

by Taco Hornbaker

# 10 TIPS FOR BETTER CAMP VIDEOS

**V**ideo packs multisensory power. It moves emotions and captures attention even in a media-saturated world. Video is the original viral, and it continues to draw extremely high rates of digital engagement and shareability. It's one of the most effective ways to show and tell the stories of camps and conference centers.

Smartphones have delivered video to our pockets and made it possible for camp and conference constituents to carry, watch and share camp stories from almost anywhere. What an amazing opportunity! But it's good video that cuts through the digital clutter. These tips and tools can help improve your videos and help you better engage broader audiences. Roll 'em. ►

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PRACTICAL TIPS AND TOOLS TO HELP  
YOU VISUALLY TELL YOUR STORY

## 1. Depth of Field

Depth of field is the distance between the nearest and farthest object in focus. This is a major shooting style often seen in films but unnoticed when used correctly.

*Shallow:* A shallow depth of field means there is a small range of what's in focus. An example is focusing on

## 2. Slow Motion

Using slow motion effectively creates beautiful cinematic footage that brings out the emotions of the film to the viewer. To accomplish that correctly, try filming your video at 60 frames per second (FPS) or higher. Then when creating in your editing platform, set your project to 24 or 30 FPS. You can

**BONUS TIP: DON'T BE AFRAID TO EDIT AND GET RID OF WHAT YOU DON'T NEED, AND DON'T TAKE SHORTCUTS TO GET DONE SOONER.**

a person standing close to the camera with the background blurred out. A shallow depth of field on a person or subject is a very effective tool when you want the attention to gravitate naturally toward them.

*Deep:* A deep focus works better for wide or landscape shots when you want to keep everything in focus. There is no single rule for using one or the other technique, but depth of field can and will drastically change the feel of your scene. Practice both of these techniques, as they can be difficult to perfect.

then slow down your footage to 50 or 60 percent while keeping the footage smooth, without stutters. This works well with shots when the camera is moving, and it can help reduce the appearance of your camera shaking.

*Expert Tip:* An advanced technique is to use speed ramping. Start a clip slowed down and gradually ramp to normal speed or fast motion. Or reverse the process from fast to slow. This will take some practice to do correctly and probably some further research. Easy places to start are YouTube channels, such as Dave

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Dugdale, DSLRguide and Indy Mogul, and websites, such as nofilm school.com and videocopilot.com.

### 3. Get Feedback

It can be frustrating to complete your video, publish it, wait in eager anticipation to show your co-workers or clients, then watch them stare unengaged as your eager anticipation turns into cold sweats, just waiting for it to be over. This usually happens because of tunnel vision. You can become so engaged in your work—watching it over and over, hearing the music over and over—that you become numb to see what might need to be trimmed down, taken out or added to strengthen the quality of your film.

Every video that I produce for River Valley Ranch goes through a private viewing process before it is uploaded. I watch the video in full after it's completed. Then my supervisor watches, and finally a third party from another department gives a viewing. Gathering group feedback doesn't mean that you will always make every change that is suggested, but it will help keep you accountable to the high quality of work you and your ministry want to produce. The process will also help you find your strengths and



#### EXTRA INFO

## 5 FAVORITE FILMMAKING TOOLS

Here are a few tools of the trade that I go to again and again.

- 1. Canon EOS Rebel Series:** These DSLR cameras are great cost-effective options that produce HD video.
- 2. Glidecam HD-2000:** With practice, a handheld stabilizer like this one eliminates camera shake and helps you produce smooth, cinematic footage (photo at right).
- 3. DJI Osmo:** The HD camera and a stabilizer in one package is small but powerful and can be a great option if you don't have the budget for both a camera and a glidecam.
- 4. Final Cut Pro X:** Video editing software comes down to preference. I find this the quickest stand-alone platform. Others that will get the job done on smaller scales are AVID Media Composer, Sony Vegas Pro, Windows Movie Maker and Apple iMovie. Adobe's Premiere Pro appeals to many studios, videographers and editors because of its compatibility with other Adobe programs, which are far superior to their competition.
- 5. Adobe After Effects:** This video composition software has everything you need for digital effects, motion graphics and animation. Apple's Motion works well with Final Cut Pro X but is more limited.



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weaknesses in filmmaking and sharpen your skills.

### 4. Framing

One of the most important parts of filming is your framing. Two of the most noticeable factors are *lead room* and the *rule of thirds*.

*Rule of Thirds:* Most cameras have a grid feature that will divide your frame into nine sections on your screen. If it does not, you can do a pretty good job of imagining it does. Use the lines and put the most important objects of your scene where the lines intersect if possible. If you're filming a landscape, the horizon should lie on the top horizontal line or the bottom horizontal line depending

on what looks best. Avoid placing the horizon directly in the middle.

*Lead Room:* Let's say you're filming an interview. While it's easy to stick the subject directly in the middle of frame, it is not always the most appealing. It can be, but there are other options if the symmetry on and around the subject isn't working. Try placing them on either the right or left third of frame, and placing their face—the point of interest—where the crosshairs of the grid lines intersect. For example, if your subject is looking to the right, place them on the left third facing the center of the frame. The result is lead room. The same can be accomplished for a scene featuring someone walking left or right. Give the subject lead ▶

## EXTRA INFO

# SUGGESTED CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER VIDEOS

Video can convey many powerful stories. Here are a few options to explore.

**1. Staff Introductions:** Film your staff completing funny tasks or stunts—silly jumps off a diving board, cold water dumped on their head—in slow motion. Edit the clips together, and add their names on screen as an introduction of summer staff to campers during your first rally.

**2. Day in the Life:** Attach a GoPro to a camper using a chest or head harness. Then film what that camper sees all day long for a first-person view video.



**3. Donor Thank You:** Film lots of campers throughout the summer saying “I love Camp \_\_\_\_\_” or “Thanks for sending me to Camp \_\_\_\_\_.” Then put them together in a video like this: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzhk6iWkl-I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzhk6iWkl-I).

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room—space in front of them—and get rid of dead space behind them.

## 5. Lighting

Lighting is one of the most important parts of filming. If you can invest in good lighting, do so. Lighting for an indoor scene will look much more professional and appealing done with good three-point lighting gear. If it's not in your budget, there are several online resources for DIY lighting gear.

Also pay attention to the golden hour, which is usually the first hour of the sun rising and the last hour of the sun setting. It is also called the “magic hour” for a good reason. The lighting is beautiful. It creates a more dynamic range and is less harsh than, say, midday. This doesn't mean shooting at any other time of the day is wrong, but using clips from golden hour will add a warm, happy, cinematic feel to your film.

## 6. ND Filters

For best overall results, you want the shutter speed of your camera set at double the amount of the frames per second you are filming in. But this can

be almost impossible to achieve when filming in bright sunlight. Neutral density (ND) filters work like sunglasses. When put on your lens, they filter the sun, darkening the image and allowing you to lower your shutter speed if needed.

## 7. Crop Framing

High definition video resolution is 1080 x 720, but most cameras can record in 1920 x 1080 or even higher. Use the highest setting you can that's right for your project; then create your project at the lowest possible HD setting: 1080 x 720. This provides you room to zoom, shift and rotate your video in your video editor without losing resolution. Be aware though that if you are filming in high FPS for slow motion, check your camera settings for the highest resolution available for that setting.

## 8. Figure Out Your Strengths

Figuring out the variety of available filmmaking techniques can be overwhelming. Start testing and becoming aware of what you are naturally skilled in. I often hear clients request videos that are “your style.” Very early in my filmmaking career, I was aware that my skill gravitated toward smooth,



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cinematic footage using glidecams and fluid, colorful editing to complement. As I've continued to play to my strength and hone that style, I aim for my videos to reflect my personality,

that, like any other task, filmmaking requires knowledge, creativity, skill, passion, experience and, yes, time. Don't let that hinder you from pressing on; keep making videos.

## **BEGINNER TIP: AS A BEGINNER, I CHALLENGED MYSELF TO CREATE ONE VIDEO PER WEEK FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR! THE REPEATED FILMING AND EDITING HELPED ME QUICKLY GAIN INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE.**

but not be forced. I have developed "my style," letting my viewers recognize they are watching one of my videos before it's even over.

### **9. Keep Making Videos**

Don't rush things. A common issue for beginning filmmakers is their desire to produce the highest quality videos right off the bat. Unfortunately, it can be discouraging when that desire isn't instantly realized. It's normal to have the first projects turn out not as grand as you'd originally hoped. That was definitely true for me. But your quality will drastically improve as you continue making videos. The truth is

*Beginner Tip:* As a beginner, I challenged myself to create one video per week for an entire year! These videos were not all top quality, but the repeated filming and editing helped me quickly gain invaluable experience.

### **10. Create**

One of the best-known rules of filmmaking is: "There are no rules!" While the practical tips listed here can help improve your filmmaking quality, don't let yourself get trapped into following every rule if you find something that works for you. Keep searching for creative ways to tell your story, and do it because you love it. ●



Taco Hornbaker is the creative specialist at River Valley Ranch (Manchester, Md.) When he's not honing his video drone skills, editing an RVR video or traveling with the RVR recruiting team, he can be found playing Frisbee golf, leading worship at church or maintaining his personal video business: Anthem Aerials. Email him at [taco@rivervalleyranch.com](mailto:taco@rivervalleyranch.com).