short piece of music and illustrate it with a 'montage' of images.

Art

- Use film to explore and explain making processes and techniques.
- Explore the use and effects of different kinds of lighting.



4. EQUIPMENT YOU NEED

Camera

- Before you decide that you need to buy a camera, check out what's already available around you.
 - The cameras on lots of fr' phones are pretty good, at least in good light. iPads and some other tablets have also got built-in cameras, but they're awkward to hold.
 - Some compact still cameras can shoot really good video. The sound may not be great, and they're a bit fiddlier to hold steady, but if your school's already got them they're a good option. Some of them have better wide angle lenses and longer zooms than basic video cameras.
 - Basic HD video cameras are a lot cheaper than they used to be. Some are better and more suitable for school use than others (more reliable, better video quality, easier to use). Check out the reviews and try them out if you can.
 - If you've got a bigger budget – or if your Art department already has them – you could look at still cameras with interchangeable lenses. A lot of these 'digital SLRs' and 'mirror less cameras' shoot excellent, film-like HD video, though they are fiddly to use

Tripod

- You really need a way of keeping the camera still. It's not just about stopping camera shake. Putting the camera on a tripod makes students slow down and think about each shot, rather than 'panning and scanning'. Any tripod is probably better than nothing, but you really need a pan and tilt head. It also needs to be fairly big and stable.



Sound recording

- The easiest option is to plan your film so it doesn't need live sound.
- The camera's built-in microphone might be OK if you can find a quiet space and get close to the subject.
- If you're serious about sound, you need a separate microphone (and a camera with microphone and headphone sockets).
- A basic tie-clip or lavalier microphone is the cheapest way to get good sound for interviews and presentations to camera.
- If your camera has a microphone socket and an accessory shoe, you could put a directional microphone on it. Good ones are quite expensive.
- For recording drama the traditional way, you'll need a separate microphone on a boom pole, plus a student to hold it up in the air above the action.
- A furry windshield can make all the difference between usable and unusable sound if you're filming outdoors.
- You need headphones - recording sound without them is a bit like filming with your eyes shut.
- If you're recording a voiceover into your computer, it's worth getting a USB

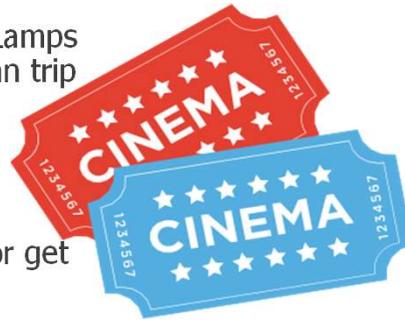


Lighting

Film lighting is too much for most school situations. Lamps can overheat, lights can dazzle students and cables can trip them.

You could use desk lamps or high-powered torches.

Instead of a second 'fill' light for the shadows, use a reflector: make your own (by gluing foil to a board) or get a cheap 5 in 1 folding reflector.



Editing

You can make a basic film without editing, and it can be a handy practice activity if you've got plenty of cameras but not many computers. (Get the students to plan the film carefully and shoot every shot in order.) But it's a shame for your students to miss out on what some of them will find the most engaging and creative part of the filmmaking process.

All Macs include iMovie, and you can download Windows MovieMaker for PCs. For iPads, you could use iMovie, or Pinnacle Studio which is more like a traditional editing programme. All of these will let you do basic editing and add transitions, music and effects.

Some film and media departments have professional software like Final Cut Pro, Avid or Adobe Premiere. These are a bit more difficult to learn but they're a lot more powerful than the basic packages





5. FILM LANGUAGE

The learner needs to understand how films work if they're going to make good films. They need to learn the language of film: how they can use pictures, sound and editing to tell stories.

The camera

Shot size This is one of the basics. How big are things in the frame of the camera? You can use different sized shots to show different things:

- to show places, use extreme long shots and very long shots.
- use long shots and mid shots to show people in the place.
- if you want to show people's expressions or important details, use close ups and extreme closeups.

When they get started, young filmmakers sometimes try to shoot everything with mid shots or long shots, because they're easy to film. If they learn to use a variety of different shots – with more closeups – their films will have a lot more impact and be better at telling the story.



An extreme closeup shows just a small part of a person or thing. Use it to show an important detail.



A closeup shows part of the subject - their face, or maybe their head and shoulders. It lets you imagine what they're feeling.



A mid shot shows the top half of the body. You can see the face and what the person is doing



A long shot shows someone from head to foot. You can see the person in the setting



With an extreme long shot you're too far away to recognise people. You can use it at the start of the film to show the setting



If you want to make a person or thing seem important or scary, use a low angle shot that points the camera up at them

Camera angle

Putting the camera in different places is important to tell the story and make it interesting. Instead of just shooting everything at eye level, the camera can go above, below or behind the subject.



A high angle shot looks down and make people look weaker. Try putting these two together to show who's the strongest out of a pair of people.



A birdseye shot looks straight down at the scene or a thing



With a Dutch angle, everything in the scene is on a slant. You can use it to make things seem odd, wacky or cool



You can use an over the shoulder shot to show two people together. It's quite handy to help the viewer understand where the characters are in a drama scene or an interview

Conventions

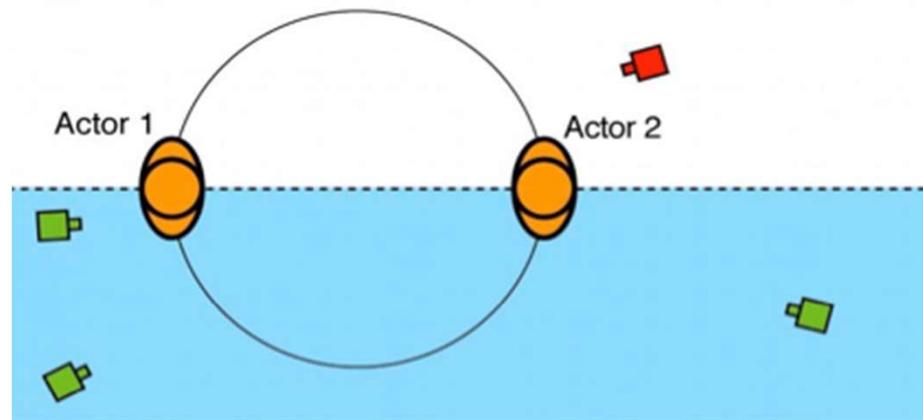
These are special kinds of shot, or ways of shooting them, that help tell the story.

- **A master shot** – usually a long shot - shows a whole scene from start to finish. If you shoot a master shot (as well as closeups, mid shots and so on) it can make editing a lot easier by giving you a shot you can go back to if there's any problem with any of the other shots.
- A **two shot** just has two people in it.
- Here's a useful one: a **reaction shot**. It shows somebody's expression. You can use it in a scary film to build up tension before you show the scary thing. They're also really useful in comedy.
- You can show what somebody's seeing with a point of view shot. It's often a walking or tracking shot.
- An **insert** shows a detail of a scene (like the text of a note someone's reading).
- A **cutaway** shows something away from the main action, like pictures on the wall, other things in the space, or the audience. They're good for showing more about the setting, and like master shots they can help with tricky editing by giving you something to 'cut away' to.



Shot-reverse shot

- Shooting in one direction, then in the other (the reverse angle), is the way most dramas are shot. It makes it easier for the audience to understand the space, and it lets you shoot two people facing each other using closeups.
- To make this work, you need to follow the 180-degree rule. You should shoot all your shots with the camera on one side of an imaginary line between the two characters. If you 'cross the line' viewers won't be able to make sense of the scene.



you don't need two cameras for this: instead, shoot the scene several times with the camera in different positions, then cut between the different positions when you edit the film. Learning how they can 'fake' reality like this is quite a revelation for young filmmakers.



Camera movements

- To help your students learn filmmaking, you could start by banning camera movements. That will make them learn to use separate shots instead of panning and zooming.
- Once they've got the idea, you could let them experiment with moving the camera. Here are some key camera movements:
 - Slow **tracking** shots are a cool way to explore a space or show what a character is seeing. They look a lot better than zooms and most other camera movements. They've got to be steady, so the camera needs to be on something like a wheelchair or skateboard. It can go forwards (**track in**), backwards (**track out**), or sideways (crab).
 - A **tilt** turns the camera vertically up or down. It's useful for slowly revealing somebody or something. The classic example is the shot that starts with someone's feet and tilts up to show how big or scary they are.
 - With a **pan**, the camera turns left or right to scan a scene or follow a movement. It doesn't look great unless it's really smooth and steady, which is tricky and takes practice.
 - Using the camera **handheld** can make the action seem more real - but it's more likely to make the film unwatchable. Zoom the camera all the way out to make handheld camera shake less obvious.



Zoom all the way out, or use a special adaptor, for wide angle shots. These can make small spaces look bigger and make camera angles look more dramatic.



Zoom in for a telephoto shot, which is like looking through a telescope - good for showing details and cutting out distracting backgrounds, but hard to hold steady.



Light

Good light can make a big difference, but setting it up can be complicated. Try to film where there is plenty of light, with the light above and behind you. Don't think that filming in a dark space will give you moody shots: they'll just be flat and grainy rather than dramatic.

- Flat light (light from a cloudy sky, or reflected off a white wall or ceiling) is much easier to handle than contrasty light such as low sunlight.
- If you want dramatic low key lighting for a scary scene, try using a desk lamp or work lamp to the side of the subject to give strong shadows.

Sound

Sound is crucial. Filmmakers should be thinking about it right from the start, rather than adding it as an afterthought. Here are three kinds of sound they might want to use:

- Diegetic sounds like footsteps, waves or crowd noises seem 'real'. They don't have to be recorded live – sound effects (added in editing) can sound better than the real thing.
- Music is usually non-diegetic - the audience knows it's been added. There are lots of different ways to use it: to tell us where and when the story is set, to set a mood, to tell us what kind of film it is, or to let us know that something's about to happen.
- Voiceovers should always be recorded separately. Don't try recording them into the camera while you film. A voiceover can tell the story from the point of view of an impartial narrator, or it can tell us what a character is thinking.



Editing

- The main thing with editing is to get students to focus on telling the story, not on playing with effects and transitions. If they put a lot of wipes and dissolves in a drama scene, it'll just confuse people. If the action is supposed to be continuous, the best way to show this is to use simple cuts.
- They should only use other transitions if they actually help people to understand the story.
 - A dissolve – where one shot melts into the next – can show that part of a journey has been missed out. You can also use dissolves in montage sequences that sum up stories or ideas.
 - You can fade to black at end of a scene, or use a fade to black followed by a fade in to show that time has passed.



They need to watch the pace when they edit. They should judge this by watching their sequences as they go on and seeing how they make them feel.

- Fast editing (which could get faster) can make things exciting, and slow editing can make them seem peaceful (or build tension).
- If nothing's happening in the shot, it doesn't need to last more than a second or two.

If a shot flashes by really quickly it can be really disrupting and confusing





6. MAKING YOUR FILM – THE PROCESS





There are three main stages towards making a film:

- **Pre-production** is the bit that happens before you start filming. This is where you get ideas and work out how to make the film. If you spend plenty of time on this stage, you can save hours or days later on.
- **Production** is the actual filming part.
- **Post-production** is where you edit the film. together, add or edit sound and titles, and get it ready to show to people.



Filmmaking roles

- There are lots of different jobs at different stages of the filmmaking process. If there's a big enough team you should be able to find roles for everyone, and everyone should know what their role is - even if you decide to rotate them.
- You could have a producer, who's the driving force behind getting the film made, selling the idea and making sure it gets shown.
- You can allocate creative jobs like writers, composers, set designers, makeup artists and prop makers.
- The director is the person with the creative vision. Even if the group makes most of the creative decisions together, you'll probably need a director at the filming stage to keep things organised.
- When you're filming, you can also have a first assistant director to check that all the shots get filmed, pass the director's instructions on to the crew and note down the good takes.
- You'll definitely need a camera operator even if you have to rotate the role so everyone gets a go.
- If your film's got live sound, you'll need a sound recordist to check sound levels, hold microphones and so on.
- A continuity person keeps notes to avoid distracting changes of costume and hairstyle from shot to shot.
- Production assistants can do things like set things up, keep the set tidy and stop other people from wandering onto the set.
- Once the filming is finished, you could have editing as a separate role - though everyone may want to have some creative involvement.



- **Pre-production**

- This is where you decide what your film is about, what the story is, and how you're going to make it. There are lots of different ways of planning. Which ones you use depends on what kind of film you're trying to make.
- For example, if you're trying to imitate the style of a scary movie or a drama you've just watched, you could make a list of all the different features of that genre: characters, typical scenes, typical settings, music and so on.
- A mind map is a good way of getting lots of ideas about the film. You need to know what the main things that will happen in the film are and from whose point of view it's being told.
- Writing a short pitch or summary can help. You can include things like what genre of film it is? What's the story? What characters will it include? What will the visual style be?



THE SECRET

SCENE 1

INT. CLASSROOM

JOHN and SAM are writing at desks.

JOHN

You know, I saw something really strange on my way here this morning.

SAM

What was that?

JOHN

I saw one of Lisa's friends hiding something.

They don't notice that LISA is listening.

- Scripts include the dialogue and descriptions of actions and settings. There's a standard format for laying out scripts, as in this example.



le the dialogue and descriptions of actions and settings. There's a standard format for ripts, as in this example.

Scene 1

d Ivy are sitting on the bed talking to each other

Ethan

You Know I saw something strange on my way here today

Ivy

What was that?

Ethan

I saw Mary's husband with another lady cosyng up in a car

They did not notice that Mary is listening to their conversation

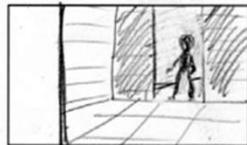


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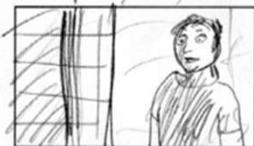
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Camera

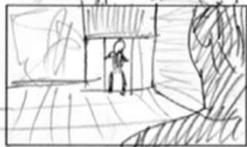
Sound



Long shot.
John appears in doorway and turns to look at the cabinet.



Mid shot.
He looks surprised.



Over the shoulder shot.
He watches Naomi by the cabinet.



Closeup. John tries to see what she is doing.



Closeup of Naomi looking round before she opens the cabinet.



Low angle shot inside cabinet. Naomi crouches down.

- A storyboard is really useful. It's a visual plan of every shot in the film, with descriptions. Don't worry if it's just stick figures, as long as you can see which shots are which (e.g. which ones are closeups and which ones are long shots). If the filmmakers really don't like drawing they could use digital still cameras instead. Make sure they realise that the storyboard is a rough guide to help them plan, so they can change the order of shots and add in extra ones.
- You don't always need a storyboard – for example, you wouldn't storyboard every shot in a shot-reverse shot drama scene. And you may not be able to plan every shot if you're making a documentary: a basic list of shots might be best.
- Getting the right locations is important. Before the group decides to film somewhere, they need to visit it to check it out properly, what filmmakers call a recce. They should find out whether they need permission to film there and see if there's enough space, what the light is like and if there are likely to be any distractions.
- What costumes and props will they need? They should make a list and make sure they can get all of them.
- Writing out a shot list as well as a storyboard is useful.



- **Production**

- This is the actual filming process.

- **Calling the shots**

- Following a standard sequence will help keep things organized and make sure that everybody knows what they are doing.
- Each team should practice this several times until they know it by heart before they go on location. Try this:
 - The camera operator sets up the shot.
 - When it's ready, the Director calls out "Quiet please".
 - When everyone's quiet, they call out "Roll camera".
 - The Camera Operator starts the camera. When they're sure it's recording they call out "Camera rolling".
 - Now the Director waits five seconds before calling "Action" or giving a visual signal.
 - The actors or presenter do their part. The Director waits five seconds at the end of the scene before saying "Cut".
 - The camera operator stops the camera.
 - The Director makes a note of whether the take was good or not. See, think, make.



Filming

- The camera operator should follow the 180-degree rule, keeping the camera on one side of an imaginary line so that the shots will join together when they edit the film.
- If you've only got one camera and you're filming a dialogue scene shot reverse shot, that's no problem. Shoot the scene several times with different framing and camera positions, then alternate between them when you edit the film.

They should make sure they don't shoot into the light and try to avoid mixing different kinds of light.



Sound recording





- If the film uses live sound, they should stop for a few seconds and get everyone to be quiet and listen, in case there are sounds like buzzing lights or traffic which will affect the shot.
- Microphones on booms need to be held over the actors, as low as possible without appearing in the shot. This is really tiring so you need to make sure the sound operator takes a break between takes. The easiest way to hold it is above the head, with hands spread wider than shoulder width. Watch that the boom doesn't drop into the shot as they get tired !
- If the camera has a headphone socket, plug headphones in and use them.
- If you can adjust the sound levels, you should. This usually gives better sound than using automatic levels.
- If the sound is too quiet, you'll get hiss when you make it louder in the editing program. If it's too loud, you'll get nasty distortion.
- Try a few lines of dialogue and watch the sound level meter. It's OK if the levels go into the orange bit but they should never go into the red.
- Make sure the actors leave pauses between their lines and don't talk over each other.
- It's a good idea to record half a minute or so of silence. This room tone can be really useful for patching up gaps in the sound at the editing stage.
- It's a good idea to play back a test recording to check whether the sound is OK. (But if you're using tape cameras, make sure you don't rewind and record over stuff you've already filmed.)



- **Post-production**

- This is where all those separate bits of video come together to make a film.

- **The editing process**

- If there isn't too much video, it's easiest to import it all into the computer and then choose which bits to use.
- If there's loads, it's worth logging it: going through (with the help of the first assistant director's notes and the shot list) to choose what to import. This can save a lot of time.
- Put the shots in order on the timeline and see if the story makes sense. Can it be improved by adding, removing or repeating shots?
- Now trim the clips so that you just have the important part of each clip.
- The editing team need to keep checking how the shots work together in sequence, rather than just looking at one shot at a time.

- **Effects and titles**

- Some young editors love adding effects and transitions like dissolves or fades, But it's really important that these things make sense. Gimmicky effects can just confuse things.
- Useful effects: things like black and white or sepia (to show something's in the past or in somebody's imagination)
- Useful transitions: dissolves or fades (to show the passage of time).
- They can add opening titles, subtitles, intertitles between scenes, and credits at the end.

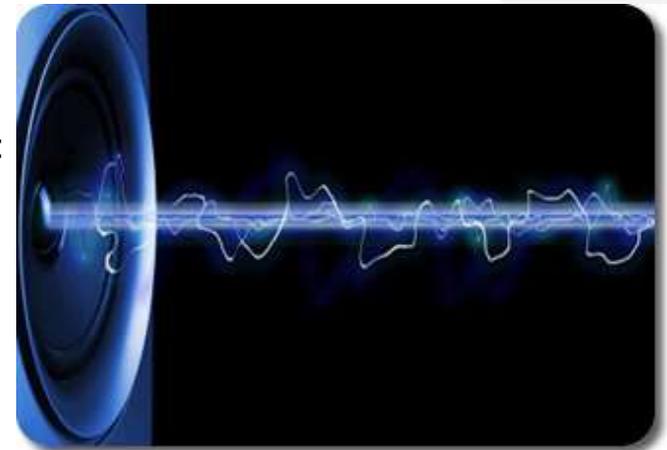


SOUND

The filmmakers need to allow enough time to sort the sound out: adding effects, music and voiceover, and adjusting the sound levels.

If they get this right it can make a massive difference to their film.

- Don't let them use copyright music if you want to show the film in public or put it online.
- The editing programme will probably have free loops and effects you can use. If your score is complicated, you could use a separate music programme to make it.
- They could start with a soundtrack or voiceover, put markers on the timeline (or just fit to the waveform of the sound) and edit their shots to fit. This is great for making music videos where the edits match the beat, or documentaries where the video matches what the presenter is talking about.



Sharing the film

- Don't just leave the finished film as a project file in the editing programme. If you want to show it, you need to export or share it. That way, you'll have a version that you can use on other computers or put online.
- It's a good idea to export one version in the highest quality possible, and then to make smaller versions to put on the school website or a video sharing site. You could also make a DVD.



7. GETTING YOUR FILM SEEN: COMPETITIONS AND FILM FESTIVALS

- Before you think about sharing a film, check that
 - it's in the right format
 - you've got parental permission
 - there are no child protection issues
 - the film doesn't include copyright music or images
- Here are some ideas for where to show a film:
 - Screen it at an assembly or parents' evening
 - Show it before a film club screening
 - Put it on the school website
 - Upload it to a video streaming site (check that the site doesn't include unsuitable material or links)
 - Enter it in local, national or international film festivals or competitions



THANK YOU



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