

7TH EDITION

TELEVISION FIELD PRODUCTION AND REPORTING

FRED SHOOK, JOHN LARSON, AND JOHN DETARSIO



TELEVISION FIELD PRODUCTION AND REPORTING

Television Field Production and Reporting provides a comprehensive introduction to the art of video storytelling. Endorsed by the National Press Photographers Association, this book focuses on the many techniques and tools available in today's digital landscape, including how drones and miniaturized technology can enrich the storytelling process. The new edition of *Television Field Production and Reporting* is an absolute must in this visually oriented, rapidly changing field. At its core, visual storytelling helps transmit information, expose people to one another, and capture and communicate a sense of experience in unforgettable ways. This edition reflects, through practitioners' eyes, how to achieve those goals and excel as a professional, whatever the medium at hand, even as changing technology revises the storyteller's toolkit. This edition emphasizes digital and emerging media, and includes new color photography relevant to contemporary visual storytelling and reporting. It also features important updates regarding digital media law which affect anyone who records and/or disseminates digital media content, whether in private, on television, the web, via social networking sites, or in commercial venues.

The seventh edition of *Television Field Production and Reporting* stresses the mastery of innovative storytelling practices in video programming as far ranging as electronic press kits, multi-camera production, stylized programs, corporate video, raw documentaries, and real time cinéma vérité.

Fred Shook's professional experience encompasses television reporting, production, writing, photojournalism, and video editing. He has taught at university level and worked nationally and internationally as a television producer, consultant, writer, director, and editor for commercial television, corporations, and government agencies. Shook is a National Television Academy Silver Circle Member for significant contributions to television over at least twenty-five years. He received a Rocky Mountain Emmy Nomination for writing, and the National Press Photographers Association's Robin F. Garland "Outstanding National Educator" award. He also is a recipient of the NPPA's J. Winton Lemen National Fellowship Award for his contributions to television photojournalism. He has written *The Process of Electronic News Gathering*; *Television News Writing: Captivating an Audience*; and *Television Field Production and Reporting*, ed. 1–4, and is lead author on ed. 5–7.

John Larson is recognized as one of the nation's best storytelling reporters. He's excelled in national and local investigative, breaking, and feature reporting. Larson reports and produces stories for *PBS NewsHour*, and is a former *Dateline NBC* correspondent. He also serves as a consultant to hundreds of journalists, and works internationally as a Video Journalist who does it all. His powerful writing has made him a sought-after speaker, teacher, and motivator at workshops and newsrooms across the country. He's earned multiple DuPont Columbia awards – arguably broadcasting's Pulitzer Prize, as well as multiple Peabody's and National Emmys. His award winning work has taken him around the world – investigating drug cartels in Mexico, the sinking of a ferry in Indonesia, police corruption in Louisiana, HIV/Aids in Africa, death of undocumented immigrants at the hands of the US Border Patrol, racial profiling in the United States, and many others. His investigation of the insurance industry for *Dateline NBC* became one of the most honored works of journalism in broadcast history. Before going to the network, Larson spent eight years at KOMO-TV in Seattle, Washington.

John DeTarsio is Director and Director of Photography for scripted and non-scripted episodic TV, documentaries, and magazine shows. As Director/DP of the MTV hit series, *Catfish*, he helped design the look of the TV series and has been with the show since its inception. His body of work encompasses highly-stylized shows, from the raw documentary look of MTV's *Catfish*, CBS *48 Hours* and MTV's *Suspect*, to the premier network magazine show, CBS *60 Minutes*, to multi-camera productions (*Coming Home*, *Lifetime*, and *Kid Nation*, CBS). John has worked for five news stations as photographer, editor, and on-air reporter. At KNSD 7/39 San Diego, he became Executive Producer of Creative Development, before becoming a freelance network photographer and consultant. As a consultant (www.johndetarsio.com/), he works with national and international television photographers, editors, reporters, and managers, sharing his passion for visual storytelling. His awards include NPPA National Photographer of the Year, the national Iris Award, six national NPPA awards, and forty-six regional Emmys. In addition to twenty-eight San Diego Press Club Awards and nine Golden Mic Awards, he also has received more than fifty regional NPPA Awards.

TELEVISION FIELD PRODUCTION AND REPORTING

Seventh Edition

FRED SHOOK

JOHN LARSON

JOHN DETARSIO

First published 2018
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2018 Taylor & Francis

The right of Fred Shook, John Larson and John DeTarsio to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

First edition published by Pearson Education Inc. 2000
Sixth edition published by Focal Press 2007

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Names: Shook, Frederick author. | Larson, John, 1953- author. | DeTarsio, John author.

Title: Television field production and reporting / Fred Shook, John Larson, John DeTarsio.

Description: Seventh edition. | New York, NY : Routledge, 2017.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016054593 | ISBN 9780415787659 (hardback) | ISBN 9780415787666 (pbk.)

Subjects: LCSH: Television broadcasting of news. | Television—Production and direction.

Classification: LCC PN4784.T4 S53 2017 | DDC 070.1—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016054593>

ISBN: 978-0-415-78765-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-78766-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-22580-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Univers
by Keystroke, Neville Lodge, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton

A VALUABLE RESOURCE

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join us at www.story201.com. Here you will find video tutorials, and valuable links for *Television Field Production and Reporting*, 7th edition. Recognized around the world for their seminars and presentations, the authors provide updated, specific instructional content available nowhere else. We invite you to join us.

Contents

	Preface	xix
	Acknowledgments	xxi
	Introduction	1
Chapter 1	Telling the Visual Story	2
	Through Stories We Share Human Experience and Understanding	3
	The Differences Between Visual Stories and Reports	4
	Heart, Emotion, Demeanor	5
	Toward a Philosophy – Placing the Human Perspective in Perspective	7
	Telling Versus Showing	8
	The Value of Visual Narrative	8
	Silence as a Writing Tool	10
	The Silent Languages of the Senses	10
	Putting It All Together	11
	Culture Impacts Perception	12
	Summary	13
	Discussion	14
	Exercises	14
	Notes	15
Chapter 2	Planning and Shooting the Story	17
	The Best Stories Convey a Sense of Progression	17
	Find Images That Convey a Clear Story Focus	18
	Write the Pictures First	19
	Reportorial Editing	19
	Working as Part of a Team	21
	Prove the Story’s Focus Visually	21

The Focus May Change	22
Look for a Story Focus in Events with Uncontrolled Action	22
Tell Your Story Through People	23
Strong Natural Sound Helps Tell the Story	23
Build in Surprises	23
Keep Sound Bites Short	24
Address the Larger Issue	25
Challenge Your Focus Statement	25
Video Packages Are Factual Mini-Movies	25
The Lead	25
Provide Visual Proof for All Main Points	26
The Close	27
Be Hard On Yourself as a Writer	27
Write from the Visuals	28
Look for a Story While Capturing Uncontrolled Action	30
Look for the Larger Story	30
Summary	31
Key Terms	31
Discussion	31
Exercises	31
Notes	32
Chapter 3	
Visual Grammar	33
The Shot	33
The Sequence	33
Basic Shots	34
Long Shot	35
Medium Shot	35
Close-Up	35
How the Basic Shots Work Together	36
Camera Movement	36
Pan	36

Moving Shot	37
Combination Shot	37
Tilt Shot	38
Tracking Shot	38
Trucking Shot	38
Dolly Shot	38
Changes in Camera Perspective	38
Stabilize Shaky Images	40
Storytelling Shots	40
One Shots to Crowd Shots	43
Master Shot with Cut-Ins	43
Overlapping Action	45
Shooting Matched-Action Sequences	45
Jump Cuts	47
The Cutaway	48
The Motivated Cutaway	48
The Transition or Reveal Shot	48
Using Camera Movement to Enhance Storytelling	49
Point-Of-View Movement	50
Thinking Camera	50
Screen Direction	50
How to Avoid the False Reverse	51
Vary Camera Angles	52
Photograph People at Eye Level	53
Angles Provide Psychological Impact	53
Contrast and Comparison	53
Composition	54
Summary	54
Key Terms	55
Discussion	55

	Exercises	56
	Notes	57
Chapter 4	Video Editing: The Invisible Art	58
	Editing Is Another Writing Tool	58
	Toward a Philosophy of Editing	59
	Everyone Is an Editor	59
	The Cut	60
	Choosing Edit Points	61
	There Can Be No Matched Action Without Overlapping Action	62
	Cutting On Action or At Rest	62
	Into-Frame/Out-Of-Frame Action	63
	Jump Cuts	64
	Pop Cuts	64
	Devices to Compress Time and Advance the Action	64
	Parallel Cutting	66
	Shot Order Impacts the Illusion of Continuity	66
	Content Dictates Pace	67
	Cutting to Condense Time	67
	Composition Affects Pace	67
	Screen Direction	68
	Editing to Eliminate the False Reverse	69
	The Transition Shot	69
	Sound as a Transitional Device	70
	Cold Cuts	71
	Flash Cuts	71
	Cutting to Leave Space for Audience Reaction	71
	Communication Pays	72
	Dissolves and Other Optical Effects	72
	Summary	73
	Key Terms	74

	Discussion	74
	Exercises	75
	Notes	76
Chapter 5	Shooting Video in the Field	77
	Composition Guidelines	77
	The Rule of Thirds	77
	Pointers for Wide Screen Composition	81
	Use a Tripod Whenever Appropriate	82
	The Handheld Camera	83
	Control Breathing	84
	Preplan Body Movement	84
	Walk in Lockstep	84
	How to Use the Zoom Lens	84
	Avoid Calling Attention to the Zoom	85
	Adjust Speed and Duration of Zoom to Story Mood and Pace	85
	Recompose the Shot as You Zoom	85
	Storytelling and Planning	85
	Establish Communication in the Field	85
	Think Before You Shoot	87
	Shoot Sequences	87
	Shoot and Move	87
	Anticipate Action	89
	Shoot Only the Shots You Need	89
	Avoid Indiscriminate Shooting	89
	Edit in the Camera	89
	Shoot to Eliminate the False Reverse	90
	Involve the Camera in the Action	90
	Working with People	91
	Avoid Distracting the Subject	92
	Staging Versus Motivating	93

The One-Person Band	94
How to Shoot and Conduct Interviews Simultaneously	94
How to Photograph Your Own Standup	94
Shooting in Cold Weather	96
Safety First	97
Distancing	98
Safety in Numbers	98
Plan to Make Plenty of Mistakes	98
On Returning Home	100
Summary	100
Key Terms	101
Discussion	101
Exercises	102
Notes	102

Chapter 6 Writing with Light 104

Photography Is the Art of Controlling Light	104
White Balance	104
Mixing and Matching Light Sources	107
Helpful Filters	108
Lighting Kits	109
Lighting Styles and Patterns	109
Broad Lighting and Short Lighting	116
Bounce Lighting	117
Eye Reflections	117
Lighting Nighttime Action	118
Photographing Subjects with Dark Skin	118
Cautions	120
Summary	121
Key Terms	122
Discussion	122

	Exercises	122
	Notes	123
Chapter 7	The Sound Track	124
	How Microphones Work	125
	Directional Patterns	125
	On Choosing a Mic	126
	Impedance	127
	Frequency Response	127
	Microphones for the Visual Storyteller	127
	The Wireless Transmitter-Receiver	130
	The Mixer	133
	Essential Points for Audio	134
	Monitor the Sound with Earphones	138
	Techniques to Reduce Wind Noise	138
	Be Aggressive	141
	The Microphone Hears Differently	142
	Sound Perspective	142
	Stereo and Surround-Sound	143
	Covering News Conferences	143
	Recording Group Discussions	144
	The Two-Person Interview	145
	Record Room Tone	145
	The Seductive Quality of Nat Sound	145
	Watch What You Say	145
	Sound and Video Accessories	146
	Summary	147
	Key Terms	148
	Discussion	148
	Exercises	149
	Notes	150

Chapter 8	The Interview: Shooting the Quotation Marks	151
	Establish Trust	151
	Practice Good Manners	152
	The Most Important Interview Question	152
	Save Your Questions for the Interview	152
	Do Your Homework	152
	How to Frame Interview Questions	153
	Use a Wireless Microphone	154
	The Art of Listening	154
	Avoid the Easy Questions	155
	Build Questions Around the Five W's	155
	Avoid Two-Part Questions	156
	“How Do You Feel?”	156
	Anticipate Questions the Viewers Would Ask	156
	Practice the Fine Art of Hesitation	156
	Pitch Reporting Opportunities	157
	Rearrange Signals Between Reporter and Photographer	157
	How to React Without Appearing to Agree	158
	Retain Control of the Interview	159
	Interviewing Children	159
	The Talking Head	161
	Influencing How Viewers Perceive the Subject	161
	One-Eyed Talking Heads	162
	Body Language	162
	After the Interview Is Over	163
	Interviews Allow Reporting Through Direct Observation	164
	Summary	165
	Key Term	165
	Discussion	165
	Exercises	166
	Note	167

Chapter 9	Writing the Package	168
	Define Your Focus	169
	Write the Beginning (Studio Lead-In)	169
	Write the Package Lead	170
	Write the Middle or Main Body	170
	Write the Close	172
	Preplan the Package	173
	Spot-News Packages	174
	Set a High Standard for Packages	176
	Use Natural Sound Liberally	177
	Summary	178
	Key Terms	179
	Exercises	179
	Note	180
Chapter 10	Write Like a Storyteller	181
	Transmitting the Experience	181
	Be a Tour Guide	182
	Use “Wows!” – The Things That Turn You On	183
	Let Your Audience Experience the Wows	183
	Moments	184
	Great Moments Are Almost Always Unexpected	184
	One Thought About Field Teamwork	184
	Writing Your First Sentence	184
	The Three Horses – Storytelling Tools for Video Stories	185
	First Horse: Surprise	185
	Second Horse: Quest	191
	Third Horse: Character	193
	Tips for Writing Strong Stories	195
	Concluding Thoughts	197
	Summary	197

	Discussion	199
	Exercises	199
	Notes	200
Chapter 11	Producing the Story Minute-By-Minute	201
	The Big Picture	201
	Size Matters – Bigger Is Not Always Better	201
	Bottom Line	206
	Starting Out, Over or Up	206
	Six Overlooked Tools for Video Journalists	207
	Minute-By-Minute – Lessons Learned in the Field	211
	A Guided Tour: Lessons Learned	211
	Adding Drones to Your Toolkit	215
	The Future of Video Journalists	220
	Summary	220
	Key Terms	223
	Discussion	223
	Exercises	224
	Notes	225
Chapter 12	How to Improve Your Storytelling Ability	227
	Seek Gradual Improvement	227
	Have a Story	227
	Involve the Camera	228
	Sequences Advance the Story	228
	Don't Try to Show All of New Zealand	230
	Pursue Your Interest in People	231
	Motivate Viewers to Watch	231
	Develop Video Fluency	232
	Excuses	232
	Know the Community	233
	Curiosity Pays	234

See Beyond the Obvious	234
Show Audiences What They Missed	234
Help Viewers Experience the Story as You Did	237
Adapt Your Reporting to Story Demands	239
Reporting the Nonvisual Story	239
Personal Appearance and Conduct	240
Etiquette	240
Shooting and Reporting Events Outside Your Control	240
Toward a News Philosophy	243
Summary	244
Key Terms	245
Discussion	245
Exercises	246
Notes	247
Chapter 13	
Improving On-Camera and Voice-Over Performance	248
Develop Qualities That Make You Interesting and Interested	248
Reasons for Standups	249
Keep Your Attention On the Story	250
Give Yourself Something to Do	251
Justifiable Reasons for Standups	251
Five Common Standups	251
Seek Reaction	255
Communicate What You Feel About the Story	256
Delivering from the Studio	257
Put Experience into Your Reports	257
Multidimensional Reporting	258
Learn How to Relax	259
Develop Conversational Delivery	260
Your Appearance	261
Let the Audience Know You as a Friend	262
Impact How People Perceive Your Interview Sources	262

	Posture Matters	265
	Split-Focus Presentation	265
	The Anchor Debrief	266
	When You Appear On Camera	266
	How Reporters Evolve into Anchors	266
	Summary	267
	Key Terms	269
	Discussion	269
	Exercises	269
	Notes	271
Chapter 14	Digital Media Law	272
	Gathering the News	273
	Libel	274
	Invasion of Privacy	276
	Defamation	277
	Use of the Word Alleged	277
	Apparent Authority	278
	Technology	280
	Surveillance in States with One-Party Consent	284
	Two-Party Consent	285
	Juvenile News Sources	285
	Subpoenas and Shield Laws	286
	Access Laws	286
	Courtroom Television	286
	The Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998	292
	Freedom of Information Requests	299
	A Legal Perspective	300
	Summary	300
	Key Terms	302
	Discussion	303

	Exercises	304
	Notes	305
Chapter 15	Ethics: Defining Your Contract with Viewers	308
	Definition of Ethics	308
	Effects of Competition	309
	Situational Ethics	310
	Licensing	310
	Contract with the Public	311
	At Issue: Image Manipulation	312
	Make Your Case About Digital Manipulation	313
	Case Studies in Ethical Dilemmas	316
	Reverse-Angle Questions	321
	Staged News Events	321
	Reenactments	322
	File Video	323
	Material Provided by Outside Sources	323
	Toward an Individual Code of Ethics	323
	Summary	328
	Key Terms	329
	Discussion	329
	Exercises	329
	Discussion of Ethical Conflict Situations	330
	Notes	333
	Glossary	334
	Index	353



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Preface

This book is dedicated to helping you become one of a kind – a visual storyteller rather than simply a photographer or writer. Anyone with a camera is a photographer; anyone with a microphone can be a reporter. Today it may seem as if everyone has a video camera and everyone’s shooting video and crafting stories. Relatively few among those multitudes, however, will ever become accomplished visual storytellers.

You will need additional skills and digital “languages” if you intend to incorporate visual storytelling into your professional career. At its simplest level, you will have to master two ways of communicating: one is with pictures, and the other is with sound, including the spoken word. Although it may sound easy, it’s not.

Your images must sparkle with articulate meaning; your lighting must mimic the Renaissance mastery of light and shadow on a digital canvas; storytelling sound must become the other half of the image, because we “see” with our ears; your writing must incorporate not only the spoken word, deftly told, but all the tools of visual media. Storytelling is a learned art in a world where only excellence, originality, and interesting, relevant content will attract and hold discriminating viewers who patronize digital screens.

Your mastery of the visual languages in digital media, and a commitment to excellence, will help ensure a long, profitable, and rewarding career. This seventh edition of *Television Field Production and Reporting* features extensive updates and many new photographs that create context for gathering and producing content for digital media, including websites, video, audio, text, and multimedia.

The book includes guidance and insights by co-author and network correspondent/producer John Larson. He also travels internationally, shoots stories on his own, pilots his own drone, and serves as a reporting and writing consultant.

Also of note are the contributions of co-author and network freelance photojournalist John DeTarsio. DeTarsio is known within the television profession throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Africa, and South America. In this edition, he adds up-to-date information about field production, photojournalism, lighting, and sound. Rather than simply providing technical advice and explanations, he shows how to use the camera, microphone, edit bay, and lighting

as storytelling instruments to create far more compelling and memorable stories for digital media. Equally important, he describes his approaches in working with story subjects and how to capture their most telling insights, actions, and behaviors.

Acknowledgments

The following individuals and institutions deserve recognition for their contributions to this undertaking:

The National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) for its sponsorship of the annual Television News-Video Workshop at the University of Oklahoma. This workshop is internationally recognized for its achievements in illuminating the art of effective visual storytelling. The distinguished professionals who serve as faculty and give this workshop its direction initiated many concepts that appear in this book.

NBC News national correspondent Bob Dotson, a close friend of the authors; his network reporting and “American Story” series have distinguished his work on *NBC Today* and the *NBC Nightly News*.

Grateful recognition also is extended to photojournalists Ernie Leyba, and the late Bob Brandon, both of Denver, KUSA-TV; Patti Dennis, Vice President of News and Director of Recruiting, TEGNA Media; Eric Kehe, Director of Photography, and photojournalist Manny Sotello, KCNC-TV; chief photographer Bob Burke; and to all KUSA and KCNC staff and private citizens who appear in photographs throughout the book.

Other contributors include the following reviewers: Douglas Osman, James Stephens, and Jerry Gibbs.

To these individuals and to those whose contributions are recognized elsewhere, the authors extend most grateful appreciation.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

INTRODUCTION

If you now work in digital media or plan a communications career, you may at times write stories for the page or computer screen. At other times you may share your writing as stories translated into sounds and images for television, stories so powerful your audience may feel strong connections with people in your stories. You can excel in your career if you learn to use each medium to full advantage as a visual storyteller, even as the media landscape changes. Written and spoken words are different than images. Actions and behaviors are different than sounds and silence. As the following pages illuminate, all are methods of expression you can master and employ as appropriate for the specific medium.

At its core, visual storytelling helps you transmit information, show people to people, and capture and communicate a sense of experience in unforgettable ways. This edition reflects, through practitioners' eyes, how to achieve those goals and excel as a professional, whatever the medium at hand, and even as changing technology recasts the storyteller's toolkit.

You will discover how to take that extra moment to think and plan stories no one else sees, even while tackling the same subjects, events, and topics. You will learn how to become a multi-dimensional writer with the ability to captivate and hold audiences by making your work relevant, original, and interesting. The authors will help you begin your journey toward those goals and more in the pages to come.

TELLING THE VISUAL STORY

1

“It takes a special kind intelligence to tell a story, and from our tribal days to this moment we learn most from stories.”¹

Gerry Spence, trial lawyer and author

Reporters report. Photographers take pictures. Writers write. They attend events. Observe. Tell us what happened. If you subscribe to such conventional wisdom, your work will forever imitate what everyone else is doing. Odd as it may sound, the most powerful visual storytellers often stop reporting and writing, stand back, and serve as producers in helping their story subjects tell the story.

Imagine for a moment that you have been assigned to cover a city council meeting. Other reporters from around town are there; taking notes, recording city council members’ comments, listening to citizens make statements. It’s journalism with a capital J. Except that it isn’t storytelling. That’s because a meeting is never the thing that happened.

Let’s assume city council is deciding whether to apply for federal matching funds to help local minority businesses. Sounds like a clickable or turn-the-page story? How will you make this story interesting? Should you make it interesting? Isn’t it up to you to provide just the facts? Isn’t it your audiences’ job to understand? Not if you wish to have a satisfying career or to compete against other writers, reporters, and storytellers who labor to make their work as interesting, visual, and understandable as possible.

Let’s return to city council, this time with an audience of one in the back of our mind, an approach that the Poynter Institute’s Roy Peter Clark advocates. When he is struggling to make something clear, he says he imagines a conversation with his mother. “If she asked me, ‘What did you learn at city council today?’” he says he would not respond: “The city council agreed by a one-vote margin Friday to apply for federal matching funds to permit them to support a project to aid small minority-owned businesses by giving them lower interest loans.” Instead, he says, “I might be more inclined to say, ‘Well, Ma, minority business people are struggling, and the city council thinks it’s found a way to help them out’.”²

Note how Clark converts the central character from “The city council” to the more powerful and accessible “minority business people”. Now we have real people, non-institutional representatives, who can tell us their story from a people perspective.

If we also tell the story from their viewpoint, or even an observer’s viewpoint, we can show their struggles, the forces that make it difficult to earn a living in the community, how minority business folks tried to survive, and why they’re failing.

We can still report the city council story for it, too, is important. Once audiences understand why the story matters, then we can cover city council and cast the council meeting itself as a story element: the story outcome that remains unknown until council takes its vote. Even then, audiences will want essential details, the vital facts and figures, in palatable doses. “People want to be spoken to,” says Garrison Keillor, noted writer and radio personality. “Ministers who read their sermons inevitably lose the audience in the first two minutes. So sad, so unnecessary.”³

THROUGH STORIES WE SHARE HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

We sometimes live inside stories. Sometimes they live inside us. Stories help us understand ourselves, and to grow in self-knowledge beyond personal experience. Stories also help us understand what all humans share in common, whether as children, parents, lovers, relatives, workers, senior citizens, or in belonging to similar cultures or religions, in which we embrace common values and codes of conduct. Through voyagers and explorers, past and present, we learn about places we may never visit and people we may never meet. And, ultimately, most humans ponder what it all means and what happens when it ends.

Visual media helps viewers feel they’re part of the action, essentially experiencing the events on-screen (Figure 1.1). The most compelling stories contain a beginning, middle, and unknown ending; the same format in which we experience our own lives and other real-life events. We’ve been telling stories this way since the first hunters gathered at night to relate the day’s happenings: “We began our hunt before sunrise . . .” leads to the story’s middle where one or more characters struggle against an opposing force to achieve a goal, and on to the ending where the audience learns how things turned out.

Along the way, the best stories address larger issues. From them we gain deeper understandings – perhaps the value of patience and persistence, the futility of hunting in the dark, or what lethal dangers a hunter must confront to feed the clan. The story’s narrative structure commonly begins with someone in pursuit of a difficult goal and follows a narrative timeline through to the ending.



Figure 1.1 Photography captures tactile impressions of the environment that give viewers a vicarious sense of experience.

Ernie Leyba Photography

“Amazingly, the same neurons fire whether we do something or watch someone else do the same thing, and both summon similar feelings,” writes author Diane Ackerman. “Learning from our own mishaps isn’t as safe as learning from someone else’s, which helps us decipher the world of intentions The brain evolved clever ways to spy or eavesdrop on risk, to fathom another’s joy or pain quickly, as detailed sensations, without resorting to words. *We feel what we see, we experience others as self.* (Emphasis added)”⁴ Further understanding of this phenomenon comes from memory expert James McGaugh, neurobiology professor at the University of California, Irvine. Dr. McGaugh notes that when we experience something, positive or negative, our bodies release adrenalin, searing those memories into our brains more strongly.⁵

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VISUAL STORIES AND REPORTS

Visual stories reveal someone’s goals and actions as they unfold sequentially, *along a timeline*. They use moving images and sound to mimic how viewers experience the world in their personal lives.

Reports commonly emphasize just the facts. They may show people in interviews, walking here and there, and sometimes doing interesting things. In the end and with exceptions,

however, they highlight facts and information more than they use video and field audio to help communicate a sense of experience, or to introduce interesting people to viewers. The structure of reports also differs. Reports may even begin with the story's outcome: "Five mastodon hunters suffered grave injuries early this morning . . ."

If you equate powerful visual storytelling with mere feature reporting, abandon such prejudices now. Images and sounds are different tools than words on paper or even words spoken aloud. Typically, print informs or reports first to the *intellect*. Visual stories commonly report first to the *heart*. Storytelling helps you avoid the institutional. It makes your work unique, something alive and exciting.

HEART, EMOTION, DEMEANOR

"Somehow wisdom is not lodged inside until its truth has been engraved by some moment of humiliation, delight, disappointment, joy or some other firsthand emotion," observes *New York Times'* columnist David Brooks.⁶ In turn, the emotional reactions that viewers experience help them understand the story's significance. Nearly two centuries ago the poet John Keats noted that "nothing ever becomes real until it is experienced."⁷

Consider how emotion lends significance to events and situations in your own life: your favorite NFL team just won its eighth consecutive game: you *hope* today's injuries won't derail the team; unemployment is high: you're *afraid* you soon may lose your job; you're *excited* because you just found a job, received a raise, or won the lottery; you're *annoyed* by all the political ads on TV; you feel intimidated by that menacing dog next door; you feel *sad* and *angry* because your stock portfolio just lost half its value.

"Facts exist independently, outside people. Seven inches of rain in a night is a fact, so long as you merely see an item about it in the paper," observed author and scriptwriter Dwight Swain. "Let it wash through your living room and ruin two thousand dollars' worth of furnishings, and it takes on true meaning and significance for you. For significance, remember, starts within the individual, in feeling."⁸ Clearly, the same thing happens to viewers when stories or situations elicit honest human emotions. Sometimes, the best writing may occur when your images help viewers feel as if those seven inches of rain are washing through their own living rooms.

During four years as the editor of *Life* magazine, Thomas Griffith, later a *Time* columnist, said he learned the different effect of words and pictures. "I concluded that *Time* was about meaning and *Life* about feeling, and that both were valid paths to take," said Griffith. "That gave me a clue to television's influence. I no longer scorn the way even sophisticated voters, while they might sigh for a sober debate over the issues, get as much from a candidate's demeanor as they do from his words."⁹

Note how Griffith differentiated between journalism’s traditional currency—*meaning*— and what many journalists struggle to eliminate from their reports, e.g. *feeling*, on grounds that emotion would bias meaning. But whenever audiences don’t know why certain information matters, or finds it dull or too complex, the best approach may be to package the information as a visual story. Stories that show how issues and events affect people draw viewers to the screen, because they help make information more interesting and accessible. They show how situations affect people.

Authors Tom Peters and Robert Waterman make similar observations in their book, *In Search of Excellence*:

Moments that touch or surprise writers often go unreported in the storytelling process. Sometimes, writers strip feelings and emotions from their stories on grounds such elements are unjustifiable in objective reporting. But stories that don’t touch feelings often wash over audiences and fade quickly from memory. The fact that we not only experience the world, but respond to it with honest, human emotions, gives meaning to life.¹⁰

BOX 1.1 WORDS VS. IMAGES

We cannot always trust words literally, especially in our role as communicators. Listen for a moment to the respective comments about the value of words versus images from individuals who have influenced many generations of Americans, past and present. Collectively, their perspectives may help you reflect on what words and images do, do best, and perhaps cannot do.

Most news is made up of what happens in men’s minds, in what comes out of their mouths.
And how do you put that in pictures?

Edward R. Murrow, CBS News

Movies are about making mental things physical.

John Carpenter, film director, composer and screenwriter

Whatever is said hides what cannot be said.

Robert McKee, author and scriptwriter

Words don’t tell you what people are thinking. Rarely do we use words to really tell. We use words to sell people or to convince people or to make them admire us. It’s all disguise. It’s all hidden--a secret language.

Robert Altman, film director

TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY – PLACING THE HUMAN PERSPECTIVE IN PERSPECTIVE

“What can television do that can’t be conveyed—at least not nearly as well—in any other medium? How about touch and feel and context and character? Not the all-network aerial of the flood, but the terror of water creeping in under the doorjamb.”¹¹

Ray Farkas, network producer and visual storyteller

What most of us know and remember about the past century and many recent events is a result of images on the moving screen: mass shootings in America, 9-11 and other terrorism at home and abroad, key Presidential elections, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the Moon landing, the Kennedy assassination, World War II, the Hindenburg disaster, etc. We also have learned much about the good in one another, the challenges we face in common, and how the best among us have solved such problems.

We owe much of that knowledge to visual storytellers who have shown people to people in memorable and compelling ways, who have captured and shared a sense of human experience, and who have created a national campfire for us to gather around in times of crisis.

Video journalists, photojournalists, and other visual storytellers have taken us into newsworthy or otherwise noteworthy environments worldwide and helped us to experience events, respond to them, and hence gain a sense of understanding and significance available through no other medium.

As we’ve learned, the imagery that so informs us is a different currency than print. Often, it speaks to us first through the heart, rather than the head. Both avenues, however, are legitimate avenues to understanding the human experience, and both are essential for us to be well-informed. Irrespective of medium, all the facts-and-figures reporting in the world, as novelist John Steinbeck reminded us, creates information that we can set down and walk away from, if it fails to touch us, as it so often does. And the same is true of the moving image. But show us starving children, let us hear their cries of hunger on fly-infested nights in Somalia, and place it all in context with powerful writing, and the resulting words, sounds and images are sometimes powerful enough to prompt governments to launch shiploads of food to faraway shores. Furthermore, those images can compel us to demand accountability from governments and institutions.

Whatever the application—whether in private, government, research, or commercial settings—the potential of television and the Internet survives and thrives to this day because media deliver the work of storytellers who reflect the world as it is or could be through their skills, intelligence, hearts, and passion.

As storytellers in visual media, our obligation is to revere every medium's strengths, and build upon them, so as to foster ever-greater understanding. We need excellence in the printed word, just as we must demand excellence in all visual storytelling. Neither print nor video is superior to the other. Each is a different currency and influences our hearts and minds in different, but nevertheless equally valid and effective ways. Use each tool in the toolbox, including silence and song, actions and reactions, as appropriate, at any given moment in the storytelling process.

TELLING VERSUS SHOWING

Americans live in a word-oriented culture. The photographer Minor White observed we often believe a thing has no meaning until we assign it a word.¹² As you'll see a few paragraphs further along, even esteemed broadcasters have held that all authority is in the word, that "the word is everything."

Even in visual communication, one camp has long honored the word as the most legitimate, and sometimes the only acceptable form of information. For generations, journalists have been told their job is to gather facts and write sentences. They also have been taught the "product" they produce is information. PBS reporter and journalist Jim Lehrer holds that "[Journalism] is a craft based on one premise only, and that's information, bringing information to the public." He believes, "We are an instrument of information and that is *all we are*."¹³

Adherents of this camp speak typically about "telling" the audience the news, even when they refer to stories on television. "[BBC radio correspondents during World War II] had a power different from TV journalists of today because they dealt in words only. Nothing distracted the listener's attention from their voices and the words they spoke," observes Robert MacNeil of the original *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*. "All the authority was in the word. It wasn't that it was beautiful or poetic language or anything else. It was just that the word was everything."¹⁴

THE VALUE OF VISUAL NARRATIVE

A second camp of writers understands the word's great value, but they also have learned to see and think in images, in sounds, and as storytellers rather than electronic stenographers. These writers use digital media to communicate visual narrative and to package and produce sounds and images that tell stories sometimes far more profoundly than words alone. They tell and show not only what happened, but let viewers watch and take part in the action, as those things happened.

Often, they plan the pictures first, before the words. "It is a better way. But it's tougher for a reporter; it makes you work harder and think more," says reporter Linda Ellerbee, who discovered the technique early in her television career. "It makes you write to the pictures and

with the pictures, letting the pictures tell the story. Don't misunderstand. This technique works only when the pictures *do* tell the story."¹⁵ (Figure 1.2 shows a photojournalist at work.)

At first, the pictures-first approach may seem alien, especially to those who have always thought of writing as putting words on paper or a computer screen, and who think only words carry editorial content and meaning. But in this approach, no longer are the words always written first, then illustrated almost as an afterthought with semi-appropriate, semi-literate video or sound.

"Pictures are different than words. They are not illustrations of words. They are a different dimension of information," said Reuven Frank, then senior executive producer at NBC News. "Pictures are as different from words as smells are from sounds, but all four of those are kinds of information. Nor are they the only kinds. All the five senses inform."¹⁶

Frank believed that because words go mostly to the intellect, while pictures go more to the heart and emotions, the best pictures from an airline crash, for example, might be a woman's



Figure 1.2 The photojournalist is a visual storyteller, separate and distinct from photographers who think of their job as merely to take pictures.

Ernie Leyba Photography

stocking hanging from a tree, or a doll with a broken face, or waiting relatives, or perhaps the close-up shot of a wedding ring on a victim's hand. "These, in their way, can tell you more than someone saying in words how many died, more than a newspaper report; more even than body bags being carried down a hill," said Frank.¹⁷

Linda Ellerbee worked with Reuven Frank during her tenure at NBC. "Reuven believed that television was a narrative medium, and that understanding if any, came out of the story, not from describing the story or explaining the story," she said. "We were to tell the story, that's all."¹⁸

SILENCE AS A WRITING TOOL

Silence can be just as powerful as sound, and more eloquent than words. Some of the most compelling World War II newsreel footage of atom bombs falling on Hiroshima and Nagasaki occurs when the music stops and silence takes over the screen. Nothing else competes for the mind's attention against the images of devastation.

Year after year, television viewers imitate the long-observed behavior of film audiences who seem to watch most closely when the screen goes silent, even for a few seconds now and then, to let a moment play out without distraction. "Very early . . . I discovered that viewers are more attentive to silent sequences than they are to dialogue scenes," observed filmmaker Edward Dmytryk. "When the screen talk[s], so d[oes] the viewer. Silent scenes command attention."¹⁹ But still today, too few video journalists consciously build silence into their reports.

THE SILENT LANGUAGES OF THE SENSES

"In real life, many of our vocabularies are wordless and silent. The raised eyebrow, the downcast eye, the wink, the turned cheek, the hesitation, the grimace, the blush, the stance, the choice of clothes, the scratch of an index finger against a person's back, all these are silent languages, a common, taken-for granted, and quite ordinary part of life," writes author Shannon Brownlee.²⁰ But seldom does informational media take much advantage of these silent languages.

Just as audio serves to draw audiences into the environment of a real-life event, listeners and viewers become more deeply and more tangibly involved if you allow them to see, and feel, and smell, and touch, and taste that moment. When you write to the senses, you draw viewers into your story in an almost physical way, and your work becomes a little better and more competitive. "Writing to address the five senses reaches out and brings you into the scene and touches your senses," says author James D. Mitchell. "If they're seeing, feeling, tasting, then they're involved in it."²¹

Writers generally have less trouble describing the visual sense than other physical sensations such as smell and taste. But the best video writers make addressing any of the senses sound easy. NBC correspondent Bob Dotson, for example, portrayed Mississippi paddle boats as great floating wedding cakes; he talked of a teapot bubbling over an open fire; the night wind that flipped the page in an old man’s hymnal; he caricatured a Texas wildflower enthusiast as having a face that could sell Marlboros; and he described an old Indian woman as thin as a dying moon.²²

Often, in such writing, lyrical imagery emerges. It will be up to you whether you write, “It was a clear day and the wind wasn’t blowing,” or, “The day dawned as still and clear as if the sky intended to hold its breath.”²³ Sometimes, the best writers help us see what we could not see ourselves, even standing next to them.

BOX 1.2 WRITING FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATIONS

When you think about it, visual storytelling and filmmaking share much in common. But early television journalism took more of its cues from print and radio journalism, and in the beginning favored the written word spoken aloud, while treating images as an afterthought. Many early day broadcasts literally were the written word spoken aloud. A photo once displayed in the lobby at WFAA-TV, Dallas, even showed a person reading a newspaper into the microphone.²⁴

Too often, today’s scripts still echo old ways. When you write for video you are writing to show things and speak to people, not read to them. That means you must write conversationally, the way you speak. “Viewers are used to two things: reading the written language and hearing the spoken language. But [listeners and] viewers are not used to hearing reporters speaking the written language, yet that’s the standard too often encountered in broadcast journalism,” observed James Bamber, a television reporter with Société Radio-Canada, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s French television service.²⁵

As KWGN anchor Mike Landess advised, “Your writing should be so conversational you could read it to your mother over the telephone, and she won’t know you’re reading it.”²⁶ In some respects, writing for video is like talking on the telephone to a respected friend, although you can never see or hear your audience responding.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

In media that contains moving images and sound, we are always writing with one instrument or another – camera, microphone, sound, silence, actions and behaviors, video editing, and the spoken word. But in the end, all those instruments come down to this: *in video media you can only communicate in two ways: one way is with images, the other is with sound or its absence.*

How might television journalism have developed in the late 1940s, had filmmakers handled its inception, rather than print and radio journalists? How might sounds from the natural environment have played a larger role from the start, at the hands of those who already had discovered that we “see” with our ears, and that all the senses inform?

Such ongoing differences guarantee that not all journalism, every journalist, or every digital medium, can achieve their upmost potential should visual reporters and storytellers employ only techniques and approaches most applicable to print media, in which words can dominate and sometimes overwhelm the visual story.

CULTURE IMPACTS PERCEPTION

Cultural influences also affect how we define and practice storytelling and reporting. For centuries, the spoken word, and later the printed word, helped us keep records and articulate everything from the banal to the abstract. Before the fine arts— such as music, painting, sculpture, and theater— and before film, television, video and the Internet, we conferred meaning upon things that existed outside ourselves by assigning them a word. Even now we may not appreciate the voices that still whisper to us from the past, whether as brushstrokes on canvas, or as a Pharaoh’s likeness frozen 3,000 years ago in sculpted stone.

Today, words remain a vital communication tool. But leading still photographers and videographers have proven the still and moving images’ worth as well. Powerful stills capture an exact and representative moment in time, often an insight or meaning that would have gone unnoticed in the photographer’s absence. Yet a mere six decades ago, photographers still lobbied for greater “visual literacy” in journalism and the arts – the idea that images alone could convey meaning, even abstract concepts, and that viewers could “read” and acquire valuable insights and “experience” from wordless images. Today, we regard such ideas as self-evident.

BOX 1.3 HOW HUMANS COMMUNICATE

We exchange knowledge each time we communicate. Frequently, we communicate a point of view, or help make people aware of an issue. We might inform them to take a necessary action or give them a sense of what it was like to experience an event or situation. We might motivate them to buy, vote, or change their behavior. We might warn them, deceive them, or even entertain them.

We might use words both spoken or printed, still photographs or moving images, sounds of warning or affection, line drawings, audio, a color (red for stop, green for go), body language, a symbol, a line, or even a pyramid-shaped pile of rocks, but always we communicate.

Even sound blasting from a train or ship's whistle assumes the meaning we assign it, telling us, "Ten minutes until all passengers must be aboard!" Different symbols—words—might carry the same meaning if a train conductor were to shout into a megaphone, "All aboard in ten minutes!"

In truth, there is no such thing as a neutral transaction. Humans cannot *not* communicate. This is true from the moment we begin to move within the womb and—for such folks as physicists, scientists, philosophers, actors, authors, and filmmakers—even after we die, until our influence and works fade from all human consciousness and records.

Realizing video's great powers, never be afraid to show people and the consequences they experience, even in hard news, legal, education, and investigative stories or any other field. Most events and issues affect or involve people, and interesting people involve viewers. People who can be seen doing interesting things in your stories help viewers relate to important information or issues they might otherwise ignore. Not everything you create must be in story form. A half-hour newscast might not require more than one or two stories, with the remaining time devoted to short on-camera readers and straight video reports. Corporate video might achieve the corporation's goals with a traditional, fact-based format. But, if your audiences might not realize why crucial stories matter, or would better understand them with more context and perspective, video storytelling can take your work to unparalleled heights.

SUMMARY

In video stories, there are only two ways to tell stories. One is with pictures. The other is with sound or its absence. Photojournalists, who may be both photographers and reporters, use the television field camera and microphone as writing and reporting instruments to tell compelling visual stories. In television news, the written word, although crucial to the storytelling process, seldom stands alone but is part of a complex package of information made up of images, colors, actions, sounds, and silence.

The most effective visual stories typically communicate a sense of experience to viewers by incorporating matched-action sequences and natural sounds. Something happening can be seen to happen. When the camera is closely involved in the action, the process somewhat duplicates how eyewitness observers and participants would experience the event.

Often the strongest stories are told through people engaged in visual and interesting activities. In most stories, it also is desirable to build white space or pauses in the voice-over narration to allow compelling pictures and sounds to involve the viewer more directly in the story.

Besides the camera, microphone, and computer console, another essential tool of visual storytellers is the edit console. Here, ideas are put in relationship to one another, story pace is adjusted and refined, and the story's emotional outlines are given their emphasis.

DISCUSSION

1. What qualities separate the photographer from the photojournalist?
2. In what sense are the camera and microphone "writing and reporting instruments"?
3. How can you "stuff more humanity" into visual stories to make them less institutional, yet still memorable, compelling, and relevant?
4. How do the best visual stories address universal themes and share a sense of human experience?
5. Why is it important to let audiences "experience" your story? Name three tools that can help heighten viewers' sense of "being there".
6. Discuss how honest human emotion can lend significance to visual stories.

EXERCISES

1. Find the dullest story you can imagine and write a paragraph or two that makes the story interesting yet informative, relevant yet compelling, factual but memorable.
2. Shoot or describe a one-minute video, with or without sound, that helps viewers feel they're part of an action or activity – as if they're essentially experiencing the event.
3. Find a video story on television or the web that interests you and identify the story's central character, what the character is trying to achieve (goal), and the obstacles the character must surmount.
4. Find a story that you find relevant and identify the larger issues (the deeper understandings or lessons) that it offers viewers.
5. Study a visual story from television or the web and analyze how much of the story's information each of the following elements convey: environmental sounds, silence, actions and behaviors, reaction, tone of voice, the spoken word, and addressing the physical senses.
6. Analyze sound bites and compare the impact of short, five- to ten-second bites with interviews of thirty seconds or more.
7. Study news stories and commercials for examples of "surprises" or moments of drama that reengage the viewer and make the story more memorable. If the stories you watch lack such moments, consider what elements could have been added to make the story more interesting and memorable.
8. Study a newscast and its commercials with the sound off to determine how "intelligent" or literate the visuals are. As a photojournalist, how might you have improved the level of visual literacy in the stories you viewed?

NOTES

- 1 www.gerryspence.wordpress.com/2008/12/29/our-trip-down-turd-river/, downloaded June 22, 2005
- 2 Roy Peter Clark, "Making Hard Facts Easy Reading: 14 Steps to Clarity," *Washington Journalism Review*, January/February 1984, 24–26.
- 3 Clarence Fanto, "Garrison Keillor sees transition out of 'A Prairie Home Companion'," *Denver Post*, www.denverpost.com/entertainment/ci_28397218/garrison-keillor-sees-transition-out-prairie-home-companion, published June 27, 2015, accessed June 30, 2015.
- 4 Diane Ackerman, *The Zookeeper's Wife*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2007), 237.
- 5 An indirect quote from James McGaugh by Lesley Stahl, *CBS 60 Minutes*, "Endless Memories," December 19, 2010. Stahl is quoted verbatim from the *60 Minutes* transcript accessed December 20, 2010 at www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/12/16/60minutes/main7156877_page6.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody
- 6 John Keats, "The Vale of Soul-Making," in a letter to his brother and sister George and Georgiana Keats, written between February 14–May 3, 1819, www.john-keats.com/briefe/140219.htm, accessed January 16, 2017.
- 7 David Brooks, "The Art of Gracious Leadership," *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2016/08/26/opinion/the-art-of-gracious-leadership.html?_r=0, published August 26, 2016, accessed January 16, 2017.
- 8 Dwight V. Swain, *Techniques of the Selling Writer* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 39.
- 9 Thomas Griffith, "Goodbye to All That," *Time*, April 1988, 47.
- 10 Laurel C. Sneed, "Make Your Video Tell a Story (People are irrational, they reason by stories)," *Training*, p58–60, 62–63 Sep 1992: Quoted from *In Search of Excellence* by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman.
- 11 Ray Farkas, "Letter to Sean (Last name withheld to protect privacy)," excerpted from comments written in his private letter to a friend, April 9, 1992.
- 12 Peter Farb, *Word Play: What Happens When People Talk* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), www.books.google.com/books?id=lo9KCgAAQBAJ&pg=PT21&lpg=PT21&dq=culture+word+everything+minor+white&source=bl&ots=Aj-qh5A1QP&sig=uR0mmbxbz5XLh6KwONtspulEZMM&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiN0LDpr8fRAhUEyGMKHW9cA1kQ6AEIQzAK#v=onepage&q=culture%20word%20everything%20minor%20white&f=false, accessed January 16, 2017, 11.
- 13 Bob Priddy, "The Courage to be Serious," from an interview with Jim Lehrer and Robert MacNeil, by Bob Priddy RTNDA Communicator, September 1990, 15.
- 14 Robert MacNeil, comments on the original MacNeil-Lehrer Report, from an address at the University of Kansas, February 10, 1982.
- 15 Linda Ellerbee, "And So It Goes: My Adventures in Television," *Playboy*, April 1986, 196–198.
- 16 Reuven Frank, "Almost Nobody Writes Silence Anymore," an address to the Radio and Television News Directors Association, Hollywood, FL, December 04, 1980, as quoted in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol XLVII, No. 10, March 01, 1981, 293.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Linda Ellerbee, "And So It Goes: My Adventures in Television," *Playboy*, April 1986, 196.
- 19 Edward Dmytryk, *On Film Editing*, (Stoneham, MA: Focal Press, 1984), 79.
- 20 Shannon Brownlee, Horizons Section, *U. S. News & World Report*, May 07, 1990, 66.

- 21 James D. Mitchell, "Touching The Senses," a presentation at the Oklahoma Writers' Federation 22nd Annual Conference, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 04 May 1990.
- 22 Bob Dotson, *In Pursuit of the American Dream*, (New York: Atheneum, 1985).
- 23 Anonymous author. Cited by James D. Mitchell, "Touching The Senses," a presentation at the Oklahoma Writers' Federation 22nd Annual Conference, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 04 May 1990.
- 24 Brad Woodward, "Writing News for Radio," *RTNDA Communicator*, December 1986, 42.
- 25 James Bamber, "Importance of the Word/Text in Reporting," an address at the SRC Storytelling Workshop, Montreal, Canada, 02 February 1991.
- 26 Mike Landess, an address to journalism students at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, October 22, 1991.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

PLANNING AND SHOOTING THE STORY

Visual stories take form the same way any other story originates, with a summary statement that identifies the story to be told. This summary statement is sometimes called the **focus statement**. You may also encounter the term *story commitment*. Terminology aside, the process is as simple as summing up the story in your mind before you start to write the script or shoot video. Defining the story focus with discipline forces the video reporter not just to identify the story, but to identify what is most important and interesting about that story. It embodies the centuries-old concepts of theme, story line, premise, and the reporter's point of view.

The focus is a simple, vivid, declarative sentence expressing the heart, the soul of the story, as it will be on air.¹ It is the “takeaway”, the main idea or insight the audience will remember about your story. But until *you* know the story yourself, it will be difficult to tell it to anyone else. In the words of television journalist Shellie Karabell: “If you can’t express your idea for a story on a 3 × 5 card, in one sentence, you don’t understand the story.”²

Sometimes you’ll hear someone say, “My focus is to show the demonstration . . .” or whatever story they happen to be covering, but defining the story’s focus goes beyond merely showing the subject. The story itself remains unidentified until it can be stated as a complete sentence: “The economics of farming affects all Americans.” Focus statements help define the story’s essence. Until you’ve defined the story firmly in your mind, you can’t tell it to anyone else. Simple as the idea sounds, it is often overlooked.

THE BEST STORIES CONVEY A SENSE OF PROGRESSION

As a storyteller, remember to search for elements that help your story develop or progress. Something is happening. Somebody is trying to accomplish something. Somebody is going somewhere. Somebody is involved in something. Often, the most compelling stories address the story subject’s struggle to attain something important or valuable. Jack Bickham, author of the book, *Apple Dumpling Gang*, and other works, said every good story involves a strong central character engaged in the quest for a goal against opposition.³

If you can process the story in your mind, identify what the story subject wants to achieve (and why), and make sense of the story visually, you're on the road to reporting stories people want to watch.

The process requires an ability to notice real life happening as it happens, an ability to find something interesting in it, and an ability to use images and sound to capture and transmit that experience to a viewing audience. In the hands of those who possess such skills, video becomes one of the most powerful mediums in the world.

FIND IMAGES THAT CONVEY A CLEAR STORY FOCUS

A telling distinction separates photographers and **photojournalists**. "Anyone with a camera is a photographer," says Larry Hatteberg, a video journalist who has been telling award-winning stories with his camera throughout his career (Figure 2.1). "My mother is a photographer; my grandmother is a photographer," says Hatteberg, "but no one is a photojournalist until they learn how to tell the visual story."⁴



Figure 2.1 Anchor/reporter Larry Hatteberg has done it all, in his more than four decades in television. He has received more than 100 local, state, and national awards for news photography and reporting and is Kansas' most honored journalist.

Larry Hatteberg

Whether you work alone, in a crew, or even with just one other person, Hatteberg's definition of the photojournalist extends to everyone involved. "In television," says Hatteberg, "everyone's contribution is coequal."⁵ Still, some video photographers have never tried to tell a visual story before they become solo journalists, and not all video reporters have learned to think of themselves as visual storytellers, even though their final product is built around—and upon—images.

To achieve excellence in visual storytelling, VJs typically decrease their on-screen presence. "Telling" the audience is lecturing. "Showing" the audience is teaching. "Letting the audience experience the moment" is visual storytelling. Wise reporters know they are never the story or even the "star" of the story. They work instead to step back and produce other people's reality. They work to sell the people in their story and then let the people themselves sell the story. They may still appear on screen in a standup and during an interview, but seldom more, in stories less than two minutes. Obviously, exceptions will occur.

At first, this approach may feel foreign, even awkward, to reporters whose job is, after all, to report the news. Reporters know better than anyone that their name is on the end result. When a story shines, they receive most of the credit. When it fails, they receive most of the blame. Some reporters may also equate fame and fortune with their frequency of on-camera appearances; and at personality-driven shops this may be true, although rare. "If people remember your stories, they'll more likely remember your name," says NBC's Bob Dotson.⁶

WRITE THE PICTURES FIRST

The strongest television news stories result when you *write the pictures first*. This advice requires that you think first about the left side of the script (the video instructions) before thinking about the words that will be in the report. In the field, look first for pictures that will tell your story. Search for sounds (and sound bites) that will add impact, emotion, and meaning to your reporting. Write words as necessary to interpret and explain what the pictures can't say (see Figure 2.2).

REPORTORIAL EDITING

This approach, known as **Reportorial editing** is the process of previsualizing the story, including the pictures, the sounds, the words, and even the visual and audio transitions needed to move the final edited story forward with logical structure and continuity. In essence, reportorial editing is the field search for the building blocks of visual communication, the equivalent of a mind's-eye **storyboard** that begins to take shape even before you arrive on location. Note that converting from two-person teams to solo journalists leaves the VJ fewer opportunities to talk over the story with someone else, and less time to call sources while on tight deadlines or while en route to cover breaking news.⁷ In such

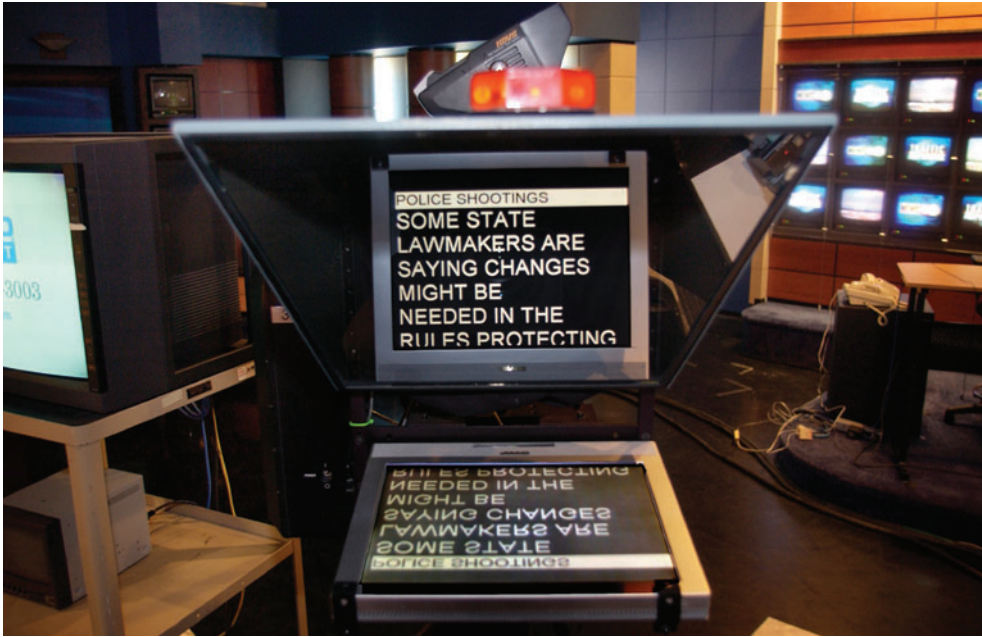


Figure 2.2 In video stories, spoken words support pictures and sounds. They are but one element in the storyteller's arsenal.
Ernie Leyba Photography



Figure 2.3 The video editor is a vital team member who influences the reporting process from inception to finished story.
Ernie Leyba Photography

scenarios, two heads are better than one. Even working alone, you can think ahead to identify at least a rough story focus, think of images that might prove your main points, and at times leave yourself a voice mail about potential words, voice-over script, images and sounds that might give you a head-start when you edit the story, or go live at the scene.

WORKING AS PART OF A TEAM

At other times, when you work with a crew, reportorial editing links all disciplines in the partnership among reporter, producer, photographer, and editor. There is no “partnership,” no “team effort,” until all members of the crew begin to see the story in their mind’s eye along common lines.

Normally, such harmony of vision is impossible until all members of the reporting team, including the editor, begin to share their ideas, their visions, and their perceptions of the story. Such communication is rare, and without some effort on everyone’s part, it cannot happen.

Perhaps the best approach is this: Talk out your ideas and negotiate them with one another. Talk to the assignment editor or manager. And the minute you get in the car with the photographer or reporter, start talking again. Ask yourself and one another, “What is the story we’re about to cover, and what do we want out of it?”

Often reporters may not even use the pictures they bring home that best show viewers what happened. They may use only the pictures that most closely illustrate their scripts, which are first written, then later “wallpapered” with available video. Slide shows, not compelling video, commonly result.

PROVE THE STORY’S FOCUS VISUALLY

Once the story has been assigned and researched and the story’s focus identified, you or your team can proceed to prove the focus visually. Perhaps your assignment is to report about a new school district policy that requires teachers who suspect child abuse to notify police within twenty-four hours.

If you state your focus as “School officials have adopted a get-tough policy toward child abusers,” you have charted a very specific course in the way you’ll cover this story. If your focus is “Abused children have a new friend in the public schools,” then the story may concentrate more on the teacher’s role in helping protect children and veer away from officials who talk about putting child abusers where they belong.

If your subject is a routine warehouse fire, you may identify the focus by the statement, “This is a big fire.” Your “visual proof,” just as your words, will then follow naturally. **Visual proof** is one

or more shots that illustrate a main point or help convey the overall story focus. If your focus is “Firefighting is long days of boredom, followed by moments of sheer terror,” then your visual proof will change accordingly. If, in the same story, your focus had been “This fire offered a study of the firefighter’s ability to endure searing heat and freezing cold,” your visual emphasis would have been still different.

Imagine the pictures and main points that would result if your story focus involved the high sugar content, and potential health dangers, of your community’s top-selling soft drink. Now imagine how the pictures and main points of your story would change if your story focus were to address that soft drink’s emerging popularity as a status symbol in developing countries. Clearly, your focus statement drives not only the story you tell but also the pictures you bring back from the field.

THE FOCUS MAY CHANGE

Sometimes, through prior research, you can adequately identify the story’s essence and state its focus before you enter the field. At other times the real story can’t be nailed down until after you arrive at the scene. You may discover, contrary to the assignment editor’s best-educated conjecture, “This is not a big fire, but it’s giving firefighters practice for the next big one.” Or you may determine “Tighter security could have prevented this fire,” or you may watch even the most valid focus change before your eyes as the story develops (a firefighter becomes trapped inside the warehouse and rescue efforts fail).

The essential responsibility is to be ready to change your focus if the story changes or was improperly identified at the start. Any story suffers when a producer, reporter, or photojournalist imposes a preconceived focus on it, and the damage will be instantly apparent to the audience. Just as obviously, any story suffers when a focus is absent.

LOOK FOR A STORY FOCUS IN EVENTS WITH UNCONTROLLED ACTION

There is a story in every event you cover, even when you are under a tight deadline and the story is not under your control. This often happens with **spot-news** stories or hard news events that are generally unpredictable. Assume that you have just received word of a fire in the central downtown area. You jump in the van and within minutes arrive at the scene. At this point, you may not know what’s going on, whether anyone is hurt, or even what caused the fire. You spend lots of time shooting the smoke going up, the walls falling down, and perhaps you capture a moment or two of drama as fire victims are rescued. But you commit an unpardonable professional error if you return home without having asked yourself, regardless of whether you are the photographer or the reporter, “What is the story?”

TELL YOUR STORY THROUGH PEOPLE

Try to tell your stories through strong central characters engaged in compelling action that is visual or picturesque. So often, reporters try to tell the story themselves, using authority figures—the mayor, the fire chief, the sociology professor—to explain what ordinary people enact every day in far more compelling ways. The sociologist can tell you that suburban neighbors live in isolation, relatively anonymous to one another, but so can one of the neighbors. Simply ask her if she knows her next-door neighbor’s name. When she scrunches up her shoulders, hesitates, then says sheepishly, “I don’t,” her information is just as valid and far more visually interesting and memorable. Why do we need the mayor to tell us the earthquake scene is a frightening mess when area residents can take us into their homes and show us the damage themselves?

Sometimes you will need authority figures in your stories, but strive to include everyday people as well. Such people can help sell your story, so your job is to “sell” them by bringing them to life on viewers’ screens.

Storytellers are far less compelling when they tell audiences the story after it takes place, rather than couch it as a story unfolding in the present moment.⁸ Strong central characters let viewers live someone else’s life for a moment and experience the story as it unfolds. Viewers become more powerfully engaged and may remember the story far longer.

STRONG NATURAL SOUND HELPS TELL THE STORY

Night after night, television viewers sit and watch a half hour of news, then can’t remember what they saw because they have been told what happened – not allowed to experience something of the event themselves. “The video reporter’s contract with the audience lasts for about fifteen to twenty seconds,” says Bill Taylor, CEO of NuFuture.TV. “Every fifteen or twenty seconds, the reporter must renew that contract, or risk losing the audience.”⁹ The use of strong natural sound gives the video journalist a way to renew the contract: Nothing beats it to help heighten a story’s sense of realism. The sharp, crisp sounds of life give us a sense of being there and of having experienced the moment (Figure 2.4).

BUILD IN SURPRISES

When you report, try to build surprises into your stories to help sustain viewer involvement. A surprise is any device that helps viewers feel something about the story, helps lure uninterested viewers to the screen, or connects them more directly with the story’s subject or main character. John DeTarsio, National Photographer of the Year, San Diego, launches a fire rescue story with natural sound of the rescuer’s words, “Gimme air! I need air!” John Goheen, three time National Photographer of the Year, Los Angeles, lets audiences peer into the bottom of a small bucket as the rancher holding the bucket says, “I call this my rain gauge. I reckon it



Figure 2.4 In powerful video stories, sound is a primary form of communication. The microphone is thus a form of “writing” instrument that can be used to heighten the story’s sense of realism.

John DeTarsio

rained an inch and a quarter or so.” Surprises can be compelling visuals, unusual or unexpected sound, short sound bites, or poetic script, such as Bruce Morton wrote for a piece on atomic radiation: “Once upon a time on a Pacific Island, the sun exploded.”¹⁰ Always, surprises are little moments of drama, regardless of their form, that help renew the contract with viewers and lure them back to the screen.

KEEP SOUND BITES SHORT

Sound bites, or short excerpts from an interview, public statement, or spontaneous comment, can help prove the story you show. They are less effective when they are used as substitutes for your own reporting. An effective approach is to think of the sound bite as an exclamation point, both to help enhance the visuals and to punctuate story content. In many video stories, sound bites work best when they’re kept short (five to fifteen seconds, or around the same one or two sentences as the quotes in newspapers and magazines), and when they are not used as

an essential part of the main story. Otherwise, they may transfer editorial control to the speaker. For that reason, sound bites should enhance the report, but rarely should a specific sound bite be so essential that a report would fail without it. Remember that stories are different than reports, however, and offer more leeway. In stories, the sound bite may even function as a main point.

ADDRESS THE LARGER ISSUE

Most people will watch a story that tells them “Vacations are fun,” but they may wonder subconsciously, “So what?” if that’s all you tell them. Few viewers will forget your story if you address the larger issue: “The typical family vacation creates more stress than it relieves.” Even routine traffic accident stories can address larger issues if you look beyond the event and search instead for the meaning of the event.

CHALLENGE YOUR FOCUS STATEMENT

An easy way to check whether you have addressed the larger issue is to ask the “So what?” question: Immediately after you have stated the story’s focus to yourself, immediately ask yourself “So what?” If you believe the audience will also say “So what?” when your story airs, look for a new focus before you begin to report.

Often, it’s as simple as challenging your original focus statement. Some reporters strive to “focus their focus” by asking the magic question, “What’s most interesting or important about that?” repeatedly until their focus gels and they’re confident they have the strongest story line possible.

VIDEO PACKAGES ARE FACTUAL MINI-MOVIES

You can think of video packages as miniature movies with a beginning, middle, and ending. Just as any other visual story, they tell the viewer where the story is headed, deliver the main points and prove them visually, and they build to a strong visual close. In some ways, they are similar to television commercials, which have a beginning (to establish a problem or a need), a middle (to introduce the product and show it in use), and an ending (to resolve the problem). Typically, a 15- to 30-second television commercial delivers its messages with strong, often unforgettable, visual proof. Effective commercials further integrate strong sound, memorable writing, and creative editing to enhance the message. The same principles are true of the best television and Hollywood films – and of the strongest television and video stories.

THE LEAD

The beginning of any **package** is the **lead**. Like all story leads the first shot should instantly telegraph the story to come. Ideally, the lead is visual. If the story subject is a stranded rock climber, the package will better serve viewers if it begins with a shot of the stranded climber,

not of bikers pedaling down a nearby highway. If the subject is the hardships of poverty, show something more meaningful than a shot of the county courthouse in which the welfare office is housed.

PROVIDE VISUAL PROOF FOR ALL MAIN POINTS

Throughout the package, one of the visual storytellers' or reporters' greatest obligations is to tell the visual story and to prove its main points visually. The main body of the story, the middle, cannot be constructed until the journalist has identified the story's main points.

"So often journalists find themselves with a notebook full of facts and a half hour of interviews, and they still may not have the story firmly in mind," says Bob Dotson. "The trick is to realize that all those facts are your research, not your story. Then you can sit down and ask yourself, 'All right, what are the three or four main points I've learned today about this story?' Once you've identified those main points, you can then find ways to prove them visually."¹¹

Perhaps a main point in your report about child abuse is that some 300 elementary students are abused each year in your community. Through voice-over narration you can tell your audience that figure, but the audience may soon forget what you said. No member of the audience can so easily walk away from that number if you communicate it visually.

A simple standup can accomplish the objective: A reporter in an empty school gymnasium points out the rows of bleachers those abused children would fill each year, then cuts to an extreme long shot to show that about every five years enough children are abused in just this one community to fill the entire gymnasium.

With sufficient thought and hard work, almost any main point in any story can be proven visually. The alternative, which will rarely amount to good storytelling, is to write and narrate the main points verbally and illustrate them with generic video.

Even abstractions like inflation can be brought to life through pictures, in ways that will stick in the viewer's mind. Say you've been given a half-hour to shoot a story on inflation.

"The typical approach is to crank up the graphics machine and make some charts with arrows that point up or down," says Dotson. "But if you can think through a way to report the story with visuals your report will have far greater meaning for your audience."¹²

On assignment to show inflation's effects, Dotson entered a Fort Worth meat market and with the camera running, gave the butcher a ten-dollar bill and asked how much stew meat that ten

dollars would have purchased a decade earlier. The butcher displayed a hefty portion of beef. “Now,” Dotson asked, “show me how much beef that same ten dollars would buy five years ago.” The butcher grabbed his cleaver and chopped the once generous purchase approximately in half. “Now show me how much stew beef I could buy today with the same ten dollars,” Dotson prompted.¹³ The butcher again apportioned the meat in half and handed Dotson the remaining tidbit. It is one of those storytelling approaches that “make it memorable.”

As another example, perhaps a main point in a story is that new restaurant openings suggest that eating out has become a way of life for busy people. In yet another story a main point is that trucks exceeding state load limits are damaging interstate highways in your region. In either case your creativity and imagination can help you prove those main points visually. In the first instance, you might simply show the number of new entries in a search engine’s restaurant listings. In your story about road damage, an interview with an expert who only tells you what happens to roads when trucks exceed their legal carrying capacity won’t effectively prove your main point. Neither will voice-over narration, illustrated with trucks traveling down the interstate. What may work to make the message memorable is something like a close-up of hot pavement in the summertime, bending and stretching in slow motion as truck tires hammer their way through the potholes.

THE CLOSE

The story’s **close**, the ending, should be so strong that nothing else can top it. Ideally, the moment you first arrive on scene, you will begin to look for a closing shot. You can then build the rest of your story toward the close when you write it because you already know how the story will end.¹⁴

The closing shot of a story on poverty might be of a woman on Social Security as she sits at her kitchen table one night, before her a pile of monthly expenses she must somehow cover with her meager income. The story of a national figure who has just died might build to a closing shot of file video of that person, waving a final good-bye to a crowd of admirers.

Generally, avoid ending your story on a sound bite or standup. Save that for traditional reports. Stories demand satisfying endings with strong closing images and strong closing sound from the environment. Standups and sound bites that end a story abruptly rarely satisfy.

BE HARD ON YOURSELF AS A WRITER

The most inviting newspapers and magazines contain “white space,” and the most inviting television and video scripts contain frequent pauses in narration (audio **white space**) to let a moment or two of natural sound play out or to allow a compelling moment of video to make its point. Unnecessary words destroy the impact of otherwise memorable moments. Yet, few

video journalists write silence anymore. Wall-to-wall narration is powerless to draw viewers into a story with the same effect that even a few seconds of strong sound and picture can accomplish.

The moment of drama that plays without narration may be something as simple as five seconds of video and **nat sound** (natural sounds from the environment) as a passenger jet with damaged landing gear approaches for a landing. Perhaps the drama is that final moment in a pro golf tournament as the front-runner sinks a complicated putt for the grand prize – no words, just that pregnant pause as the ball makes its way across the green and finally plops into the cup.

“When the pictures are telling the story, we should be able to get an idea of what the story is about, even [without narration],” says Fidel Montoya, former KUSA news director.¹⁵

WFAA photographer Tom Loveless and reporter Scott Pelley (now with CBS News) vividly demonstrated that concept in a report titled “Boaters’ Rescue.” The report, which earned a National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) First Place Spot News Award, shows the rescue of two persons who had been pitched from their open boat into a storm-tossed lake. Time and again, two volunteers on the bow of a pitching rescue boat reach into the water for the survivors – a twenty-year-old man and a nine-year-old boy. Finally, after eight hours in the water, the two survivors are pulled into the boat, brought to shore, and given artificial resuscitation. The story runs two minutes, twenty-seven seconds. It features forty-seven seconds of narration, a nine-second sound bite with an eyewitness, and segments totaling eighty-nine seconds that consist exclusively of pictures and natural sounds of the rescue, with no voice over. Two of the most compelling segments play for more than thirty seconds each with only pictures and natural sound telling the story.

In television, the reporter’s larger commitment must be to clarity, and to attract and hold the audience’s attention. Fresh, conversational writing, delivery, and powerful storytelling visuals help achieve these goals, as does a commitment to eliminate the unnecessary in every report. Audiences that fail to see much difference between competing newscasts and anchors these days will appreciate your originality and your memorable stories – and perhaps return again until it becomes a habit.

WRITE FROM THE VISUALS

Some reporters might contend that the audience is at fault for not remembering or understanding the stories they see. But it’s more probable that the blame lies with reporters whose stories flow over and around their audiences and fade quickly from memory because there is no drama, no compelling story, and few devices to engage the viewer’s attention.

Even when words are essential to help tell the story, writers frequently put up with too much laziness and uncritical thinking from themselves. It is difficult to be harsh with oneself, but every web and television writer can eliminate information the viewer already knows or that the visuals communicate more eloquently. A more workable approach is to *write from the visuals*. In a story on homeless Americans, for example, the pictures might show a man in tattered clothes as he walks down the sidewalk with a liquor bottle in a brown paper bag. If you write *from the visuals*, where the message is “Whiskey numbs loneliness,” your voice over might say something like “Joe’s best friend is always at his side. Already it’s robbed Joe of his family and given him cirrhosis.” The opposite approach is to write the script first, talking about alcoholism in general, then find visuals that support the script. But this approach tends to damage visual and story impact. Words can more easily be written *from the visuals* than preshot visuals can be found to accompany the narrative script.

BOX 2.1 CREATING AUDIENCES WITH EFFECTIVE STORIES¹⁶

Audiences appreciate thoughtful, well-produced stories with strong visual elements. Sometimes such criteria seem impossible to achieve, given the four-hour or less news cycle that dictates reporters’ and producers’ lives on television and the web.

The trick is to remember television’s strengths and play to them. “If reporters spend their time covering the ‘people’ angle of a story, the anchors can then play a more meaningful role in the newscast by giving us some of the latest information and video on a story,” says news director Ron Comings. “They can use graphics for information such as numbers in a story about budget cuts while the reporters focus on the people sacrifices that will follow.

“Now you have a newscast where the anchors are seen and heard delivering significant information and playing a more meaningful role as the station’s most recognized reporters. They move away from the ‘Vanna White’ duty of introducing one package after another. They ‘own’ a piece of every story. Audiences actually get to see and hear them at work,” adds Comings.¹⁷

Remember also to seek minor victories in every story, advises Bob Dotson. Find the right word, record storytelling sound, write a phrase that works, shoot sequences that give viewers a sense of “being there,” or shoot a scene that tells the story. Anything you can do to enhance viewers’ sense of vicarious experience and understanding advances television’s mandate.

Be mindful that some stories are best treated as reports that neither merit more than “an account of an event” nor the time it would take to emphasize a story’s focus on human perspectives. Other stories, such as school shootings and hurricane devastation, may require an organization’s entire staff to update the human stories for days or weeks on end.

LOOK FOR A STORY WHILE CAPTURING UNCONTROLLED ACTION

So often, we think of an event as the thing we should photograph. If the president comes to town or a big fire breaks out, that's where many VJs point their cameras – and keep them pointed. The same thing can happen on non-news events that occur outside your control, be it a cattle drive or a pilot's first landing on a naval carrier. Event-driven video is one reason so many stories look the same.

LOOK FOR THE LARGER STORY

To find that larger, more interesting story, a useful approach is to first capture the main event and anything else that happens only once: grandpa backing out of the garage with the door closed, a woman's reaction as auctioneers sell the final item in a bankruptcy sale, a wall collapsing, fire fighters rescuing a pet from the burning home, or the President waving to admirers as she exits Air Force One. In the non-news uncontrolled event, you could show how six cowboys can drive a thousand cattle down a highway, how far the herd stretches, the stopped traffic, and the cowboy assigned to keep cows from bolting to freedom. Certainly, you'd want to be rolling as the Navy pilot makes her first carrier landing. None of those video images will help position your work as unique or exceptional, however, because anyone with a camera would be photographing such moments.

Once you've captured all the good stuff from the main event, then stop for a moment to look around – and think. Whatever the story, *look for people who are trying to get something done*. Such people help you find the story's soul. Now, it's not just a report about the "President Comes to Town," or "Local House Burns Down," but "Local Family Loses Home, But Learns How Much Neighbors Care."

Maybe you're covering a house fire in which the hard news is the blaze itself. Look about and you may discover dramatic storytelling details wherever you glance. The telling detail, the story's journey, might lie in a neighbor's vigil from the sidewalk, as she waits to hear whether everyone escaped the burning home. Her vigil now becomes a channel that can elevate shots of leaping flames and falling walls into a narrative story with a beginning, middle, and an unknown ending. Most viewers won't stop watching such stories until they learn the outcome, in which, in this example, the woman's neighbors and their pets escape unharmed.

As you explore the story environment, also look for little two- and three-shot sequences that can add subtext and enhance the story's energy and pace. In our example, you might also happen upon a firefighter struggling to free a snagged hose. Maybe he loosens it in a few seconds and goes about his business, but that little tussle is a moment of detail, a small step along your journey to find and show human struggles and their resolutions unfolding on camera. Viewers will appreciate your efforts to help them become even more involved in the story as eyewitness observers and participants.

SUMMARY

Crucial to the visual story is a story focus, the journalist's equivalent of the scriptwriter's story line or premise. The focus statement is a declarative sentence that summarizes the story to be told and helps give it focus. Each story also requires a beginning, middle, and ending. Often the strongest stories are told through people engaged in visual and interesting activities.

KEY TERMS

close	nat sound	reportorial editing	storyboard
focus statement	package	sound bites	visual proof
lead	photojournalists	spot news	white space

DISCUSSION

1. What is the important role of picture sequences in video stories?
2. Why is sequential video usually more engaging and compelling than illustrative video?
3. What is the story commitment or focus statement, and what are the procedures for determining it from one story to the next?
4. Why can most video stories benefit from a focus statement?
5. Explain the value of learning to write from the visuals.
6. What is the role of natural sound in visual storytelling?
7. Why are short sound bites often preferable to lengthy bites?
8. What techniques can the photojournalist use to help make visual stories more memorable?
9. What purpose lies behind the need to "address the larger issue" in meaningful visual stories?
10. In a web or television video story, what is meant by the term visual proof?

EXERCISES

1. Using only natural sounds and visual imagery, photograph or script a sequence or two that captures the moment and communicates a sense of experience about the subject. You might choose to capture the mood on a ski slope at opening time, the feeling of test-driving a used car, or of planting and watering a tree or flower. At all times, keep the camera involved in the action. The key is to help viewers feel as if they have participated in the event and experienced something of the story's environment.
2. Critically study the field reports in a web or television newscast for the presence of sequences and matched action. Compare another visual story from any source of your choice. Note how many stories contain sequences and how many rely primarily on illustrated scripts (illustrative rather than sequential video).
3. Study television stories and commercials for the "visual proof" of their main points. How frequently are the main points proven verbally when they might have been made far more memorable with strong visuals?

4. View several television news stories and define the story focus for each. If the story's focus seems vague and uncertain, supply a story focus that would have given the story a clear meaning.
5. Turn your back to the screen during a video newscast and listen for examples of the effective use of natural sound and sound bites in news stories and commercials. Pay attention to how often the sound or voice-over narration entices you to look at the screen.

NOTES

- 1 Fred Shook and Don Berrigan, "Glossary: Television Field Production and Reporting," *Atelier Sur le Récit Visuel*, Service National de la Formation et du Développement, Bureau de Montréal, Société Radio Canada, Montréal, Canada, 1991.
- 2 Shellie Karabell, Comments at the NPPA Advanced Team Storytelling Workshop, Lexington, KY, April 22, 2003.
- 3 Jack M. Bickham, *Scene and Structure* (Cincinnati: Writers Digest Books, 1999), 24.
- 4 Larry Hatteberg, "People Oriented Photojournalism," a presentation at the NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, March 17, 1998.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 E-mail correspondence with the principle author, June 27, 2007.
- 7 Eric Deggans, "WFLA-Ch. 8's move to drop fleet vehicles craters morale at the TV station," *Tampabay.com (The Feed)*, www.tampabay.com/blogs/media/content/wfla-ch-8s-move-drop-fleet-vehicles-craters-morale-tv-station, published December 16, 2010, accessed December 20, 2010.
- 8 Jack M. Bickham, *Scene and Structure* (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1993), 2.
- 9 Bill Taylor, Conversation with the principle author, June 28, 2007.
- 10 Cited by Ed Bliss in his address, "Newswriting," to the 42nd Annual Radio-Television News Directors Conference, Orlando, FL, September 3, 1987.
- 11 Quoted from e-mail correspondence with the author, September 14, 1998.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Bob Dotson, Comments in a live video presentation to Australian journalists, Sydney, Australia, August 11, 2010.
- 14 Jim Redmond, Fred Shook, Dan Lattimore, and Laurie Lattimore-Volkman, *The Broadcast News Process*, 7th ed. (Denver: Morton Publishing, 2005), 109.
- 15 Fidel Montoya, Quoted from "National Press Photographer's Best Photography Awards" videotape presentation. This and similar tapes are available from National Press Photographer's Association, P.O. Box 1146, Durham, NC 27702.
- 16 Ron Comings, Comments during telephone interviews with the lead author from early March through mid-August 2004, and May 2015 through January 2016.
- 17 Ibid.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

Visual storytellers reconstruct events in such a way that viewers develop a sense of having observed and experienced the moment, and learned something from it. Throughout the visual storytelling process, the emphasis is on *reconstruction* of events from raw material shot in the field, rather than on the *re-creation* of events. And in video stories, just as in theatrical filmmaking, photographic reconstruction works best when it embodies a sense of continuity or consecutiveness to help heighten the viewer's sense of experience.

To accomplish such feats requires an understanding of the **visual grammar** that allows videographers to break simple action into its complex parts for later reconstruction at the edit bay. In television and other visual media, no one can excel without an ability to previsualize and properly manage this reconstruction process.

THE SHOT

In motion picture photography the basic unit of expression is the **shot**, or the single, continuous take of material recorded each time the camera is turned on until it is turned off (or paused). Depending on action and content, the "average" shot is recorded in the field for some eight to ten seconds and occasionally longer. It is easier to shorten a shot during editing than to lengthen it. When recording in the field, hold the shot long enough for the action to complete, or to portray subject matter adequately within the shot, and remember to give the editor adequate length in every shot. During editing, each shot assumes larger meaning in relation to the shots that come before and after it.

THE SEQUENCE

Shots are the building blocks from which the editor builds a representative composite of the event. A number of shots, related to each other to convey a single message, are combined to form the **sequence** (Figure 3.1). Action flows across the edits from one shot to another to create the illusion that viewers are watching a continuous, uninterrupted action. Sequences help viewers feel they've experienced an event because sequences represent the activity much as eyewitness observers would experience it.

Surprisingly, some videographers have never shot a sequence, and others cannot identify a sequence with any reasonable certainty – the consequence of scripts that are first written



Figure 3.1 The sequence is a series of related images that shows an event as it unfolds. The process duplicates how an observer in real life might take in the event. In an edited motion sequence, action continues smoothly from one shot to the next with no disruption in continuity.

Ernie Leyba Photography



and then illustrated, sentence-by-sentence, and paragraph-by-paragraph, with random, nonconsecutive bits of video.

BASIC SHOTS

In essence the photographer has only three shots with which to build sequences: the long shot (LS), the medium shot (MS), and the close-up (CU) (Figure 3.2). You'll hear these shots also referred to as wide-medium-tight. All other shots, including the medium close-up (MCU), extreme close-up (ECU), and extreme long shot (ELS), are variations of these three.



Figure 3.2 The three basic shots in motion picture photography are the long shot (top left), medium shot (top right), and close-up (bottom left), also known as wide-medium-tight. All other shot compositions are variations of these three shots.

Ernie Leyba Photography

LONG SHOT

The **long shot (LS)**, or wide shot, provides a full view of the subject. Accordingly, the long shot may show a full view of an individual from head to toe or perhaps an entire mountain valley. Whatever the subject, the distinguishing feature of the long shot is its ability to show an overall view of the subject.

MEDIUM SHOT

The **medium shot (MS)** brings subject matter closer to the viewer and begins to isolate it from the overall environment. Although a long shot might show us an entire federal courthouse building, the medium shot might show only the main entrance. Whereas a long shot of an individual might show the person from the feet up, a medium shot would show the individual from the waist up. The medium shot can be used to place the viewer's general attention where the photographer or editor wants it, without the jolting effect that might result from cutting directly from an extreme long shot (ELS) to an extreme close-up (ECU).

CLOSE-UP

The **close-up (CU)** isolates the subject entirely from its surrounding environment. It shows a person from about the shirt pocket up and may show nothing more of a building than the doorway or a sign that identifies it.

Close-ups can help the viewer achieve a greater sense of intimacy and vicarious involvement with the subject. This leads to the suggestion that if you want close, intimate shots, you must move the camera physically close to the action. To involve viewers in the action, you must involve your camera.

HOW THE BASIC SHOTS WORK TOGETHER

The basic shot designations of long shot, medium shot, and close-up (wide-medium-tight) identify shots according to their image size and composition. These basic shots function together in sequences in a manner roughly equivalent to how the eye and brain work together. Whenever we first encounter a situation we normally make a visual overview to acclimate ourselves to the surroundings. When we first walk into an airport, we see the crowds of passengers and long rows of ticket counters (long shot).

Once we have taken in the full view and oriented ourselves, we begin to inspect the environment more closely, perhaps searching, through medium and close views, for an overhead TV monitor that displays flight departure information. For detailed visual inspection, we may walk closer to the monitor for very close-up views.

Even without moving physically closer it is sometimes possible to create the photographic equivalent of a medium or close-up shot in our mind's eye through our ability to isolate an object of interest within the environment and concentrate primarily on that object with our full attention.

Beyond the basic LS, MS and CU, other shot designations derive their names from particular camera movements or how shots are used within the storytelling process.

CAMERA MOVEMENT

The video camera's main job is to record action, not to create it. The photographer can animate otherwise static shots with pans, zooms, and tilts, but the goal is to record actual motion whenever possible rather than to infuse the scene with artificial camera movement. Nevertheless, camera movement has its place, as you'll soon see.

PAN

In the **pan**, the camera is swiveled on a tripod to show an overall scene, or the handheld camera is moved in similar fashion to "show all the scene" in a single shot. The pan is an artificial device that tends to call attention to itself. Although our heads can swivel, our eyes never pan, just as they never zoom. They only take individual shots. Try to pan a view with your own eyes: notice how your eyes cut from one part of the scene to the next as you move your head. Even when we view a pan shot on the screen, the eye darts from one "shot" to the next within the pan as it isolates various views and builds a composite image.

BOX 3.1 RULES FOR PANNING

Rules about panning help keep the viewer's attention on the story by drawing attention away from artificial camera movement.

1. Avoid panning altogether unless the pan is motivated by action within the scene.
2. Shoot static footage before and after the pan to give the editor a range of cutting points.
3. Always have something on the screen as you pan. Compose the shot so that as one object leaves the screen, a new object comes into view.
4. Adjust the speed of the pan to the subject matter in order to make camera movement less obvious.
5. Let each object you pan remain on the screen long enough for viewers to have a clear view of it.
6. **Feather** the start and stop of the pan, so that camera movement begins and ends smoothly and imperceptibly.

Alternatives to panning include building an overall composite of the entire environment to be shown, in long shot/medium shot/close-up, just as the eye builds its own composite of reality.

When you do pan, hold the shot steady for at least three seconds before you begin to pan, and again hold the shot steady for another three seconds after you end the pan. Editors appreciate this technique because it gives them options about where to begin and end the pan. Shooting a few seconds of static footage before and after the pan also gives the editor footage that can be used separately as static shots if necessary.

MOVING SHOT

If the camera swivels on a tripod or other fixed support to follow action, such as to follow a bicycle race, the result is a **moving** (or follow) **shot**. The moving shot is sometimes called a "pan with a purpose," but because the photographer's motivation here is to follow action rather than show a static object in panorama, the moving shot is technically not a pan.

COMBINATION SHOT

A variation of the pan and moving shots is found in the **combination shot**. The camera follows the action until a new moving subject enters frame, then picks up the new subject and follows it. The camera, for example, might follow a jet plane as it taxis; when a second plane appears in frame, taxiing in the opposite direction, the camera then follows the second plane. The combination shot produces a relatively long "take," which the editor on tight deadline can substitute for two or three shorter shots that otherwise would have to be edited together separately.

TILT SHOT

The **tilt shot** is the vertical equivalent of a pan: the camera tilts up; the camera tilts down. The tilt is commonly used to show an entire object that would be too tall to photograph in a single shot, or to reveal some new aspect of the subject: the unveiling of an artist's mural that covers the entire wall of a hotel lobby three stories tall, or from a close shot of clapping hands to the square-dance caller's face. The tilt shot also keeps subjects in frame, such as when football fans stand to cheer a touchdown, or to follow a firefighter's ascent up an extension ladder.

TRACKING SHOT

In the **tracking shot** the camera actually moves through space to keep moving subjects in frame. No longer does the camera merely swivel to follow bicycle racers as it would in the pan. In the tracking shot the camera moves through space to keep the bicycle riders in frame. For a tracking shot of a pedestrian walking down a sidewalk, the camera would be mounted in a car or other conveyance to keep pace with the subject.

TRUCKING SHOT

In the **trucking shot**, the camera itself moves past fixed objects. A trucking shot would result if, for example, a camera were mounted atop a cargo van and driven down a neighborhood street past Victorian homes or if the camera were mounted in the seat of a wheelchair and moved past a row of students in a classroom.

DOLLY SHOT

In the **dolly shot**, the camera moves either toward the subject or away from it: The camera is said to dolly in (toward an object) or dolly out (away from the object). To achieve smooth movement, the camera tripod is attached to a dolly, a simple frame or platform mounted on wheels. Anything from a professional dolly to a wheelchair or snow sled can be used for dolly shots, provided the device glides smoothly without bumping or jerking the camera. In some shops, the dolly shot may be called a *tracking shot*.

CHANGES IN CAMERA PERSPECTIVE

Perspective reflects the apparent sizes of photographed objects in relationship to one another as they appear at certain distances, in comparison with how the human eye would view the same scene from the same distance. No change in perspective is possible unless the camera itself moves through space. On occasion the **zoom shot** may serve as a passable substitute for the dolly shot, provided the zoom is introduced coincidentally with subject movement. The zoom is a shot produced from a fixed location with a continuously variable focal-length lens. If a child on a bicycle turns onto a country lane and pedals toward camera, the camera can be zoomed back to keep the child in frame in an effect similar to the dolly's. A substitute shot is



Figure 3.3 Note the change in perspective between the left close-up, taken from a distance with the zoom lens set on a long focal length (Figures 3.3a and 3.3c), and the close-up on the right, taken by moving the camera physically close to the subject (Figures 3.3b and 3.3d). The subject in the right photo almost looks three-dimensional by comparison.

Ernie Leyba Photography

possible in a standup if the camera zooms back to preserve proper composition as the on-camera speaker walks toward the camera.

Because the camera remains in one physical location in the zoom shot, there can be no change in perspective. For this reason, if you wish to take a close shot of an object, move the camera physically close to the subject. Although you can keep the camera at a distance and zoom in for what appears to be a close-up, the lack of true closeness to the subject is immediately apparent (Figure 3.3).

The **aerial shot** is achieved by placing a camera in a drone, an airplane, helicopter, blimp or balloon. It is unequalled in providing overall, bird's-eye views of traffic, floods, fires, terrain, and related subject matter. Because the camera physically moves through space, the aerial shot also can be used to produce both tracking and trucking shots.

BOX 3.2 INCORPORATE ACTION IN EVERY SCENE

The great strength of video is movement. Children smile. Flags flutter and ripple in the breeze. Rabbits scutter through the grass. Rockets climb into the sunrise. The alternative to movement is still life and static subject matter, the stuff of every slide show. For this reason walls and signs make poor establishing shots in television.

In visual stories, the goal must be to incorporate movement into every scene. If you have decided to shoot an establishing shot of the courthouse, photograph people as they walk up to it, rather than photograph the static side of the courthouse building. If the subject is a sheer rock cliff, follow an eagle's flight with the cliffs in the background. If the assignment is to photograph a lifeless fence, show it as it sways in the wind or as a bird takes flight from a corner post.

STABILIZE SHAKY IMAGES

Camera movement can introduce unwanted shakiness on the screen, especially when shooting handheld or shooting scenes from vehicles and aircraft. Stabilization technology, whether mechanical or electronic, allows you to steady otherwise shaky images while using many lenses, cameras, and smart phones. This technology counteracts movement and shakiness in the image from one moment to the next, letting you produce smooth, fluid walking and sometimes running shots that can rival big budget camera moves. Editing software can also help stabilize shaky images. Some electronic stabilizations systems artificially crop the image, and will require looser than normal composition.

STORYTELLING SHOTS

The long shot is commonly used as an **establishing shot** because of its easy ability to introduce viewers to the story's locale or to the story itself. Among professional photographers and editors the practice is to avoid establishing shots of walls and buildings, which rarely tell viewers much about the story to come, and to concentrate instead on shots that help engage the viewer and instantly communicate the story to come.

Whereas an establishing shot can be a wide shot, it can also be a close shot, for example, of a foot tapping to the music at a bluegrass festival. A jury foreperson reading a verdict may be a more effective "establisher" than a long shot of the federal courthouse building with a sign in front.

From time to time within a scene, the **reestablishing shot** is useful to introduce new action or subject matter or to reestablish the setting where the action occurs. In a typical example, we might first see a motorist looking under a car hood at the engine, followed by a reestablishing

shot of the overall scene in which a patrol officer pulls up to help. In another example, we might see a close shot of a little girl blowing a party horn, followed by a reestablishing shot to show her mother entering frame with a birthday cake and walking toward her daughter.

The **insert shot** provides the audience with close-up, essential detail about some part of the main action. If, in one shot, we see a woman slip something into her purse, the insert shot shows us the object in close-up detail.

The **point of view (POV) shot** shows the view as seen through the subject's eyes (Figure 3.4). If a ship's captain looks out to sea in one shot, the point of view shot shows us the view as seen through the captain's eyes.

You can shoot video from the perspective of someone physically involved in the action or from that of the uninvolved observer. Whenever the camera represents the participant's point of view, the style is called **subjective camera**: the screen shows action as the subject would see it.



Figure 3.4 The point of view shot (POV) depicts a view from the observer's perspective.

Ernie Leyba Photography

If the screen portrays action as an observer on the sidelines would see it, then the style is called **objective camera**. (Note: POV also can motivate legitimate camera movement, as explained later in this chapter.)

Action and reaction are critical components in the visual storytelling process. An action occurs, followed by a reaction. A woman looks down and smiles at an object off screen. In the next shot, the **reaction shot**, a baby coos and smiles in response. A food server accidentally drops a tray of dishes on her return to the restaurant kitchen. In the reaction shot, diners pause in their conversation at the sound of the breaking glass and then applaud as the server takes a bow. Yet again, a baseball player knocks a home run. In the reaction shot, the team's coach jumps for joy. Reaction shots tell us how people feel about what happened (Figure 3.5). Often, the heart of the most memorable visual stories lies in reaction shots, because they may reveal new information even as they confirm and sometimes intensify the reactions viewers are having as well (in one shot an employee sees a pay increase on her payroll check. In the reaction shot, is she pleased or disappointed by the amount?)



Figure 3.5 Action–reaction is a useful device to heighten viewer interest in a story. Top left, (the action); top right, (the reaction). Below left, (the action); below right (the reaction). Many reaction shots also can also serve as cutaways.

Ernie Leyba Photography



Figure 3.6 Action–reaction is a useful device to heighten viewer interest in a story. Left, (the action); right, next shot (the reaction). Many reaction shots also can also serve as cutaways.

Ernie Leyba Photography

The face and the eyes mirror the soul and the depth of feeling. Therefore, if you show action in your photography, look for the reaction as well. “The reaction is where most things happen,” advised film director and author Edward Dmytryk. “Reaction is transition, change, movement—and movement is life.”¹

The **reverse-angle shot** (Figure 3.6) is commonly used to introduce new action or to advance the action within a scene. Assume a scene in which a barber has just finished cutting a patron’s hair. The patron pays the barber and exits frame. The barber yells “Next!” and a second patron enters frame with his back to the camera. A reverse-angle shot can then be used to give viewers a frontal view of the new patron as he approaches the camera. To accomplish the reverse-angle shot, the camera simply shoots back along the axis line as originally established in the first shot.

ONE SHOTS TO CROWD SHOTS

Other shot designations are defined according to the number of people who appear in the shot. Into this category fall the one shot, two shot, three shot, group shot, and crowd shot. In the group shot—anywhere from five to a dozen people or more—it is possible for viewers to identify individual faces. In the crowd shot, it is difficult to differentiate among individuals

MASTER SHOT WITH CUT-INS

Over the years in traditional theatrical filmmaking, directors have commonly relied on the **master shot**, in which a single camera records a continuous take of the entire scene from one location and at one focal-length lens setting (Figure 3.7). After the main action is recorded in one take, the action is then repeated (or the photographer waits for the action to reoccur) in order to photograph **pickup** or **cut-in shots**. Typical cut-in shots include the close-up or



Figure 3.7 A master shot (left) is used to record an uninterrupted take of the entire action. The photographer then asks for the action to be repeated, or waits for it to repeat, and photographs insert or pickup shots to emphasize detail and improve story pace.

Ernie Leyba Photography



insert shot, reaction shot, and point of view shot, as well as new camera angles to emphasize particular elements of the action. You might create the look of a two-camera shoot with a single camera, for example, if you were to make your master shot of a chorus singing holiday carols at a nine o'clock religious service, and then wait for the eleven o'clock service to shoot cut-ins when the chorus sings those same songs again.

A variation on the master shot with cut-ins occurs in the television studio or at outdoor sporting events whenever multiple cameras are used to record different facets of the action as it unfolds. Video signals from the various cameras are fed simultaneously to a central switcher in the control room or field production equipment and displayed on video monitors. At the central switcher a director looks at the monitors and decides when to punch up a particular shot "on air" or to record it for later broadcast. Because the various cameras view the same action from multiple angles and compositions, it is relatively simple to cut from one camera view to the next as the action progresses.

Even when photographing with a single camera, the photographer can produce shots that can be edited together in **matched action** (Figure 3.8), if the photographer shoots **overlapping action** in the field.



Figure 3.8 When an action is edited so that it continues smoothly and without interruption from one shot to the next, the result is matched action.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Using one camera, the photographer must move it from one location to the next, corresponding to the locations of the various cameras as they would have been placed in a multiple-camera setup. Either the action is repeated or the photographer waits for the action to repeat itself to capture developing action from each of the various angles. Done correctly, the result can be virtually indistinguishable from the action recorded in a master shot with cut-ins or through multiple-camera photography.

OVERLAPPING ACTION

Overlapping action means simply that action in one shot occurs identically in at least one other shot (Figure 3.9). If a fly angler throws a line into the river in an idyllic backlit shot, a close shot might show the fishing fly as it lands on the water's surface.

Because the line can be seen to land on the water's surface in both the long shot and the close shot, the action in the two is said to be overlapping. The editor can produce matched action between the two shots by cutting out of the long shot at a point in the action identical to the continuation of the action in the close shot.

SHOOTING MATCHED-ACTION SEQUENCES

Action often repeats regardless of whether you're photographing a volleyball game or a police officer directing cars away from a flooded intersection. Even events that happen only once can be shot sequentially if the photographer anticipates the action. The photographer might decide to hold a defendant entering the courthouse in frame during a continuous shot, **snap zooming** to the defendant's feet or to the grim face of the accompanying marshal, or the photographer might determine to shoot the action in such a way that the defendant will enter and leave frame



Figure 3.9 Many activities in life, including those in most news events, are repetitive. Photographers who are sensitive to repetitive action can record shots of overlapping action in the field and use such shots to create matched action during editing.

John DeTarsio

BOX 3.3 TIPS FOR SHOOTING SEQUENCES

Even if the story moves in real time, there are ways to acquire sequences. The best way is to anticipate the action, to have the camera one step ahead of what's going on. If a woman goes to the ATM to withdraw money, you would probably begin with her walking up to the machine. You also can anticipate she'll pull out her ATM card. Maybe you should skip ahead and have the camera ready for the card going into the machine. With anticipation, you can be ready when the card comes into frame. You also know she'll have to push buttons to enter her PIN. At that point you may go to a wider shot, and then to the woman's face, always trying to anticipate the action, staying one step ahead of it, so you can build your sequences.

When you shoot, one of the biggest rules is not to interfere with real life. It's never appropriate to interrupt subjects with a "Hey, wait a minute," to catch up with the action because when we interfere with real life, it goes away.

The other way to shoot sequences in real time is through **action–reaction**. Whatever is going on you can build sequences by shooting the action, and then shoot reactions to that action. Examples include: someone smiles and another person responds; cookies come out of the oven and a child watches with anticipation; a high school basketball player shoots the winning basket and the crowd goes wild.

a certain number of times. Snap zooming is a technique in which the photographer snaps the zoom control, instantly zooming in or out for a new shot of an action. Later, the editor eliminates the few frames of video in which the snap zoom appears and edits together the action as though it had been shot simultaneously with two cameras, one set for a medium or long shot, the other set for a close shot. The result of such planning in the field is overlapping action – the raw material that will enable the editor to cut together matched action.

Using one camera on uncontrolled action without zoom capability, you may have to “zoom with your feet,” settling for two-shot sequences, such as shooting a wide then a medium shot, or shooting medium-tight.

JUMP CUTS

Jump cuts in finished video occur when action jumps unnaturally forward or backward in time or when an object jumps unnaturally into a new position on the screen. If in one shot the speaker at an outdoor rally is wearing a hat but in the next shot an instant later has lost her hat, a jump cut has occurred. Technically, a jump cut is an action that could not occur in real life. The action “jumps.” A woman at the beach is seen wearing sunglasses in the first shot but no glasses in the shot immediately following, or a computer screen displays text in an establishing shot, followed by a medium shot of the same screen that is now blank (Figure 3.10 shows still another example).

When the action cannot be edited together seamlessly, or when it must be abridged, the editor will look to the photographer to provide cutaways, inserts, reverse-angle shots, and reestablishing shots.

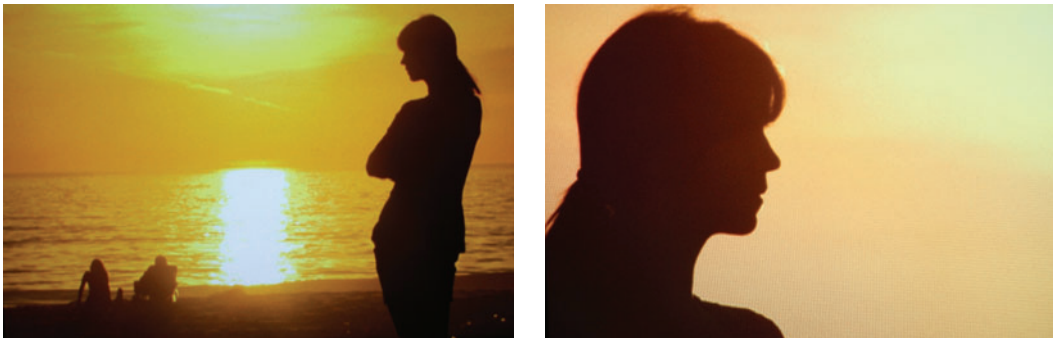


Figure 3.10 A jump cut occurs when an object changes position or appearance on the screen instantly and unnaturally from one shot to the next.

John DeTarsio

THE CUTAWAY

A common device to eliminate jump cuts and to condense time is the **cutaway**, a shot of some part of the peripheral action that diverts the viewer's eye for a moment so that when the eye returns to the main action, the "jump" will be less obvious. In the case of the woman at the beach who wears glasses in the first shot, a shot of the setting sun and perhaps a second cutaway of a sandpiper hopping along the beach could be inserted just before shot two of the same woman now seen without glasses. Viewers can be expected to assume that while they watched the sunset and sandpiper, the woman had time to remove her glasses. In the story of a chess match, the cutaway could be a shot of the clock that measures the time allotted each player to contemplate the next move. At a news conference, the most hackneyed cutaway shows a bank of television cameras recording the event or a close shot of a reporter taking notes. Besides using a cutaway, an optical device such as a **dissolve** or **wipe** can be used to eliminate the jump cut. A dissolve occurs when a scene fades to black on top of a scene that fades to full exposure (one scene into the next). A wipe creates the illusion of one shot being shoved off the screen by an incoming shot. As you will read elsewhere, straight cuts often are preferable to dissolves and wipes, which provide only artificial continuity.

THE MOTIVATED CUTAWAY

The typical cutaway is simply a device the photographer shoots to help the editor eliminate a jump cut and/or to condense the action (as when editing together two short cuts from a lengthy speech). Even more ideal is the **motivated cutaway**, which contributes desirable or essential new information to the scene. Instead of the gratuitous shot of television cameras at the news conference, a motivated cutaway might show the proud faces of the speaker's relatives as she announces her candidacy for office. Whatever the setting, the ideal motivated cutaway will help drive the story forward by providing new information.

THE TRANSITION OR REVEAL SHOT

Another way to link scenes is with a **transition shot**, also called a **reveal shot**. Transition shots give the editor a way to pivot from one sequence to the next, a way to link separate scenes without dissolves or wipes. Transition shots can be used to disorient the viewer momentarily, as in this example from film editor Michael Kahn, who describes a scene in which a group of people are sitting around the table, followed by a scene in which the same people are in line waiting to go to a movie:

Normally you'd cut to the marquee to show a geographic reference, but in this case you cut to a close-up of the counter and hands exchanging money for tickets, or even a close-up of somebody's face. You [the viewer] don't know where you are, but you know you're somewhere different. Then you cut back to the master (shot) of all of us in line waiting to enter the movie. You go right to a close-up and then cut back to reveal the new scene.²

In another example, a close-up shot of a ship's whistle could be used to move the story from a fish market along the wharf to shots of canning operations aboard a fishing ship.

Similarly, in a video package about diseases in ponderosa pine and elm trees, the transition shot might be used to move the story from a mountain setting to an urban area. In this example we first see a logger with chainsaw cutting down a ponderosa pine in a forest setting. Next we see the transition shot, a close-up ostensibly of the same chainsaw the logger used in the previous shot, followed by a cut to a long shot of an elm falling in an urban setting.

You can shoot the equivalent of an optical wipe in the field during a tracking shot; for example, the camera might move past a white pillar that fills the screen. The pillar creates the illusion of a screen wipe from left to right. In the midst of this wipe, while the pillar is still full screen, you might cut to a tracking shot that reveals your main character striding into a room. The result is a natural wipe without the need for studio effects.

To photograph such transitions in the field, the photographer must already be thinking like an editor as he or she shoots.

USING CAMERA MOVEMENT TO ENHANCE STORYTELLING

Shooting an unfolding story requires that you shoot with the camera off tripod, and that you have a valid reason to move the camera physically, or to zoom and pan. Let action or reaction motivate where and how the camera moves. Use such movements to take viewers along with you, or otherwise indicate where you want them to look. Let's assume that a wide, establishing shot shows a burning house, while the voice track talks about someone inside that house. In this example, the wide shot might zoom in toward the house to visually take viewers inside or at least suggest that someone remains inside. The same zoom in without purpose might distract or confuse viewers.

If we see a person walk down the street, or drive past in a car, we might follow the action with a camera, or concentrate on other essential movement or details, much as we would focus our attention in real life. We could photograph a woman as she walks through frame at a wedding rehearsal, then shoot a close-up of her face and then her shoes, and finally take a wide shot as she walks away from camera.

Elsewhere the camera might record the bridesmaids' limousine in a wide shot as it glides through wine country. If we let action motivate camera movement, the next shot might show the limo approach the wedding location and stop; the shot after that might show the driver opening the limo door; then the bridesmaids exiting the limo in a medium close-up shot and walking out of frame.

As the bridesmaids walk away from camera toward the wedding site, their action might motivate a reverse angle shot of their “walk away”; and finally, the camera might follow the limo driving into the late afternoon light and disappearing from view. Instead of directing the action, action now directs the camera.

Indeed, we could stage, rehearse and direct every shot, but anyone who shoots uncontrolled action rarely has the time or opportunity. Even then, viewers can tell the difference. We believe the real-life actions and behaviors we see on-screen – far more than the stiff, deliberate, self-conscious behaviors of non-professional actors, or everyday folks who are told to “just act natural.”

POINT-OF-VIEW MOVEMENT

The subjective camera perspective can further enhance storytelling by showing something from a moving subject’s POV. Suppose a woman leaves her house and walks to her car. Within this sequence you could make a shot from her point of view, with the camera positioned at her eye level, set to a lens focal length that duplicates what the human eye sees, thereby putting viewers in her shoes and seeing life from her perspective as she walks toward the car.

THINKING CAMERA

Another moving-camera technique is “the thinking camera.” In a sense, the camera reacts to the moment as a person might. If an interview subject says something airworthy, but unusually intimate or heartfelt, the camera might drift downward, much as a respectful listener might look down at the subject’s hands in her lap before looking back at the speaker. A reverse angle of the interviewer’s reaction would also work, serving as a way to look at something else for a moment to honor the other person’s feelings. Perhaps the subject might look off to the left, as if reliving a poignant moment. Audiences might accept the camera looking there as well, perhaps to show a picture on the mantelpiece, before it looks back at the person. The goal is to let the camera see and process the moment just as any person might. Used properly, the technique can help make such events more intimate and sometimes less obtrusive.

SCREEN DIRECTION

In real life, subjects move in predictable directions. Yet on many information and “reality” programs, subjects swap directions on the video screen like ping-pong balls. The rule of thumb regarding screen direction is to keep the subject moving in one consistent direction – either screen right or screen left. The idea is to keep video as seamless and transparent as possible, without introducing unnecessary distractions.

The underlying cause of illogical changes in screen direction begins in the field, when photographers unwittingly “cross the axis line” to produce shots in which a subject first faces

one direction on the screen, then in the next shot is shown to face the opposite direction. To envision the phenomenon, ask two people to face one another while you photograph them. In the camera viewfinder, the person on your left (subject A) will face screen right and the person on your right (subject B) will face screen left. Now, go to the opposite side of the two individuals, again viewing the shot through the camera viewfinder. This time subject A will face screen left; subject B will face screen right. The result is called a **false reverse**.

HOW TO AVOID THE FALSE REVERSE

The only way to avoid the false reverse is to avoid crossing the **axis line**. When the first or primary shot is made of a subject in the field, an axis line is established. One form of axis line is an imaginary straight line projected from the tip of the camera lens through the center of the subject and beyond (Figure 3.11). Some photographers use the term *vector line*, a similar concept used to describe the compass direction along which planes and ships move. Still other photographers simply call the axis line "the line." After the first or primary shot is taken, the photographer must commit to shoot on one side of the line or the other, but not both. If shots are taken on both sides of the line, the result will inevitably be a false reverse in the action.

Another form of axis line occurs when the action plays out parallel to the camera, for example, at a football game. The photographer can shoot on one side of the line or the other, but never on both sides of the line (Figure 3.12). Conflicts in screen direction can be eliminated in the field if the photographer simply remembers to keep the subject facing the same direction in the viewfinder at all times.

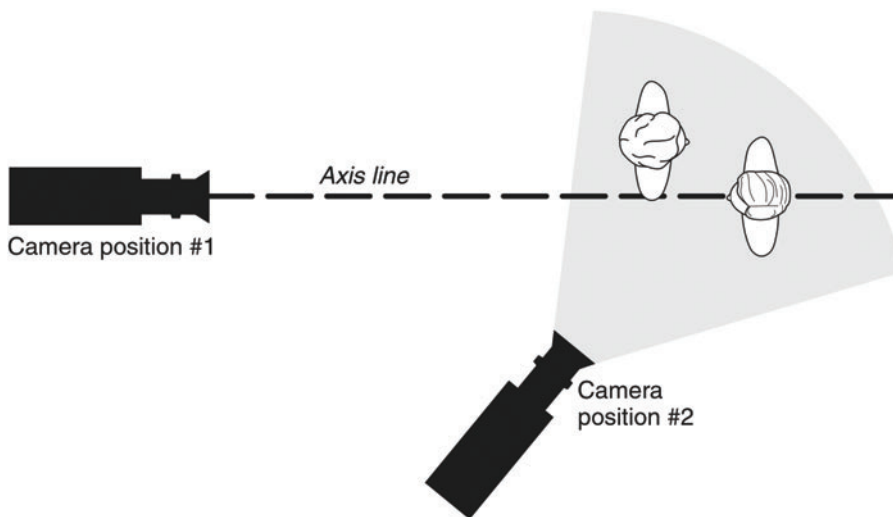


Figure 3.11 Eliminate false reverses in the subject's screen direction by remembering to establish an axis line, then consciously shooting on only one side of that line, not both.

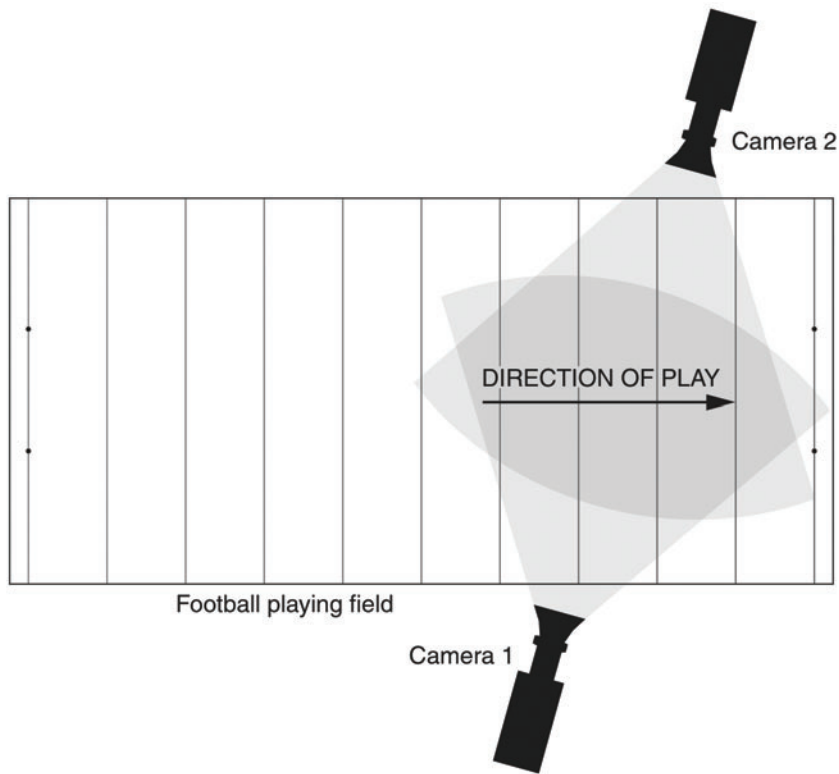


Figure 3.12 A false reverse in the action will result if the shots from camera positions on both sides of an axis line are spliced back to back. Shots made from camera one will produce action that progresses from screen left to screen right. Shots from camera two will produce action that moves screen right to screen left.

VARY CAMERA ANGLES

Variations in camera angle give the photographer a way to enhance visual interest from one shot to the next and are essential to help maintain viewer interest. Viewers will soon feel a monotonous sameness in the photography if every shot is taken from a flat, straight-on angle, with the camera at the same unvarying height from the ground. In every shot work to find angles that are exactly right, even if you must climb a tree or lie on the ground. Your angle is too extreme if it makes viewers tilt their heads to see your picture.

“When you’re shooting down the railroad tracks, don’t just stand and shoot. Put the camera down low, on the rail. That way you build in some foreground interest and a more dramatic angle,” says Boston photojournalist John Premack. “Or when you’re shooting down a supermarket aisle, move over against one side of the aisle, close to the shelf, and note the increase in visual impact.”³



Figure 3.13 The angle of the camera, whether high or low, affects how viewers perceive the subject. In the picture on the left, emphasis is on the top of the subject's head because the camera was allowed to remain high and look down at the subject. A more desirable composition (right) is to photograph the subject at eye level.

Ernie Leyba Photography

PHOTOGRAPH PEOPLE AT EYE LEVEL

The rule of thumb is to photograph people at eye level, and to show both eyes. When you photograph children, lower the camera so that it looks straight into their eyes. Similarly, photograph adults straight on, not looking up or down at them with the camera unless, of course, you want to achieve a particular psychological impact (Figure 3.13).

ANGLES PROVIDE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

Camera angles also influence the viewer's psychological response to subjects. **High-angle shots**, taken with the camera high and looking down, tend to diminish the subject. The effect is similar to the psychological dominance that occurs when one person stands and talks to someone who remains sitting. Such is the situation when the supervisor stands but the employee is told to sit, or in an adult-child relationship in which the adult dominates simply by virtue of his or her greater height.

Low-angle shots, taken with the camera low to the ground and looking up at the subject, make the subject more dominant and may even destroy the viewer's sense of control or superiority. Low-angle shots of an earth mover on a highway project can make the machine seem overwhelmingly powerful and destructive, whereas a high-angle shot taken from atop a nearby hill can make the same earth mover pale to insignificance against the terrain's enormity.

CONTRAST AND COMPARISON

Visual sameness is the equivalent of dullness. In most areas of life, including visual communication, we seek variation. Just as a meal made up of four bowls of potatoes and gravy

lacks interest, so does a story with four back-to-back shots of elderly residents at a nursing home. Do show us the faces of the older people, but show us also the unwrinkled youth and vitality of the children who come to visit or photographs of the elderly residents when they were younger. If your story is about the desert, try occasionally to show viewers something cool and green or perhaps simply the drops of water that slide down a bottle of beer as moisture condenses in the heat. In all stories, contrast and comparison are powerful devices to help give your subject additional screen presence.

COMPOSITION

Videography is a way of seeing on behalf of others. **Composition**, or the placement and emphasis of visual elements on the screen, lets the photographer control what viewers see and helps clarify the messages to be communicated. In motion picture photography, composition may be less noticeable to viewers because no shot stands by itself or communicates an entire story as it does so often in still photography. In motion picture photography, only when all the shots have played out is the story complete.

SUMMARY

Visual grammar comprises the rules that govern the visual reconstruction of events, including both the raw material shot and recorded in the field and the process of editing the material for video. In viewing, the basic unit of expression is the shot. A matched-action sequence of long, medium, and close-up shots can be linked to convey a message.

Shots are further defined according to camera movement and function. Shots that incorporate camera movement include the pan, tilt, dolly, tracking, trucking, and aerial shots. Shots classified according to their function include the establishing shot, insert, point of view, reaction, reverse-angle, and master shots.

Matched-action sequences can only be created during editing if the photographer has shot overlapping action in the field. In other words, identical action must be present in at least two shots. If overlapping action cannot be photographed, or if action must be compressed, then unnatural jumps in the action—jump cuts—can be avoided with cutaways or optical effects.

Transition shots allow the editor to create transitions from one time, location, or subject to the next within a story. Angles and composition further affect the treatment of subject matter and how viewers will react to the subject.

Always, the goal is to create a visual reconstruction of events so compelling and involving that viewers are unaware of technique.

KEY TERMS

aerial shot	high-angle shot	overlapping action	shot
axis line	insert shot	pan	snap zooming
close-up (CU)	jump cuts	perspective	subjective camera
combination shot	long shot (LS)	pickup shot	tilt shot
composition	low-angle shot	point of view (POV)	tracking shot
cutaway	master shot	shot	transition shot
cut-in shot	matched action	reaction shot	trucking shot
dissolve	medium shot (MS)	reestablishing shot	visual grammar
dolly shot	motivated cutaway	reveal shot	wipe
establishing shot	moving shot	reverse-angle shot	zoom shot
false reverse	objective camera	sequence	

DISCUSSION

1. Explain the meaning of the term *visual grammar*.
2. List the three basic shots in motion picture photography and describe their functions.
3. Explain how the three basic shots can be joined to achieve a sense of continuity or consecutiveness in a scene.
4. What considerations help determine when a shot or the image size of a subject should be changed in a visual story?
5. Explain why it is important in film and video to have action in virtually every scene.
6. List and define the various shot categories, describing each shot according to its function. Be certain to differentiate between the pan and the moving shots.
7. Describe when an insert shot might also serve as a reaction shot.
8. Can a reaction shot ever serve simultaneously as a point of view shot? If your answer is yes, provide an example. If your answer is no, explain why not.
9. Provide an example of a master shot and list six possible related pickup or cut-in shots.
10. Explain the essential distinction between matched action and overlapping action.
11. Explain how to eliminate jump cuts (a) when shooting a scene and (b) when editing a scene.
12. Describe the functions of the transition or reveal shot, and give an example as part of your discussion.
13. How can the photographer avoid the false reverse (a) when shooting action and (b) at the edit bench?
14. Define the psychological impact of variations in camera angle as a function of camera height in relation to the subject.
15. What unique considerations of composition affect video photography?

EXERCISES

1. Shoot a simple sequence of a subject that is under your control, using a long shot, medium shot, and close-up.
2. Shoot the same sequence, but this time purposefully cross the axis line so that you create a false reverse in the action.
3. Purposefully photograph two shots that would result in a jump cut if edited together and a related cutaway. First, edit together the two shots to produce a jump cut, then edit them so that the cutaway separates them. View and analyze the result.
4. Make two shots of an action plus a generic cutaway that can be used to divert the audience's attention from the main subject. Now shoot a motivated cutaway that also diverts the audience's attention but contributes useful new information to your story.
5. Pan a static subject, then introduce a moving subject, such as a person who walks in front of your subject, and follow the moving subject with the camera as a way to motivate the pan. Compare the result.
6. Shoot a master shot with at least six related pickup or cut-in shots.
7. Shoot a sequence in which the subject progresses through space, this time allowing the action to move into-frame, out-of-frame.
8. Shoot a matched-action sequence that contains an insert shot. Be certain each shot has overlapping action so that action can be matched at the edit bench.
9. Shoot a matched-action sequence that contains action–reaction shots.
10. Shoot a matched-action sequence that contains a point-of-view shot.
11. Find a subject that is not under your control and shoot a matched-action sequence. Remember to anticipate the action rather than to react to it.
12. Shoot a story in which you can move from one time, location, or subject to the next. Shoot at least three transitions or reveal shots that can be used to move the story to the next time, location, or subject.
13. Experiment with camera angle on a subject and note the variations in psychological impact that result.
14. Practice picture composition based on the rule of thirds. Experiment with subject placement within the scene by mentally dividing the viewfinder into thirds both horizontally and vertically and placing subjects at the points where the lines intersect.
15. Learn to critically inspect all elements within the viewfinder. Practice consciously composing scenes so that you show viewers only what you want them to see.
16. Practice composing a shot with two people in an interview situation until the shot is pleasing and well balanced and good enough to be used professionally.
17. Find a routine subject and photograph it in a new way. As an example, you might show a knife from a Halloween pumpkin's point of view or a fast-food restaurant from a transient's point of view.

NOTES

- 1 Edward Dmytryk, *On Film Editing* (Stoneham, MA: Focal Press, 1984), 65.
- 2 Michael Kahn, "Michael Kahn: Film Editor at the Top," *Moving Image* 1 (September/October 1981), 46–47.
- 3 John Premack, comments to a critique group, NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK. (Undated)

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

VIDEO EDITING: THE INVISIBLE ART

4

Video editing can look so simple to casual observers. It's easy to edit video and add basic effects, even on a smart phone or tablet, and stream it in high resolution for web and commercial broadcasts. Such technology makes it possible to overlook the artistry and creativity involved in great editing. Because true art conceals art, the best editing is invisible. People see the video, but not how beautifully put together it is.¹ Viewers notice bad editing, too, for it can disrupt their mood and jolt them out of otherwise engrossing narratives.

This chapter looks at editing's purpose, and how it weaves the magic carpet that transports viewers through the screen and into the story. Most great editing is seamless and transparent, yet potent and magical, for it gives stories their heartbeat. It is the process of thinking and seeing, of finding interrelationships among shots and sound to create new meaning.

There is no right or wrong way to edit, however. Consider adopting guidelines, rather than obeying rigid rules about editing. Good editing is what works. This perspective is your invitation to edit with your heart and your innate storytelling skills. Whenever you edit, trust what you think and feel about every shot, scene, cut, effect, sequence and their timing and pacing, regardless of what the rulebooks say.

Think of **editing** as positioning every word, every edit, and even every silence in just the right place, for just the right length, and for just the right effect. As an editor you are the conductor of a great symphony in which you write for the eye and the ear, and never only with words, but through a meaningful consecutiveness of images, sounds, silences, actions, reactions, and behaviors. You do these things to reconstruct a sense of reality for the viewer – a feeling of “being there” not only as an observer, but as a participant.

EDITING IS ANOTHER WRITING TOOL

Video editing, then, is another of the visual storyteller's writing tools. Few viewers ever watch stories for the editing, and just as certainly the editor's name on a film rarely sells tickets at the movie theater. Those who have never edited may think of editing as a mere joining of scenes, or as an “elimination of the bad parts,” but unless you truly understand editing you'll find it difficult to preplan the story in your mind; and it will be more difficult to shoot raw footage that tells a story.

Hollywood editor Glenn Farr speaks of editing's critical role in the storytelling process: "Photographers and reporters need to understand [editing's] importance as much as editors need to know what good photography and writing can do to help shape the idea being communicated, says Farr."²

TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF EDITING

Editing is vital to every visual storytelling platform because it lets us use all visual and audio media to their greatest potential and strength. The art of editing therefore lies in reconstructing and condensing reality, and stimulating and sometimes controlling emotional responses (Figure 4.1). Even cutting together two unrelated shots creates meaning not present in either shot alone. Think for a moment about two individual video shots, recorded months apart. One shows a woman running toward camera. The second shot shows a snarling grizzly bear standing on hind legs. Cut them together in that order and you've foreshadowed probable tragedy. Reverse them, and you've made the woman seem a bit unhinged. Who in their right mind would run toward certain death?

BOX 4.1 VIDEO EDITING FOR WEBSITES

Video's power has led many web designers and editors to model websites after television, rather than text models.³ The web is a visual medium where high demand exists for those who can shoot raw video and transform it into blockbuster visual stories. Even radio and print-media websites depend on video or other wide-screen imagery to attract viewers, and upon visibility in social media to further drive audience growth. Many websites take the best from all digital platforms – using blogs, magazines, video, stills, and audio – and converge their content into strong, memorable brands with loyal audiences. Web managers know they're in a race for dollars by creating content that will attract the most valuable visitors, and the highest quality ads. The savviest have shifted their editorial focus to video, realizing that compelling visual stories and frequent major story updates, lure regular clients more often, and can help convert casual viewers into regulars.⁴

You can view just one example among hundreds of websites that emphasize video at *The New York Times Online*: <http://video.nytimes.com/>

EVERYONE IS AN EDITOR

Editing, in its simplest definition, is selection, arrangement, timing, and presentation.⁵ Only through editing can one enhance the story and the storytelling process. Editing, then, begins not at the final stage of the storytelling process but rather at the beginning.

Your choice of shots and how you compose them is one form of editorial selection. Only through selection is emphasis possible. The order in which the shots appear is a form of



Figure 4.1 The picture and sound editing process allows storytellers to emphasize, reveal, pace, and structure the various elements that make up a compelling video story.

Ernie Leyba Photography

editorial arrangement. Shot length is a form of editorial timing, a way to control dramatic tension through quick cutting or a more relaxed mood that lets the eye wander across the screen. Even your preplanning for matched action and for transitions in subject matter and through time and space will determine whether presentation is harsh and noticeable or smooth and seamless.

Shots and sounds, their timing and arrangement, and their framing and composition, should become part of your thinking the moment you finalize your story focus, or as you see the story's focus changing in the field.

THE CUT

In editing, the **cut** is the most basic, yet most important edit of all. Nonlinear editing makes it simple to add wipes and effects, but in real life our eyes and minds work in cuts, not wipes and dissolves, and never in wiggles or flips.

As we walk into a room our eyes naturally see a wide shot of the room, then perhaps a group of people, before we focus on an individual's face. In real life, we experience this sequence in cuts. We look at one thing, and then another, always in cuts, never in zooms and pans.

You can reaffirm how humans see if you look at something far away, and then imagine your eyes are the camera lens as you try to zoom out to a wide shot. It's impossible to zoom with your eyes. Now pick out objects to look at on opposite sides of a room or other environment. Look at the object on the right, then on the left. Did your eyes and head do a slow pan from one side of the room to the next or did your eyes naturally make a "cut" from one object to the other?

In real life, humans can choose what to look at, when, and how much emphasis to give whatever they view. Psychologists call this process selective perception. As we first enter a familiar room, we might not take a wide shot with our eyes had we misplaced our house keys. Even standing fifteen feet distant, we might focus our attention only upon a shelf across the room where we normally place those keys, obliterating all awareness from our view but that empty shelf. This is the mind at work, not the eyes, but we can do the same thing with the camera and editing process.

Just as the eye works, cameras, photojournalists and video editors can serve as extensions of the mind. They too can show viewers what to look at, when, for how long, and from what angles and perspectives. In the lost-key example, the camera might replicate the subject's selective attention on that empty shelf in a close shot that fairly screams, "Not there either!"

The next time you watch a movie, pay special attention to the editing. Unless a change occurs in time, or sometimes in location or subject, you'll rarely see anything other than a cut edit. Unnoticeable cuts, however, require thoughtful field photography, which makes seamless cuts possible rather than trying to "fix it in the edit" with dissolves and wipes.

CHOOSING EDIT POINTS

The point at which one shot is surrendered and a new shot begins is called the **edit point**. Every shot that contains action has an ideal moment when it should begin and another ideal moment when it should end. If you will "listen" to the action and observe it closely, the action itself will suggest where the cuts should be made. Suppose that we have two shots: (1) a college student approaches a mailbox and deposits a letter, and (2) a close-up shot of the mailbox in which the student's hand enters frame and we see that the letter being stuffed into the slot is addressed to "Navy Recruiter."

The scene could be edited in as many ways as there are editors, yet there is only one ideal edit point. You would cut out of shot 1 just as the student approaches the mailbox and her body

language indicates that she is about to post the letter (letting her arm motion determine the edit point), then cut to the close shot in which we see action that has already begun in scene 1 continue smoothly and conclude in scene 2.

You also could cut the action out-of-frame/into-frame. In this approach the student would exit scene 1, followed by a cut to scene 2 (close shot of the mailbox), and the shot would hold momentarily until the student's hand came into frame. This technique is perhaps less desirable because there would be little motivation to cut from the shot of a student walking down the sidewalk to a static shot of the mailbox. In effect, the editor would be saying, "Here's a shot of a student about to mail a letter. Now let's cut to a shot of the mailbox and wait for her to catch up with us."

THERE CAN BE NO MATCHED ACTION WITHOUT OVERLAPPING ACTION

Few stories can unfold naturally if individual field shots lack the basic raw material that video editors need to produce matched-action sequences. Editors worship photographers who bring back video shots that contain recurring or **overlapping action**. In other words, an action present in one shot also appears in a related shot, in a similar manner and rhythm. Such shots contain cutting points that allow action to flow smoothly, without interruption, from one cut to another.

If, for example, in a long shot a swimmer dives into a swimming pool and presently surfaces near the pool's edge, a close shot might show the same swimmer surfacing after the dive. Because the swimmer can be seen to surface in both the long shot and the close shot, the action in the two is said to be overlapping. The editor can produce matched action between the two shots by cutting out of the long shot at a point identical to continuation of the action in the close shot.

Even a simple reaction shot or a motivated cutaway can help the editor build a more natural-looking story. But without overlapping or recurring action, or even reaction shots or cutaways to use, that editor will end her day with a story full of unrelated jump cuts.

Equally regretful, the jump-cut story will lack a meaningful sense of experience, because as humans we see and experience real-life activities in uninterrupted time – the equivalent of video's matched-action sequences. In the end, good video stories are just little reenactments of human experience, constructed as we might encounter them ourselves in real life.

CUTTING ON ACTION OR AT REST

Whether the action is a fistfight or a horse race, if the edits or cuts (or shot changes) occur while the action progresses, the technique is called **cutting on action**. If the edits occur at a moment in which the action on the screen has stopped, the technique is called **cutting**

at rest. Cuts might be made with the action “at rest,” for example, in a three-shot sequence of a woman being served coffee at a resort hotel. In the first shot the server would enter frame and place coffee before the woman. The coffee cup is at rest. In the next shot, the camera might cut to a close shot of the same coffee cup (still at rest), then to a shot of the woman’s face as she looks at the cup.

Even a fistfight can be cut at rest if the cuts are made at that moment when the fighter’s arm is fully extended during a punch or when a scene change is made from a shot of a fighter who takes a hard blow to the face and collapses, to a shot of the fighter lying unconscious on the floor.

The decision whether to cut on action or at rest lies with the editor. Generally, action scenes should be cut on action if the editor wishes to sustain pace and provide fluid story development and continuity. If the subject matter should be treated more deliberately and at a slower pace, cutting at rest may be appropriate. Here, the axiom that “performance follows content” holds true. Let content dictate the proper treatment.

Regardless of the choice you make, edit the action so it flows smoothly and effortlessly across the cuts without the editor’s work calling attention to itself. The editing will be strongest if it is as seamless and transparent as when we look at an event with our own eyes, unaware even of the process by which we are observing it. For this reason, be cautious about cutting out of a moving pan, tilt, or zoom to the middle of another zoom, pan, or other shot that contains artificial camera movement. If you must edit such shots together, consider linking them with a dissolve, fade-in or fade-out, or similar optical effect to soften the edit (optical effects are explained in detail later in this chapter).

INTO-FRAME/OUT-OF-FRAME ACTION

In cutting matched action, most editors try not to let a continuing action “fall out of the splice” at shot changes. In other words, they cut from an outgoing scene while the subject is still visible in frame, then cut to the incoming scene at a point where the subject has obviously entered frame. If the action disappears from view at splice lines, pace will drop and viewers may wonder why the subject momentarily disappeared.

Exceptions occur frequently, however. Photographers may be forced to maintain continuity when shooting uncontrolled action by shooting into-frame/out-of-frame action. In such cases they begin to shoot before the subject enters frame and continue to shoot after the subject has exited frame. Once the subject has left frame, the editor can cut to virtually any new scene without a jump. Cutting into-frame/out-of-frame action also is useful to create a transition from one time or locale to the next or even to move a subject through time or space, because the editor can cut from an empty frame to anything else.

JUMP CUTS

In the previous chapter you learned that **jump cuts** in action occur when action jumps unnaturally forward or backward in time. The most common device to eliminate jump cuts is the cutaway, a shot of some part of the peripheral action that diverts the viewer's eye for a moment so that when the screen returns to the main action, the jump will be less obvious.

Sometimes you can render jump cuts less noticeable by cutting from one shot to another shot during motion. Look for movement in each shot and see if the movement contains edit points. Say the camera is on a wide establishing shot from across the street. In this shot, the subject walks screen left to right. The shot also shows a car, which is about 20 feet from the subject. You can next cut to a shot of the person approaching and entering the car, assuming the camera changes location and composition, and the action still moves from left to right at about the same pace. This approach tricks the viewer into believing the scene continues seamlessly, although you compressed time and advanced the action by 20 feet.

If all else fails, editors can once again call on optical effects such as dissolves and wipes to eliminate the jump cut. Such effects may still diminish audience involvement, however, by making the editing technique more obvious.

POP CUTS

Be vigilant not to confuse the jump cut with the pop cut. They're different animals. **Pop cuts** occur whenever you edit together two or more shots that were photographed along the same axis line, even when the action is perfectly matched. Maybe the photographer first photographed a long shot, then zoomed in for a medium shot, and then a close-up.

The solution is to "shoot and move" while taking shots in the field. For each new shot, move the camera to establish a new axis line. When you shoot and move, matched action edits together more naturally. The result is smooth, seamless, distraction-free matched action.

DEVICES TO COMPRESS TIME AND ADVANCE THE ACTION

Any shot that diverts audience attention lets the editor cut back to the main action at a moment further ahead in time than could be the case in real life. The **insert shot** is an example. Unlike the cutaway, which diverts audience attention from the main subject, the insert provides the audience with close-up, essential detail about some part of the main action. At a news conference that continues in real time for nearly a half hour, for example, a politician announces he will end his candidacy for office. In the edited report, we see the politician announce his decision (the statement is edited from a point early in the news conference), followed by a close-up insert shot of the candidate. In the insert shot we hear a reporter ask, off camera, whether the candidate wishes to comment on published reports that he has been unfaithful

to his wife, and the candidate replies “No comment.” The insert is followed by a final shot in which the candidate turns and leaves the news conference. With the help of an insert shot, a half-hour news conference has been depicted in just three shots totaling thirty seconds or less.⁶

Two other shots, the **reaction shot** and the **point-of-view shot**, can be used in similar fashion. In the reaction shot, the subject reacts to something that has just happened in the previous shot: In a medium shot a doctor gives a child a flu vaccination; the reaction shot shows the child’s stoic response to the pain.

In the point-of-view (POV) shot, the subject sees or reacts to something off screen, and we see the thing from the subject’s point of view. For example, shot 1 shows a woman sitting in an airport-waiting lounge as she looks down at her wristwatch; shot 2 provides a close-up of the wristwatch from the woman’s point of view. From that point, the editor can advance the action by cutting to another shot of the woman taken some minutes later and thereby condense time. Note that in this example, the point-of-view shot also functions as an insert shot.

On occasion, you may want to use the first part of a scene, cut to another shot, then cut back to the original scene. The sequence might be of a football player running for a touchdown,



Figure 4.2 Proper pacing and screen logic result when the editor cuts shots to reflect a logical progression in the action. In this example, the editor has used the first part of a shot (top left), cut to another shot (top right), then cut back to the original scene at a point about two seconds beyond where audiences last saw the action (bottom).

Ernie Leyba Photography

then a cutaway to the cheering crowd, then back to the original scene of the football player. Or perhaps the scene shows a hot air balloon passing before a sheer rock cliff. In either event, remember to advance the action so you don't cut back into the shot at the same point you left it. If we last saw the football player at the twenty-yard line, the football player must have advanced a logical distance beyond the twenty-yard mark following a two-second cutaway to the crowd. Conversely, the hot air balloon must be shown to have advanced through space when we cut back to it after a cutaway shot of onlookers, rather than being shown still positioned in front of the same reference point against the rock cliff.

The best rule of thumb in such cases is to advance the action the same amount of time as the cutaway remains on-screen. If the cutaway is left on-screen for two seconds, eliminate an equal length of footage from the primary scene before the action is resumed (Figure 4.2). Usually, though, you can advance the action further than it might have gone in real life, provided the object's progression through time and space appears natural and logical.

PARALLEL CUTTING

If neither overlapping action nor appropriate cutaways or other shots are available in the raw field video, at least the illusion of matched action can sometimes be accomplished through **parallel cutting**, or intercutting between separate but developing actions. Parallel cutting was routinely employed in early westerns as the screen cut back and forth between an out-of-control stagecoach and bandits in hot pursuit.

Today, the technique is equally effective in situations where overlapping action is difficult or impossible to photograph; for example, in the case of a hot air balloon drifting out of control with a chase team in pursuit. In this case, footage that may be little more than a series of "grab shots" (shots taken on the run as action unfolds before the camera) can be intercut to first show the balloon in trouble and drifting away, to shots of the chase team trying to follow the balloon and rescue its flight crew. Such footage might include random shots you took, shots from onlookers' smart phones, and shots supplied by the chase team and flight crewmembers themselves, in which little or no matched-action footage is available. Cutting back and forth between the balloon and the chase crew as the action progresses can help impose a continuity otherwise unavailable.

SHOT ORDER IMPACTS THE ILLUSION OF CONTINUITY

Acceptably edited matched action sometimes can look wrong, even when a close, frame-by-frame inspection of the edit shows the action to be perfectly matched. If the eye doesn't accept the match, you have a problem.

One solution is to follow the advice of long-time Seattle photojournalist Phil Sturholm.

"If you have a problem matching your action perfectly, edit the action from a close-up to a long

shot rather than a long shot to a close-up,” said Sturholm. “The long shot has so many things coming at you it’s hard to see if something doesn’t match exactly.”⁷

CONTENT DICTATES PACE

We often hear that in video reporting and storytelling, pace is everything. Audiences lose interest when story development is too slow or predictable. Although few guidelines exist about what constitutes acceptable pace, most video editors and virtually all viewers know it when they see it. The story’s pace either feels right, or it doesn’t.

The key to good pacing is to recognize that content dictates pace. Slow does not necessarily mean dull. Fast does not necessarily mean interesting. Good editors listen to their feelings and let the story suggest its own pace. Depending on the photographer’s commitment and the story’s point of view, a motorcycle hill-climbing event may be told better either in a series of slow-motion shots that play out on the screen over long seconds or in a flurry of action, colors, and sounds that hit the screen with the staccato beat of machine-gun fire. Only visual content and story commitment can determine which treatment will be more effective.

CUTTING TO CONDENSE TIME

A great virtue of video editing is its ability to expand or compress time, an effect known as **filmic time**. Such a simple event as a woman leaving a car, entering an apartment building, walking upstairs, and entering an apartment can be accomplished in two or three shots: the woman leaves car and walks out of frame, she enters frame at top of stairs and exits frame, she walks into frame and enters apartment. In video and film, time can be compressed or expanded far beyond the constraints of real time. An action that required up to a full minute in real life is accomplished in as little as ten seconds of filmic time. Sequences can just as easily be expanded beyond real time using slow-motion shots, cutaways, point of view, insert, and reestablishing shots.

COMPOSITION AFFECTS PACE

Compressing time is but one element of pacing. Equally important is the composition of the various shots in a story as the framing switches from long shot to medium shot and close-up.

Television was once considered a close-up medium. Today, the size of subjects on the screen can be varied more dramatically. Larger screen sizes allows the photographer and editor to place emphasis on subject matter more precisely and permit greater control of the “distance” to be created between audience and subject.

From one shot to the next, however, viewers’ perception of how fast an action unfolds on the screen remain subject to such factors as focal length, distance from subject, and the relative

lens perspective. If the action unfolds at one speed in the first shot, then at a different speed in the next shot, the editor has another problem. Composition influences not only visual and dramatic impact, but also the amount of information that can be delivered. Consider the story that hinges on the make of a gun used to murder a holdup victim. A medium shot of the gun may be insufficient to show an important trademark crucial to the jury's deliberation. A close-up of the gun may be necessary, held on the screen for several seconds so that the viewer's eye may discover and study the all-important trademark.

Conversely, a close-up of a single rose might deliver its entire meaning in a couple of seconds, whereas a long shot of tulip beds in Holland may require triple that screen time to deliver its message. Clearly, both the editor's intent and the story's content will dictate individual shot length and the story's final pace. After all, the editor's responsibility is to reflect not only the story's information, but its feeling and atmosphere as well.⁸

SCREEN DIRECTION

In real life, subjects move in predictable directions, so the rule of thumb regarding screen direction is to keep the subject moving in one consistent direction – either screen right or screen left. Otherwise, viewers may be left confused and consciously or subconsciously frustrated (Figure 4.3).

You can avoid screen direction conflicts in the field if you keep the subject facing the same direction in the viewfinder at all times. If a subject moves screen left in the first shot, then it must continue to move screen left in all the other shots. Otherwise, the result is a false reverse (Figure 4.4).

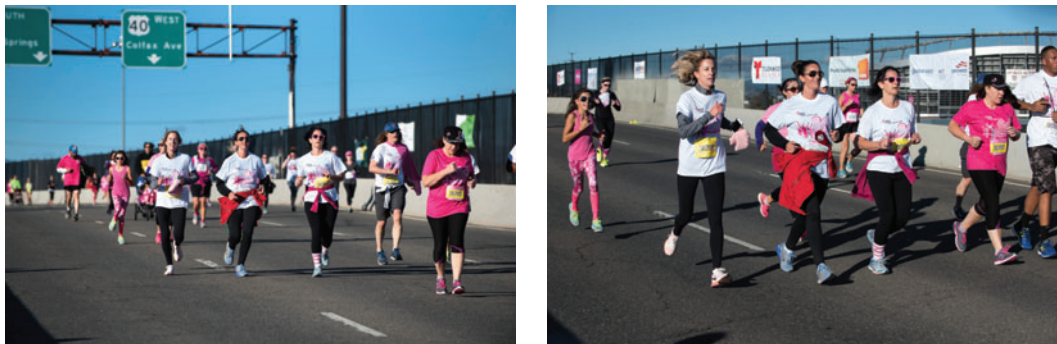


Figure 4.3 In real life, most subjects move in predictable directions, hence the need for consistent screen direction of subjects in motion picture photography and editing.

Ernie Leyba Photography



Figure 4.4 If a subject suddenly and illogically swaps directions on-screen, the result is called a false reverse.

Ernie Leyba Photography

EDITING TO ELIMINATE THE FALSE REVERSE

The most obvious solution to a false reverse is the cutaway. A shot of a football player running screen right can be followed by a shot of the crowd or a referee, preferably looking somewhat toward the camera rather than obviously right or left, followed by a cut to the player running screen left. Another device to neutralize the false reverse is a **head-on shot** of the action coming straight toward camera or a negative-action shot of the subject moving away from camera. Yet another device is to continue photographing the shot as the camera moves across the axis line, taking the audience with it. If such a shot is unavailable, the editor can again use an optical effect such as a dissolve or wipe.

THE TRANSITION SHOT

The typical video package, even the typical theatrical film, is a series of sequences, or at least a series of “medium-tight,” “wide-tight” shots. **Transition shots** give the editor a way to pivot from one sequence to the next, a way to link separate scenes.

In a video package about a glass blower, for example, the transition shot might be used to move the story from the artist’s studio to a retail shop. In this example we first see the artist twirling and transforming molten glass into a vase. Next we see the transition shot, a close-up ostensibly of the vase being turned (as if the close-up were a continuation from the previous shot), followed by a cut to a long shot of a customer holding the vase in her hands as she examines it in the retail shop. When shooting uncontrolled action, the transition shot might be a tilt-up from a football in the player’s hands to his face, or from a desk lamp to someone at a computer.

A memorable illustration of a transition forward in time occurs in the classic film *Little Big Man*. A young Cherokee played by Dustin Hoffman rides down to a mountain stream on

horseback, dismounts, kneels by the stream, and scoops water to his face. The screen cuts to a close shot in which Hoffman's hand covers his face. When Hoffman lowers his hand to reveal his face, we see it is the same person, but he's now eighty years old.

Film director David Lean fashioned an equally memorable transition in *A Passage to India*. A young Indian doctor leaves a wealthy enclave late at night after treating an upper-class British woman. He sees a horse-drawn carriage leaving the area, and calls out, but the driver does not stop. The doctor looks into the night sky, where a brilliant moon hangs in still life. We next see the moon, as if from the doctor's point of view. As the shot holds, a hand comes into frame, as if reaching behind the moon itself, and scoops water, in a match cut, to the doctor's face. Viewers realize that what they mistook as a shot of the moon itself was its reflection, lying motionless upon the surface water in a horse trough.

Occasionally it is useful for visual storytellers to study such transitional techniques, including those found in commercial films, to better apply the principles to their own videography and editing.

Even if the photographer has failed to record transition shots in the field, transition opportunities may still be possible during editing, as in the story of a black swan that sticks its head beneath the water. In a closer shot, in which camera angle and action are exactly matched with the previous shot, a white swan pulls its head from the water.

Such opportunities occur frequently enough that that it pays to be alert. Always, the goal of such efforts is to preserve visual continuity while inviting and reengaging viewer participation.

SOUND AS A TRANSITIONAL DEVICE

Another transitional device is the use of what is known variously as the sound overlap, sound bridge, or incoming sound. The technique allows incoming sound to be heard for a moment or two before the accompanying shot appears on-screen. Normally, the incoming sound begins over the last second or two of the outgoing shot, although it can be introduced even earlier.

Consider how this technique would work in connection with the shot of a cruise ship lying idle at dockside, then a close shot of a ship's whistle followed by shots of passengers coming aboard the ship. Sound could be laid in so that viewers would hear the incoming sound of the ship's whistle over the last two seconds of the shot showing the ship lying idle. At the conclusion of the lying-idle shot, the ship whistle would appear on screen with its accompanying sound continuing.

In addition to its utility as a transition device, the sound bridge can provide a moment or so of white space or breathing room in voice-over narrative to give the package greater realism.

COLD CUTS

The sound bridge also helps the editor eliminate tiresome successions of cold cuts. **Cold cuts** occur when a shot ends and its accompanying sound ends, only to be replaced at the splice line by a new picture with new sound. To avoid cold cuts, let outgoing or incoming sound carry over the splice line or make edits on words or other sounds. Avoid edits on silence at the end of a sentence of voice over, and strive to avoid edits during a pause or at the conclusion of other sound. If the phenomenon is difficult to imagine, notice how often shots in news packages end coincidentally with the end of sentences in the voice over.

FLASH CUTS

Some video stories go better with music. With its smaller-than-theatre screen sizes and audiences taught to thrive on pace, television is well suited to an editing style called **flash cutting**, or “rapid montage cutting.”

In this technique, brief fragments of shots are cut to exact rhythm against a musical beat or sound. The visual information comes quickly, but not so fast that it fails to leave an impression or message, whether on an eighty-inch TV or a forty-foot theater screen.

CUTTING TO LEAVE SPACE FOR AUDIENCE REACTION

Wall-to-wall narration has become a hallmark in all too many videos. In part, the phenomenon occurs because conscientious storytellers hope to communicate as much information as possible in the little time available. But no communication is complete until there is understanding. Remember the need to “write silence,” to give your viewers time to assimilate information. When facts are fired at viewers nonstop, the information may wash over them and soon fade from memory.

For that reason, virtually all stories will benefit from white space or breathing room –occasional moments in which pictures and sound play while the viewer takes a momentary respite from the narration. If, in a shot, a plane with crippled landing gear is about to touch down on the runway, the editor owes viewers a moment or two of silence during the landing, even if it means eliminating a sentence or two of voice-over copy story.

Always, common sense is essential. If those five seconds of voice-over audio are more essential to the story than a little breathing room, keep the voice over. But, if viewers need that little moment of dramatic impact more than audio that only tells them what they can see for themselves, they deserve it.

COMMUNICATION PAYS

Photographers are sometimes heard to say, “The editor used my worst stuff yesterday and made me look bad.” Most oversights involve no malice but are a consequence of the editor’s unrelenting deadlines. Often, editors must simply “edit off the top” of field video to meet deadlines.

Elsewhere it has been suggested that videographers should photograph only what they want on air or in their stories. In fact, photographers who avoid indiscriminate shooting can endear themselves to video editors who may have too little time and too many packages to edit. Editors love photographers who anticipate the action, who preplan what they’ll shoot, who wait for action to occur and are already shooting when it does occur. And if the video contains no meaningless shots, soft focus shots, or shaky footage, then the photographer has become at least a silent partner in the editing process.

If, as a photographer, you would like to see certain shots aired or avoided in a story, tell the reporter or editor. If you can’t talk face to face, at least write a note to the editor. If, as reporter or editor, you see your photographer shooting too many unnecessary shots, tell the photographer your concerns.

DISSOLVES AND OTHER OPTICAL EFFECTS

A simple straight cut may be adequate to move viewers along, even from one unrelated scene to the next, but at other times the editor may want to use such optical effects as fades, wipes, dissolves, or more elaborate digital video effects to indicate that scenes, although significantly different, are related.

In general, the **dissolve** indicates a change in time, location, or subject matter. One scene melts into another. In other words, one scene optically fades to black on top of another scene that optically fades from black to full exposure. The longer the dissolve, the more obvious the separation is. Common dissolve lengths are from one-half second to two seconds or more. Occasionally, editors use dissolves to more artistically connect scenes or eliminate jump cuts within a real-time sequence, but the result may be confusing to audiences who have been conditioned to understand that dissolves mean a change in time, location, or subject matter.

Wipes and flip wipes, whether horizontal or vertical, indicate a more noticeable separation between scenes. Wipes tell the viewer that a new subject, idea, or location is being introduced.

Fades, including the fade-in and fade-out, are among the most obvious transitions. The scene fades to black, or sometimes to white, or fades from black to full exposure. The fade is seldom used in news, although it is commonly found in public affairs and documentary programming and is used at some stations just before commercial breaks.

Because no rules exist regarding how or when to use optical effects, editors can profit from the axiom that true art conceals art: The best optical effects may be those that go unnoticed because they are used so logically. Remember, also, the beauty of the straight cut, which is the most transparent optical effect of all.

Ultimately, the key to good editing is to make all your work go unnoticed. If your technique is invisible, if continuity is present, and if your pace is smooth and flawless, then you will have helped viewers achieve that incomparable feeling of “being there.”

SUMMARY

Editing is important to the visual storytelling process because of the ways in which it duplicates how the mind works. Shots, or fragments of reality, are combined to form a composite understanding of the original experience or event. Everyone involved in the reporting process is an editor and uses editing to emphasize, pace, structure, and reveal the story.

The most fundamental editing technique is the cut, the joining of one scene to another. Deceptively simple as a creative device, the cut creates new meaning. A shot of a child crawling on the ground, intercut with a shot of a snake crawling toward camera, creates meaning that was not present in either shot by itself. If the two shots are reversed, their meaning is again altered and new meaning created. Editing also allows the journalist to expand or condense time, an effect often called filmic time. The essence of an event that occurred over hours or days in real life can be reconstructed on the screen in only a minute or so. Similarly, events that happened during the span of a few seconds can be depicted for far longer times on the screen by repeating the action through shots from multiple cameras and slow-motion photography.

Pace, a critical component in all visual communication, arises not only from shot length but also from influences such as composition, cutting points, and the content itself. Normally, in scenes with action, pace is more natural if scenes are cut on action, or in other words, while the action progresses.

Various shots are available to emphasize and reveal action and control pace. Among them are the insert shot, reaction shot, and point-of-view shot. Common editorial devices to eliminate unnatural jumps in action, or jump cuts, include the cutaway and insert shots. Like the photographer, the editor also is responsible for helping preserve screen direction. Generally, pictorial continuity is best served when subjects move logically in one direction on-screen, rather than randomly swap directions from shot to shot.

Editing also encompasses sound, which can be used as a transition device to move from one shot to another, as in the use of incoming sound a second or more before its accompanying

scene appears. Storytelling sound also helps provide perspective in a scene, and helps heighten the viewer's sense of realism. Optical effects such as fades, wipes, and dissolves offer further means of visual punctuation.

Competency in video storytelling, reporting, and photography relies on more than a passing acquaintance with editing. Editing is not simply the final process in the art of visual reconstruction: It guides the reporting process from start to finish.

KEY TERMS

cold cuts

cut

cutting at rest

cutting on action

dissolve

editing

edit point

fades

filmic time

flash cutting

head-on shot

insert shot

jump cuts

overlapping action

parallel cutting

point-of-view (POV)

shot

pop cut

reaction shot

transition shot

wipes

DISCUSSION

1. Why are the best editing techniques often invisible to home audiences?
2. Describe how editing can be used to help enhance the visual storytelling process.
3. Explain why an understanding of picture editing is important to all members of the reporting team.
4. Describe the role of the cut in video editing.
5. Explain the meaning of the phrase "pace is everything" as it applies to video stories.
6. Explain what is meant by the term filmic time and provide an original example.
7. Describe the considerations that influence the length of individual shots in an edited television news story.
8. Distinguish between the terms cutting on action and cutting at rest.
9. What considerations guide determination of the edit point in beginning and ending a given shot?
10. Define parallel cutting and provide an original example of the concept.
11. Explain how sound can be used as a transition from one time, subject, or location in a story to the next.
12. Explain the difference between cold cuts and flash cuts.
13. Describe typical uses of the most common optical effects.

EXERCISES

1. Arrange three video shots, each with separate but related subject matter, and consider them to be shots A, B, and C. If you lack access to a video editing console, use still photographs and place them side by side.

An example of three shots might be: A—a mobile home in perfect condition sits on a well-manicured lot; B—a woman removes the lid from an empty quart jar and holds the jar in the direction of something off screen; C—a mobile home that has been overturned by high wind. Notice how the linkage of shots A and B produces new meaning that neither shot by itself contained. Notice further the new meaning created when shots B and C are linked. Now, if the visual result will make sense, relink your three shots in the following orders and compare the outcome: A-C-B; C-A-B; B-A-C.

2. Analyze television news stories, commercials, and theatrical films to determine what factors motivate the cut or edit that transfers the viewer's attention from one shot to the next. Note to what extent the content influences the pace of the editing.
3. Find an event that occurs over the course of several minutes or hours in real life, then photograph and edit a reconstruction of the event into a one-minute presentation. Reedit the one-minute version into a thirty-second reconstruction, and finally into a twenty-second reconstruction.
4. Ask a video editor, preferably a willing acquaintance, to determine the proper screen length for a long shot and a close shot of identical action. Compare the running time of the two shots.
5. Edit footage of an action, first on action, then at rest. Play and critique the result.
6. Edit together two versions of out-of-frame/ into-frame action from the same footage. In the first version, take care to avoid letting the action "fall out of the splice." In other words, surrender an outgoing shot while the subject is still visible at the edge of frame, and pick up the incoming shot with the subject already in frame.

In the second version, recut the action so the subject disappears entirely from frame in the outgoing shot and does not reappear for several moments after the incoming shot has begun. Compare and evaluate the two approaches.

7. Edit together precisely matched action from raw field shots that contain overlapping action. View and discuss the raw and edited footage with the photographer.
8. Using footage from separate events, cut together an example of parallel cutting.
9. Insert a cutaway in the middle of a shot in which the action continues to progress, such as an athlete running down a playing field. Pick up the action after the cutaway precisely where it ended in the outgoing shot just before the cutaway. Now recut the scene, this

time eliminating from the action scene following the cutaway a length of footage equivalent to the length of the cutaway. Compare and discuss the result.

10. Edit together two scenes that result in a false reverse in the action. Use any other appropriate shot available to you to soften the impact of the false reverse.
11. Use sound or a video shot of your choice as a transitional device from one sequence in a story to the next.
12. Edit together two examples of the cold cut, followed by examples in which you have eliminated the cold cuts you originally created.
13. Practice editing flash cuts. Cut footage of your choice to the beat of music of your choice.
14. Study examples of the effective use of optical effects as they are used in television and film.
15. Practice editing voice-over narration against video pictures, leaving white space with natural sound in the track as appropriate.

NOTES

- 1 An Interview with Cheri Hunter," in *Editing* (Eagle Eye Film Company, 4019 Tujunga Avenue, Studio City, CA 91604, July 1986), 1, 2.
- 2 Nick Denton. "Why Gawker is Moving Beyond the Blog," *Gizmodo*, www.lifehacker.com/5701749/why-gawker-is-moving-beyond-the-blog. Published November 30, 2010, accessed September 20, 2016.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Karel Reisz and Gavin Miller, *The Technique of Film Editing* (New York: Hastings House, 1968), 46–48.
- 5 Matt Williams, "Academy Winner Extols Editing," *Rangefinder* (Utah State University, Spring 1985), 40.
- 6 Phil Sturholm, "Creative Photojournalists—They Are the Future," a presentation at the NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, March 20, 1986.
- 7 Karel Reisz and Gavin Miller, *The Technique of Film Editing* (New York: Hastings House, 1968), 142.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

SHOOTING VIDEO IN THE FIELD

5

Visual storytellers often discover that small changes in their approach produce big improvements on the screen. As one element after another comes under control, an individual style begins to emerge. The process affirms that professional development never ends and that no detail is too unimportant to master.

COMPOSITION GUIDELINES

The rules of composition that have served artists over the centuries remain valid for videographers. The most powerful two-dimensional images are distraction-free. They appear visually balanced, while projecting a sense of depth, scale, and perspective.

Television Is a Horizontal Format

Everything on wide-screen television, movie screens and most desktop computers happens within a horizontal format. There is no possibility of turning the camera sideways to record a vertical shot in portrait mode, unless you're shooting with a smart phone or action cam. Although the horizontal-only format may require some adjustment, for most photographers it is not necessarily limiting because the entire horizontal field needn't be used all the time.

THE RULE OF THIRDS

The **rule of thirds** identifies "golden spots" within the viewfinder frame to improve the composition of individual scenes. Many camera viewfinders can display these "golden spots," or locations within the frame where the lines intersect. (Figure 5.1 identifies these golden

BOX 5.1 HORIZONTAL ISN'T ALWAYS BEST

Whenever you shoot video for viewing on smartphones and tablets, the rules change. It's more comfortable to hold many handheld devices vertically, in "tall screen" mode. Even while watching video shot in horizontal format (landscape mode), smartphone and tablet viewers often prefer and routinely watch video in "tall screen mode" (portrait mode). Whether you decide to shoot in horizontal format or vertical format, the correct approach may come down to which format looks most correct on the devices your audience will be using.¹

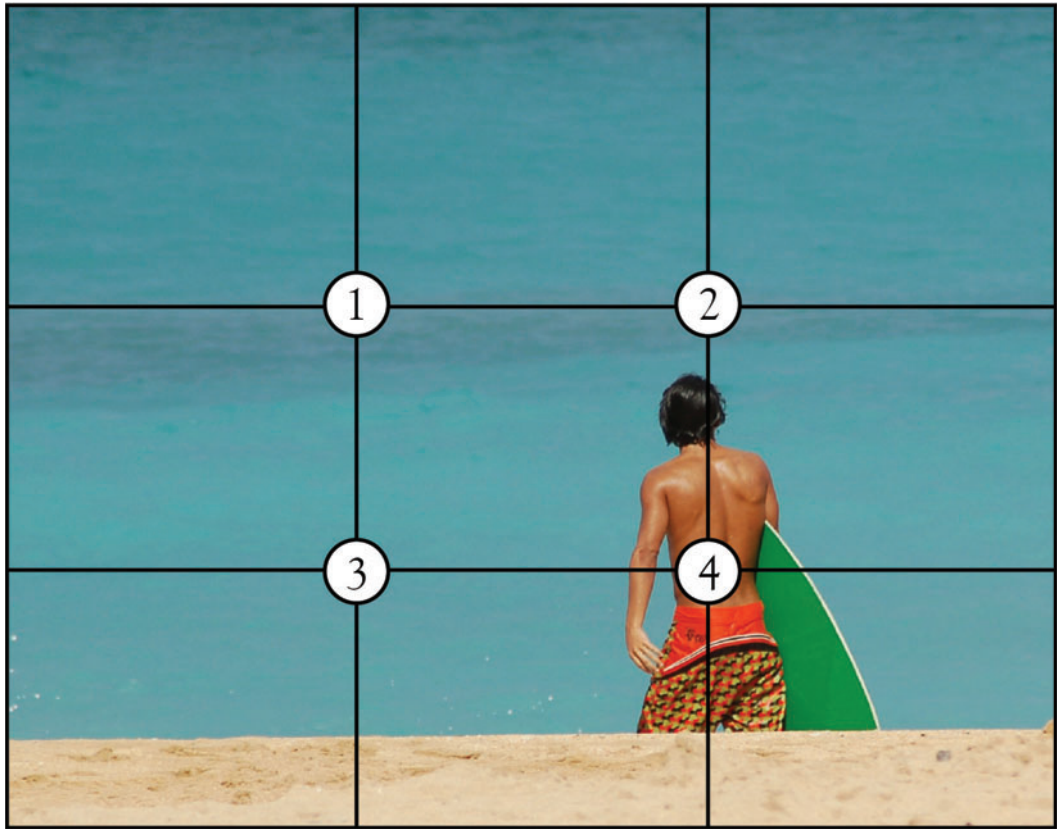


Figure 5.1 The camera viewfinder, divided into imaginary lines, with “golden spots” where the lines intersect, permits composition of scenes according to the rule of thirds.

©2016 Laura Schaub Designs

spots – 1, 2, 3, 4 on the diagram). If your camera viewfinder lacks these lines, try imagining them superimposed upon the viewfinder.

These areas serve as focal points where our eyes naturally go whenever we view or take a picture. Most times, compose the shot so your main subject or center of interest occupies one or more golden spots.

Referring to Figure 5.1, a water-skier moving screen left to screen right might be placed on the imaginary line identified by numbers 1 and 2. This composition gives the skier room to move into the frame. A man petting a dog might be placed at intersection 2 with the dog at intersection 3. A speaker addressing a large crowd might be placed at intersection 1 with the crowd filling the remainder of the screen.

Using the same approach you can place horizon lines either on the line identified by numbers 1 and 2, and thereby emphasize the foreground, or on the line identified by numbers 3 and 4, and thereby emphasize the sky or background.

Notice the absence of a golden spot in the frame's dead center. That's the "Bermuda Triangle" in your viewfinder, where good composition often goes to die. Note, however, that recommendations are only guides, never hard and fast truth. You may want a rocket standing smack in the frame's dead center, so you can capture flames spitting frame right and left as the rocket ignites. You may wish to place a face in the frame's dead center, to create the POV of an amateur photographer or yes, even as a professional approach to heighten impact (see Figure 5.4).

Show Viewers Only What You Want Them to See

One of the most freeing rules of composition is to show viewers only what you want them to see. Although the mind concentrates on what it wants to see and filters out the rest, the camera records everything before it, so show the camera only what you want viewers to see. "Study the viewfinder just as if you are at home watching the scene on television," advises Florida photojournalist Gary Croshaw, "and never let anything on the screen take you by surprise."²

On Every Shot, Think Before You Shoot

Ask yourself, as you peer into the viewfinder, "Is this important?" "Is this relevant?" If the answer is yes, push the button.



Figure 5.2 Notice how composition impacts the viewer's perception. Composition is less dynamic when subject appears centered in the frame (left). Note how the rule of thirds strengthens composition (right).

Ernie Leyba Photography

Elevate the Ordinary

“Don’t turn on the camera unless what you see in the viewfinder makes you say ‘wow,’ or otherwise impresses you with its impact,” advises photojournalist John Premack.³ Such advice helps explain how some photographers make the mundane seem extraordinary and memorable.

Screen Space

In shots with action, **screen space** and visual balance change constantly as subjects move about in the frame. To maintain a visual treatment that is relatively transparent and unnoticeable to home viewers, some vigilance is necessary.



Figure 5.3 Notice how composition affects the viewer’s perception. The randomly composed image (left) is less pleasing to the eye than its companion. Notice how the photo on the right has a more powerful center of interest and “feels” more balanced. Note its use of “golden spots” suggested by the rule of thirds; its overall balance; and the obvious visual impact.

Ernie Leyba Photography



Figure 5.4 Powerful composition sometimes results from ignoring composition guidelines. Here the main subject occupies the frame’s dead center with powerful effect.

© 2011 Jon Warren/World Vision.

- Make good use of the entire screen when composing a shot. Fill the screen with important subject matter.
- Avoid tilted horizon lines. Use the leveling bubble on the tripod or line up the camera viewfinder with a horizontal line to be certain the camera is level.
- Avoid cutting the screen exactly in half with the horizon line.
- Remember that movement or bright lights in the background pull the viewer's eye away from the subject. Eliminate these distractions from the frame whenever possible.
- If the background is distracting, move the subject or the camera if possible; otherwise, throw the background out of focus by changing the focal length and focus point of your lens or by reducing light so you can shoot at a wider aperture and thereby reduce depth of field.
- When shooting sound bites, avoid placing the speaker's face dead center in the frame. Place the speaker's eyes above the center of the frame and provide "looking room" within the frame. Also leave room at the bottom of the shot to super the speaker's name.
- When shooting over-the-shoulder shots, avoid filling the frame with the back of the person's head.
- Composition can be unconsciously disturbing if the subject appears to be moving or looking out of frame instead of into frame. As a rule of thumb, action moving frame right should be positioned in the left third of the frame, or at least slightly to the left of center, and vice versa. This leaves space for the subject to move or look into.
- Avoid big gaps of space between people, such as in interview settings. If wide spaces exist, either recompose the shot by physically moving the camera or, if ethically warranted, by repositioning the subjects themselves. Normally, people can position themselves closer together on screen than would be customary in real life.
- Photograph individuals in full facial shots that show both eyes, rather than in profile shots that show one eye and one ear. In real life we normally see eyes in pairs but are only subconsciously aware of ears. Side profile shots incorrectly emphasize the ear.
- Create the illusion of depth in your photography by including foreground interest in the shot and by photographing shots that contain two or more planes of focus for the subject to pass in front of and behind.
- Maintain crisp focus on your subject.

POINTERS FOR WIDE SCREEN COMPOSITION

Composing for any format has always been subjective. You may find the following aesthetic and practical approaches useful in taking your composition for wide-screen media to the next level.

- Paint to fill your canvas. Place people and interesting backgrounds edge-to-edge in your frame.
- Be mindful that a 55-mm lens will more closely approximate the normal field of view in professional wide-screen formats. If you're seeing too much of the background around the edges, tighten up the shot.

- Use care in interview situations where the interviewer is off screen. With such a wide frame to work with, the interviewee may appear to be looking off into space if the eye line is too far left or right of the center of the frame. You can place yourself (or another interviewer) almost directly behind the camera to help avoid this disturbing appearance.
- Allow for **TV cutoff**. Whenever you compose a shot in the camera viewfinder, allow for "cutoff." Some home screens clip off the edges of the transmitted image. To avoid the problems, some camera viewfinders show a "safe area" or else show less of the image than is being recorded, which may cause other problems, as you'll see in Chapter 12, "How to Improve Your Storytelling Ability."
- If the viewfinder does show the entire picture being recorded, then compose shots that are slightly looser than normal.⁴

Trust your instincts

The Internet is filled with advice for developing artists and photographers on how to become more artistically sensitive and proficient. No one must wait to be taught these things, of course. Often the best approach is to move ahead, experimenting with new approaches, adopting what works for you, and discarding what doesn't. Rather than doubt yourself too often throughout this process, learn to trust your instincts. And learn to listen to yourself before you listen to any other critic. No one knows more about your ability than you do.

USE A TRIPOD WHENEVER APPROPRIATE

Sometimes a tripod is most appropriate, sometimes not. In general, use a tripod for extreme tight shots; for shooting sequences free of shakiness; or when shooting video that requires thoughtful composition. Also use a tripod when shooting a thoughtful, sit-down interview or



Figure 5.5 The steadiest shots result when the camera is mounted on a tripod or other fixed object.

John DeTarsio

whenever you have time to compose the shot (Figure 5.5). Most photojournalists keep a tripod close by, wherever they go. If no tripod is available where you work, or if the tripod assigned to you is wobbly or inadequate and repair or replacement appears unlikely, consider buying your own tripod.

THE HANDHELD CAMERA

When the story is moving, switch to handheld so you can move with the story. Many cameras and smart phones provide built-in stabilization, although electronic stabilization sometimes cuts off some of the image. Wide-angle lenses also help reduce shakiness in handheld shots. The closer you are to the action and the wider the shot, the steadier and smoother the pictures will look. For rock-steady shots, use a tripod if you have to stand more than 10 or 20 feet away from your subject.

BOX 5.2 HANDHELD VERSUS TRIPOD SHOTS

It's important to shoot appropriately to the action going on around you. If the subject is moving, you should be moving as well. If I am away from the action I want my camera on a tripod.

When action is happening or when the character is involved in a real-life moment, I want to be handheld, up close, and personal. I keep my camera loose so I can move with the character.

The whole purpose of a tripod is to have rock-steady pictures. Tripod shots often are scene setters – “this is where we are now.” Tripods are also invaluable for shots made on extreme telephoto, composing a scenic shot, or setting up a shot through which action will flow.

Handheld shots are most useful in very close situations when you're right up next to your subject, with the lens on a very wide shot. It's almost like you're dancing with the subject and the movement is all with the feet. It's all tracking, side to side, front to back, zooming and panning with the feet and not with the fingers on the zoom control, and the shoulders pivoting around, and always with the camera on a wide shot and always used up close. It's a person walking down the hall and me walking with him – never standing and panning as the person goes by, but walking along in a tracking motion.

Ideally, I want shots to last at least ten seconds, so there's plenty of usable footage in the middle. This gives the camera time to settle down if there's a little shaking in the beginning and toward the end, and still leaves plenty of usable video. You can be confident about having “enough meat in the middle,” especially when deadlines are tight and all you can do is just lay down long-running shots with everything already there.

—John DeTarsio

John DeTarsio is Director and Director of Photography for scripted and non-scripted episodic TV, documentaries and magazine shows.

If the action isn't moving and you're caught without a tripod while using extremely heavy or lightweight camera gear, you can convert your body into a tripod. Find a wall, a telephone pole, a tree, or whatever else is handy and push the camera up against this object. Indoors, if a straight-backed chair is handy, sit backward on the chair and use the chair back as a camera support. Further support the camera with a sandbag, pillow, or cushion.

For steadier shots, you can also kneel, a technique that provides good perspective on many shots. When kneeling, sit on your heels and rest elbows on your knees, or even set the camera on an equipment case. You can also place the camera on the ground or floor, straddle it with your knees, and use a wallet or similar object as a wedge to position the camera properly.

You also can hold the camera at waist level (cradle it in your arms) or at arm's length. Some viewfinders can be swiveled to virtually any angle you might need to compose the shot conveniently.

If all else fails, you can adjust stabilization in your video editing software to make shaky video look steady. This step may add more time to the edit job, however, depending on your software.

CONTROL BREATHING

As you prepare to shoot, relax. Breathe in, let half the air out, then hold your breath like a target shooter. If the shot is long, breathe in shallow breaths.

PREPLAN BODY MOVEMENT

Preplan your body movement for pan shots or whenever you follow action with the handheld camera – to follow a plane taking off, for example, or to follow a person moving past the camera. Position your feet in the direction the shot will end, then swing your body back around to capture the approaching action. As you shoot, your body will “uncoil” much like a spring. Otherwise, your body will bind up as you “coil up.”

WALK IN LOCKSTEP

Another trick to minimize the shakiness of handheld shots is to photograph only objects that move. Subject movement renders camera movement less obvious. For smoothest action whenever you follow a subject in a walking shot, stay in lockstep with the person you're photographing. When the person steps on the right foot, you also should be stepping on your right foot. If you are walking backward, reverse this procedure.

HOW TO USE THE ZOOM LENS

Use zooms with care, and to achieve a goal. Some zooms can help you communicate with the viewer. A **zoom in** (zooming from wide shot to tight) can show viewers what you want them to

see. Perhaps you're shooting a detective looking through a case file. After an establishing shot, you might shoot over her shoulder. Now viewers see a document from her point of view, as the camera zooms in to show pertinent information.

If you must zoom while working handheld, try to avoid using auto zoom. Instead, zoom by *physically moving your body with the lens set to a wide-angle view*. The wide-angle setting will keep the shot in focus, and minimize shakiness as you physically move closer to your subject. In general, use the electronic zoom on the lens only when the camera is on a tripod.

The **zoom out** (zooming from tight shot to wide) works best in two situations. If you find nothing better, you can shoot a zoom out to alert viewers the story is ending. A better closing shot, though, is **negative action**, as in old westerns that end with the main character riding into the sunset, a train pulling away from the station, or a hero walking into the distance. Another caution: Negative action shots often supply better closing audio than zoom out shots.

A second zoom technique is the **reveal**. The camera zooms out to reveal a change or visual surprise – something unexpected for the viewer. Perhaps we see the main character at a polo match. The next shot on screen cuts to a close-up of our main character, then pulls back to reveal the subject in a new location. Thus, the reveal shot can serve to surprise or disorient the viewer, or serve even as a transition shot.

AVOID CALLING ATTENTION TO THE ZOOM

Normally, the best zoom shots glide so smoothly and slowly that viewers seldom notice them. One trick is to introduce the zoom simultaneously as subject movement begins, as when a jet at the end of the runway begins to gather speed for takeoff.

Another device to help make the zoom shot less noticeable is to use only a portion of the zoom range, rather than zooming through the lens's entire focal-length range from wide angle to telephoto. The shot's purpose may suggest the appropriate zoom range for a particular subject.

ADJUST SPEED AND DURATION OF ZOOM TO STORY MOOD AND PACE

Remember also to control the speed, length, and duration of the zoom so that it will match the overall pace and mood of the larger sequence in which it is to appear. Sometimes "snap" zooms are most appropriate. At other times, a slow, lazy zoom will work best. Zoom shots that are always made at the same speed, and are predictably long and artificially slow, can damage the story's pace.

Also try to "feather" the beginning and end of your zoom shots: Accelerate slowly to a predetermined zoom speed, then gradually decelerate the zoom as you come to the end of the shot. This avoids the hard stops and starts that occur when zooms begin and end instantly.

RECOMPOSE THE SHOT AS YOU ZOOM

As you zoom, remember to tilt the camera up or down as necessary to keep such factors as headroom in acceptable composition. Avoid starting a zoom shot with the subject centered close-up in the frame, then zooming back to a longer shot without tilting down the camera to keep head room above the subject in acceptable proportions. The result would be a long shot of the subject in dead center of frame, with most of the top half of the frame wasted on empty space.

Remember, also, the good advice of professional photographers: “When you zoom, don’t ‘play the trombone.’” Don’t zoom in, then back out, during the same shot.

STORYTELLING AND PLANNING

It is possible to shoot everything that moves and still not have a story. The goal is to shoot images that tell stories. Identify the story. Research the subject. Decide what you want your audience to learn. Know the story so you can tell it effectively to others with your camera. Ask yourself as you shoot, “What offers visual proof of the subject, of my point of view, the story’s main points, and my story focus?”

Remember also to give every story you shoot a beginning, middle, and ending. Stories without an ending are the visual equivalent of unsigned letters.⁵

ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION IN THE FIELD

Once you have identified the story in your own mind, talk over your ideas with other members of the team. Contribute as appropriate to the story and how it is to be covered and edited. Only if you establish communication with other team members can you know what they are thinking and reach final agreement on the story to be told (Figure 5.6).

BOX 5.3 JOHN DETARSIO TIPS

From the minute I first get my assignment, I start brainstorming the story’s focus, how it will begin, what’s likely to happen in the middle, and how it will end.

The focus will change until we start to shoot, and will often change again at least once after shooting begins. That’s because visual focus depends on the real life that plays out on location, and what I’m able to capture.

Before leaving the location, I must know what my open is, and what the opening shot or shots are. How are we going to start this story – the first layer of the onion for this story? I must also know I have at least one good closing shot (often negative action) and a good closing statement or sound bites that can sum up the day – a statement, a period to the piece.



Figure 5.6 A CBS crew on location in Brazil sets up to shoot a *CBS 60 Minutes* interview. Reporting in team situations is a collaborative effort among all team members. Ongoing communication between the reporter and photographer is essential on every assignment.

John DeTarsio

Communication with the subjects in your story is just as vital. The contributions of subjects who trust the reporting team, and who feel safe enough to share something of their inner selves, can elevate the story from the routine to the exceptional.

THINK BEFORE YOU SHOOT

To further separate your work from the competition, exercise imagination every time you shoot. Try to make your photography communicate not only what you see and experience in the field, but what other observers may have missed. Show the event, but also give viewers a reason to want to watch the story, and look for ways to help viewers feel as if they have participated in it.

SHOOT SEQUENCES

A proven method to heighten the viewer's sense of involvement in the story is to shoot matched-action sequences. Through sequences, visual storytellers can reconstruct an event much as first-person observers would see the action. To shoot sequences, learn to recognize action that repeats itself and break "simple" action into its complex parts. If the assignment is to show a child boarding a school bus, show the child's face, a close-up of her scuffed tennis

shoes, the sapphire-chip ring on her finger, her fingers tightly curled around her lunch box handle, her point of view of the approaching bus, the driver’s smiling face, the cars stopped behind the bus, her father waving good-bye, the bus door closing, and the bus resuming its journey. During editing, the shots can be used in any given selection and order to emphasize particular aspects of the message.

SHOOT AND MOVE

Remember to help the editor avoid “pop cuts” (also see Chapter 3). After every shot you make in the field, try to physically move the camera to a new location and angle. They result most often from using the zoom lens to shoot a long shot and medium shot of a subject, or a medium shot and a close-up, without moving the camera off the original axis line (Figure 5.4).

To avoid the pop cut, simply remember to shoot and move. When you first photograph the subject, establish an imaginary axis line projecting from the lens through the center of the subject. Shoot the subject, and then physically move the camera to a new setup position for each new shot (Figure 5.7a, b, c).



Figure 5.7 To avoid “pop cuts,” remember to shoot and move. In other words, physically move the camera to a new location and angle after every shot you make.

Ernie Leyba Photography

ANTICIPATE ACTION

If you can study the action before you shoot and learn to anticipate what happens next, your photography will have originality. If you find yourself shooting behind the action, try to preplan your shots. Wait for the action to occur and be shooting when it happens. “Don’t let yourself get behind the story,” advised network freelance photographer Bob Brandon. “Otherwise you will always be shooting aftermath.”⁶

SHOOT ONLY THE SHOTS YOU NEED

Most photographers have seen their worst shots make it into a presentation, broadcast or onto the web. Usually they blame the editor: “The shot was out of focus/too shaky/too fuzzy/too green. *Why* did you put *that* shot on the air?” In turn, the editor usually blames deadlines that prevented a more critical review of the footage. If a shot with poor focus or an unsteady zoom resides in your video, it will often make its way onto the screen.

The answer to such problems is to be found in the wisdom of professionals. “If you don’t want it aired, don’t shoot it,” says Atlanta editor James Townley.⁷

This means that when you focus the camera, focus it before you begin recording. Sometimes, things will happen so fast you may have to roll before you’ve composed the shot, but in general try to work out all your shots, including zooms and pans, and rehearse them before you turn on the camera.

AVOID INDISCRIMINATE SHOOTING

With abundant recording capacity on hard drives and memory sticks, many photographers overshoot their subjects. They simply shoot until the drive is full, sometimes shooting twenty minutes of video or more for a simple thirty-second spot. This practice of shooting “editing fodder” unnecessarily wears down field batteries and forces editors under tight deadlines to handle unnecessary volumes of footage. As every editor knows, less footage is easier and quicker to edit.

Even if every shot is award-winning material, the editor faced with a ten-minute deadline may still have to cut the spot from the first two minutes of raw video anyway. If you discover that your best footage often is near the end of the shoot, become more selective and avoid shooting the camera randomly. The goal is to assess the story visually in your mind before you shoot each scene and to have a purpose for every shot you take, a process made easier if you have first identified the story to be told.

EDIT IN THE CAMERA

The best videographers are also experienced editors. Their experience at the edit console allows them to previsualize or edit a scene in their mind before they even shoot it. This

ability allows the photographer to **edit in the camera**, shooting sequences and overlapping action in generally the same order in which they will appear in the story. The technique can save valuable editing time on stories that originate close to airtime. The technique also helps ensure the editor will reconstruct the story as the photographer envisioned it.

When you edit in the camera, it is important to concentrate on three shots at a time: the shot you're taking, the shot you just took, and the shot you will take next. With this approach, you will intuitively shoot more sequences and can more naturally maintain continuity in the action from one shot to the next.

If you retake a shot without altering composition, take steps to avoid the inadvertent airing of identical takes by placing your hand to the lens to blank out the screen, or by recording a few frames of color bars between your identical takes. When you edit against deadlines, or whenever someone else edits your footage, these visual separations will help prevent jump cuts.

Just as important, when you want particular footage to be aired, especially when the editor is on deadline, submit your footage for editing or digitizing with the video already cued to the best footage.

SHOOT TO ELIMINATE THE FALSE REVERSE

As you edit in the camera you can eliminate false reverses in the subject's screen direction by remembering to establish an axis line, then consciously shooting only on one side of that line. If the axis line is a confusing concept, just remember to keep action moving in the same direction in the viewfinder from one shot to the next. If the train is moving screen right, keep it moving screen right in every shot. If a person's nose points screen left, keep it pointing left in all shots.

To soften abrupt reverses in action, buffer with a shot of the action as it approaches the camera head-on. You also can provide a cutaway to divert audience attention from the abrupt reversal in action. Or, you can "take the audience with you" by recording the shot as you cross the line, or else soften the reverse with a dissolve or other optical effect.

INVOLVE THE CAMERA IN THE ACTION

Try to move in close to your subjects and involve the camera in the action as intimately as possible. Go for detail and try to include full facial close-ups of people, in views that approximate how we see people in real life during our everyday, one-on-one encounters. Otherwise, the audience may feel cheated.



Figure 5.8 Full facial composition in which both of the subject's eyes can be seen is preferable to the often observed shot that shows only one of the person's eyes and an ear.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Full facial shots create high impact because of their emphasis on eyes. Close-up, detailed shots of eyes help reveal what the subject is thinking and feeling, so try to show both of the subject's eyes, rather than a profile shot that shows one ear and one eye (Figure 5.8).

In this context, telephoto shots seldom count for actually moving the camera close to the subject. Shots made on long focal length settings magnify the subject but tend to produce an artificial and unappealing sense of perspective. Telephoto shots rarely involve the audience as intimately as the camera that is truly close to the subject.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE

Because video is often about things that happen to people or otherwise affect their lives, an emphasis on people helps give most stories larger meaning. Without people in your stories, your reporting will tend toward institutional treatment, which many viewers may find dull and uninviting. Often, when you tell your stories through people, you can use their presence to help illuminate the larger meaning of events.

Working with people is essential for photographers to master because the most intimate relationship in the reporting process often develops between the photographer and subject. The process is less intimidating than it might at first appear to be. Most strangers will be willing to cooperate, provided you treat them with courtesy and respect.

To understand that relationship, consider having someone stick a camera in your face, stand two feet away, and let it follow every move you make. Now try to act natural while under that microscope and you'll understand why it's so important to develop rapport with your subject.

BOX 5.4 WORKING WITH STORY SUBJECTS

As I get to know the main characters and try to make them comfortable, I always talk with them throughout the story, either asking them questions regarding the story or explaining what we are doing. If, as I shoot cover footage and see they are nervous because the camera is on them, I sometimes turn my head away from the camera's eyepiece and caution them not to talk right now, explaining they might look like they're talking to themselves. They then begin to understand how the video will be edited and begin to feel part of the process. Explaining what may seem like a mysterious and glamorous process instead of just snapping, "don't talk" helps win the person's confidence in your mission. I always try to explain what I'm doing and try to relate to them and their comfort level by letting them know "I understand this is uncomfortable, but you are doing a great job" as I continue to gather the story – all the while keeping them on focus.

—John DeTarsio

To make people feel comfortable you have to like people. Look for common ground with the subject, something you both have in common, something you can share with the other person. Unless you establish a comfortable relationship and your story subject is able to open up, the story will be stiff, period.

Confidence in yourself and your ability helps you avoid being intimidated by your gear or by onlookers or even by the subject of your story. If you do feel inhibited or intimidated, remember that self-confidence develops through experience. In a short time you should feel entirely at ease telling other peoples' stories.

AVOID DISTRACTING THE SUBJECT

Because the camera and other hardware act as barriers to reality, try to avoid drawing attention to yourself or any of your equipment whenever you work with people. Set up sound and lighting equipment with as few distractions as possible, preferably before your subject arrives, and try to "fade into the wallpaper."

If people are worried about how they'll look or how they should behave in front of the camera, they won't give you their best heat or white light. **Heat** is present when sound bites are spontaneous and believable and when they embody moments of emotional and intellectual intensity. **White light** occurs whenever the subject is natural, unaffected, and emotionally transparent while on camera. When white light occurs, viewers know they are experiencing something of the real person in a real environment.

To further preserve spontaneity, try not to emphasize the microphone. Hand-held and shotgun mics intimidate many people and create barriers between you and the subject. Furthermore,



Figure 5.9 The handheld or “stick” mic (left) can draw attention and unnecessarily act as a barrier between the audience and reporter. The miniature lavalier microphone is far less intrusive (right).

Ernie Leyba Photography

mic flags (corporate or station logos affixed to handheld microphones) tend to pull the viewer’s eye away from the person and the person’s emotion. Unless your employer’s policy dictates otherwise, consider substituting a lavalier mic instead (Figure 5.9).

STAGING VERSUS MOTIVATING

When working with people, you have at least three options when photographing their activity. The first is to photograph people as they go about their affairs. This technique results in perhaps the most honest and natural depictions of the subject. A second approach is to ask the subject to perform a particular activity on camera. If the wood carver has decided not to work on the day you show up, you may have to ask him to carve anyway so you can shoot the video you need and get on to your next story assignment. Most photographers consider this practice ethically acceptable, because the subject performs only as he or she normally would in the photographer’s absence. A third alternative, unacceptable in many instances, is to **stage**

the action and ask people to do what they don't normally do or direct them to engage in activities that are out of character.

The more preferable alternative to staging is to motivate people to do what they normally do. The process can be as simple as making an observation: "Even as a retired airline pilot, you still fly commercial aircraft." If luck holds, your subject may reply while grabbing the remote control for a commercial drone, "It's a fact. Here, let me show you."

THE ONE-PERSON BAND

Not only must reporters who labor alone simultaneously photograph and conduct interviews for their stories, they must often photograph themselves in standups before the camera. With only a little practice in the field, both techniques are easily mastered.

HOW TO SHOOT AND CONDUCT INTERVIEWS SIMULTANEOUSLY

Interviews are most easily conducted if the person to be interviewed remains busy at a familiar task. This allows the reporter-photographer to carry on a discussion with the person, sometimes without even formally asking questions, and without the need to "interrupt reality" by placing the person in a staged interview setting. People are usually less self-conscious in this setting, so interviews can be more spontaneous.

Holding the camera during the interview seems to result in greater spontaneity than if the photojournalist mounts the camera on a tripod and concentrates most of his or her attention on the viewfinder. Preferably, the photojournalist can hold the camera while asking questions or making observations from off camera. The shotgun mic supplied on most field cameras usually is sufficient to pick up remarks from both the interviewer and interviewee. Because the camera mic is close enough to pick up your "I see's" and "Uh-huhs," you can indicate your interest and understanding of the interviewee's comments with an occasional and barely audible "Mmmm."⁸

You can work the camera quite close to people, provided you've established rapport with them. To help keep the subject from looking straight into the camera lens as you photograph the interview, you can try holding your left index finger to your left ear. Most subjects will obediently attach to this visual reference point during shooting, rather than to the camera lens, especially if they have been told in advance what to expect.

HOW TO PHOTOGRAPH YOUR OWN STANDUP

If you are recording your own standup as a static on-camera appearance, simply place a light stand in front of the camera to mark the spot where you will stand. The top of the stand can extend to within a few inches of your height. Tape a business card or other small object to the

BOX 5.5 INTERVIEW STYLES

Interviews are an everyday fact in reporting and storytelling. They show people to people, and help give stories immediacy, authority and spontaneity. The most common interview styles come in three flavors.

Process interviews: This approach lets the photojournalist have a conversation with story subjects as they go about a familiar task or some activity they've mastered. In formal interview settings, folks who seldom appear on camera or prefer not to appear, often fuss over what to wear or how their hair and makeup look. They focus attention inwardly, upon themselves, rather than the topic. Process interviews help such individuals feel less self-conscious.

They also will become more comfortable around the camera(s) and microphones if you first shoot a couple of sequences while they perform some activity. After you've taken a few shots, you might throw out a simple observation, "That looks delicious," or "I know you've pulled this old ferry back and forth across the Rio Grande for a long time." Questions also work, "What happens next?" or "If people no longer need your ferry to enter Mexico, how will you earn a living?"

Sit-down interviews: Once interview subjects know you better, and trust you, they may be willing to go to a quiet place for a formal, sit-down interview. Here, you would frame and light the subject in the most appealing ways possible, and compose the shot in a head-and-shoulders frame. Here you can ask the person more reflective questions about the story and perhaps uncover a meaningful emotional response that will help viewers more closely relate to the subject, "What were you thinking when that happened?" or "Tell me about the day you learned about your cancer."

"Non-interview" interviews: Throughout process and sit-down interviews, try as well to conduct the "non-interview" interview, or as some call it, "the non-question question," which is nothing more than non-verbal language that encourages subjects to explain what they just said, state what remains unspoken, or prompts them to continue. It may be nothing more than holding their gaze without saying anything – looking directly, eye-to-eye; or giving the subject a gesture. Maybe it's a raise of the eyebrow in surprise, a positive gesture that suggests, "You're doing great!" or even a shrug or small smile. Storytellers sometimes discover those little non-verbal moments yield the best material. Your subject may not realize that little nod you gave them was an interview question, but it was.

—John DeTarsio

stand at the same height as your eyes. Use this card or other object to help focus the lens and to establish correct framing and headroom. Clip a lapel mic to your clothing, set sound levels, roll video, and step in front of the camera to deliver your standup. Your body will block out the light stand you used as a reference point during the setup. If you must use a handheld mic, hang it on the mic stand before you roll the camera. When you step in front of the camera,

simply grasp the mic, turn so that your body is centered in front of the light stand, and deliver your standup to the camera.

If you are doing a walking standup, frame the shot so that you leave room to move into and out of frame. Again, you can use the light stand to help you establish proper framing and headroom height. Set up the light stand where you want the right side of the scene to be framed, then move the stand and use it to help find where the left side of the frame ends in the viewfinder. You can mark both right and left limits of where you will enter and exit frame with a couple of rocks or with some gaffer's tape or any other suitable object. At this point, remove the stand so it doesn't appear in your shot. (Some cameras, you'll remember, show more than you see in the viewfinder.)

Now, with the lens set on the desired composition, roll the camera, walk into frame, and "root" yourself, meaning that you set your body so that you don't begin to sway as you address the camera. When you are finished talking, give yourself an edit point before you exit frame or else exit frame naturally as you finish talking.

Network correspondent John Larson offers more guidelines about shooting your own interviews and standups in Chapter 11, "Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute."

SHOOTING IN COLD WEATHER

When shooting in cold weather, keep batteries, camera, and recording media dry, covered, and as warm as possible. Especially try to avoid storing batteries in the car during cold weather. When you move the camera inside from the cold, give it adequate time to warm slowly to room temperature (Figure 5.10).

Humidity and condensation can occur not only on the camera lens but inside the camera itself as the equipment is moved from a very cold environment to a warm, relatively moist room. Some cameras shut down when moisture levels climb too high.

During heavy rain or snowfall, the best solution seems to be a kind of fairly loose "raincoat" that allows excess moisture to escape before it can damage the camera lens or condense inside the camera. This so-called raincoat is nothing more than a loose cape that you can buy, or make from waterproof materials to fit the gear at hand.

When you must work in the cold, try to install any replaceable batteries in the camera at the last possible moment, and then try to spend as little time making your shots as necessary. Try to keep batteries and recording media as warm as possible, preferably under your winter coat next to your body. When the shots are made, remove the batteries from your equipment



Figure 5.10 Plummeting temperatures take their toll on field equipment, batteries, and people.

Ernie Leyba Photography

and if possible return to a warm car and let warm air from the car's heater or defroster blow across them. If you must shoot outdoors in cold weather for long periods, consider covering the camera housing with a padded cover. Some covers are available or can be made to order with pockets specially built to accommodate portable hand warmers.

SAFETY FIRST

Over time you learn to avoid risky, sometimes hazardous situations (Figure 5.11). If you are to expose yourself to danger while covering events, the cause must be terribly worthwhile. Possibly no event is worth risking death or serious injury. Train yourself to be aware and learn to recognize that the brick wall in front of you may collapse at any moment or that you are in the middle of the SWAT team's line of fire or that noxious fumes and smoke are creeping your way.

Although you can be physically hurt while covering the news, it is just as possible to be emotionally hurt. Perhaps a man's wife has just died or a family has lost its home in a fire, or perhaps a three-year-old girl in a story you cover suffers from terminal cancer. No one says journalists must be the tough, silent type. The important thing is to admit your feelings and if something bothers you, talk it out with someone you trust.

Figure 5.11 Video journalists encounter hazards that range from dust storms, cave-ins, and fire, to oil spills, enraged crowds, tear gas, and military combat. Here, videographers encounter a New Mexico sandstorm while shooting a television series.

John DeTarsio



DISTANCING

Also of concern when you cover the news is a phenomenon called **distancing**. As you watch the action unfold in the camera viewfinder, a feeling develops that you're watching the event on TV. The event may seem remote, even unreal, and at such moments you may almost feel that nothing can hurt you. Dozens of photographers have looked up to find heavy equipment, parade floats and football players almost upon them, all because of the erroneous sense of distance that resulted from the false perspectives of wide-angle and telephoto lens settings.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

An extra set of eyes can offer an important margin of safety. Whereas the photographer's attention is focused on the viewfinder, the reporter or someone you enlist can be alert to action that develops outside the viewfinder frame. This person also can watch your back in dangerous crowd situations, making paths through crowds as you record the action, or acting as driver while you make shots on the move.

PLAN TO MAKE PLENTY OF MISTAKES

Every photographer encounters common problems the first few times in the field. With only slight exaggeration, some photographers suggest you're not a professional until you've committed every mistake there is to commit, at least twice. The following list of most common mistakes forms a starting point; you may wish to add additional notes based on your own field experience.

Shakiness: Tripod all shots until you learn to hold the camera rock-steady. If you can't use a tripod, shoot on wide angle and support the camera and your body by leaning or resting

against stationary objects. Remember never to hold the camera when the lens is set on telephoto.

Color Balance: Set the camera's white balance, if applicable, to achieve an absence of color at white. Adjust white balance each time the light source changes. Some cameras allow you to preset indoor/outdoor white balance values. Thus, if you're following a suspect from fluorescent light inside a courthouse hall to bright sunlight outside, you can hit the white balance switch as you move outside and be assured of proper white balance.

Wrong Filter: If necessary, be certain the proper camera filter is in place under each light source —sunlight, fluorescent, artificial, mercury-vapor, athletic playing fields, and the like.

Record Color Bars: Remember to record color bars for ten to fifteen seconds at the start of each disk, tape, or memory stick. Color bars provide a reference of the field camera's color output, contrast, and video signal strength. (Whenever videotape is used, such as retrieving file footage from video archives, color bars also are useful. Without space for the edit preroll, the beginning of the first scene on some tape systems cannot be edited.)

Exposure Problems: Guard against under- and overexposure and hot spots in the frame. Use the automatic camera meter to set exposure, but then shoot on manual iris, in order to avoid the exposure "bloom" that results from moving objects when the lens is set on auto iris.

Focus Problems: Establish crisp focus; avoid zooming in to unintentional soft focus or zooming out to soft focus.

Contrast Problems: Avoid high-contrast backlit scenes that occur when the main light is behind the subject you are shooting. Use front fill light if necessary. Some examples of backlit scenes: shooting the person's face against the background of a bright sky; shooting the subject against a light-colored background; shooting a subject in front of a window (close the curtains behind your subject).

Composition Problems: Compose each shot carefully. Avoid distracting backgrounds. Adhere to the rule of thirds to avoid placing subjects in the dead center of frame. Leave room at the bottom of the shot for superimpositions of the speaker's name. Avoid tilted horizon lines.

Excessive Panning and Zooming: Practice self-control when you zoom and pan. Hold the beginning of your shot steady for about three seconds, then zoom or pan, and again hold the shot steady for another three seconds before you stop the camera.

Sound Problems: Monitor sound quality in the field through earphones. Monitoring lets you identify and fix issues while you're still in the field.

Wind Noise: Protect against wind noise when recording sound in the field. Use the foam rubber windscreen furnished with the microphone, or wrap a dark-colored cloth neatly around the microphone. When fashioning a homemade windscreen, avoid white because it may bloom, or appear to be overexposed, on home screens.

Spot-Check Images in the Field: Preview video in the field before you return home. Most systems feature instant playback on-screen or through the camera viewfinder. Playback lets you spot troubles that have developed during shooting before you return home, while reshooting may still be possible.

Label All Video: Immediately label recording media with subject matter and date. Unlabeled video can create chaos and missed deadlines.

Dead Batteries: Number field batteries and use them in sequence so you know which ones are still charged. When working some distance from a vehicle or helicopter, take extra recording media and at least one extra battery, fully charged.

Protect Field Equipment: Some field equipment is extremely sensitive. Sound and picture quality depend on careful handling. Regularly clean and check all equipment, including front lens elements. See that no one bangs, jars, or drops equipment. Protect cords and cables against rough treatment. Fragile electrical connections may short-circuit or come loose, resulting in loss of power, picture, and/or sound. Neatly re-coil all cords and cables and return them to their proper cases. Replace the lens cap on the camera. Don't leave the lens cap in the field by accident.

ON RETURNING HOME

- *Charge batteries.* Immediately recharge all batteries that have been depleted in the field.
- *Be considerate of the next person or crew.* Be certain to leave blank recording media with each camera so the next person or crew doesn't enter the field unprepared.
- *Store equipment properly.* Store equipment in its assigned place on returning from the field.
- *Report damage.* Report any damage or malfunctions immediately.

SUMMARY

Attention to small details in photographic technique can markedly differentiate the work of one photographer from the next. Often, the most professional techniques are transparent to home viewers. A hallmark of professional photographers is their ability to hold the camera rock-steady. Use of a tripod or appropriate stance and breathing techniques are necessary to produce a

steady image. Professionals always have a reason to pan and zoom: Leave excessive panning and zooming to amateur photographers.

Beyond mastery of technique, skills in storytelling and planning are essential requisites for the professional visual storyteller. Discrimination in the order and choice of shots helps preserve story focus, reduces the amount of unnecessary footage and time wasted in the field, and speeds up the editing process.

Television is a medium of close-ups, textures, and details, so the viewer's greatest sense of involvement and first-person experience naturally results when the camera is involved in the action. Equally important is the need to focus more on people than on institutions during the reporting process. The photographer also must learn to work comfortably with people in order to portray them naturally and with spontaneity, and to work safely and prudently whatever the environment. Ultimately, success depends on mastery of creative and technical principles through unflagging attention to detail.

KEY TERMS

distancing	one-person band	stage	zoom out
edit in the camera	reveal	TV cutoff	
heat	rule of thirds	white light	
negative action	screen space	zoom in	

DISCUSSION

1. List the advantages and disadvantages of using a tripod when shooting video.
2. List the most important techniques you can use to steady the handheld camera.
3. Explain the primary considerations that govern panning and zooming.
4. Why is it important to establish interactive communication in the field between the photographer and reporter?
5. Explain how photographers can help editors avoid the pop cut.
6. Define the term *editing in the camera*, and discuss situations in which the technique can be useful.
7. Why is it important to involve the camera in the action?
8. What approaches can you use when working with people to make your stories more natural and interesting?
9. What is the difference between staging action and motivating it?
10. Explain the steps involved in shooting your own standup in the field.
11. Explain how to simultaneously shoot and conduct an interview in the field.
12. What precautions must the photographer observe when shooting in a cold environment?
13. Discuss the elements of safety you should observe whenever you cover hazardous events.

EXERCISES

1. Continue to practice holding the camera until you can hold it rock-steady. Observe proper breathing technique and stance. Shoot a shot while standing up; shoot the same shot while leaning against a support. Rest the camera against the back of a chair or other support while you shoot. Compare handheld shots taken with the lens set on wide-angle and telephoto focal-length settings.
2. Practice panning and zooming a subject at differing speeds. Then photograph the same subject without panning or zooming. Compare the result.
3. Create a pop cut for analysis: First shoot a long shot of a subject under your control, then physically move the camera toward the subject along the same axis line as you shoot medium and close shots. Now, move the camera back to its original position. Again shoot a long shot of the subject, but remember to move the camera off the original axis line as you shoot and move to photograph the medium and close shots. Edit the scenes together and compare the results.
4. Shoot a simple sequence in which you edit action in the camera. Shoot only those scenes you want on the air, in the order you want them to appear, with action as closely matched as possible. Show the result without editing any of the scenes.
5. Shoot close shots of action from a distant location with the lens on a telephoto setting. Now, involve the camera in the action by physically moving it close to the action to record shots. Compare the screen results.
6. Working with a friend or willing stranger, try to motivate an action that would be familiar to your subject without letting the subject know your intent, such as the observation made to a spelling bee champion, "I'll bet you can even spell chrysanthemum." Now, stage the action, perhaps telling your subject, "Okay, why don't you sit here, and I'll tell you a word to spell. Ready?" Compare the degree of spontaneity that results from each approach.
7. Practice photographing yourself in a field standup, using the suggestions offered in this chapter.
8. With the help of a friend who can act as your interview source, practice holding the camera while you interview your friend.
9. Ask a couple of friends if you can follow them around with the camera. Practice photographing moments of heat and white light.

NOTES

- 1 Farhad Manjoo, "Vertical Video on the Small Screen? Not a Crime," *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2015/08/13/technology/personaltech/vertical-video-on-the-small-screen-not-a-crime.html?_r=0, posted August 12, 2015. Accessed January 20, 2016.
- 2 Gary Croshaw, comments to journalism class, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, April 11, 1995.
- 3 John Premack, "Avoiding Mistakes," a presentation at the NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, March 14, 1994.

- 4 Kirk Bloom, cinematographer, Los Angeles, CA, in undated correspondence with the lead author.
- 5 Darrel Barton, network freelance correspondent, comments to journalism students at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, November 05, 2005.
- 6 Bob Brandon, comments in a critique session at the NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, May 20, 2003.
- 7 James Townley, "Videotape Editing: The Basics," a presentation at the NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, March 14, 1994.
- 8 Larry Hatteberg, "Working with People," a presentation at the NPPA Television News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, March 16, 1992.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

WRITING WITH LIGHT

6

Light has as much substance as words or gale force winds. Light is real stuff, as real as ink and sound, and in television and video, light is the communicators' primary medium. Properly controlled, light creates a sense of three-dimensional depth, emphasizes areas within scenes, imparts atmosphere, and sometimes lends an emotional outline to stories. In all photography, light delivers form, mood, and meaning.

PHOTOGRAPHY IS THE ART OF CONTROLLING LIGHT

The most "natural" light is natural light (Figure 6.1). The best lighting is invisible. In fact, the strongest and most honest stories often contain little or no lighting. Learning to control light, and work smart with available light, is akin not only to learning a native language, but figuring out how to whisper, speak, and shout while using it. You can do all this by knowing how to control the intensity of light, its patterns and colors. Knowing the basics of light and its **color temperatures**, you'll be far ahead whenever you have to supplement your existing light, choose the best angle for a shot, or choose the ideal time of day to begin shooting.¹

WHITE BALANCE

In every shot you make, the camera wants to know what is white. **White balance** means adjusting the camera so that white objects in the scene appear white, whatever the light source. The camera can then produce all colors accurately.

Often, you can look in the camera viewfinder or a live view screen, and dial in the correct color balance by eye. When a shot looks right in the viewfinder, it's at least close to correct color balance. You also can leave your camera set on "auto white balance," but no camera is very smart. If you let the camera do the thinking, at some point it will double cross you.

BOX 6.1 FOLLOW ALONG WITH YOUR SMART PHONE

You can experience the subjects addressed in this chapter more directly if you follow along with an iPhone or Android smartphone at hand. Consider loading an app such as Filmic Pro (iPhone), or Cinema FV-5 (Android) before continuing.



Figure 6.1 Natural light is often most natural, even under sunlight, and even indoors. Otherwise, you can achieve natural lighting patterns by knowing how to use artificial lights indoors, and knowing where to position your camera and subjects outdoors under natural sunlight.

Ernie Leyba Photography

That's why it pays to know just a few numbers from the Kelvin Temperature Scale (Figure 6.2). These numbers tell you the color of different light sources –whether reddish, orange, yellow, or blue.

Various indoor light bulbs (and sunrise and sunset) tend toward the orange spectrum. Some fluorescent lights produce a greenish hue. Sunlight is blue. Sunlight flooding into a room through red curtains will yield a pronounced crimson hue. Human brains can adjust, but cameras need help, so that no matter the light source at hand, viewers see a canary feather as yellow or a hen's egg as white.

Numerous cameras, even smart phone apps, let you dial in exact Kelvin temperature settings in small, controlled increments. If you're shooting in a living room, table lamps on, and window curtains open, identify the strongest light source and white balance to that. Sometimes the strongest illumination will be sunlight in the range of 5,000—5,300°K coming through a window.

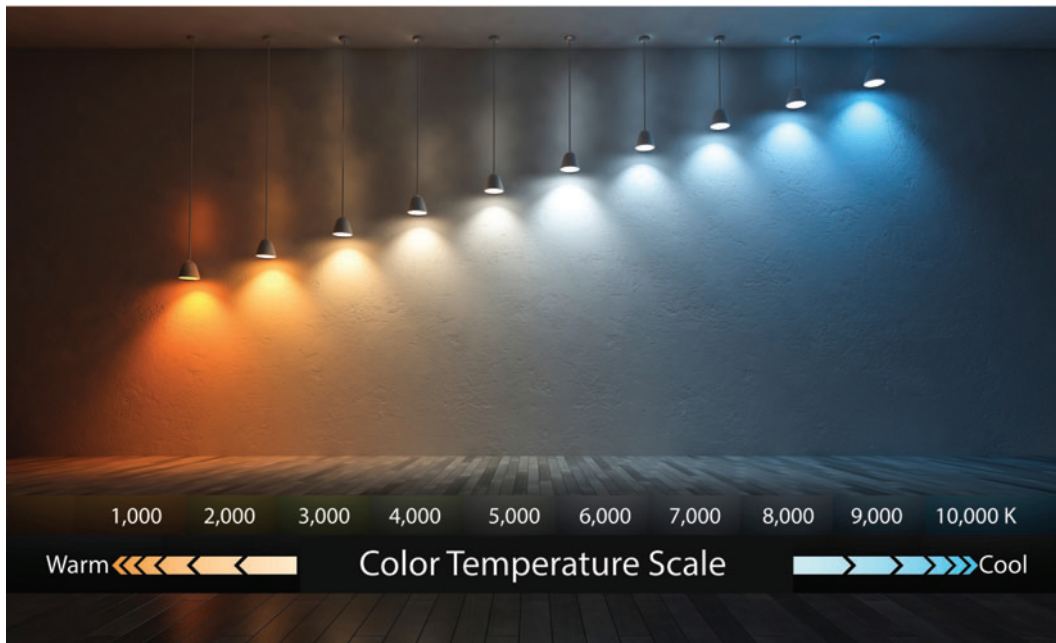


Figure 6.2 Every light source produces a characteristic color, or color temperature, expressed in degrees Kelvin. Consider the orange glow from briquettes burning in a BBQ grill, to the blue flame shooting from the burners on a gas stove. Much the same logic applies to light sources you'll encounter while shooting video. The lower the Kelvin temperature, the more red to orange the light. The higher the number, the bluer the light.

Laura Schaub Designs; Images: © 2016 Neode/depositphotos.com

Other times, it may be a table lamp or an overhead kitchen light (3500°K). When you shoot under more than one light source, white balance the camera to the strongest or most dominant light source.

As the camera moves from one location to another, white balance can shift. Your images may look fine when you white balance the camera for bluish light near the window. But watch what happens when you walk into the kitchen where the light source has an orange cast. Now everything in the scene skews orange. If you white balance under inside lighting (orangish), and walk over to the window, the camera will exaggerate blue colors. In such cases, take the overall average of the area. Find the best average to do your white balance, and try not to mix too many light sources.

Click to White Balance

One minute you're shooting uncontrolled action, the next a standup in open shade, and later still an indoor interview, or perhaps inside a windowless courtroom drenched in fluorescent light.

Many cameras provide up to four basic white balance modes to help meet such challenges. With just a click or two you can handle most assignments:

1. **Continuous Auto White Balance:** This mode lets the camera do the thinking. It's ideal when you're grabbing quick sound bites and shooting on the run under various light sources. In this setting, the camera white balances to the brightest parts of the scene. Mixed light sometimes confuses the camera on this setting, producing off colors, or a visible lag as the camera adjusts from one light source to another.
2. **Manual White Balance (White Balance Hold):** This setting requires you know about the Kelvin scale (Figure 6.2), but with color viewfinders and live screen displays, anybody can use it. To set white balance manually, show the camera a white card or other white object that fills at least half the frame, and press the white balance button or icon. Check exposure to be certain the card appears neither washed out nor dark gray. Just set your camera to a color temperature and it will stay.

This setting lets you further adjust the color temperature in small increments anywhere from around 2,000°K up to 20,000°K. Just watch your picture until it looks best, a practice called creative white balance.

3. **Camera Preset White Balance:** Whether you're recording an interview or shooting on the run, this setting lets you click to a preset color temperature. The 3,200°K setting is adequate for most shots taken under inside lights, and works at nighttime. Click to the 4,300°K setting if you're shooting inside a house with lots of windows and sunlight coming in, or outside on a cloudy day. A setting in the 5,200°K to 5,600°K range is good for shooting in sunny bright conditions, generally after the sun climbs more than 45 degrees until it begins to descend past 45 degrees.
4. Some cameras offer a final 6,300°K preset, ideal for shooting during the Golden Hour and onward, or to create a warmer look when the sun is high overhead.

Some cameras also let you create and store customized color temperature settings and click to them as needed, such as when making underwater or high altitude shots, or when you frequently shoot in the same outdoor sports venue at night or under fixed lighting in gymnasiums.

MIXING AND MATCHING LIGHT SOURCES

Sometimes you can match one light source to another. **LED (light-emitting diode)** lights can produce white light, while permitting adjustable light intensities and variations in color temperatures ranging from the orange to blue spectrums.

If you need to balance sunlight coming in through windows with hotel room bulbs, you can find the solution at the nearest supermarket or home improvement store. Buy some light bulbs balanced for daylight and switch out the hotel room bulbs. In someone's home, you may have to turn off light bulbs that make faces look too ruddy. If someone's face looks too orange in the viewfinder, turn off the offending light or switch out the bulb. Sometimes, a different mix looks great – warm light on a face, with bluer sunlight coming through a window to illuminate the background.

HELPFUL FILTERS

At times you may need to manipulate light. You can change the color of light entering the camera with numerous **filters** and gels, mounted on the camera or light head. You also can control how much light enters the camera.

Perhaps you want to shoot at a wider aperture to reduce depth of field. Maybe the sky is so bright the foreground looks underexposed. In either case, the ND or neutral density filter will solve the problem. You can think of this dark, smoke-colored filter as “sunglasses for your camera.” The (ND) filter reduces the amount of light entering the camera. It has no effect on color temperature.

You can use an ND to cut exposure – either to help reduce depth of field by permitting a wider lens aperture, or to reduce exposure under very bright light sources, such as at high altitude. An ND2 filter reduces light entering the camera by a full f stop (e.g. from an original exposure of f/8 to f/5.6); a ND4 filter reduces exposure by 2 stops (from f/8 to f/4) and an ND8 by 3 stops (from f/8 to f/2.8).

If you have a bright sky in the background, with your subject too dark or hidden in shadows, consider using the graduated neutral density filter. The top half of this filter cuts down on bright sunlight. The bottom half is clear to let more light onto the foreground, thus opening up detail on the subject. You can also recreate similar filter effects in editing, during postproduction.

The adjustable polarizing filter lets you capture beautiful dark blue skies, reduce haze, eliminate reflections in windowpanes and eyeglasses, and tame sunlight's harsh glare off surface waters. You may already know what this filter can do if you wear polarizing sunglasses. Notice what happens when you turn your head left, then tilt your head right, and then left again, and you can see this filter's effect in making the sky look bluer. On the camera, you adjust this filter simply by rotating it. Turn it this way and that as you look into the viewfinder or live view screen to create shots that say “wow!”

LIGHTING KITS

LED (light emitting diode) light kits commonly contain diffusers and sliding dimmers that let you control brightness from zero to a full 100 per cent, and set your choice of color temperatures anywhere from 3,200°K or lower to 5,600°K and higher. LED lights are portable, light weight, produce almost no heat, and can last for several hours on a single charge or set of disposable batteries.

LIGHTING STYLES AND PATTERNS

As you light scenes, let the real world be your guide. Most lighting patterns borrow from nature's design. The most frequent pattern is one dominant light source (the sun, a reflector, or an artificial light) combined with a secondary light source (Figure 6.3). The goal is to make the light look as though it originates from one source, and to light in such a way that subjects have dimension, not flatness. Light coming straight into the face erases shadow.

As you light a scene, it may help to think of yourself as painting with light, mindful that painters begin with a blank canvas. Rather than immediately saturating a scene with excessive light,



Figure 6.3 Sunlight filters through a translucent screen to provide fill light, while an artificial light white balanced to sunlight serves as the key light.

Ernie Leyba Photography

imagine you have a blank canvas and build up the light step by step. Indoors, you could begin with a dark room, and then start adding light. You might open the curtains to admit sunlight, or close the curtains so you can use existing lights in the room, using supplementary light as necessary to fill in the shadows.

Whatever your approach, content drives style, even in lighting. Lighting for documentary and reality programs must look realistic, while eliminating black holes that show nothing. Interviews and standups require their own special treatment.

Interview Lighting

The most basic lighting pattern of all is to use a single **key light** placed to the side and higher than the subject (Figure 6.4). Light coming straight into the face erases shadow. The key light is by definition the brightest light falling on the subject. It can come from many sources – a window, a table lamp, an LED light on a stand, and even car headlights or outdoor sunlight. Overcast skies also produce pleasing light, the cloud cover serving to filter and soften sunlight.

You can add a weaker second light or a reflector as your fill light. It might be a wall, a reflector such as a 2' × 2' white foam core board, a white piece of paper, an LED light, a table lamp, or even open shade.

Fill light is soft and diffused. It has been broken up and randomly scattered as it reflects off objects and surfaces within an environment.

Even when you use a fill light, the goal is to make the light look as though it originates from one source, and to light in such a way that subjects have dimension, not flatness. Place the fill light opposite the key light, approximately half as intense and half as high as the key light.

Figure 6.4 Key lighting is properly positioned when a triangle of light appears on the shadow side of the subject's face. If shadows are too harsh, a fill light can open up detail in harsh shadow areas on the subject's face.

Ernie Leyba Photography



You can alter the intensity, height, distance, and placement of either light for dramatic effect or to soften shadows or eliminate other distractions in the shot. Thus, you might use a window as the key light, and a table lamp or a reflector for the fill light.

Rembrandt Lighting

As described here, this two-light setup is sometimes called Rembrandt lighting, named for the Dutch painter who used dominant and secondary light and shadows to create striking portraits, at once natural looking yet compelling. In true Rembrandt lighting, the key light produces a triangle of light beneath the eye on the shadow side of the face; the triangle no wider than the eye and somewhat shorter than the nose (see Figure 6.4).

Three-Point Lighting

Three-point lighting adds a **backlight** to the key and fill light setup (Figure 6.5). The backlight is placed behind the subject, usually from a higher position, to outline the person's shoulders and



Figure 6.5 You can shoot many field interviews using only a key light and backlight. Traditional sit-down interviews may look best if you lower the key light until you find the most pleasing angle, and add a fill light opposite the key light. A backlight further separates your subject from the background and adds pleasing highlights to the hair and shoulders, and helps illuminate the interviewer during reverse angle shots.

Ernie Leyba Photography



Figure 6.6a The key light produces full, rich lighting.



Figure 6.6b The fill light side of the face is somewhat underexposed to provide a three-dimensional look. The darker the fill side of the face, the moodier the resulting light.



Figure 6.6c The key and fill lights produce a more three-dimensional appearance. Note the triangle of light beneath the subject's eye on the fill side of the face.

hair. This light helps further separate the subject from the background and makes the image feel even more three-dimensional. Sometimes you can use the low setting sun as the backlight, or else move people so the sun works as a key light with a reflector or artificial light providing the backlight.

You'll also find additional artificial light all around you, even at night. Stadium lighting, streetlights, and shop windows often provide top light and backlight on your subjects.

Variations to the key light pattern include the **side light**, sometimes called **hatchet light** because it splits the subject in half, and **side-rear lighting**, in which the key light is placed to the side and somewhat behind the subject.

Another variation is **top lighting**, with the key light almost directly above the subject. This technique throws deep shadows beneath the eyes, nose, and chin. A variation of top lighting is called **butterfly light** (Figure 6.9). The light remains high but is placed slightly in front of

BOX 6.2 POSITIONING KEY AND FILL LIGHTS

Lighting Tips from John DeTarsio

When I light a scene or interview, I first place the key light. I position it along an arc, usually fairly close to the side of the person. If the person's hair creates shadow, I move the key light to the opposite side of the camera.

How high you place the lights depends on the look you want. I go higher or lower as necessary. I might go two, even three feet above the person's head to match the angle to sunlight, but lighting is beautiful all the way down to a person's face.

Low sunlight, for example, is often most pleasant. To recreate that same look with your own lights, bring the key light down low, about a foot above the subject's eyes. At this angle, the light is perfectly placed (see Figure 6.7). Lights in this position also illuminate more of the subject's lower body. If the subject looks into the key light the camera can see the shadow modeling on the other side of the subject's face, an effect that lends three-dimensional perspective. I want soft key light, perhaps using an umbrella, or a soft light box. I've even used an LED flashlight outfitted with a soft diffusing gel.

The setup is easy to visualize if you picture the person standing or sitting in the middle of an imaginary clock face that lies flat on the floor. I position the camera at 6 o'clock on this imaginary clock face. If the key light is on the right side of camera, say between 4 and 5 o'clock, the fill light goes on the opposite side, anywhere between 7 to 9 o'clock – with 8 o'clock a happy medium.



Figure 6.7 A key light, positioned about a foot above the subject's eyes, produces pleasing light and three-dimensional modeling. Placed low, the key light also illuminates more of the subject's lower body.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Figure 6.8 Lighting setups are easy to visualize by imagining a clock face lying flat on the floor and then positioning lights on the “clock face.”²

Photo of couple © 2016 fotoevent.stock/depositphotos.com 90989894; photo of light on stand © maxxystas/depositphotos.com 11641976; Graphic design © 2016 Laura Schaub Designs.



I prefer soft fill light. It’s great to have a dimmer on artificial lights so you can dial in how much shadow you want on the face. The right amount of shadow also adds depth to the picture.

Try to bring up just enough light to fit your story. The more light you bring in, the less emotion you want to have. The harder the edge to your story, the grittier you want it to look. The darker you keep the fill side of the face, the more mood you create.

*

Often, it’s impossible to create perfect lighting. I consider backlight the least important when I’m shooting under pressure. Otherwise, I try to position the backlight at 12 o’clock, directly behind the subject, and two or three feet behind, but that requires a light stand with an extension arm so the stand doesn’t appear in the shot. Without an extension arm, I might have to position the backlight slightly to the right or left of the subject, at about 11 o’clock or 1 o’clock. Backlight is generally a harder light, so it mimics light coming from an obvious source. At night, even flashing police car or ambulance lights can throw pulsing backlight along the subject’s shoulders and hair.

*

When I take a person outside, I’m still thinking the same way – “How I can start from zero?” I study my environment. I notice how shadows are hitting the background and decide how they fit best in the shot. Shadows appear almost everywhere we look in real life, so I embrace them in my lighting. As you study an environment, just look at the existing light and shadow and decide, “is this pretty or is it attractive?” Shadows can really help you.

Outdoors, I sometimes have to bring in my key light. At other times I may have to reposition the subject, use a reflector, or shoot in shade under a tree or an overhang, well away from direct sunlight, with nothing above the subject to obstruct scattered secondary light from the sky itself.



Figure 6.9 Butterfly or glamour lighting occurs when the light is positioned high but slightly in front of the subject. Note the modeling in the subject's face created by shadows beneath the eyebrows, nose, lips, and chin.

Ernie Leyba Photography

frame, move the light and the subject farther away from the background, or compose a closer shot in such a way that no shadows are visible within the viewfinder.

During locker room interviews and the like, you may find that other photographers light the subject sufficiently that you won't need to bother using lights. If you choose the right camera angle, their lighting can look even better in your own video.

Umbrella Lighting

Umbrella lighting offers a quick, inexpensive way to convert a single light into a viable soft light source. With an umbrella reflector, the light head is pointed away from the subject. The light is

the subject so that no harsh shadows appear in the eyes or under lips. This lighting pattern takes its name from the butterfly-shaped shadow that appears beneath the subject's nose and can be an excellent choice of patterns when using a single light. Butterfly lighting is also called **glamour lighting** because it is commonly used with models and actors.

Flat Lighting

Many digital cameras can power a single battery-operated light mounted directly to the camera. This approach frees your hands to shoot fast-moving action, but results in flat lighting, with little sense of depth or modeling.

Whenever you can, a better solution is to hold the single light high and to one side of the camera. In this position the light throws shadows that lend depth and interest to the subject's face.

Be aware that a single light high and to the side can throw harsh shadows on the background behind the subject. At least three remedies are possible: Hold the light so that shadows fall outside the viewfinder

Figure 6.10 An umbrella reflector can produce pleasing improvements in lighting quality.

Ernie Leyba Photography



reflected back to the subject via a metallic-colored, heat-resistant umbrella attached to the light stand or head (Figure 6.10). In a traditional sit-down interview, the light can be placed above the interviewer's head or where an interviewer would be if present. Light from this single source wraps naturally around the subject. Shadows are soft and smooth, and in close-up shots only a single highlight or catchlight is obvious in each of the subject's eyes. The downside to umbrella lighting is its tendency to spread everywhere, even upon the background. But with careful positioning, the light from umbrella reflectors is virtually unnoticeable to home audiences while helping interview subjects remain relaxed and natural. You can find umbrella reflectors online or at most camera and photo supply stores.

BROAD LIGHTING AND SHORT LIGHTING

When the key light shines on the side of the face closest to the camera, the effect is called **broad lighting**. Generally, broadlight is the preferred lighting pattern for interviews. In **short lighting** the camera photographs the subject from the fill light side of the face, rather than from the key light side. The technique is used widely in portrait photography, but use it as appropriate to give your video a different mood and feeling.

BOUNCE LIGHTING

Bounce light is another way to produce soft, natural lighting. Artificial lights can be reflected (bounced) off a ceiling, wall, or other reflective surface. Bounce light is diffused and less harsh than direct lighting, but take care to avoid unwanted color temperatures when bouncing the light off colored surfaces.

EYE REFLECTIONS

In real life and in natural portraiture, each eye normally contains a single highlight. When lights are improperly placed, however, the subject's eyes may contain two highlights (catchlights), which make it obvious the subject is being "lit." Eyeglass lenses and frames can produce still other distracting highlights. Although you cannot always eliminate such distractions, you can often minimize them. The most common solution is to move the camera or to change the lights' height or angle, or to use some form of indirect lighting that may solve the problem altogether.

BOX 6.3 STAR QUALITY CLOSE-UPS WITHOUT LIGHTS

Lighting Tips from John DeTarsio

Ready for My Close-up!

Notice the star's close-up shot next time you watch a movie. Study how the camera focuses on the actor's eyes. Whenever we look at someone close to us, we look first at the eyes, or wherever the sharpest focus on the video screen guides our attention. Film and television close-ups thus usually show the person's face, hair, and shoulders in sharp focus, while retaining soft focus on the background behind the subject. Most people look best in compressed shots like that.

Shallow depth of field emulates how we naturally see others whenever they are close to us. You can confirm it yourself while you read these very words. Remain focused on the text as you transfer your attention (but not your focus) to your peripheral vision. You can see that by focusing on something close, only what you look at directly remains in focus.

How to Shoot Effective Close-ups

The best close-ups show people (and sometimes animals) as they appear in real life. The goal is to capture your subject so naturally that viewers might recognize that person a few days later at the supermarket. An ideal approach is to position your subject at least 10 feet in front of the background in your shot, and place your camera on a tripod at least 10 feet in front of the subject. Next, zoom into the subject and frame the shot to achieve a "movie star close-up" look (Figure 6.11). Enclosed or difficult shooting environments may rule out this approach, but honor it as closely as you can.



Figure 6.11 Depth of field in close-ups affects our impressions of people, and reveals much about the photographer. Figure 6.11a (left) reflects undesirable depth of field that occurs when the subject is positioned too close to the background and the camera. This setup often leads to unnecessary shadows and unwanted background detail. A better approach in close-ups is to set up the shot for shallow depth of field (Figure 6.11b, (right)). Shallow focus portrays people much as you would see them up close in real life. In this setup the subject is about 10 feet from the background, and the camera is on a tripod about 10 feet in front of the subject.

Ernie Leyba Photography

LIGHTING NIGHTTIME ACTION

Streetlights and other urban light sources may be all the illumination you need at night. A good approach is to look at your environment. Determine what light is already available, and then add just enough light to see faces while keeping the shot natural-looking.

Especially at night, use no more light than you need (Figure 6.12). Shoot with the aperture as wide open as possible, so both the subject and background are visible. Extremely bright light on the subject can result in pitch-black backgrounds.

Again, the secret is to work with the light you have and add to it as necessary. You might place portable, battery-operated LED soft lights in a bush, another on top of the patio to approximate natural light – trying to add enough supplementary light to see faces. Is light coming from sliding glass doors? Perhaps you can add just enough supplementary lighting to blend in, as if the light is coming from inside the house.

PHOTOGRAPHING SUBJECTS WITH DARK SKIN

Whenever you light subjects with dark skin, look for backgrounds slightly darker than the subject. Another method is to keep as much light as possible off the background, in order to keep contrast ratios to acceptable levels. If the background is too light or too brightly lit, essential detail may be lost in the subject's face, or the subject may even be reproduced in **silhouette**. Keep light levels as low as comfortable, and if possible, err slightly on the side of overexposure rather than underexposure.



Figure 6.12 At night, try to use relatively low levels of illumination. The more intense the light used to illuminate a subject at night, the less detail is visible in the background.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Large-scale Lighting

At times you may have to photograph uncommonly large areas, such as hotel ballrooms, auditoriums, show rooms, and supermarkets. Once again, a good approach is to work with the light you have and to supplement existing light rather than bring in an entirely new overall light source. If the predominant light source is fluorescent light, for example, consider adding your own portable fill or accent lights set to the color temperature of the existing fluorescent fixtures.

Come to the scene mindful of everything you know about what makes beautiful light and address as many of those goals as possible. Sometimes you can reposition the people in your shot to take better advantage of the available light. Also, keep three-point lighting in mind. Can you use the sun, or any other light source as key, fill, or backlight?

On occasion you might have to light foreground, middle ground, and background. If the viewfinder shows that certain areas within the scene are too bright, other tools can help. You can mask light with **barndoors** (Figure 6.13), or **flags** (opaque panels that block light from certain areas), or else use **cookies** (flags with regular or irregular cutouts that form patterns of light and shadow on the background) and nets to enrich or subdue particular areas within the scene, a practice called painting with shadows.



Figure 6.13 A portable light with “barndoors” that can be moved to control light falling on the subject and background.

Ernie Leyba Photography

CAUTIONS

Older lights, such as quartz halogen bulbs, are extremely bright and hot, and they pull lots of electricity when plugged into wall outlets. The obvious precautions apply when using these artificial lights:

- Never touch quartz bulbs. Serious burns can result, and bulbs can be damaged from the natural oils on fingers.
- Allow bulbs to cool before packing them away or setting on objects (including carpeting, camera cases, and vinyl-topped tables).
- Serious retinal damage can occur if bright lights are used closer than 3 feet to human or animal subjects.
- Avoid shining bright lights directly into the lenses of older cameras. Cameras can be permanently damaged.

- Avoid plugging more than three lights into an electrical circuit. Excessively high-voltage drains can cause overheated cords or tripped circuits.
- Use only extension cords large enough to handle the job. Cords that are too small cause voltage drops and can overheat to the point of causing fires. Voltage drops also alter the color temperature of artificial lights.

In the final analysis, lighting creates mood. Mere illumination destroys it. Within every shot, light is the most visually important element – the raw material for every visual storyteller, the essential substance of every video story. Happily, in today’s environment, light is a commodity more easily captured and controlled than ever before in human history.

SUMMARY

One of the photojournalist’s most important writing tools is light. A primary characteristic of light is its color temperature, an expression of the proportion of red to blue light each source radiates. Under each varying light source the camera must know what is white in the scene so it can produce all colors accurately.

Popular when shooting field video are LED (light-emitting diode) systems that produce white light, with adjustable intensities and color temperatures ranging from the orange to blue spectrums.

Some cameras rely on filters to correct the color temperature of sunlight by adding or subtracting certain hues. The ND or neutral density light reduces the quantity of light entering the camera, allowing for a wider aperture to produce shallow depth of field. Polarizing filters help produce deep, dark blue skies and eliminate reflections and glare in the scene.

For live shots and interviews, basic lighting patterns call for a key or dominant light and a fill or a backlight. Variations include sidelight, side-rear light, and top light, with further refinements available, such as butterfly or glamour lighting.

If you use a fill light or reflector, the intensity of illumination between key and fill light sources helps determine contrast ratios within the scene. Generally, the fill light is set about half as intense as the key light. Often, diffused light is softer and more pleasing to the eye. Sunlight is naturally diffused on overcast or foggy days or when subjects are in open shade. Diffusion of artificial light also can be achieved through bounce light or umbrella lighting or with any of the various diffusion materials.

Although many lighting assignments can be accomplished with natural light, other assignments will require a key, fill, and backlight. Large-scale interiors and night lighting present special challenges. In the final analysis, light creates mood and meaning. Mere illumination destroys it.

KEY TERMS

backlight	color	flat lighting	short lighting
balanced lighting	temperature	hatchet light	silhouette
barndoors	cookies	key light	umbrella lighting
bounce light	fill lights	LED (light-emitting diode)	white balance
broad lighting	filter	open shade	
butterfly light	flags		

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the extent to which light is the true medium of television, web, and non-broadcast video.
2. What is color temperature and how does it affect the video image?
3. List helpful filters to carry when shooting video and describe their uses.
4. Explain how to white balance when shooting in environments with mixed color temperatures.
5. Describe the differing roles of the key light and the fill light.
6. Describe the basic lighting patterns commonly used when shooting video.
7. Explain the difference between broad lighting and short lighting.
8. How can light rays be diffused or otherwise controlled to create softer, more pleasing lighting patterns?
9. What minimum lighting equipment should a photographer have available for field assignments?
10. What special considerations are necessary when using supplementary artificial lights outdoors under bright sunlight? Why are artificial lights sometimes necessary under such conditions?
11. What considerations should you keep in mind when lighting subjects outdoors at night? How about when lighting large-scale subjects such as warehouses and supermarkets?
12. What safety precautions should you observe anytime you work with high wattage lights?

EXERCISES

1. Color-balance a camera or smart phone for 3200°K light. If using a smart phone, use an app such as Filmic Pro (iPhone), or Cinema FV-5 (Android), then without altering color-balance, photograph scenes illuminated by a normal household light bulb, under sunlight at noon, and one hour before sunset. Compare the results.
2. Shoot a subject indoors silhouetted against the sunlight or other backlight coming through a window behind the subject. Set up an artificial fill light or reflector to balance exposure on the subject's face against the light in the background.
3. Set up a key light on a subject. Properly position the key light so that a triangle of light appears on the shadow side of the subject's face. Now, set up a fill light of equal intensity

to the key light, but position the fill light approximately twice as far from your subject or half as strong as the key light. Photograph the result.

4. Using a single light, first shoot and record a scene using a flat, front-on lighting pattern, then move the light to create high side lighting, and finally, butterfly or glamour lighting on the subject. Play back the video for review.
5. Outdoors, under bright sunlight, use a reflector fill or an artificial light to provide fill light on the shadow side of the subject's face. Be certain the fill light matches the color temperature of sunlight.
6. Photograph a subject using broad lighting and short lighting and compare the result.
7. Light a scene to create first a low-contrast image, then a high-contrast image.
8. Practice diffusing artificial light with a diffusion screen or other material, and bouncing light from the ceiling.
9. Inspect the shots you have made of people during practice lighting sessions for the presence of single highlights in each eye. If two highlights appear, relight the subjects properly and photograph them again.
10. Light a person outdoors at night, first using brilliant illumination, and then consciously subdue the illumination to the lowest intensity possible, adjusting exposure as necessary. Compare the results.

NOTES

- 1 "Writing with Light" reflects significant updates based on contemporary lighting technology, 4K, 8K, and small format video recording devices. Thanks to international photojournalists John DeTarsio, Scott Rensberger, and Bob Burke for their contributions to this chapter.
- 2 Clock graphic suggested by images at www.lowel.tiffen.com/edu/foundations_of_lighting.html.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

THE SOUND TRACK

7

Sound, like words and pictures, is another of the essential tools storytellers use to communicate meaning. Herein, we encounter the wisdom of acoustic specialist Ned Hall, about how to isolate and harvest audio – the kind that comprises the other half of the image and that lets us see with our ears.

For all the bandwidth we dedicate to imagery, both in our airspace and in our minds, the stubborn fact remains: Sound carries much of the meaning of our stories. We are thinking creatures; one thing that separates us from animals, and science from art, fact from feeling, is our ability to distill our perceptions into words and to reconstruct an experience from the shorthand of speech.

When a passenger jet crashed into the wooded hills outside Pittsburgh, the pictures of the aftermath could only frame the words: “The plane was on an approach to the airport when the aircraft apparently banked sharply to the left and dove 6,000 feet, in twenty-three seconds, to the earth.”¹ Without the words, we see a trash dump in the woods. With them, we see a

BOX 7.1 NED HALL, AUDIO-RECORDING ENGINEER

The late Ned Hall traveled the world as an audio-recording engineer for NBC, ABC, CBS, PBS, Fox, Disney, HBO, and MTV for such programs as *48 Hours*, *60 Minutes*, *Prime Time Live*, and *Today*. Ned espoused author Diane Ackerman’s philosophy that the world would not be nearly so interesting if it were silent. He brought home a rich fabric of sounds from the Arctic Circle and the Gulf of Mannar to the Cape of Good Hope. His work included music videos for artists from Neil Young to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In the dark, windowless world of postproduction, he sweetened shows like PBS’s *Creation of the Universe* and the syndicated series *The Story of Rock and Roll*. In his own postproduction facility, he generated several Random House audio books and composed music for NBC News videos and for documentaries for the Discovery Channel. Friends and colleagues knew Ned as an artist who sculpted audio, revered it, and shared his love of life’s sounds with all of us. Ned rewrote and contributed a lot of new information for this chapter before his death. You will recognize his humor in the following pages, and his wisdom. We have dedicated this chapter to Ned’s memory and to those who will follow in his footsteps in the pursuit of storytelling audio, wherever that pursuit may take them.

tragedy. And when the flight recorder was recovered, the Federal Aviation Agency decided not to release the audio contained thereon in order to “spare the passengers’ loved ones” the sounds of human suffering.² Such is the power of audio.

The most spectacular images of an exploding oil refinery cannot answer some very important questions: Where is the refinery? When did this explosion occur – last weekend? Last year? Fifteen minutes ago? Was anyone hurt or killed? How many? Who is in jeopardy right now? Is the neighborhood being evacuated? The most revealing shots of the fire chief’s face as he arrives at the scene will tell you no more than the tone of his voice as he dispatches the firefighters.

Recording sound, like recording images, is fishing, casting about for the best story elements you can coax from the world’s undergrowth. You can catch a trophy fish on a bent pin and a string, but chance favors the angler armed with experience, patience, and the necessary tackle.

HOW MICROPHONES WORK

The magic of recorded sound begins with the microphone. Sound is vibrating air, and microphones convert those vibrations into electrical energy. The **dynamic microphone** moves a coil of wire in a magnetic field rather like a dynamic speaker in reverse. Dynamic microphones commonly are used for information gathering and in stage and music applications. Dynamic mics produce high-fidelity sound at reasonable cost and are among the most rugged units of all.

Ribbon microphones operate in a fashion similar to dynamic microphones, but use a thin ribbon of metal foil inside a magnetic field for a diaphragm. Ribbon microphones can be “warm” sounding, and thus are commonly encountered in audio booths and radio studios.

A *condenser* microphone requires power, supplied by the mixer/preamplifier or a separate power supply and sent through the mic cable, or by a battery in the mic itself. Condenser mics can be the most sensitive of microphones and are used in a variety of music and voice applications.

DIRECTIONAL PATTERNS

The simplest microphone, suspended in open space, can “hear” sound equally well from any direction. You might imagine the directional pattern of that mic as a sphere. Microphones can be designed to favor specific areas in a sphere, allowing you to point the mic at the sound you want to record while lessening to some degree the pickup of sounds you don’t want. Unfortunately, this is not like a camera lens that sees only where you point it. A camera can take a picture of a clear mountain stream without revealing that the idyllic brook runs six feet from the highway. A microphone will report faithfully the traffic density on that highway, complete with a truck count, no matter what the directional pattern of your mic.

The directional characteristics of mics are more pronounced as the frequency of the sound increases. Low-frequency sounds will “leak” into any mic regardless of its type or orientation, and sound reflects off objects in thousands of unpredictable ways.

Light may be stopped with an upraised hand or a dropped eyelid; sound can be stopped only with mass or distance.

Omnidirectional

A mic with an **omnidirectional** pattern picks up sound equally from all directions. The majority of handheld and lavalier microphones are omnidirectional. However, an “omni” mic mounted on a person’s chest becomes hemispherical in pattern – the mass of the body blocks sound coming from behind the subject.

Unidirectional

A mic with a **unidirectional** pattern tends to reject sound from the rear and sides.

Unidirectional mics are good for news conferences and meetings because of their ability to minimize audience noise and feedback. They come in these basic flavors, each more directional than the last:

- cardioid (sound is picked up to the front and sides of the mic)
- hypercardioid
- short shotgun
- long shotgun

Bidirectional (Figure Eight)

Sound is picked up in front and back but not to the sides of the **bidirectional** microphone. The user must correctly position the microphone to record desired sound while rejecting unwanted sounds.

ON CHOOSING A MIC

Given the incredibly cluttered soundscape we inhabit, one might be tempted to grab a shotgun mic and be done with it. In fact, many soundpeople seem to settle on a short shotgun mic as the one first pulled from their kit and mounted on the end of their boom pole. Indeed, if you are fishing for sound bites in an unknown sound environment, that’s a good choice. However, there are other points to ponder.

Try to position your mic close to the subject. When you halve the distance between a mic and a sound source, you increase the audio level by three **decibels (dB)**. One reason lavalier mics, though omnidirectional, seem to reject so much extraneous sound is their proximity to the

sound source. The closer you can get your microphone to the sound, the less unwanted noises will intrude.

IMPEDANCE

Microphones also are designated according to their **impedance**, a characteristic related to, but not to be confused with, electrical resistance. The **ohm** is the measure for both. Low-impedance microphones (generally in the range of 50 to 250 ohms) are standard for field sound recording and include most dynamic mics. They can handle any practical length of microphone cable, as much as several hundred feet from the camera or live transmission facilities, without noticeable loss in sound quality. High-impedance microphones (in the range of 1,000 ohms and higher) are limited to cable lengths of 20 feet or less. Generally, modern high-quality mics are low impedance.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE

The human ear is said to be capable of hearing frequencies ranging from 20 **hertz (Hz)** to 20 **kilohertz (kHz)**. Considerable but conflicting evidence suggests we can sense overtones much higher. Be that as it may, a microphone company that boasts of a mic with a frequency response from 20 Hz to 20 kHz is suggesting that its mic can “hear” any sound your ear can. Microphones with the same published frequency response can sound very different, though, so make your selections based on what you hear in your headphones.

MICROPHONES FOR THE VISUAL STORYTELLER

At a minimum, solo reporters and crews often carry an omnidirectional hand mic, a unidirectional mic for stand use (to exclude audience noise at news conferences and meetings), a shotgun mic, at least one miniature lavalier mic, and at least one wireless transmitter-receiver system. Some organizations provide their crews with far less than this basic complement, although wireless transmitters and inconspicuous lavalier mics lead to more spontaneous interviews and even to more compelling demonstration standups. Almost always, progress depends on performing at a higher level of excellence than your competitors. If the organization refuses to provide you with the tools you need in this endeavor, you might want to consider buying those tools yourself.

Handheld Microphone

Both directional and omnidirectional hand mics are the workhorses of the video storyteller. You can tape them onto tree branches to record the passing sounds of the parade, position them at the edge of the gym floor to record the squeak of basketball players’ shoes, or tape them to the speaker’s stand at a news conference. Rugged, reliable, and affordable, dynamic handheld microphones are indispensable tools for the video reporter. The standard field mic is usually an omni because it is rather like a hand grenade: You don’t point it so much as heave

it in the general direction of whatever is making the noise. They are often chosen for their bullet-proof construction and for how they look wearing a **mic flag**, that little box imprinted with the organization's logo that pops into view so frequently (Figure 7.1).

Often, however, the handheld mic is used with such little thought that it intrudes on the story. Interviewers continually thrust handheld mics into people's faces and further compound their intrusiveness with mic flags. While such intimidation may silence a wise man, it often will incite a silly one to greet his mother.

Given today's technology, viewers no longer need see the microphone. Its presence serves merely to remind who is covering the story, thereby reducing the viewer's level of involvement in the story. Occasionally, management requires a logo to appear on the hand mic and encourages the presence of the mic on-screen. But, as managers find better ways to promote the organization's presence in the field, we can hope that mic flags will become just a curious footnote in video history.



Figure 7.1 The wireless transmitter is an indispensable field reporting tool. It eliminates the need for cables and allows use of unobtrusive lavalier microphones rather than handheld mics, which can distract viewers, especially when outfitted with a mic flag that carries the organization's logo.

Ernie Leyba Photography



Figure 7.2 Small lavalier microphones can be clipped to the speaker's clothing or can be hidden entirely from view by taping them to the speaker's chest or inner clothing.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Lavalier Microphone

During interviews, standups, and similar applications, using a **lavalier microphone** often is more appropriate than using a handheld mic. These small microphones clip to the speaker's clothing or can be taped directly to the speaker's chest and are easily hidden from camera view (Figure 7.2). Lavalier mics are designed to be used close to the speaker's chest cavity, never handheld, and their output may become less vibrant and more tinny the farther they are used from the sound source.

Shotgun Microphone

Other microphones are used in situations where you can't move close enough to the speaker. News conferences are an example. Here, you may have to use the so-called **shotgun microphone**, which picks up sound from a relatively narrow area in front of the microphone. This mic derives its name from its resemblance to a miniature shotgun barrel (Figure 7.3). The shotgun mic has a pickup pattern vaguely similar to the angle of view of a telephoto lens and allows usable quality sound to be recorded from quite a distance in a perfectly quiet environment. Because the shotgun mic is highly directional, you must "show" it precisely what you want it to hear. If your aim is poor, you may pick up the sound of a taxiing jet and miss the speaker's most important comment at a news conference. To help keep the microphone accurately pointed at the sound source, you must listen carefully with headphones.



Figure 7.3 The shotgun microphone is highly directional. It has a pickup pattern somewhat similar to the angle of view of a telephoto lens. The microphone seen here is equipped with an acoustic foam windscreen.

Ernie Leyba Photography

THE WIRELESS TRANSMITTER-RECEIVER

Useful in many situations and crucial in some is a miniature radio transmitter and receiver set, commonly referred to as a *wireless*. Used most often in conjunction with a small lavalier mic connected by a short, thin cable to a small transmitter worn inside a pocket or hooked to a belt, the wireless can be invisible or no more obtrusive than a smartphone. Transmitters can also be used with a handheld mic or with a mic placed inconspicuously in a likely spot (often referred to as a “plant” mic), or, with a special cable, to public address (PA) systems or hi-fis.

Wireless transmitters provide speakers with great mobility and give reporters the freedom to move about during standups and interviews. Using two wireless systems, the reporter and interviewee can walk and talk during interviews without the restriction of microphone cables and without the annoyance of microphones intruding on the interview process (Figure 7.4). The transmitted sound is picked up by a matching receiver(s), which in turn feeds directly into the video recorder or the mixer or into live broadcast transmission facilities.



Figure 7.4 The wireless transmitter-receiver system allows reporters and subjects to move about freely without the restriction of microphone cables.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Range

In a perfect world, a wireless transmitter would have infinite range. In reality, its working range often seems to be about two feet less than you need. Several factors limit wireless range. One is the relatively small power output of the transmitter, measured in fractions of a watt, and, like all radio transmitters, regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Another is the potential for interference.

Interference

Although wireless transmitters are relatively expensive, they cannot deliver the sound quality of a regular hardwired mic. For one reason, a wireless introduces special signal processing circuits into the signal path in the interest of delivering a clean, usable signal. The transmitter has an audio circuit called a compressor that “squeezes” the signal into a very narrow dynamic range, a term relating to variations in intensity. The receiver contains an expander that then restores the signal. Although these components function as intended, they limit the frequency response and the dynamic range that could be preserved by a simple microphone cable. Another reason

sound quality is poorer is because the transmitted signal is susceptible to any outside electrical interference that may be present, whether it's electrical ignition noise from poorly maintained cars in the area, the periodic snap-snap of an electric cattle fence in the country, the unwanted intrusion of **radio frequencies (RF)** that carry radio and some TV signals, or from another crew across the street using the same frequencies as you are. Further, the physical mic cord wire that feeds into the wireless transmitter can act as a radio antenna and serve to convert the field recorder into an AM or FM radio receiver, which can pick up perfectly clear reception of broadcast programs. Some units also are susceptible to occasional interference from shortwave broadcasts, walkie-talkies, and microwave transmissions.

Dropouts and interference also can occur when the signal from the main transmitter arrives at the receiver just as a secondary signal reflected from a wall or other nearby reflecting surface reaches the receiving antenna, so monitor your sound and move the receiver if necessary. Occasionally, even fluorescent or neon lights produce interference. If you can, turn off the lights. Otherwise, if you suspect the lights as a source of interference, reorient the receiver or move it to a different location. Murphy's law postulates that the interference will be intermittent and will occur in direct proportion to the status of the person being recorded. Often the problem will exist on one frequency and not another, making a spare wireless a lifesaver.

Interference often increases as the distance between the transmitter and the receiver increases. As the signal becomes weaker, the receiver is less capable of discriminating between the desired signal and a spurious one. In general, it is best to keep that distance as short as possible. Remember that you are broadcasting a radio signal, and that you will occasionally "take a hit" and hear a pop, zizz, whistle, crackle, tick, ding, hash, or clang. En garde!

Frequency

The FCC assigns the frequencies available for wireless use. Although these units output very little power, the FCC requires that radio transmitters be licensed in the frequencies made available for wireless use. Certain areas of VHF band (from about 169 to 216 MHz) were home for these devices until some spots in the UHF band (470 to 890 MHz) were made available, and this higher frequency, coupled with the relatively (for now) uncrowded condition of these wavelengths, makes for some desirable improvements in wireless performance. Back when wirelesses were mostly in the VHF band, a buyer who planned to use the units in locations all around the United States was urged to buy them in the 169 to 172 MHz range. These "traveling frequencies" are safe from interference from VHF television stations. But be aware that when dozens of news crews are working at the same location, many of them will be using those traveling frequencies.

Antenna Placement

Whenever you use a wireless transmitter, placement is important. When the antenna, or the mic cable that serves as an antenna, is poorly positioned, some wireless units tend to cut off or “clip” certain frequencies, making voices sound thin and artificial. Try to keep the wire straight and, ideally, keep the antenna on the front of the person, facing the camera, so signals don’t have to pass through the speaker’s body on their way to the receiver. To help reduce dropouts, keep the antenna away from metal (is your subject playing with car keys and change in his pocket?) and, if your transmitter has both antenna and mic cable, keep them as separate as possible.

To further reduce interference, place the receiving antenna as high as possible, preferably atop the camera or on the shoulder strap of the mixer, or even, in desperation, on a pole placed high enough so that it is above the subject. If you are in a nightmare situation and your wireless will work only for a few feet, tape the receiver to the end of a pole and “boom” the antenna, keeping it just outside the picture frame.

Wireless mics also can quickly eat up batteries, so remember to carry plenty of spare batteries into the field. The crackle and static you hear in your earphone may be simply the sounds of a battery growing weaker. Some photojournalists use fresh batteries on every assignment on the proven theory that batteries are less expensive than failed productions.

THE MIXER

At times all the gear you may need to capture storytelling audio is the mic mounted on the camera and one wireless velcroed to your battery pack or camera. At other times, the way you cover a story may demand more complex setups. When the assignment calls for interviews with one, two, or sometimes three people or more, multiple microphones in different locations can dramatically enhance your video. These assignments may take the form of a discussion between two or more people walking down the street, a question-and-answer session after a speech (including a telephone call-in), a conversation, or even situations where one shot pans from a summit conference to an angry protest just outside the window. Such situations may call for an audio person with a **sound mixer**, as well as a wireless link between the mixer and camera or a separate audio recorder.

Note the distinction between a wireless link between mixer and camera and a true “double system” of audio recorder rolling in sync but separate from the picture recorder. A double system puts control of the sound recorder in the hands of the soundperson; this allows audio to be recorded even when the camera is not rolling. Small pieces of incidental audio, or “wild track,” can add greatly to a finished piece; **nat sound** needn’t be merely street noise recorded while the camera shoots an exterior shot of a building, but footsteps on concrete as a woman

approaches the building. A double system also gives the soundperson the opportunity to roll on dialogue that the camera operator might not be aware of; in casual, less structured environments you may be documenting a conversation rather than shooting a formal interview. Sometimes your subject will say the most telling things just as the camera stops rolling (see Murphy's law).

In a double system, the soundperson's headphones can monitor the sound as it is being recorded; in a wireless link, only the camera operator, while at the camera, can hear any interference that occurs between the mixer output and the camcorder. This risk must be regularly evaluated (check playback often!) to help determine the best method to use. Most crews using a wireless link are ready at a moment's notice to abandon the wireleses and revert to an audio "snake" that, in addition to sending two channels of audio to the camera, will also return the mixed audio from the camera's earphone jack back to the soundperson. In fact, it is best to hardwire in this manner for any situation that does not require mobility. If you are riding around in the back of a police car, wireless links will normally suffice; if you are doing a sit-down interview of the Dalai Lama by the Pope, hardwire.

Whenever you have more potential audio sources than you have channels, the mixer becomes an essential tool, as does the need for a soundperson, who can devote all attention to whomever is speaking, to whomever might speak next, or where the best place might be to record the sounds of a passing marching band. It is a soundperson's job to choose microphones expertly and decide where and how to place them, and to see that good-quality sound is being recorded at the appropriate level.

The microphone mixer is the tool used to choose the appropriate audio sources, to control the levels of those sources, to assign and mix those sources to an appropriate channel on the recorder, and to monitor those sources via headphones. A good mixer can provide power for condenser mics and can accept both mic- and line-level signals of various strengths as well as output signals at mic or line level for more than one recorder. It can insert high-pass filters on individual channels separately, and it can generate the tones used to record a reference level before editing begins.

ESSENTIAL POINTS FOR AUDIO

How to Dress Subjects with the Miniature Mic

Concealing the microphone is almost an art form in itself. When the microphone is out of sight, the storytelling process itself is less intrusive. But concealed mics can have unintended consequences. If you find yourself concealing a microphone to record someone without his or her knowledge, be sure you have solid ethical and legal grounds.

BOX 7.2 NED HALL ON MICROPHONE PLACEMENT

The handheld or “stick” mic is often, but not always, an omnidirectional, dynamic mic. This is usually a good choice for anyone honoring the Hand Grenade Principle. If the hand that is holding the mic is waving the mic around, as during an impromptu interview, the background noise can change drastically. For example:

Your reporter is interviewing a farmer standing out in his field (for being outstanding in his field, one supposes). The field is bordered on one side by a busy freeway. On the opposite side of the field is the farmer’s son idly gunning the engine on his rusted all-terrain vehicle (ATV). Behind you is a barn, containing six new-born calves, lowing for suck. Directly next to the farmer is his shiny Behemoth MkIII tractor, which shakes the ground slightly as it idles. What to do?

Well, first, ask the farmer to shut off his beautiful Behemoth. Then, send the producer over to talk sonnyboy into turning off the ATV, preferably after he has driven it far away. This leaves you with the barn and the freeway to deal with. If the reporter has a directional mic in her hand and she is facing the freeway, then when she points it away from her, the freeway’s roar will be much louder under the farmer’s comments than under her questions. If you can reorient the pair so that the mic is always pointed away from the freeway, you will have largely farm sounds under your whole interview. This is desirable, as the background noises will then reinforce the location as seen by the camera. If the mic is omnidirectional, the background noise won’t change so drastically, but just how annoying the freeway noise is depends on how far you are from the road.

The only way to ameliorate this is to move further from the road and closer to the barn. The omni will pick up a more consistent background, but it also must be much closer to the mouths of the speakers to achieve an acceptable difference between the volume of the speech and the volume of the lowing calves. If you could get that omni mic very close to the desired sound source, you would minimize the volume of most of the background sound, but that big object in the picture would be quite distracting.

Enter the lavalier. Usually omnidirectional (because the omni is less susceptible to handling noise and is more forgiving of head turns and other sound source anomalies), the lav will usually achieve the most isolation from background noise of any miking technique. Remember, if that farm is located four miles from the closest road, then a cardioid condenser mic held over the heads of your subjects may yield the most pleasing, open, and natural sound, complete with crickets cricking, grasshoppers whirring softly through the moist grass, cows softly lowing in the barn, the breeze rustling the rushes down by the creek, the old windmill cranking and banging in the next pasture, the bed sheets the farmer’s wife hung on the line billowing and snapping, the flies buzzing on the compost heap back by the truck garden, the phone ringing in the next farmhouse over . . . A good-quality, sturdy, and quiet mixer that will accommodate as many channels of input as you foresee needing is an essential part of your kit.

You'll discover many ways to mount microphones on a person. Often, unobtrusive mounting will prevail over invisible mounting, because seeing a lav in a news interview is more common than seeing one on a character in a movie. When reporters speak to the camera there is no point in pretending they're not on television. But when you follow a subject through the paces of a "typical day" (typical except for, of course, one or more people loaded with video gear tagging along behind), it is best to see no mic at all. In any case, a black lav clipped to the middle of a white shirt with the cable dragging off to one side looks like amateur hour. A mic clipped to a tie or to a collar will have much less chance of being rubbed and scraped by other clothing than will a mic you have tried to hide completely. Some degree of "clothes rustle" may be present no matter which miking technique you employ; a nylon windbreaker can play havoc even with a boom mic. Your headphones will tell you whether you have an intolerable problem or not.

Different lavs conceal more effectively than others; you will find a favorite that mounts the way you like, sounds good, and seems to yield the cleanest track. Some general methods apply to any mic you choose: Lavs usually sound good mounted at about sternum height; a mic mounted too high on the neck may sound muffled, with the subject's chin blocking some sound; a mic mounted too low may sound thin and distant. (If your goal is to pick up both sides of a conversation with only one mic, a low position might be better because both subjects' mouths may then be about the same distance from the mic. Be willing to experiment.)

If necessary, tape the mic firmly to the shirt or body to keep it from producing extraneous noise when the person moves, and tape in an isolation loop to keep the mic cord free of stress. Gaffer's tape, folded into two "sticky-side-out" triangles and sandwiching the mic, makes a flat, sticky package that can easily be concealed in a shirt or blouse opening or under a lapel or a tie.

If you clip the mic to a coat lapel, choose the side where the speaker is most likely to be looking during the interview (body right or left). Sound quality will diminish if the microphone is attached to the person's left coat lapel but he or she looks mostly to the right.

If the speaker wears a low-cut blouse or sweater, fasten the microphone right under the lapel or neckband with a safety pin or a small piece of gaffer's tape. Keep the mic cable out of sight, preferably beneath the person's clothing. Women can be directed to an area where they will have privacy and be asked to drop the mic plug down the front of their dress or blouse. The cable need not necessarily run down the subject's front. It might be easier to tape it at the shoulder or under a collar and let it trail down the person's back. If the speaker is wearing a tie, you might conceal the mic cord by running it through the tag on the back of the tie.

If the person wears casual clothing, a jogging outfit for example, or will be active, use safety pins and tape to hold the microphone and cable in place. If the safety pins show through the

clothing, bend them to conform to the clothing and the person's body and cover them with gaffer's tape.

Place the transmitter wherever it is least obvious – in the person's pocket, for example, or in the back of a bra. Sometimes the transmitter can be taped to the small of a person's back or even inside the person's thigh. Tuck all cables and wires neatly out of sight (and don't tangle the mic wire with the antenna).

Work quickly, but remember Murphy states that if you wire someone in the belief that he or she will never be seen on camera from the waist down or from the back, the subject will stand up during the wide shot to retrieve a photo album from the bookcase behind him or her. Remember that you are invading your subject's personal space when you mount a mic. How you handle the process can make the person more nervous or less nervous.

Tips for Good Sound

Achieving good-quality sound is a matter of learning to listen for sound and to differentiate between what is acceptable and what is not. "Good sound is the absence of bad sound; bad sound is sound that is distorted," advises Murray R. Allen, president of Universal Recording Corporation in Chicago. "Distortion is any signal that unintentionally sounds different on output as against input."³ Listen to sound recordings for hiss, buzz, boomy sound, low volume, and distortion. If you hear any of these elements, take steps to eliminate the unwanted sounds.

Experiment with Microphone Placement

One of the most important steps in achieving good-quality sound is to experiment with microphone placement. Take time to move the mic closer to the subject, then farther away. Change the sound volume. Move your subject away from walls and the center of rooms to avoid unwanted sound reverberations. One of the most frequently committed errors is to work the mic too far from the sound source. The rule of thumb is to work the microphone close to the speaker and to involve the microphone in the action just as you would involve the camera. The nearer the mic is to the sound source, the better the recording will be. Moving the microphone closer allows you to lower the volume and thereby cut down the background noise. Each microphone reproduces sound best when used in a particular way, and you will need to experiment to discover which position yields the best sound quality.

Monitor Recording Levels

Often, **distortion** occurs because volume levels are set so high that the recording equipment becomes overloaded. All professional video gear has audio-level meters that indicate recording levels. Meter types vary, and not all meters are maintained and calibrated with the same diligence devoted to the camera's video components. This means the same meter reading that

yields a clean, well-modulated recording on one camera may indicate distortion on another. Experiment with your own equipment and listen to playback.

In general, if your camera has a pivoting needle indicating the audio level, that meter is calibrated in volume units (VU). Adjust speech to peak at zero, just before the needle moves into the red zone on the meter face. If your equipment has a digital display, its meter may read peak levels and may be adjusted to indicate somewhere to the right of 0 on the meter for normal speech.

In various camera viewfinders a red light flashes when the audio level approaches or intrudes into distortion. Experiment so that you know what your meters are telling you. For all their differences, most audiometers are marked in decibels (dBs), a measure of sound intensity that corresponds roughly to the minimum change in sound level that the human ear can detect. Even a change in speech levels of 2 dB, for example, may not be noticeable to anyone who is not listening for it. Sound recorded from -10 to 0 dB generally is acceptable. To avoid further sound distortion, try to avoid automatic level controls because of the alternating levels in volume and the increases in background noise that can result.

It is important to record a tone at the beginning of each session while you are recording color bars. All mixers contain a tone generator. Set the mixer so that its meters read the tone at 0 dB and then set the recorder's meters to 0 dB. This will allow the editor to calibrate the playback machine's audio output.

MONITOR THE SOUND WITH EARPHONES

Whenever you record in the field, it is critically important to monitor the sound with earphones (Figure 7.5). Photojournalists by the hundreds fail to monitor their sound, but the practice is professional suicide. There is no other way to determine whether the sound you're recording is good enough unless you monitor it with earphones. The best earphones enclose both ears and block out much unwanted sound, but, if you are shooting video as well as recording sound, smaller, in-the-ear plugs may be more comfortable. High-quality ear buds designed for portable media players can be pressed into service if full-sized headphones interfere with your shooting style.

TECHNIQUES TO REDUCE WIND NOISE

Wind makes noise only when interacting with an object. The undesirable artifact we refer to as wind noise is really not the sound of the wind, but the sound of a microphone diaphragm literally flapping in the breeze. Obviously the windiest conditions offer quite a challenge; recording on a boat under sail or in stormy conditions on land calls for elaborate measures. The lightest breeze, though, will ruin a track if you are not prepared.



Figure 7.5 To determine whether field recordings are clean and free of dropouts and distortion, monitor the sound with earphones.

Ernie Leyba Photography



Figure 7.6 A microphone windscreen is the first line of defense to help dissipate the wind and absorb its shock. Here the windscreen is normally concealed beneath the metallic mesh microphone cover.

Ernie Leyba Photography

The first line of defense in battling the breeze is foam. This substance is sold as *acoustic foam*, so called because it is open-celled; that is, the little bubbles in the material touch each other and thus allow air to pass through them, albeit in a convoluted path. Closed-cell foam, which may appear quite similar, will not work. The test is to hold the foam to your mouth and blow through it. Open-celled foam will allow your breath to pass through easily; note that the puff of air has lost its power after its trip through the foam. Manufacturers normally supply their microphones with **windscreens** made of gray foam or of a metallic mesh that has the same effect (Figure 7.6).

In an emergency, should the wind guard be absent, you can use the foam used to protect quartz bulbs from a lighting kit, but keeping a piece of acoustic foam in your kit is inexpensive and will come in handy. If you are having wind problems with a lavalier mic and its tiny windscreen is not up to the task, you can try moving the mic under a layer of the subject's clothes, making a larger windscreen from your stock of foam, or repositioning the subject with her back to the wind.

In high winds, the best solution might be to revert to a boom-mounted mic encased in a large mesh cage, called a *zeppelin* or *blimp*. These work in higher winds by creating a large pocket of still air around the mic. They are often augmented further by a cloth sock and further still with a jacket of long synthetic fur. When installing your mic in this device, you can slip a foam windscreen on the mic itself and add one or more layers of foam sheet inside the zeppelin. If you still have a wind noise problem, take cover because there's a tornado right behind you!

Windscreens can have a slight dulling effect on the recording if you use several layers of blocking material. Odds are, though, if you need all that protection from the wind, your subject will be shouting just to be heard.

The second step is a *filter*. A **high-pass filter** (or low-cut filter – two names for the same thing), so called because it sharply attenuates low frequencies and allows the highs to pass through, is almost always used in field recording. This function is usually built into a mixer, mic power supply, or into the mic itself. Some amount of high-pass filtering may also be built into a wireless transmitter – it may or may not be externally adjustable. There are simple, nonadjustable high-cut filter “barrels” designed to be placed in-line on the microphone cable (Figure 7.7), but more versatile circuits usually provide you with three choices: no filter at all and two different degrees of attenuation. The most severe of these settings is useful in a stiff breeze; the more moderate setting can be handy even indoors, to lessen the obtrusiveness of furnace or air conditioning rumble. More than one filter may be used in tandem for even more pronounced effect, useful if you insist on shooting that tornado.



Figure 7.7 A high-pass, or low-cut, filter can be installed in the mic line to diminish wind, air conditioning, and other low-frequency noises.

Ernie Leyba Photography

These filters do affect audio quality, most obviously in music, but also, to a degree, when recording the voice. A low-cut filter will remove some of the depth of a resonant male voice, while to its credit also removing the worst of a distracting roar from a refrigerator or from a crowd of people. The conscientious recordist will eliminate as many distracting noises as possible. Turn off the air conditioner and shut off the refrigerator right before the interview starts – but remember to turn them back on before you leave! (You’ll never forget if you put your car keys in the refrigerator when you shut it off.)

Bear in mind that, once you eliminate the booming rumble of wind hitting the microphone, you may still hear the wind rustling the subject’s clothing. Wind can render a location undesirable even after you have solved the immediate problems with the mic. Be aware of possible problems before you become wedded to a location; the only way to know for sure is to listen carefully through your headphones. Wind in the treetops can make a terrible racket even though it is beautiful, and still, on the ground. Careful headphone listening will also reveal that most condenser microphones are so sensitive that just moving them around in still air will cause them to rumble. These mics are therefore always used with at least a foam windscreen.

BE AGGRESSIVE

As a soundperson, be aggressive but unobtrusive. Strive to identify the small things that make sound in the environment in which you are recording. And don’t give up if the sound is bad: Keep trying different variations until you get clean, usable sound. Your efforts can make the difference between unacceptable and excellent sound and between merely technically correct sound and something truly exciting. Your instincts can guide you to story elements that might otherwise be missed. If a tree falls in the forest and you weren’t rolling, does it make a sound? Your audience will never know!

THE MICROPHONE HEARS DIFFERENTLY

The microphone is as different from the ear as the camera is from the eye. The microphone “hears” differently, just as the camera “sees” things your eyes and mind screen from your consciousness. Be especially aware of sound that comes from outside the camera frame. For example, it is possible for the sounds of a lawnmower to intrude during an interview conducted on a battleship berthed at dockside. Routinely, the microphone will pick up buzzing flies, air conditioners, distant airplanes, and the rumble of heavy equipment in the background, even if you fail to notice such noises while you’re conducting the interview. Careful monitoring with headphones is the only way to be sure you haven’t ignored a stray sound that will return to haunt you.

Sometimes there is no complete solution to a sound problem. If you do a feature on anti-abortion picketers and interview people on a busy street in front of a clinic, you will not be able to avoid traffic noise in the sound track. If the camera chooses to frame the interviews with the fine old oak tree growing next to the clinic, your subject might appear to be standing in a peaceful glade, and the car noise will make no sense and will distract the viewer. If, however, the camera includes the traffic zooming past just two feet from the protest, the noise then becomes perfectly appropriate and will even add a feeling of tension to the scene. And, if you are prepared and have a proper mic at the ready, you might even catch a shout from a passing driver that will speak volumes about the situation you are trying to document. Can you keep one eye on your surroundings and catch the first words of an irate neighbor as he crosses the street to engage the protesters?

SOUND PERSPECTIVE

Sound should have the same perspective as the pictures it accompanies. If the shot is a close-up of a basketball smacking the backboard and the mic was in the bleachers, some effect is lost. One danger of using wireless lavs is that all perspective is lost; the listener’s ear is resting on the speaker’s chest. If your reporter is standing on a desolate and windswept plain and the camera is pulled way back to reveal the bleak and stormy conditions, the reporter should not sound like someone speaking from an isolation booth. Either put an open mic on another channel or record some wild track of that moaning wind.

Similarly, take the case of a scene and accompanying sound of a woodpecker hard at work on a tree in the Okefenokee Swamp. If the woodpecker is photographed in a long shot or with a wide-angle lens, the bird will appear to be some distance from the camera. At that distance in real life there would be a slight delay in the sound of the tapping because it must travel some distance to the observer. In the edited video, the same delay can be incorporated into the sound track if the editor simply slips sync slightly to create a perspective of distance, even if the original sound of the woodpecker’s tapping was field recorded in dead sync with a wireless microphone hidden in the tree.

STEREO AND SURROUND-SOUND

Even with video cameras that can record three-dimensional images that reveal detail and nuance flat pictures can't even suggest, it may be years before we all have three-dimensional television receivers in our homes. Yet the technology for delivering three-dimensional sound to our living rooms has long been in place. Most television shows, including news programs, have stereo theme music if not surround-sound. At professional production houses, edit bays have long been equipped for stereo. Even the most basic of editing systems is stereo-ready, and computer-based editing systems are engineered to handle stereo audio automatically. Yet most sound in the field is often recorded monophonically.

If you were to produce a program in stereo, much of your field procedure might remain the same. A mono sound can always be placed in a stereo image, and an interview or standup may best be recorded in mono. But imagine yourself at an antiwar rally in Washington, DC. The camera shows a somber man tracing a name sandblasted in the war memorial's stone. The sound records a snuffle or two, but far off to the left, you can hear a man's voice, singing a song he heard on the radio decades ago, and to the right, the murmuring of a crowd listening to someone speaking with anger and conviction into a bullhorn. The camera turns and moves through the crowd, and you can feel the people pass by you on both sides. You hear a yell from off-camera, but you know where it came from, and as the camera pans to the source of the shout, you can hear the crowd move past the lens. This is life in surround-sound and, if you find yourself in the position to experiment, you will be rewarded with sound that will make you sure the quality of the picture has magically improved.

Many stereo microphones are available, and those that use a technique called M-S (for mid-side) are perfectly suited for video work. These mics use one unidirectional mic capsule pointing forward and another figure-eight capsule with its lobes pointed to the left and right. The mics combine these signals in a special way to produce an accurate stereo image. Should that stereo signal be combined into mono, and played through a single speaker, all that will be heard is the forward-facing unidirectional mic.

COVERING NEWS CONFERENCES

One of the secrets to covering news conferences is to arrive early and stake out your territory. If several camera crews are expected, use your tripod to help create a buffer area for yourself. To keep other crews from moving in front of you, try leaving them a place – even make a hole for them and offer it when they arrive.

Normally, news conference sound is recorded in one of three ways: You can use a shotgun mic, tap into the public address system fed from the podium mic, or you can add your handheld or stand mic to the thicket of microphones already taped to the podium. If you are taking the main



Figure 7.8 Recording sound at media events presents special challenges of acoustics and microphone placement. Come prepared, arrive early, and expect the unexpected.

Ernie Leyba Photography

sound from a common junction box or amplifier, find out in advance which adaptors you will need (Figure 7.8).

If you are the only organization at the news conference, or the first to arrive and there's no podium, consider placing the mic where you'll want the subject. Most media-savvy individuals gravitate naturally toward the microphone. And if possible, talk to the speaker in advance and get to know the individual. That way, when the person speaks during the news conference, he or she may look in your direction somewhat more than in the others'.

RECORDING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

If your task is to record a roundtable discussion or a full circle of speakers, then a different approach is required. To mic a group of people sitting in a circle will be most simple if the individuals sit around a table. You may be able to capture acceptable sound simply by placing the mic flat on the table. If no table is present, perhaps you can dangle a microphone from a ceiling fixture above the center of the group, or else use a shotgun mic and keep it as low and

as close to the middle of the group as you can. Experiment with microphone placement until the sound is acceptable.

THE TWO-PERSON INTERVIEW

The “sit-down” conversation between two people is a staple of television and usually lends the most opportunity to control extraneous sound. Often, the crux of an issue is stated in this main interview, and the sound recorded here will be used over other pictures, so it is doubly important to eliminate distracting sounds. Check the air conditioners; close the doors; unplug the telephones; shut off mobile phones. Try to make a quiet nook for serious exchange.

Generally, it is best to use the same kind of mic on both parties, so the tracks will blend well. Also, because everyone is sitting down, and the camera(s) is tripod-mounted, consider “hardwiring” your subjects—that is, using cables instead of wirelesses—to improve your chances of avoiding an ill-timed “hit”.

RECORD ROOM TONE

Whenever you record sound in the field, remember to record some **room tone** or ambient sound for the editor. Room tone is the ambient undertone peculiar to each environment. It is the “silence” of the forest, the calming sound of the distant river, the fan noises in a room full of computers, the sound of people breathing in a quiet classroom. During editing, gaps of silence in the sound track will draw unwarranted attention if the track suddenly goes dead. To prevent a dropout, the editor has merely to insert room tone, provided it was recorded in the first place.

THE SEDUCTIVE QUALITY OF NAT SOUND

The need for nat sound as a storytelling tool—that is, all sound other than speech that occurs naturally in our environment—is an expression of our desire for realism. Good sound is compelling, involving, and engaging. Often, good sound builds on prior experiences that viewers themselves bring to the screen. When we hear sounds that imitate or draw from our own life experiences, we bring to the story a more profound and intimate depth of understanding. Although it is inaccurate to say that experience is the equivalent of understanding, sound is a vital component of direct observation and a source of much that we know. Always, sound serves as an equal partner with pictures in helping viewers experience the great potential of video reporting and storytelling.

WATCH WHAT YOU SAY

Perhaps one of the most important cautions whenever you record sound is to say nothing around the microphone that you wouldn’t want broadcast. Around the country, broadcast journalists compile video of the spoonerisms (“It’s snowing tonight on Rabbit Ass Pierce” when the weather reporter meant to say “Rabbit Ears Pass”) and obscenities of other journalists –

and share them widely, including on YouTube. Some of the best-known names in US television are on those videos, and some of their utterances would make a deckhand blush. Even worse, in the rush of deadlines, some of their obscenities and unwarranted religious and ethnic comments, although made privately during the reporting process, have been inadvertently broadcast to home audiences – sometimes live, sometimes on hurriedly-edited video. Consequently, the guiding rule must be, “If you don’t want it on air, or the web, don’t say it.”

SOUND AND VIDEO ACCESSORIES

Returning home with usable sound is sometimes a matter of being able to fix problems that occur in the field. Many professionals carry a car kit with the following items. You can pack them in a standard shaving kit or a small drawstring hiking bag. Such items can be especially valuable in remote areas or when you travel overseas, far from the nearest repair shop.

You cannot check the kit on board, of course, when you travel by air; if you’re worried about losing the kit should your checked luggage go astray, consider creating a backup kit and check it through in a second bag. Your kit might contain the following items:

- battery-operated penlight
- spare batteries for everything you operate (penlight, mics, wristwatch, microphone mixers, wireless, etc.)
- spare bulbs for portable lights and your penlight
- video and audio connectors and adaptors (mini, phono, etc.) (Murphy says you will either carry every adaptor except the one you need or, to make the desired connection, you must use all the adaptors you carry.)
- alligator clips
- straight/Phillips screwdrivers
- pliers
- jeweler’s screwdrivers
- miscellaneous small screws, bolts, nuts, pins, washers, etc.
- extension cord adaptors (3-prong to 2-prong)
- foreign electrical adaptors and power converter
- locking needlenose pliers
- small soldering iron
- good electronic solder
- scissors
- sharp pocketknife (Swiss Army knife is de rigueur)
- Allen wrench set
- masking or other form of paper tape
- gaffer’s tape (furnace duct tape is acceptable, but it can mar delicate surfaces)

- nylon strapping tape
- instant bonding adhesive
- heat-shrink tubing
- cleaning swabs or chamois
- magnifying glass (small)
- earphones (take a spare pair)
- loose waterproof cover or plastic garbage bags for camera and mixer
- wooden wedge or steady bag to put under the camera when shooting low angles
- log books to jot down footage locations as you log video and audio
- pens/pencil(s)/felt-tipped markers
- electrical wire
- spare mic cables
- labels for video and hard drive recorders
- adjustable nylon fastening straps
- 75- to 300-ohm converter
- 75-ohm coaxial cable
- in-line line-to-mic adaptors to match level from auditorium amplifiers to a mic-level input
- in-line transformers to match impedance
- in-line high-pass and low-pass filters

SUMMARY

Conscientious professionals use audio in special ways. Sound imparts a sense of realism and life to video stories, and viewers have come to expect natural sound and crystal-clear interviews in their reports and other videos. Microphones have various pickup patterns. Whereas some pick up sound from a full 360-degree circle, others pick up sound only from a narrow angle in front of the mic or both in front of and behind the mic.

Handheld microphones, although versatile and reliable, may intrude on content when they act as barriers between the reporter and interview subjects or, in the case of standups, between the reporter and viewer. The problem is further compounded when the mic flag with an organization's logo distracts the viewer's attention from the reporter or interview subject.

More appropriate in such situations is the lavalier mic, an unobtrusive miniature microphone that can be clipped or pinned to clothing or taped to the speaker's chest. Shotgun microphones, which take their name from their appearance, are useful to record faraway sounds, such as at news conferences and athletic events. For the least distraction and most freedom to move about during standups and interviews, a good option is a wireless transmitter-receiver system. Sound can be transmitted over a range of several hundred feet, although wireless units are more sensitive to electrical interference than hardwired mics.

Poor sound quality will result from improper microphone placement and from recording levels that have been set too high or too low. A dependable rule of thumb is to work the microphone close to the sound source and, as appropriate, to involve the microphone in the action. Set recording levels and monitor sound quality with earphones.

Frequently, wind noise destroys otherwise high-quality sound. Techniques to reduce or eliminate wind include placing foam or metallic mesh windscreens on the microphone, installing high-pass filters in the microphone line, or physically shielding the mic from wind gusts. As a further consideration, a recording should have the same perspective as the pictures it accompanies. If the picture is a close-up, the sound should be recorded in close-up, and vice versa. Almost always, sound is a vital component of the best video stories, and in real life, a source of much that we know.

KEY TERMS

bidirectional	hertz (Hz)	mic flag	room tone
decibels (dB)	high-pass filter	nat sound	shotgun microphone
distortion	impedance	ohm	sound mixer
dropouts	kilohertz (kHz)	omnidirectional	unidirectional
dynamic microphone	lavalier microphone	radio frequencies (RF)	windscreens

DISCUSSION

1. Of the various microphones, which types are most frequently used to cover news and other events shot in the field? Compare the strengths and weaknesses of each type.
2. Discuss the most common microphone pickup patterns and their relative merits.
3. Explain the distinguishing features of the dynamic microphone.
4. Discuss the typical uses of the handheld, lavalier, and shotgun microphones in news applications.
5. Discuss the major strengths and weaknesses of the wireless transmitter-receiver system.
6. When you work with story subjects, what considerations are most important to remember in concealing the miniature microphone beneath their clothing or in other personal effects?
7. Overall, what are the most important considerations to follow if you are to achieve good-quality sound in the field?
8. Explain why it is essential for the videographer or soundperson to constantly monitor sound in the field with earphones.
9. Discuss the full range of techniques you can use to reduce wind noise in the field.
10. Explain the concept of perspective as it applies to the sound that accompanies visual images.
11. List the steps that are helpful to follow when you record sound at news conferences.
12. Explain the role of nat sound in helping lend a sense of realism to visual stories.

EXERCISES

1. Attend a news conference and observe procedures that professionals use to record high-quality sound. Examine microphone placement. Determine whether cords and cables are properly taped to the floor to reduce the risk that passersby will trip or fall. Notice which techniques the professionals may use to entice speakers to look in their direction.
2. Visit a television station with the chief photographer or a sound engineer and inspect the various microphones used for news and sports reporting. Prepare a report based on your discussions with the photographer or engineer about the uses and relative merits of each type of microphone.
3. Record a person's voice with a dynamic handheld microphone located approximately two feet or more from the speaker's mouth. Make a second recording with the microphone about ten inches from the person's mouth. Determine which microphone position results in the best quality sound.
4. Practice concealing a miniature lavalier microphone and its cord beneath a willing subject's business and leisure clothing, on the neck of a pullover sweater, and beneath a necktie.
5. Experiment with microphone placement in a room with poor acoustics. While you monitor the sound with earphones, have a friend reposition the microphone in several locations until you find the best position to record quality sound.
6. Intentionally record sound at too low a volume, then boost volume to acceptable levels during playback. Note the distortion that results. Repeat the exercise, this time recording at too high a level and lowering volume to acceptable levels during playback.
7. Record sound outdoors in high wind. Use the mic with and without a windscreen. Block the wind with your body or other object, then again with and without the windscreen. If possible, record sound with a high-pass filter installed in the mic line.
8. With and without the high-pass filter in the mic line, record the sounds from the tailpipe of an idling car or motorcycle.
9. Practice installing a wireless transmitter on a willing participant. Make practice recordings with the system, changing the transmitting antenna from the front to the back of the person, from horizontal to vertical position, and at various distances from the wireless receiver.
10. Note the variations in sound perspective that result when the microphone is involved in the action.
11. Record a series of room tones from various environments and study these respective "sounds of silence."
12. Watch editors at work as much as you can. Witness the problems caused by poor sound recording techniques.

NOTES

- 1 National Public Radio, November 11, 1994.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Murray R. Allen, "Is There a Place for Good Audio in Video?" *Follow Focus* (official journal of the Professional Motion Picture Equipment Association, Toluca Lake, CA) 3, no. 2 (Fall 1983), 24.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

THE INTERVIEW: SHOOTING THE QUOTATION MARKS

Although images communicate much of the story, interviews provide little moments of punctuation. Interviews provide essential detail, help give stories spirit and atmosphere, and impart vital spontaneity. Part of the interviewer's job is to gather facts, but also to reveal the person being interviewed. The best interviews are often so strong that viewers would recognize the main subject days after seeing the story. Inevitably, some interviews feature the world's mayors, ambassadors, and other authorities. Still, the most poignant and memorable interviews often are with ordinary people who have never been interviewed on camera and may never be interviewed again. When people like ourselves talk, we listen. Whatever your story assignment, interviews usually play a valuable role.

ESTABLISH TRUST

As a video storyteller you're most often an outsider, yet your job as an interviewer depends on your quick ability to establish trust and gain acceptance from perfect strangers. The job is sometimes less difficult for print and text-based reporters, who can walk up without a camera and immediately establish rapport, than those who must tote camera, lights, microphone, and other gear that can make subjects self-conscious.

Because your presence is so obvious, some people will be curious about you; others may be hostile, frightened, or indifferent. To achieve their cooperation, you will have to be open enough to let people come to know and trust you. Get them relaxed. Find common ground as soon as you can. Extraordinary stories sometimes result because people will talk more openly to a friend than a stranger.

The process can take as little as five minutes and be as simple as a brief chat over coffee, but it can never happen unless you have a genuine interest in people and have the self-confidence to reveal something of yourself. If you are afraid to approach people as you launch your interviewing career, remember that most people feel flattered to be on camera even if they seem nervous at first.

PRACTICE GOOD MANNERS

In a sense viewers will be peering over your shoulder throughout the interview. Your conduct will determine how the subject reacts, so even when you are in a rush to meet deadline, practice good manners and treat subjects with genuine courtesy. Arrive on time and take leave before you wear out your welcome. Leave the chewing gum at home, and refrain from sitting unless you are invited. Be friendly but not overly familiar. You are always an invited guest. Because viewers may identify more with interview subjects than with the interviewer, how you treat interviewees may translate into how viewers subconsciously feel you have treated them.

THE MOST IMPORTANT INTERVIEW QUESTION

Because the most compelling stories and interviews reveal personality, it does well to remember that the interview itself is rarely the story. Usually, it is supporting structure for a larger story. For this reason, sometimes the most important question you can ask an interview subject is, "Show me what you do."

Interviewees are more at ease if they can focus on familiar work and surroundings than if they are forced to focus on themselves, their appearance, or their performance during the interview. Often you can interview people while they're engaged in familiar activities rather than standing them in front of a blank wall and thrusting a stick mic in their face, or letting them sit behind a desk. People are more relaxed doing something other than watching you photograph them. To avoid the appearance of staging in such situations, remember not to ask for or suggest action unless the person already routinely performs the activity in your absence.

SAVE YOUR QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

The best interviews carry at least the illusion of spontaneity. Still, it's often necessary to set up the interview and determine in advance the subject matter to be covered, what time you will conduct the interview, and even its location. To help preserve the feeling of spontaneity, try not to share questions in advance of the interview. That's because subjects ordinarily put most of their energy into their first response. Once the camera rolls they may leave out the detail because having told you once, they assume you already know what they said. While interview subjects commonly want to think through their answers in advance, the best interviews address the moment and the feelings of the moment and grow naturally from the honest interaction between you and the subject.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

The more you know about your source, the more confidence you give the person and the more you can concentrate on listening without having to worry about the next question you'll ask. Anyone can ask anyone else questions, but the interviewer can succeed only by asking informed questions that are based on knowing everything possible about the subject.

BOX 8.1 HELP INTERVIEW SUBJECTS FORGET ABOUT THE HARDWARE

Many people you interview will have little experience with reporters, microphones, lights, and cameras. Predictably, their first reaction will be to become almost painfully self-conscious and to direct their focus inward. To help put interview subjects at ease and keep their focus off themselves, the following strategies may help:

- If you have the time, leave your equipment out of sight until you've had a chance to talk with the person you plan to interview.
- Spend as much time as possible getting to know the subject, whether you have only a few minutes or a half hour. Often, this interaction is the most valuable time you can spend on a story because it gives you and the interviewee a way to know and trust one another.
- Talk about things that interest the subject; try not to talk about yourself unless the subject first expresses an interest in you.
- Use a miniature lavalier microphone and wireless transmitter.
- Try to avoid talking about your equipment or how much it costs.
- Give the subject time to become accustomed to the camera, tripod, light case, and cables.
- Let the subject do as much of the talking as possible.
- Try to avoid alerting people when you begin to record, or whenever the camera is rolling.

Author Cornelius Ryan believed journalists should never interview anyone without knowing 60 percent of the answers. Do all the homework you can before the interview. The person you're interviewing has, and will be prepared.

Among the resources available to most reporters are the Internet, publications in the subject's field, almanacs and yearbooks, government manuals, directories, magazines and newspapers, the public library, and, of course, phone calls and visits with acquaintances, friends, and relatives of the person to be interviewed. The absence of full and certain knowledge about a subject virtually guarantees an interview far beneath its potential.

HOW TO FRAME INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

So often, reporters think up the questions they'll ask on the way to the interview. The result is an interview without focus. When you start asking questions, the other person immediately wonders, "Why does she want to know that?" If your purpose is unclear, your subject may be reluctant to talk. Ask a few questions to warm up, but save the best and strongest or most controversial questions for the last part of the interview and actually build the interview to a climax. The interview must lead to a given conclusion, somewhat like a story with beginning, middle, and end. Never should it be simply a series of unrelated questions.



Figure 8.1 Reporting hardware can quickly intimidate and overwhelm interview subjects.

Ernie Leyba Photography

USE A WIRELESS MICROPHONE

When you conduct one-on-one interviews at close range with people unaccustomed to the process, try to avoid the handheld mic and even the shotgun mic because such hardware reminds people they're being recorded (Figure 8.1). If you can use a wireless mic instead, subjects are more likely to forget about the microphone. They'll feel and act more natural and may engage in more unguarded conversation.

To further keep the hardware low profile, arrive early to set up equipment. If you must conduct a sit-down interview and must use lights, use the lowest-intensity possible, and set them up ahead of time to give interview subjects time to adjust.

THE ART OF LISTENING

The most powerful interviews are but conversations between two people, yet there can be no conversation without a listener. Most obviously, that job falls to the interviewer. Listening, in fact, is one of the reporting arts. Good interviews occur naturally when you're prepared, listen well, and show interest in what people say. They will give part of themselves to you if you give part of yourself to them, observes photojournalist Larry Hatteberg.

Listening also helps you frame more meaningful questions. A spontaneous interview is most likely if your questions build naturally off the other person's responses. Attentive listening also frees you from having to concentrate so hard on formulating your next question that you miss what the other person is saying.

As a further payoff, good listening can help you identify potential "edit points," even while you are in the field. When you feel something about what the person says, for example, it's generally a strong sound bite. "Whenever I interview someone, I try to identify the emotions I feel, and which points during the interview I feel them," says Bob Dotson, the originator of "American Story" on NBC's *Today* show. "Inevitably, when I go back to those moments in the interview while I'm editing, that's where I find the strongest statements."¹

AVOID THE EASY QUESTIONS

It would help all interviewers to talk with a celebrity or two about interviewing. Whether they are screen stars or football quarterbacks, all celebrities have endured countless questions so similar and predictable that they become clichés. Especially when you work with people who appear frequently on camera, think up fresh questions. Again, the task is easier the more you know about the subject.

If your research leads you nowhere, perhaps you can call one of the subject's old college classmates for background information that may point you in new directions. Along the way, you can ask questions and dig for details based on your curiosity about the interviewee, even when they lead you beyond the subject under discussion.

When shooting sit-down interviews, for example, and you have time, be alert for the moment when your subject becomes more than just an expert on the story and reveals personality and humanity. When you dig for details, you'll likely throw away 98 percent of what you unearth, but the more small details interview subjects reveal, the more you learn what matters to them. Sometimes, the small details will become the most touching and memorable moments in your story. Avoid interviewing someone for more than a few minutes, however, if you know you can only use one or two short informational soundbites in your story. Know what you need. Get in, get out, and move on.

BUILD QUESTIONS AROUND THE FIVE W'S

The strongest interview questions solicit information and often arise from queries that begin with the familiar "Five W's": Who, Why, Where, When, What (and How). Such words compel informative responses. The question that begins "Why did you oppose reinstating the draft?" is a stronger question than one resulting in a simple yes or no response: "I understand you opposed reinstating the draft." Another good technique is to simply prompt

the person for clarification, “Really? Tell me about that,” or “I know you oppose the draft. Tell me why.”

AVOID TWO-PART QUESTIONS

The strongest interviewers ask their questions one at a time, building each new question on the subject’s last response. Whenever you ask two-part questions, trouble often looms: “How likely are we to see prefabricated factory-built houses dominate the new home market in the United States this decade, and if they do come to dominate the market, will financing be provided mostly through private lenders or through government agencies?” Most subjects will answer the first question, then having answered, will ask the interviewer, “What was the other question?”

“HOW DO YOU FEEL?”

The question most likely to pop from the reporter’s mouth at inappropriate times is, “How do you feel?” The question is asked of grieving parents, air crash survivors, and losers of football games. The answer normally is so obvious that any viewer can fill in the blanks.

Sometimes a better approach is to make an observation, “I know it’s tough for you right now,” or to ask a question that probes the subject’s emotions less deeply, such as “What do you think about this?” At other times, the best approach may be to walk away rather than intrude on someone’s privacy or sense of dignity.

ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS THE VIEWERS WOULD ASK

Try to anticipate questions your viewers would ask the subject if they were in your place. You are the viewer’s only representative in the field, and you can frustrate viewers if you overlook obvious or important subject matter in your interview. Conversely, because you are the viewer’s representative, remember to keep your questions in good taste and to the point.

PRACTICE THE FINE ART OF HESITATION

Silence can be golden as an interviewing technique known as the “non-question question,” described from the photojournalist’s point-of-view in Chapter 5, “Shooting Video in the Field.” Experienced interviewers know the single most interesting thing they can do is to ask a good question and then just wait for two or three or four seconds after the answer as if they’re expecting more. Typically, interview subjects become a little self-conscious and reveal more about themselves than intended. Even experienced interview subjects, who have “heard it all before,” sometimes give their best response to the “non-question question,” a question that was never asked.

PITCH REPORTING OPPORTUNITIES

When conducting interviews for “people stories,” professionals follow two rules. **Rule #1:** Don’t interview people only in one location; move them around. A change of location can help rejuvenate the interview, and it provides a good chance to go from soft questions to the tough ones. **Rule #2:** Don’t interview people. Have a conversation. Use little conversational questions and observations to which subjects can automatically respond, and in responding, define the moment. The observation “I’ll bet it’s cold in there” may elicit just as meaningful a response as a direct question. Remember, however, to use this technique as a way to elicit a response, not as a way to lead the subject to any particular response. Reporter Jim Hanchett and photojournalist Gary Croshaw developed four standard questions to foster this more conversational process:

- What’s happening?
- What’s going on?
- What do you think of this?
- What happens now?

Normally, the questions are asked of interview subjects as they sweep out the mud from their flooded storefront or sift through tornado debris for their possessions, while a camera-mounted microphone picks up their answers. There is no time wasted setting up a formal interview, no spontaneity lost because reality has been interrupted (Figure 8.2).

To capture responses in the aftermath of a flood, for example, Hanchett might drive along a street where flood cleanup operations continue while his photographer sits on the car hood and takes pictures. At opportune moments, either of the two might call out to people sometimes 15 or 20 feet from the camera: “*How’s it going?*” Back comes the response: “*This is terrible. I just got flooded out of my house; I lost everything.*” Extemporaneous questions give people no time to become nervous or to rehearse their answers.

PREARRANGE SIGNALS BETWEEN REPORTER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

A similar technique sometimes is possible even in more formal interview situations. Sometimes interview subjects will be at their most spontaneous and energetic best before the interview begins. If you work alone and your camera is focused, composed and ready to record, you can capture the subject’s energy and feeling without interrupting the moment. You can start recording on some cameras with a remote. (You did remember to put a wireless on your subject first thing when you arrived, right?)

The technique also works for reporter–photographer teams. Using a prearranged gesture as simple as replacing a ballpoint pen in a purse or shirt pocket, the interviewer can signal the



Figure 8.2 A good way to interview people unaccustomed to appearing before the camera is to carry on a conversation while they continue to work at a familiar task.

Ernie Leyba Photography

photographer to begin recording, even without the subject's knowledge. By the time the interviewee asks, "When do we start?" it's sometimes possible to reply, "We've just finished. Thank you so much."

HOW TO REACT WITHOUT APPEARING TO AGREE

Part of the art of conducting the interview is to react, but without indicating agreement or showing inappropriate displays of sympathy with the subject. Into this category fall nods of the head or responses such as "I see" and "uh huh." Most often your intent is to indicate your understanding, or to prompt your subject, through body language that communicates "keep going," but audiences may see such actions as agreement. As a further problem, your own utterings may make it impossible during editing to cleanly pick up the start of a sound bite if you have stepped on that part of the audio with your voice.

To avoid such problems, some reporters tilt or cock their head slightly to one side to show interest in the subject's response, or perhaps even utter an occasional "mm-hmm," provided

it's low enough in volume not to be recorded on the sound track. Also be mindful to blink your eyes occasionally, and to allow your interest or concern to show in your eyes as appropriate. It is also acceptable to change body position, even to lean forward to indicate your interest in the subject's responses, but do skip the "I see's" and "uh-huhs," no matter how well intentioned.

RETAIN CONTROL OF THE INTERVIEW

It is important to retain control in every interview, even should an interviewee grab a handheld mic and hold it as a way to seize control. You might find it hard to interrupt a nonstop talker. Whatever the situation, insist on retaining control. You might have to stop the interview to explain why you must hold the mic, or else to interrupt the interviewee so you can ask another question. Even nonstop talkers stop talking long enough to breathe. That can be your moment to regain control and to ask the next question.

INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

Few NBC *Today* viewers who watched that day will forget the report about Bill Samples, a patrol officer stationed at Philadelphia's Children's Hospital who spent his off-hours helping make the dreams of very sick children come true. NBC News correspondent Bob Dotson told of Samples and his wife, Helene, who helped find money so dozens of terminally ill youngsters could see the mountains or visit the ocean before they died. The report, titled "Sunshine Child," enabled viewers to accompany tiny Christina Wilson, who suffered from leukemia, on a visit to Disney World where she hoped to meet a mouse named Minnie.

On the plane from Philadelphia to Orlando, photographer Warren Jones showed Christina the wireless microphone that would be in her purse when she met Minnie, and he let Christina hold the camera he would be using to tell the story. When they landed in Orlando, the lens was covered in fingerprints. But by the next day, the lens had been cleaned and Christina was all but oblivious to the reporting crew and the hardware that surrounded her.

"Have you seen Minnie?" Christina asked the next morning, amid the crush of children who had gathered to meet the Disney characters. Suddenly, a big black foot stepped into frame behind Christina. The little girl turned. "Hi, Minnie," she whispered. Minnie Mouse held out her arms and the two hugged each other for long moments. Once more Christina looked up at the big mouse. "Minnie, I love you," Christina said. Minnie knelt down to offer her big black nose, and a moment later Christina kissed Minnie.

Jones's technique with Christina is central to the success of visual storytellers who interview and work with children. The camera and other reporting hardware sometimes fascinate younger kids, so a good approach is to sit down with them and explain any unusual gear, even to let them look at the screen or through the camera viewfinder if possible. Soon they will be their

natural selves, oblivious to the camera and sometimes even to the reporting process itself. This approach often leads to stronger interviews and may even result in less time spent on the actual interview.

Specific questions work best with children (Figure 8.3). A usable response is more likely if the interviewer asks, “What did Minnie’s nose feel like?” than if the child is asked, “What did you like most about Disney World?” Children often give vague answers if questions are too vague.

Figure 8.3 KUSA photojournalist Brett Alles helps a young story subject become familiar with the camera and accustomed to his presence. This technique helps subjects forget the camera and reporting process.

Ernie Leyba Photography



Figure 8.4 The strongest interviews with children commonly result when questions are specific and to the point.

Ernie Leyba Photography



THE TALKING HEAD

The viewers' inherent interest in people can help lead them to an expanded interest in your stories. Although interviews are never substitutes for the story, they are an essential component of stories told through people. For the most part, whenever you edit interviews, keep bites short. Use them to provide emphasis rather than as substitutes for the story or for your own reporting. Many strong bites will run less than ten seconds to little more than twenty seconds, but use good judgment. Depending on content and pace, even two-hour interviews can be compelling and memorable.

Some organizations instinctively deride the **talking head**, as though a speaker on-screen is boring by definition. Legitimate talking heads can enhance the story's meaning however, and, sometimes even serve as a main point. Such talking heads may serve to:

- provide insight into the speaker's personality
- show that what is said is less important than why and how the speaker says something
- show the person as he or she is
- show speakers who are compelling and dramatic or who have dramatic statements
- help prove the visuals

By contrast, the talking head can become a handicap in the video report when it displays the peculiarities that have created its bad reputation. Such characteristics are to be seen whenever the sound bite:

- substitutes for the report
- substitutes for legitimate visual communication
- substitutes for a succinct script
- fails to enhance the visuals
- is long-winded and boring

INFLUENCING HOW VIEWERS PERCEIVE THE SUBJECT

It is vital to represent the interview subject honestly and to make the interview technically acceptable. How you structure and photograph interviews and their environments will affect how viewers react to interview subjects and what they remember about them.

Interviews by their nature reveal personality and, for the most part, call for reasonably close shots. But avoid extreme close-ups that place the viewer uncomfortably close to the subject.

BOX 8.2 MAKE YOUR SUBJECT THE CENTER OF ATTENTION

With every sit-down interview, when the camera is on the tripod, I try to create as much space as I can between the subject, the background, and myself. This lets me deemphasize the background in two ways: It lets me keep the key light off the background, and it gives me distance enough to zoom into the person's head and shoulders, making the background even less noticeable. With more separation and less emphasis on the background, the more the subject's face becomes the center of attention. Watch any movie with Tom Cruise and you'll notice that most close-ups are shot on a long focal length. The face really stands out when the camera is far away and the background is fuzzy.

—John DeTarsio

ONE-EYED TALKING HEADS

Compose shots so viewers can see both the subject's eyes throughout the interview. Eyes are among the most eloquent indicators of the inner self and state of mind. Too often, however, photographers compose shots so viewers see only the side of the subject's head, a shot that incorporates a full view of the subject's ear and a single eye. Ears, in and of themselves, rarely communicate much meaning.

BODY LANGUAGE

Finally, the interviewer's body language and attire inevitably affect how viewers perceive the interview subject (Figure 8.5). If interviewees are open and generally friendly, no purpose is served by inadvertently portraying them otherwise. To generate context about your interview subjects, consider implementing the following behaviors as appropriate.

If the mood of the interview is open and friendly, and you will appear on camera with the interviewee:

- Take off your coat, roll up your sleeves, and if you're a man, loosen your tie should you wear one.
- Open up visually and physically; show your friendship and your concern; move closer to the subject.
- Sit beside the source with nothing between you, not even a stick mic.
- Angle your body toward the person, rather than face the person head on.
- Create a sense of freedom by taking the person outside; communicate a clear impression that the person is with you of his or her own free will.

If the mood of the interview is investigative or adversarial, then the atmosphere and body language change accordingly and can be reflected through the following behaviors:



Figure 8.5 The reporter's appearance and body language influence how viewers perceive both the interviewer and the interview subject.

Ernie Leyba Photography

- Place something between you and the source (a desk, a stick mic, etc.)
- Place more distance between yourself and the other person.
- Wear a coat and tie, or dress in a similarly businesslike way.
- Face the person straight on, instead of at an angle.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW IS OVER

By day's end, video reporters and storytellers who cover five or six stories a day find it difficult to remember who said what, let alone have time to preview the various interviews before writing the stories. Yet an exact knowledge of wording is necessary to write naturally into and out of sound bites and integrate them properly into packages. One solution is to record backup audio of your interview on a digital voice recorder or smartphone, and play back the interview en route to your next location, noting the exact wording of the sound bites you'll need for the story.

You can streamline the process even more if you listen for sound bites during the interview itself. Listen for edit points and note the moments when you feel something about what

has been said. Later, it will be easier to locate the statements you need and, if necessary, to communicate that information to an editor. If your camera is equipped with a time-code generator, you can sometimes set the generator to correspond to the time on your wristwatch. Then, as usable statements are made, a simple glance at your watch during the interview can help you more easily locate them during editing.

INTERVIEWS ALLOW REPORTING THROUGH DIRECT OBSERVATION

In the final analysis, video storytelling is the art of reporting through direct observation. Through the video interview, story subjects can report their own observations, firsthand and with unparalleled intensity and believability. Sometimes interviewers have a rare opportunity to see into a person's soul, but that moment usually happens only if people feel comfortable enough on camera to reveal their innermost selves. If you have established a comfortable working environment, prepared yourself for the interview, and allowed your source to see that you are a reasonable and caring human being, then you will have set the stage for powerful reporting and storytelling.

SUMMARY

Interviews impart a sense of authority and spontaneity to visual stories and provide intimate detail otherwise unobtainable. Interviews further help reveal something of the person being interviewed. None of these goals is possible unless the reporter first establishes trust with the interviewee. An atmosphere of trust is most easily created if the reporter is open and courteous and exhibits a genuine interest in people.

Interviewees usually are more at ease if they can focus on familiar work and surroundings rather than on themselves or their "performance." Thus, interviews may progress more smoothly if a subject continues with a familiar task, and if the interviewer makes observations and has a conversation with the subject rather than attempts to conduct a formal interview. Such exchanges progress even more smoothly when lights, microphones, and other reporting hardware are unobtrusive.

Few interviews achieve their full potential unless the interviewer has conducted sufficient research to learn everything possible about the subject. Preparation is a prerequisite to success. Full knowledge of a subject also frees the interviewer to listen closely to responses as the interview develops; another critical interview skill. As you listen to responses, react as appropriate but strive to avoid indicating agreement or showing inappropriate sympathy with the subject. Remember also that your body language impacts how viewers will perceive the subject.

Because you are the viewer's representative, anticipate the questions viewers would ask if they had the opportunity. Interview questions can be constructed around the Five W's—who, why, where, when, what (and how)—to help elicit informative responses. Questions that elicit simple

yes or no responses are less desirable, as are two-part questions, which are confusing and difficult for the interviewee and audience to remember.

In all interview situations, good taste and courtesy are mandatory. If the audience feels uncomfortable with a reporter's conduct or questions, the interview may fail. When interviews are lengthy, consider interviewing subjects in more than one location. A change can help rejuvenate the interview, and it provides a good opportunity to change the subject.

Retain control of the interview, even when subjects seize the microphone or refuse to stop talking. If necessary, stop the camera or use a prearranged but unobtrusive signal if you're working with another person to cut the sound and recompose the picture, as, for example, during a live shot.

Children represent special interview challenges. Good strategies include explaining the equipment before the interview and asking very specific questions during the interview.

Although interviews are never substitutes for the story, they are an essential component of stories told through people.

KEY TERM

talking head

DISCUSSION

1. Explain the essential role of the interview in video stories.
2. Discuss how to establish trust with an interview source.
3. What personal conduct and manners are important to observe whenever you are in someone else's home or office?
4. What is the most important question you can ask during an interview?
5. Discuss ways to help put the interview subject at ease.
6. Why is it important not to reveal the questions you intend to ask until the actual interview begins?
7. Describe the most important steps you can take to help interview subjects forget the microphone, lights, camera, and other hardware sometimes involved in the interview process.
8. Explain why research and planning are so important to the interview process.
9. Describe a good way to structure the interview questions you intend to ask.
10. Why is listening such an important part of the interview process?
11. What constitutes a "dumb" interview question?
12. Describe the difference between asking an interview question and pitching a reporting opportunity.

13. Devise and describe some prearranged gestures that a reporter–photographer team could use to signal one another during interviews without interrupting the spontaneity of the moment.
14. What are some good ways to react to an interviewee’s statements without appearing as though you agree with what is being said?
15. What steps can you take to retain control of the interview, even when an interviewee seizes the microphone?
16. Explain the special challenges that arise when you interview children.
17. Describe the characteristics that make for a legitimate talking head interview.
18. Discuss how environment, lighting, composition, and even your body language can impact how viewers perceive the interview subject.

EXERCISES

1. Study professional television interviewers. Pay special attention to how they put interview subjects at ease, elicit meaningful information, and move the interview along.
2. Arrange to interview a news source or someone who will play the role of a news source. Research the person and the topic you wish to discuss, schedule a time for the interview, arrive on time, and take a few minutes to become familiar with the interviewee. This time, take just a notebook and pencil and leave the camera at home. Concentrate on being relaxed, knowledgeable about the subject, interested, and friendly.
3. Repeat exercise two, but with a different person. This time take the camera, lights, and microphone.
4. Interview someone while the person continues a familiar task. Make observations or offer “reporting opportunities” rather than ask formal questions.
5. Construct two lists of questions: (1) questions you would expect an informed interviewer to ask you about your life interests and activities and (2) questions of the same nature that you would like to ask a friend based solely on your existing knowledge of that person. Compare the two lists of questions. How do the questions differ? Now, experience the value of research firsthand by calling your friend’s parents, old school teachers, close friends, classmates, and brothers and sisters, and asking them questions about your friend. Using this new knowledge, expand the list of questions you will ask your friend.
6. Practice listening to people more attentively, even in everyday conversations. Develop your ability to listen to people into a fine art.
7. In your everyday conversations, practice listening to people without appearing to agree. Act interested, but suppress any body language that tends to communicate agreement.
8. Practice conducting interviews and working with children until you are able to routinely elicit story-worthy responses.
9. Study television interviews to determine how interview environments, lighting, camera composition, and body language can influence the viewer’s perceptions of interviewers and interview subjects.

10. Listen to interviews on radio, television, and the Internet to practice identifying alternative “edit-in” and “edit-out” points in sound bites. Often, the routine sound bites in news stories can be shortened with no loss in meaning and sometimes can even be improved.

NOTE

- 1 E-mail correspondence and personal conversations with the principle author through March 2016.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

WRITING THE PACKAGE

9

Package. An edited, self-contained video report of an event or feature, complete with pictures, sound bites, voice-over narration, and natural sounds. The package is a form of narrative storytelling with a beginning, middle, and ending.

Some video storytellers start with the pictures whenever they “write” a package. Others start with the words. But the most efficient storytellers first block the package as a message or an experience with a beginning, middle, and ending. The blueprint looks something like this:

1. Focus (the story stated in a sentence)
2. Beginning (lead)
 - a. Studio lead-in (if necessary)
3. Package lead
 - a. Visual lead
 - b. Voice over (VO)
4. Middle (three or four main points)
 - a. Main point A
 - b. Main point B
 - c. Main point C
 - d. Main point D
5. End (close)
 - a. Final visual
 - b. Strong closing sound
 - c. Final VO

Following this approach, you first emphasize the ideas you wish to communicate, and only then begin the search for image, words, and sounds that will most effectively tell the story. You structure the story through four distinct stages of development: (a) reviewing existing knowledge and new information obtained from story research before you leave for the field;

(b) conducting field research and interviews, shooting video; (c) viewing and editing field video and sound bites; and (d) writing the final package. Structuring a package thus becomes much more a way of thinking than of writing.

DEFINE YOUR FOCUS

Once you understand the story, you can define its **focus**. The focus is a simple, vivid, declarative sentence expressing the heart, the soul, of the story as it will appear on air.¹ Until you know the story yourself, it will be difficult to tell it to anyone else.

In the following example of how to structure a package, assume you are covering a story on smart ways to lose weight. Perhaps as you research the story, you begin to understand that the story focus is, “The secret to weight loss lies in eating a healthy diet from the four basic food groups.”

WRITE THE BEGINNING (STUDIO LEAD-IN)

The package, like all stories, will need a **lead-in**. It could take several forms:

- The introductory copy an anchor reads on camera from the studio before the package airs
- As explanatory printed copy for web viewers to read for themselves before they click to click the accompanying video
- A recording of someone reading the copy on camera within a totally self-contained video package for a web page or public presentation
- Voice-over copy with accompanying graphics within a totally self-contained video package for a web page

Audiences are best served if the studio lead-in instantly and intrusively begins the story, rather than serves merely as an introduction to a story yet to come. In a studio setting, the video package then continues the story as the screen cuts from the anchor’s studio lead-in to the package.

Studio Lead-In:

If you want to lose weight and become healthy for life, you’ll never need a fad diet again.

In fact, you never did. You learned the secret in elementary school. (Reporter) has the story.

The anchor has disclosed the heart of the story in the studio lead-in. At this point the package begins to air and audiences see the story’s first video – at this point, a continuation of the story, rather than its beginning.

WRITE THE PACKAGE LEAD

Again, as you plan the “visual lead,” or first video of your package, identify the central idea you wish to communicate before you worry about the words. In general, the thought process focuses first on: (a) an idea to communicate; (b) images and accompanying sound to prove the idea visually; and (c) words as necessary to interpret and explain the images.

If you want to indicate in your first visual that healthy diets are instinctive, you may decide your first video should be of children eating healthy foods. You might further decide to emphasize close-ups that show healthy faces and foods. Now that you have the images defined, you can write the voice over.

Voice Over to Accompany the “Visual Lead”:

Nutritionists now tell us the only diet we ever needed is to follow the four basic food groups, and to eat a variety of food from those groups. It’s how healthy people just naturally eat . . . and it can become a way of life for almost anyone.

(Video [close-ups]: Children eating healthy foods: apples, vegetable snacks)

WRITE THE MIDDLE OR MAIN BODY

After the package lead, begin the middle or main body of your report. In a 1:10- to 1:30-minute package, try to limit yourself to no more than three or four main points. Again, focus on the ideas to be communicated before you worry about the images or words.

In this example about healthy diets, perhaps after finishing your research you know that you wish to emphasize four main points, as follows:

1. You can eat anything you want, just not everything (eat in right amounts).
2. Exercise plays a role, although you don’t need to be obsessive.
3. Healthy diets and foods are tastier. Fatty foods actually are less satisfying. If you cut fat in your diet, you begin to crave healthy foods.
4. If you find you can’t control your eating, you may be using food as a substitute to fill other needs in your life.

Again in the main body, focus first on: (a) the idea to communicate; (b) images to prove the ideas visually; and (c) words as necessary to interpret and explain the images.

Now that you have your idea clearly focused for *point one*, “You can eat anything you want, just not everything (eat in right amounts),” you begin the search for images. Perhaps you decide to visit a supermarket and obtain permission to photograph a shopper as she buys apples and

whole grain foods. As part of your report you interview the woman and she admits to having the occasional urge for a hot fudge sundae. In the sound bite, the woman tells you, “I’ve found that diets based on deprivation will not work, so I try to eat healthy foods but also occasionally reward myself with a hot fudge sundae. It’s no big deal that way.”

Even while you are in the field, you decide to build off the woman’s interview as a way to incorporate a reporter standup at this point. “Try to integrate the reporter standup so the story doesn’t come to a stop,” advised network freelance television producer and photojournalist Ray Farkas. “Make it flow visually.”² In this story, perhaps you decide the standup gives you an excellent transition from point one (“Eat reasonable amounts of whatever you want”) to *point two* (“Exercise plays an important role”). You “script” the standup either in your mind’s eye or perhaps jot down the main idea on a note pad and deliver your standup to camera. Normally, in a 1:10- to 1:30-minute story, two or three sentences will provide sufficient length for a standup. Avoid one-sentence standups, however, because they may feel too abrupt, and can even diminish the reporter’s authority.

Standup (At Fast-Food Take-Out):

“So the occasional indulgence in a healthy lifestyle is normal . . . and inevitable. Just one caution: Know when to say enough . . . and remember to exercise.”

The standup in this example helps introduce *point two*: “Exercise plays a role, although you don’t need to be obsessive.” Again, after you define the main point, look for images that will help prove it. In this story, perhaps you decide to photograph people walking along the exercise path; people running around an exercise track; and a basketball game you happen to spot as you drive by. Perhaps you decide to interview a person walking along the exercise path and record the following sound bite for the report.

Sound Bite:

“Five months ago, I weighed thirty-eight pounds more than I do now. Once I started working out, my body began to crave healthier foods.”

Remember to block in visual transitions as you move from one main point to the next, and remember to insist on “visual proof” for each of your main points. Because *point three* states that “Healthy diets/foods are tastier,” you will need one or more shots that prove this idea. The transition shot that begins point three after the sound bite could be an ultra close shot of mist-covered red delicious apples. As the shot holds on-screen, a hand comes into frame. The next shot, in matched action, shows a shopper reaching into the fruit bin at a natural foods store as she selects apples. The next shot, a close-up, might show the woman’s hand coming into frame. In a matched-action shot, this time a medium or long shot, the woman places an apple

on the kitchen counter at home. As the sequence continues, she cuts the apple, arranges it on a plate with some cheddar cheese, and hands the plate to her four-year-old daughter.

Voice-over narration throughout this sequence would make the following points: Natural foods, those without much processing, often are the healthiest and the tastiest. Further, when people cut fat in their diets, they begin to crave healthy foods; fatty foods actually are less satisfying.

At this stage, you begin *point four* in your package: “If you find you can’t control your eating, you may be using food as a substitute to fill other needs in your life.” Because point three ends on the idea that fatty foods actually are less satisfying, you could launch point four with video of fatty foods. The shot might be of dessert cakes on a bakery shelf, rows of potato chip products in a supermarket, fried chicken in a deli display, or any other shot that proves the main point visually. If you use such a shot, you will need voice-over narration that helps you make the transition to point four: “While fatty foods won’t kill you, they can leave you craving more. Worse yet, with high-fat temptations around, it’s easy to lose control with these foods.” At this point, you might cut to another sound bite that helps prove point four. Perhaps during your field interviews, someone told you:

Sound Bite:

“Food is a powerful drug. Often we eat to satisfy needs that have nothing to do with food.

To live a healthy lifestyle, you may have to learn why you’re eating when you’re not hungry.”

The person who gave you such a sound bite might be a dietician, a specialist in addictions or eating disorders, a dieter you meet at a weight-loss clinic, or some other person with the close knowledge or experience to make such an observation. A word of caution: The bite must occur spontaneously in the field during the interview process, without coaching from the reporter. Try never to steer an interviewee into making a statement to help substantiate a main point in a story. Based on your own research, however, it might be permissible during an interview to observe, “I suppose some people use food almost like some people use drugs.” In this way you have suggested subject matter, but not the response itself. Interview questions often follow such a process.

WRITE THE CLOSE

Next, write the close to your package. The **close** makes it obvious to your audience the story is ending. Without a strong close, the package will stop but it will not end. Upon arriving in the field, begin your search for a closing shot – a visual close you can build toward throughout the entire piece, something so strong it’s obvious the story is finished. Lazy reporters tend to end stories with interviews or standups, but such endings are the visual equivalent of an unsigned letter.

If you must write from video someone else shot in the field, search it carefully for a closing shot. If you are under extreme deadline pressure, ask the photographer or editor to help you identify a strong closing shot. Once you have identified the shot, you can then build every component of the report toward that final moment.

In this example, you might want to leave audiences with the idea, “If you learn how to eat and live healthily, you will live a happier life, and possibly a longer life.” The close not only wraps up the story but also reinforces the story’s focus. In this example we stated the original story focus to the effect: “The secret to weight loss lies in eating a healthy diet from the four basic food groups.” Note how the story close, “If you learn how to eat and live healthily, you will live a happier life, and possibly a longer life,” reinforces the focus and brings the story to a decisive ending.

Again, in the close, give your audience visual proof of the point you wish to communicate. Images that show an elderly person playing with a grandchild might address the idea of a longer, happier life. You also might photograph senior citizens having the time of their lives at a square dance, or perhaps find a fit, trim couple in their seventies jogging in a park. The more articulate you can make your images, the more memorable your message will become.

PREPLAN THE PACKAGE

Often, you can plan many elements within a package before you enter the field, based on your existing knowledge and new information obtained from story research. We are not talking about making a story, or writing the story in advance, but rather about nailing down all the information you can before you enter the field, then filling in the holes as you shoot field video and conduct your field research and interviews (Figure 9.1).

The term preplanning thus refers to planning that occurs before you enter the field. You can do a lot of effective reporting using the phone and Internet. You also can gather information by reading newspapers and magazines, talking with friends and acquaintances, and just from living. “You must reflect on the story before the need to write it occurs. Otherwise it will be difficult to speak with authority,” says Bob Moon, senior business correspondent for *Marketplace*, public radio’s daily magazine of business and economics. “As a given, we assume you know everything you can about the local community: what crops come from the fields, what goods emerge from the factories, and the like.”³ The same need for reflection and understanding applies even when you are covering institutions and issues. The more you know, even about the tastes and smells in a region or city, helps make you a better storyteller.

In such discussions, note the distinction between preplanning and “prewriting” the story. “Planning is essential. But it is no substitute for the reality of what you find on location,”



Figure 9.1 The most complete and authoritative reports build on the reporter's research, planning, and knowledge of the community.

Ernie Leyba Photography

says correspondent Bob Dotson.⁴ Basically, when you preplan a story, you plan the story on paper or as a **storyboard** (reproduction of a single frame of video that represents one scene or sequence in a video story) in the mind's eye that treats only those elements you feel reasonably certain about. Avoid prewriting your story before you enter the field. If you encounter changed circumstances in the field, be ready to adapt the story as necessary.

Another hazard lies in waiting to understand the story until you return from the field and actually sit down to write. By then, it's too late because the story happens in the field and can never be more than you bring back from the field. Following this philosophy, you focus first on ideas, then on images and words.

SPOT-NEWS PACKAGES

Spot-news packages can follow the same planning process, although fast-breaking news offers less time for contemplation and reflection. Often the reporter and photojournalist do well to capture what's happening. Still, once the breaking event has ended, some time usually

remains to identify the story and its focus, assess what happened, and record pickup sound and additional video. Even while covering spot news, the video journalist can identify: (a) story focus, (b) the story's three or four most important main points, and (c) how the story will close. If raw field material is unavailable to prove the story's crucial beginning, middle, and ending, or if the VJ or field crew has insufficiently identified these points before returning from the field,

Grain Elevator Explosion (Field Report)

(VIDEO)

:04 LS Rubble & firefighters: The explosion occurred about nine o'clock this morning at the McMillan Grain Company just outside Abilene.

:03 MS Firefighter scales tower: Police say five workers were inside one tower at the elevator when the explosion occurred.

:04 CU Grimy faces: Four were killed instantly. One survived.

(SURVIVOR ON CAMERA)

:18 Sound bite: We were leveling out wheat by hand at the top of one of the storage towers. I heard one of the guy's shovels hit another shovel. There must have been a spark because all of a sudden that dust exploded. Why I'm not dead, I'll never know.

(QUESTION FROM OFF CAMERA)

How did you escape?

(SURVIVOR)

The west side of the tower was still standing . . . and that's the side with the emergency ladder. When I came to, I was being hauled out by a firefighter who'd come up the ladder to look for survivors.

(REPORTER STANDUP)

:04 Reporter standup: The explosion shook buildings and rattled storefront windows in a five-mile radius around Abilene. Officials estimate property damage at more than two million dollars.

(VTR WITH VO NARRATION)

:04 LS Damaged trucks: Trucks from the summer wheat harvest were dumping their loads when the explosion occurred. Falling debris damaged fifteen of these trucks.

:03 CU Driver inspects damage:

:05 Injured driver sits on running board: Several truck drivers suffered minor injuries.

:15 Trucks drive past damaged elevator: Farmers who had been using these facilities will now have to deliver wheat to storage elevators in surrounding towns. At the McMillan Grain Company in Abilene, Tina Roberts, 9-News

the story will suffer. In the accompanying spot-news script on page 175, note how the package has a beginning, middle, and ending, and how the visuals “prove” every main point. The studio lead-in has been omitted to help make the package’s essential structure more obvious.

SET A HIGH STANDARD FOR PACKAGES

If you do make your story into a package, you are obligated to set high standards for your work. Not every story justifies a package or even a reporter’s presence, and many stories work well as simple anchor VO or VO with previously recorded sound (VO SOT). Conversely, if you are assigned to write, report, or photograph a simple VO but think the story would make a good package, tell your producer or assignment editor you think it should be a package. To help guide your decision, you can think of stories as falling into two categories:⁵

1. A video story that can be told by the camera and through sound bites. Into this category falls spot news, fires, overturned tanker trucks, and similar “event-driven” stories.
2. Stories that require explanation, analysis, or the reporter’s observations of the environment –stories the camera alone cannot tell without a reporter to help tell it.

If the anchor can do what the reporter is doing, and do it better, then the reporter must justify his or her presence in a package. Otherwise, the anchor can simply read a voice-over script against some B-roll video. They know more about the story than the anchor, and can bring these stories to life. Such reporters can justify their presence in the story. Furthermore, if the reporter experiences the story, senses it, and serves as an eyewitness in some way to explain the smells and sights of an event, then audiences may feel they need the reporter in the story.⁶

Ultimately, it’s not how many stories you crank out that count, but how memorable you make them. We trust our most valuable stories will survive to tell our descendants who we were, how we lived in this time, the troubles we faced, how we solved problems, and how we treated one another. “You pick timeless subjects and treat them properly, and people are going to be looking at them 200 years from now. We are stockpiling history,” counseled the noted Canadian documentary filmmaker Donald Brittain.⁷

Fifty or a hundred years from now, for example, historians may look back on Ron Mitchell’s reports about construction of Denver’s International Airport, the last US airport to be built in the twentieth century. When construction began, Mitchell, a KUSA reporter, took viewers into the empty fields east of Denver. In subsequent reports, using standups and even the routine sounds from public address systems at other airports, he crafted reports to “show” viewers where the various concourses, taxi ramps, baggage claim areas, and concession stands would someday be located. Today his series chronicles the airport as it rose from empty fields to become a hub for international travelers.

USE NATURAL SOUND LIBERALLY

To help involve viewers and listeners in your story, and to help them feel as if they're experiencing the events you show on-screen, remember to use natural sound throughout your package (Figure 9.2). Natural sound at the very start of a package, even before the first voice over, can help draw viewers into the story. Such natural sound could be an athlete's labored breathing, a young boy yelling "Ice cold lemonade, 25 cents!," or the purr of electric clippers at a pet grooming boutique. "When we go out, we don't often enough listen for the little sounds," observed network producer Ray Farkas. "Too often, we go for the bite at the sheriff's news conference versus the sense of what it felt like to be in the sheriff's office or the marriage license bureau."⁸

In the end, every video package should capture something of the story setting and communicate that experience to viewers. The video package is another form of narrative storytelling with a beginning, middle, and ending. It combines storytelling, compelling images and audio, the ability to help produce other people's reality, and effective editing. Routinely, some of the most memorable storytelling takes the form of compelling video packages.



Figure 9.2 Images and sound from the natural environment lend a sense of realism for video reports and stories, and help give viewers a closer sense of connection.

Ernie Leyba Photography

SUMMARY

The package is an edited, self-contained video report, complete with pictures, sound bites, voice-over narration, and natural sounds. It is a form of narrative storytelling with a beginning, middle, and ending. Before they write the words for a package or shoot the pictures, the most efficient video journalists first create a blueprint or structure for their packages. Ideally, the thought process will concentrate first on the main story idea, then on images to prove the idea visually, and finally on words as necessary to interpret and explain the images.

Typically, a 1:10- to 1:30-minute package includes a focus statement, a beginning or lead, a middle section with three or four main points, and an ending or close. The strongest packages normally begin and end on visuals and sounds from the environment rather than with standups or sound bites, except for tosses to and from live shots and remotes.

The package takes form during four stages of development: reviewing existing knowledge and facts obtained from story research before you leave for the field; conducting field research and interviews; viewing and editing field video and sound bites; and writing the final package.

To tell the story effectively, you must first understand it yourself. A good way to do that is by defining your focus statement. The focus is a simple, vivid, declarative sentence expressing the heart and soul of the story. When you can distill your understanding of a story this succinctly, you are ready to report it. The best reporters routinely exchange ideas for the story with other people involved in the storytelling process so that everyone works toward a common goal.

The strongest packages start with lead-in copy that instantly and intrusively begins the story, rather than serves merely as an introduction to a story yet to come. The main body of the package typically contains three or four main points, each with visual proof, and with a visual transition to help the package flow smoothly from one main point to the next. Identify the closing shot early, so you can build the package to an obvious and definitive ending.

Plan elements within a package before you enter the field, but never go so far as to write the story in advance: The goal is to gather information and reflect on the story before you write it. Breaking news offers less time for reflection and contemplation, but often you will have time after the main action subsides to identify the story and its focus, assess what happened, and record pickup sound and additional video.

Not every story justifies a package or even a reporter's presence. To guide your decision, you can think of stories as falling into two categories: The first category includes "event-driven" stories or spot news that can be told mainly by the camera and through sound bites. The second category includes stories that require explanation, analysis, or the reporter's observations of the environment.

Use natural sound liberally in all packages as a way to help involve viewers, and to help them feel as if they're experiencing the events you show on-screen. Remember, too, the more articulate you can make your images, the more memorable your messages will become.

KEY TERMS

close

focus

lead-in

package

storyboard

EXERCISES

1. Record a video news package and analyze its structure. Prepare a two-page, double-spaced report that addresses the following considerations:
 - Length of the studio lead-in, in seconds
 - Your analysis of how effectively the studio lead-in discloses the heart of the story
 - How effectively the first video communicates the story to come
 - Whether the package lead-in continues the story as expressed in the studio lead-in or actually begins the story
 - Number of main points in the story, listed individually
 - Use of visual transitions between main points
 - Use of sound bites
 - How well the story integrates a reporter standup, if any, without disrupting the package's visual flow
 - How well the story builds to an obvious, definitive conclusion
 - The presence of an obvious and easy-to-articulate story focus
2. Using a web or newspaper story that contains quotes from one or more sources, write the script for a 1:10-minute video package. Include all elements for the package: a studio lead-in or lead-in copy for a web page, all VO narration, scripted sound bites transcribed from quotations in the story, notes or a script for the standup, and a brief description of all visuals you would use, complete with visual transitions between all main points in the body of your package.
3. Record a video package or reference a web-sourced video package and write a script that reflects how you would make the package more informative and interesting. Change any components of the package as it now exists: You may want to rewrite the introductory web copy or studio lead-in, for example, so that it's more interesting and addresses a wider audience or that it discloses the heart of the story more immediately. You may wish to indicate changes in the existing video, or perhaps you may want to eliminate or shorten some sound bites. You may want to build a stronger close for the package. You may decide to shorten the package itself. All changes you make should make the story more interesting, more informative, and more memorable.

4. Record and view five video news packages from your favorite web source or television outlet and write a one-sentence focus statement for each, based on what you understand about the story after watching it. Next, analyze how a stronger focus statement could have made each story even more memorable and relevant to viewers.
5. On a given day, study a substantive front-page newspaper or web story and decide to what extent you could preplan the various story elements before you enter the field. Choose a story you think a local television station, cable channel, or website will cover as a video package that day. Identify the story; try to write a focus statement for it; list what you already know about the story, all the facts you still need; and decide what sound bites you might use. Include a reporter standup, if possible. Next, write a script that contains everything you know about the story, leaving holes as necessary in the script for missing information. That evening, watch the story on television. Compare your treatment of the story, based on your own preplanning, with your sources' video field coverage.
6. Compare the structure of a spot-news package with the structure of a package that addresses a nonbreaking news event. Discuss how package structure differs between the two examples, and what influences might account for the differences.
7. Apply the "Story Blueprint" on page 168 to the script you wrote for assignment two. Rewrite the original script as necessary to incorporate as many of the checklist elements as possible.

NOTES

- 1 Fred Shook and Don Berrigan, "Glossary: Television Field Production and Reporting," *Atelier Sur le Récit Visuel*, Service National de la Formation et du Développement, Bureau de Montréal, Société Radio Canada, Montréal, Canada, November 12, 1993.
- 2 Ray Farkas, "Looking through the Lens Differently," a presentation at the NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, March 21, 1991.
- 3 Bob Moon, "Bringing the World to Main Street," a workshop for students and professional journalists at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, November 09, 1990.
- 4 E-mail correspondence with the principle author, January 25, 2016.
- 5 John Haralson, in remarks to students at the Talent Performance Development Workshop, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, February 22, 1992.
- 6 Bob Kaplitz, "Managing Creative People," a presentation at the NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, March 19, 1991.
- 7 Terry Kolomechuk, ed., *Donald Brittain: Never the Ordinary Way* (Winnipeg, Canada: National Film Board of Canada, 1991), 54.
- 8 Ray Farkas, "Looking through the Lens Differently," a presentation at the NPPA TV News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK, March 21, 1991.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

WRITE LIKE A STORYTELLER

10

John Larson

Have you ever attended a class in which a teacher dutifully lists names, facts, equations, or dates but fails to interest you? The information never connects in any meaningful way? Can you remember walking out of that class, relieved to be out in the fresh air?

At its worst, reporting is similar to that lecture. It fills the air with important sounding names and facts, but fails to make them matter very much. Storytelling, on the other hand, is a bit like walking out into the fresh air – it feels natural, interesting, and a little like recess. When a great story begins, your senses come alive, as if an adventure lies ahead of you.

Great reporting borrows from the best of both of these worlds – reporting important truths and revealing this information in interesting, powerful stories. Learning to write like a storyteller can help any journalist.

An important first step is to understand that although a reporter learns facts, storytellers pay attention to what they experience while learning those facts, and what the people in their stories are experiencing. They pay attention to what they see, hear, and feel. This is important in any form of storytelling—newspaper, magazine, radio, blog—but is especially important in video storytelling.

TRANSMITTING THE EXPERIENCE

You know by now that good video storytelling shares, or transmits, an experience. It gives viewers a sense that they are there. You see, hear, and experience a story. Good storytellers also are aware their own experiences can be powerful tools to help tell stronger stories.

Why choose storytelling over other forms of communicating information? The payoff for sharing experience and information through video storytelling is that it takes advantage of our senses. People are *hardwired* to be curious about what they see, and intrigued by what they

BOX 10.1 JOHN LARSON, NETWORK CORRESPONDENT

Recognized as one of the country's best storytelling reporters, network correspondent John Larson excels in investigative, breaking, and feature news reporting. He reports and produces stories for PBS *Need to Know*, and is a former *Dateline NBC* correspondent. At *Dateline NBC*, he traveled to the corners of the world. He investigated and reported on corrupt police in Mexico City; terrorism in Morocco, Spain, and Central Africa; a sinking ferry in Indonesia; and a five-year-old Buddhist monk in Nepal. Larson also has become an international "backpack" or Video Journalist (VJ) since he joined this book as a co-author, and shares what he has learned on that front here and in Chapter 11, "Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute."

Larson's numerous awards include national Emmys for investigative reporting and breaking reporting coverage. He is a four-time recipient of the prestigious duPont-Columbia Baton, the equivalent of television's Pulitzer Prize

Before his selection as a *Dateline NBC* correspondent in 1994, Larson spent eight years at KOMO-TV in Seattle, Washington, where he won sixteen regional Emmy awards for his reporting.

His creativity and powerful writing have made him a sought-after speaker, teacher, and motivator at workshops and newsrooms across the country and abroad. Larson lives with his wife, two children, and terrier in San Diego, California.

hear. It is less like the lecture mentioned previously and more like going out for recess. If we could capture smell, taste, or touch in order to tell a more powerful story, we certainly would – but that is for some future medium. Much is written about the importance of pictures and sound, but they are important only because they mimic the way your viewer experiences the world. Use this to your advantage. Ignore it, and your stories will falter. How do you do this? Some of the ways follow.

BE A TOUR GUIDE

You can think of this as the "tour guide" school of storytelling and writing for video. Think of the last time you took a guided tour. It might have been in a museum, an historic district, or a national park. Along the way, you may have discovered that the best tour guides are great storytellers. They lead you up to each revelation and help you pay attention.

A tour guide might say, for example "On your left is the Washington Monument. Notice the three birds sitting on the very top edge? The monument is 555 feet high, the cornerstone was laid in 1848, but it took 40 years before the first person ever set foot inside." While the tour guide says this, everyone looks at the monument, wondering, "Why did it take so long?"

The tour guide might then tell a deeper story: “You can’t see it from here, but inside the monument, buried in the walls, are 193 special stones, each one different, each one hand-crafted, each one a memorial stone made with the soil of one of the nation’s fifty states. The monument’s builders thought the soil of every state seemed a good way to say ‘thank you’ to the man who gave birth to a nation. What do you think?”

Take your audience by the hand and walk them into the story. Use your words to verbally show them around; point out the pictures and sounds that are important. Help them focus and understand what they see. And then, while they watch, tell deeper stories.

This is sometimes more difficult than it sounds. Reporters are often so busy trying to cram as many facts as they can into a story, they forget to transmit their experience – what they saw, heard, and felt. They forget how their audience is hardwired to experience the world. They deprive their audience the fun of experiencing a story.

USE “WOWS!” – THE THINGS THAT TURN YOU ON

The way *you* experience an event—the things that intrigue you and bore you—are excellent hints about how your audience might experience it, and how you might construct your story. Don’t underestimate this. Pay close attention to your own reactions. This is the beginning of transmitting an experience—your experience—realizing your reactions are often similar to your viewers’.

For example, pay attention to what happened when you were first introduced to a story. What bored you or interested you? What made you laugh, moved you, or made you say, “Wow!”

Say your assignment is to write a story about a factory that was closed, the jobs exported overseas. You’ve done your research and know the facts: the number of jobs that were lost, the cost to the local economy, and so on. You meet a company supervisor at the shuttered plant. He takes you into the factory and you are immediately struck by the immensity of it – the huge, silent room, silent machines, assembly lines, and workbenches. You think, “Holy *&!\$#!” I call these moments “wows.” Good writers notice wows and write to them. When I experienced this in a shuttered pulp mill in Washington State, I wrote it this way:

“The first thing you notice about the ATT-Rayonier Plant—is the silence.”

LET YOUR AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE THE WOWS

Once you’ve identified a wow, make sure you shoot it. Take video as you walk through the door that reveals how huge, empty, and silent the factory is. You need video of the empty workbenches, and the work gloves left behind. Then, write to it. Allow several long moments

of silence so the audience can “look around,” appreciate the emptiness, and experience the same sense of loss that you did. This requires you to stop talking for a moment, and let the shot transmit an experience. If you do, viewers will experience the moment much as you did.

MOMENTS

The wow you just experienced and recorded is called a “moment.” Moments are wonderful bits of reality, full of meaning. Moments often make the best television because, when used properly, they take advantage of our hardwiring, the way we experience the world. You will encounter moments during the course of shooting and gathering a story. Sometimes they happen right in front of you; other times they happen during an interview.

GREAT MOMENTS ARE ALMOST ALWAYS UNEXPECTED

Moments are often powerful, funny, poignant, and urgent precisely because you don’t see them coming. For example, imagine you are interviewing a farmer about the tightening economics of small farms. He is being forced to sell his family’s farm. He interrupts the interview to yell across the yard, “Sarah! Grab your daddy’s saddle! Tomorrow they’ll take everything not nailed to the barn floor.” This is a moment. It helps you appreciate more about what is happening than whatever he was telling you about before the interruption.

ONE THOUGHT ABOUT FIELD TEAMWORK

If you’re part of a team, capturing moments in the field requires the reporter/producer and photographer to work together. It means the reporter cannot barge into a situation, talking over the possible moments that would occur were he or she less disruptive. It means a reporter has to think and act like a good photographer – looking for powerful moments, sounds, and pictures.

It means the photographer and soundperson have to think like storytellers. They need to be flexible, intuitive, and fast on their feet. They need to value moments more than perfectly lit or framed shots.

WRITING YOUR FIRST SENTENCE

Once you return from shooting your story in the field, if you have not already started writing (I recommend you begin writing early in the day whenever possible, even before your information gathering is complete), you have to sit down and write. The most daunting challenge in writing a short story is often (no surprise here) the first sentence. Ideally, the first sentence should impart critical information, attract the viewer, and reflect the direction or tone that you are about to take. It can act as a signpost – giving the viewer a sense of where the story is going, and how it might end. Sounds like a lot to accomplish in a first sentence, doesn’t it? Frankly,

figuring all this out before you start writing is often overwhelming. Want writer's block? Try making your first sentence perfect.

If you have trouble getting started, here are two thoughts. The first is courtesy of a friend and Pulitzer Prize winner Howard Weaver of McClatchy Newspapers:

Lower your expectations: That's right. Even the best writers do it. When you're stuck trying to write something really good, sometimes it helps to risk writing something bad. Lighten up, demand less of yourself, and start writing. Writing will often get your creative juices flowing and lead to something better. At least it will get you going. This doesn't mean you should be lazy. It means that getting going is an important part of the process.¹

Another writer's advice for beating the first sentence block is a bit more colorful:

Just vomit: "Throw up" your immediate ideas on the page. Don't edit yourself before you start. Just get it out. Purge. Again, just writing something down will often get you going. Then, you'll be ready to begin considering how to tell the rest of your story.

THE THREE HORSES – STORYTELLING TOOLS FOR VIDEO STORIES

When it comes to writing for video, I believe there are three "great horses" – storytelling *tools* or engines that you must master if you want to tell powerful video stories. These horses are powerful. But before you "saddle up," try this exercise: Think of a great movie, or even a great novel, something you really loved. Can you remember the reasons you liked it so much? It probably had strong characters – people who interested you because of what you discovered about them or what they did. It probably had a strong plot line: a mystery, a drama, or a sequence of events that evolved and led to a satisfactory ending. The movie also likely surprised you in many ways: It took you someplace you were not expecting to go, things happened that you didn't anticipate, or people said things that you didn't see coming.

These elements are storytelling engines – tools that make story lines compelling and meaningful. I've found that it does not matter if your story is two minutes long or two hours, these horses remain important. I call them "horses" because I've found they have their own momentum – energy I can use while reporting or "telling" stories. The three great horses are simple: surprise, quest, and character. All three are different, but you can easily learn how to recognize them, capture them, and write to them.

FIRST HORSE: SURPRISE

At *Dateline NBC*, we called surprises "reveals." For example, I once wrote a story about a television anchor in California who was an alcoholic. Unable to quit drinking, his life dramatically unraveled—he lost his wife, his friends, and his health—all while being on the air every day.

Eventually, he lost his job, too. We interviewed him, broke, bloated, and in denial, during the final stages of his decline. It was clear he wasn't going to make it. His liver was damaged, and his doctors said he had only weeks left to live. Several months after our interview, we received a phone call. A friend had found him on the floor of his empty apartment. I wrote the story something like this:

SOT: (*Charla, his friend talking*) "I hadn't heard from him for a couple of days. He didn't answer his phone. So I went to his place, opened the door. The first thing I saw was that small, dead Christmas tree in the corner. The heat was off. It was cold. And then I saw him in the middle of the floor."

Larson Narration: Charla called 911. Paramedics rushed Dave to the hospital. Emergency room doctors fought to save his life. But after all the vodka, all the years of breakdowns, and broken promises, the former newsman . . . survived.

SOT: (*The anchor, now many months sober and a smiling picture of health*) "Yeah, been sober six months now. I can't believe I made it."

The anchor's survival was a surprise. Everyone watching the story was expecting him to die. His survival and his appearance on camera produced a "wow." It was something I purposely held back while reporting our story, so the audience could appreciate how desperate his situation was before his collapse and could enjoy the same sense of surprise and victory I experienced when I first saw the recovered alcoholic with his fresh, lean face – healthy and strong after months of sobriety. Imagine if I had just reported the facts. It would have been something like this:

"A former newsman is fine and recovering tonight in a local hospital. A friend said he had been drinking too much."

That may be an accurate report, but not much of a story.

Here's the Windup, and the Pitch

The key to writing for surprises is to remember that all surprises require a setup. You have to prepare your audience to expect one thing: only to be surprised by another. It is a lot like telling a joke. A joke first makes you think about one thing and then delivers an unexpected punch line. It is always done *in that order*. Think of the primitive childhood joke,

Question: "Why did the chicken cross the road?"

Answer: "To get to the other side."

The punch line always comes at the end. It is never, "Chickens get to the other side by crossing the road."

Likewise, a surprise is always delivered *at the very end* of a deliberate sentence, or sequence of sentences. To do this, you must first recognize the parts of the story that surprise you—a moment, a comment from an interview, a development—and then, set up your surprise with a deliberate sequence of fact. This will often require you to delay and hold back some information until the best stage has been set to deliver your surprise. This does not mean that you should mislead your audience on factual matters. It simply requires you to recognize the natural surprises that happen and allow them to exist in your storytelling. Warning: Reporters have difficulty holding back information. Storytellers seem to do it naturally.

The Audiences' Right Not to Know

Using surprise properly turns one journalism standard on its head. We know it is essential to our democracy that people be informed. So, we work to protect the “public’s right to know.” However, a storyteller changes this a little. A storyteller knows that it is the public’s right *not* to know *until the best possible moment*.

Surprise and the Setup

I once wrote a story about a small town in which the mayor had a phony, prank parking meter. There were three surprises in the story:

1. There was only one parking meter in the entire town.
2. The meter was movable.
3. The person behind the joke was the mayor.

The mayor would take the parking meter up and down the street and “ticket” his friend’s cars. But of course, I didn’t tell the story that way; I told it like this:

Narration: The people of central Washington count on a few days being over 100 degrees every July. Wheat farmers out here count on 10 inches of rain every year.

SOT: (*SOUND OF WHEAT POURING INTO HOPPER*)

Narration: And there is a small town out here named Mansfield. Driving through town takes exactly . . .

SOT: (*SOUND OF ONE CAR WHOOSING PAST CAMERA*)

Narration: That long. Things are pretty predictable here, too.

SOT: “BREAD DOUGH WILL BE HERE THURSDAY.”

Narration: Rick the grocer knows every customer. He knows every car on Main Street.

SOT: “THE BLUE PICKUP IS THE ZELLUMS’. ETHEL POOLE, SHE’S PROBABLY JUST ABOUT READY TO GO TO WORK IN CHELAN.”

Narration: Lynn the café owner knows her customers so well she can start their orders before they arrive.

SOT: "HARRY BEARD, HE'S USUALLY A HOT CAKE AND BACON, OR FRIED ONE EGG, HASH BROWNS AND TOAST, OR, TOM POOLE, WHICH IS A HAM AND CHEESE OMELET EVERY SATURDAY MORNING, LIKE CLOCKWORK."

Narration: That's why it kind of surprised everyone when a stranger from the big city showed up. (Reveal meter here) One . . . parking meter. The only meter in 7 thousand 200 square miles.

SOT: "JUST HAVIN' A LITTLE FUN."

Narration: Tom Snell, the county's road boss, bought the meter as a prank.

SOT: "IT COST ME FIFTY DOLLARS, BUT IT SITS HERE ON THE STREET EVER SINCE."

Narration: Tom knows most out-of-towners aren't dumb enough to fall for the parking meter.
(*Car passes meter*)

SOT: "AW, HE'S GONNA TRY TO GO AROUND, AW SHOOT! YOU SEE THERE'S A TYPICAL RESPONSE."

Narration: But you see, they don't have to be. (*They roll meter down the sidewalk to the parked car*)

SOT: (*Rolling meter*) "I THINK WE GOT 'EM NOW."

Narration: This victim was from Canada.

SOT: "IT'S A WAY TO MAKE MONEY I GUESS; IT'S A SMALL TOWN."

Narration: And when there aren't a lot of visitors, Tom includes his friends. Friends like Harold Beard. (*Rolling meter*) That's Harold's truck over there. That's Harold.

SOT: "GIMME A TICKET HERE, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD. NOT SUPPOSED TO GET A TICKET IN THIS TOWN" (*Laughter*).

Narration: The meter is not just Tom's joke. Shortly after breakfast we saw Rick the grocer nail Floyd Avenell's car.

SOT: (*Laughter*) "IT'S NOT LIGHT. BUT IT DOES GET MOVED QUITE FREQUENTLY." (*Flag in background*)

NAT SOT: (*Rolling meter*)

SOT: "YEAH, I PUT IT IN FRONT OF THE MAYOR'S CAR. I PUT IT IN FRONT OF THE SHERIFF'S CAR. (*Snort*)

Narration: There goes Lydia, the lady who owns the tavern.

SOT: (*Rolling meter*) "IT'S KINDA FUN."

Narration: Now you'd think sooner or later someone would get sick of it all and complain about Tom's parking meter to the mayor.

SOT: "DON'T THINK IT WOULD DO THEM ANY GOOD." (**Larson:** "HOW'S THAT?") "'CUZ I'M THE MAYOR."

Narration: So maybe small towns are predictable. But if you go to Mansfield, don't be surprised if they treat you . . . like they've known you all your life.

SOT: "EVERY TOWN'S GOT ITS WAY."

Narration: In fact, you can almost count on it.

SOT: "TIME EXPIRED. HOW 'BOUT AN I-OWE-YOU? YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A PENNY?
I DON'T! SEE, I'M A FARMER'S WIFE!"

Narration: John Larson,

SOT: "WHAT'S NEXT? I'M TRYING TO WORK ON A FIRE HYDRANT ON WHEELS."

Narration: KOMO News Four, Mansfield.

SOT: *(Laughter)*

Three Surprises and Three Setups

Notice how all three surprises in the previous story come at the end of a setup.

First Surprise: There is Only One Meter

THE SET UP

Narration: That's why it kind of surprised everyone when a stranger from the big city showed up. *(Reveal meter here)* One . . . parking meter. The only meter in 7 thousand 200 square miles. (The viewer is expecting us to introduce a person here, not a parking meter.)

Second Surprise: The Meter is Movable

THE SET UP

Narration: Tom knows most out-of-towners aren't dumb enough to fall for the parking meter.
(Car passes meter)

SOT: "AW, HE'S GONNA TRY TO GO AROUND, AW SHOOT! YOU SEE THERE'S A TYPICAL RESPONSE."

Narration: But you see, they don't have to be. *(They roll meter down the sidewalk to the parked car)* (The viewer here is expecting the out-of-towner to successfully avoid the meter.)

Third Surprise: The Person Behind the Joke was the Mayor

THE SET UP

Narration: Now you'd think sooner or later someone would get sick of it all and complain about Tom's parking meter to the mayor.

SOT: "DON'T THINK IT WOULD DO THEM ANY GOOD. **(Larson: "HOW'S THAT?")** "'CUZ I'M THE MAYOR." (The viewer is expecting Tom to explain that people do complain to the mayor.)

Experience Surprise

Whenever possible, allow your audience to experience the surprise instead of just reporting the surprise to them. This means the best surprises are delivered by the *field video and audio*, not by a reporter's narrated track. Notice in the previous story that all three surprises *are never reported*, but are visually demonstrated. I don't say, "In this entire town they have only one parking meter." Instead, I say, "That's why it kind of surprised everyone when a stranger from the big city showed up." Next, I let the video reveal the one parking meter.

For the surprise that the meter moves, I don't say, "The meter moves." Instead, I say, "But you see, they don't have to be." Then the video reveals for the first time that the meter moves.

Last, instead of saying "The man behind the prank is the mayor of the town,"

I write, "Now you'd think sooner or later someone would get sick of it all and complain about Tom's parking meter to the mayor." And then I let the interview reveal it with the SOT: "DON'T THINK IT WOULD DO THEM ANY GOOD." (**Larson:** "HOW'S THAT?") "'CUZ I'M THE MAYOR."

Surprise Changes the Way You Gather News

Surprises are moments or wows that you don't expect. Once you start trying to capture surprises on camera you must be patient and wait for them. You also must be able to anticipate where the surprises might occur, and make sure your camera is rolling and your audio is strong. Last, you need to be very flexible. Surprises frequently don't happen where you think they will. A good storyteller becomes adept at rewriting stories to include unexpected surprises.

A Note About Rhythm

Notice how the writing in the parking meter story is often interrupted by natural sound and interviews. Almost every sentence is followed by a break for sound. Whereas not every story requires this many breaks, every good story has its own rhythm. Just like a song, a good narrated video story has a beat – a cadence of words and sentences that you can almost tap your foot to. Preachers know this: When a good preacher gets going, his or her congregation can often clap their hands to the rhythm of the preacher's delivery. Lawyers trying to sway a jury know it, too. The late Johnnie Cochran, famous lawyer in the OJ Simpson trial, kept repeating his message about the bloody glove, and how it didn't fit Simpson's hand: "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit. If it doesn't fit, you must acquit."

When you want your story to accelerate, and your viewers' attention to intensify, shorten your sentences and/or increase the regularity of your breaks for natural sound and sound bites. If you want to slow it down, do the opposite.

SECOND HORSE: QUEST

The second horse is “quest.” It is a lot like plot, but simpler and more specific. Quest consists of “someone trying to get something done.”

Example: Let’s say you’ve been assigned to a story about a city councilman who changed his vote on a zoning ordinance, supporting a developer’s plan to knock down some aging but popular retail stores. While you wait to interview the councilman, you notice his secretary’s phone is ringing constantly, with many constituents complaining about the councilman’s vote. The secretary explains, “The councilman is on the line; may I have your name and he’ll get back to you.” With each new call, the secretary writes out the details of the complaint, and then spikes the note on a rapidly growing stack of messages. She is clearly overwhelmed by the volume of phone calls. Finally, you get a chance to enter the councilman’s office. He, initially on the phone, hangs up to do an interview with you.

A straight news report might write it this way:

Narration: Last night’s city council cleared the way for Bright City to develop L Street.

SOT: “BY A VOTE OF 6 TO 5 THE MOTION IS DEFEATED.”

SOT: *(SOUND OF CROWD’S GASPS AND PROTESTS)*

Narration: More than 150 people, who turned out expecting to celebrate saving the popular businesses along L Street, were stunned.

SOT: “I CAN’T BELIEVE THEY DID THIS. AFTER ALL THE PROMISES, THEY JUST LET THE BRIGHT CITY DEVELOPERS HAVE THEIR WAY.”

SOT: “IT WASN’T SUPPOSED TO GO LIKE THIS. EVERYONE IS SAYING HARDESTY SOLD US OUT.”

Narration: Councilman Dave Hardesty had publically supported efforts to save the aging buildings and businesses along L Street, but last night he voted . . .

SOT: “NAY.”

Narration: Today the councilman explained.

SOT: *(COUNCILMAN HARDESTY)* “AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION, I NOW THINK EVERYONE WILL EVENTUALLY BENEFIT FROM BRIGHT CITY. L STREET NEEDS NEW IDEAS AND NEW LIFE.”

Narration: Which means, work on the proposed Bright City complex of 140 Condominiums, plus retail, will begin almost immediately.

SOT: *(DON SALESKY, BRIGHT CITY DEVELOPER)* “WE’RE DELIGHTED THE COUNCIL TOOK THE TIME TO STUDY THE ISSUES, AND UNDERSTAND HOW BRIGHT CITY WILL HELP THE ENTIRE AREA. WE’RE EXCITED.”

Narration: L Street supporters promised to keep up the fight saying they will now take their campaign from the historic street . . . to the courts. John Larson, NBC News, Spokane.

Storytelling Using Quest

There is nothing wrong with straight reporting, but it does not take advantage of the “pull” of a good story. Using storytelling quest, or “someone trying to get something done,” completely changes whose “voice” carries the story. It requires you to focus at least some of your report on one person. For example, the previous report might be told like this:

SOT: (*ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT DANA LEWIS*) “COUNCILMAN HARDESTY’S OFFICE.”

Narration: Eighteen years a receptionist, Dana Lewis thought she’d heard it all.

SOT: (*DANA LEWIS*) “YES, I UNDERSTAND YOU’RE UPSET.”

Narration: But today,

SOT: (*DANA LEWIS ON PHONE*) “COUNCILMAN HARDESTY’S OFFICE.”

Narration: This secretary needs a secretary.

SOT: (*DANA LEWIS*) “OF COURSE I’LL TELL HIM! WHY DO YOU THINK I’VE BEEN WRITING THIS DOWN?”

Narration: Her phone was already ringing with angry complaints when she walked in at eight.

SOT: (*DANA LEWIS*) “YES, I THINK HE KNOWS THAT, BUT AS I SAID, I WILL TELL HIM.”

Narration: That was five hours ago.

SOT: (*PHONE RINGING*) “COUNCILMAN’S HARDESTY’S OFFICE; PLEASE HOLD. THIS IS UNREAL!”

Narration: Her boss, Councilman Dave Hardesty, last night changed his vote on the L Street project,

SOT: “NAY.”

SOT: (*SOUND OF CROWD’S GASPS AND PROTESTS.*)

Narration: Angering almost everyone who came to watch.

SOT: “IT WASN’T SUPPOSED TO GO LIKE THIS. EVERYONE IS SAYING HARDESTY SOLD US OUT.”

SOT: (*RING*) “WHAT’S YOUR NAME? MR. LINDSTROM? OKAY.”

Narration: 107 Complaints – and she hasn’t had lunch yet.

SOT: (*DANA LEWIS*) “YES, I’LL TELL THE COUNCILMAN.”

Narration: We told him first.

Larson: “Your secretary is going to need a raise or a vacation.”

SOT: (*COUNCILMAN HARDESTY LAUGHING*) “YES, I GUESS SHE WILL. WE’LL JUST HAVE TO EDUCATE PEOPLE HOW GOOD THIS IS GOING TO BE. (EDIT) I NOW THINK EVERYONE WILL EVENTUALLY BENEFIT FROM BRIGHT CITY. L STREET NEEDS NEW IDEAS AND NEW LIFE.”

SOT: (*PHONE RINGS*)

Narration: Supporters of saving L Street are already planning to sue the city, sue Bright City, and sue Councilman Hardesty. But don’t tell Dana; she’s got her hands full.

SOT: (*PHONE RINGS*)

SOT: (DANA LEWIS) “YES . . . I’D BE HAPPY TO WRITE DOWN YOUR COMPLAINT.”

Narration: John Larson, NBC News, Spokane.

Finding the Quest

Remember, a quest is simply “someone trying to get something done,” often against opposition. In the previous example, the secretary’s quest is simple: “Dana the secretary is trying to answer the phones and write down all the complaints following last night’s council vote.” Most reporters would ignore the secretary. Storytellers would not. You can use Dana’s experience to draw in the viewer and drive home the contentiousness of the vote. In the process, the secretary’s quest shows us how the councilman is partially shielded from his actions, and we learn how a local democracy works.

If you look for them, small personal quests are often all around you. They are literally “in your way.” A secretary answering calls, a janitor sweeping up after a demonstration, a police officer trying to call in the details of a tragic accident, a fire victim trying to find out if anyone has found her missing pet – all are quests worth consideration.

Ask yourself, could this small quest demonstrate my larger story in an interesting or powerful way? Can I use this quest to share other important facts of the story? If the answers are yes, try using it.

Quest Changes News Gathering

Once a storyteller decides to follow someone’s quest, everything changes. The story’s focus changes. What the reporter and photographer choose to photograph changes. Suddenly, recording a secretary’s phone call may be more important than shooting an exterior of the council building. The interview questions change as well. Instead of asking the councilman why he voted the way he did, you’re asking the secretary, “What time did you come into work? Was the phone ringing? Have you eaten lunch yet?”

THIRD HORSE: CHARACTER

My third horse is character. There are people in all good stories; the challenge is to find the right details about those people, their lives, or their quests to make them meaningful and memorable. This is what I call finding character. Talking heads do not automatically have character; you need to find it. Sometimes, compelling video provides details that make someone memorable. Other times, it is a personal fact or a special quote that makes him or her memorable.

Telling Details

One of the most important lessons storytellers can learn is that building character into a story requires a search for powerful details. “Telling” details can be the contents of a wallet, a favorite nickname, an heirloom, a recurring dream, a child who passed away, the color of a car, anything. In order for details to be telling, they need to be symbolic of something larger: the quality of a life, the context of a struggle, the courage or fear of a character, and so on. How will you know if a detail is telling? It will strike you, move you emotionally, surprise you, or add depth and new dimension to the story.

For example, Chip Scanlon, a fine reporter, writer, and professor at the Poynter Institute in Florida, was once given an assignment to write about smoking and cancer for the *St. Petersburg Times*. He interviewed the widow of a cigarette smoker. Her name was Marie. Chip asked all the regular questions but kept listening for details that might bring Marie or her loss into clearer focus. If she told Chip that she missed her husband, Chip would ask deeper questions like, “When do you miss him most?” “Is there a time of day or night when it is especially difficult?” Eventually, he asked for a tour of Marie’s house. As they stood in the master bedroom Marie said, “Would you believe it? At night, I sprinkle his aftershave on my pillow. Just to feel close to him.”

This is a powerful detail. It says much about the wife, her love, and her loss. Somehow, it even tells us about her husband. Details like this, however, do not come easily. Chip was patient. As he tells it:

Scanlon: I interviewed Joe’s widow, Marie, at her home in Fort Myers. We sat for a while on her couch, looking at scrapbooks while she told me the story of their lives together and his terminal illness.

Larson: What were some of the questions you may have asked that did not pay off with anything memorable?

Scanlon: I asked, “How has this affected you? What’s your life like without him? What’s it like to see someone go through what your husband endured?” These are all serviceable questions, but I don’t think I was getting enough to help me answer my initial questions. At that point, I asked Marie if she’d give me a tour of her house. It changed the static nature of the interview; it gave me a chance to see details, hear stories behind them, which “showed” rather than “told.”

Larson: What led to the aftershave comment?

Scanlon: Marie took me up into the bedroom she’d shared with her husband. It was immaculate. I spied a photo stuck in the mirror – one of those 3 × 2 inch casual shots. I noted it in my notebook. It was then that, unbidden, Marie said, “Would you believe it? At night, I sprinkle his aftershave on my pillow. Just to feel close to him.”

I was speechless. I couldn't believe she would tell a stranger such an intimate detail. I felt compelled to ask her if I could use it my story. Yes, she said. But the quote haunted me. I prided myself on being the kind of reporter that people would trust enough to share their lives, but to be honest, I also felt protective when they did so. After I drafted the story, I called Marie back, and once again asked if I could use the quote. Yes, she said. And then just before the story was ready to go to press, I called her a third time.

Notice that Scanlon immediately sensed the personal nature and power of this telling comment. Yet instead of rushing it to print, he asked her three times if she wanted him to withhold it. This not only tells you a lot about who Chip Scanlon is, but also something about the kind of people strong storytellers often are – thoughtful, caring, intuitive, engaged. People with powerful personal details trust such reporters more than they do reporters who seem to be “in it for themselves.”

Bottom line: People fascinate me, and the trappings of their lives are windows into their inner lives, which is what I've always been after as a reporter and writer.

TIPS FOR WRITING STRONG STORIES

Physician, Heal Thyself

I hope you will have many good teachers. In writing, however, only one teacher will watch your every step and stay with you throughout your career – you. Journalism is a worldwide craft often practiced by people in small rooms with small desks. In other words, although your work will take you out into the world, you often might feel isolated when it comes to improving your craft. Reach outside your immediate environment. Seek out the exciting work of other journalists around the country and around the world. Educate yourself with examples you like. Stay enthused.

The “Rip it Off” School of Learning

It sounds awful, but I first learned to write by ripping people off. I would read good writing and then try to steal it. Don't get me wrong: I didn't steal quotes or crib observations. I didn't plagiarize. (Plagiarism is a wonderfully efficient way to find a new career in the fast-food industry.) No, I'd notice *how* other people told their stories, and then try to use their techniques. I'd try to write like John McPhee of *The New Yorker* magazine one month. Another month, I'd try to write like John Hart of NBC News. I never wound up writing much like either of them, but I would try their use of detail, their sense of pace, their choice of subject, and I improved in the process.

I made them my heroes.

Think Heroes: Bono, Mother Teresa, Tiger Woods

Great writing is like great music, political activism, or sport. It requires heroes.

Every good writer has heroes. Find yours. Find writers who make you curious, angry, sad, or laugh out loud. Then, figure out how they did it.

Years ago, I discovered the work of John McPhee. He had a powerful, intelligent curiosity. He would gather details, arrange them in a special order, and create a total effect that would be greater than the sum of the individual parts. I learned from McPhee how a well-chosen fact could be wonderful, humorous, and striking.

John Hart was an NBC News correspondent who had a way of using telling details as metaphors. He'd write international new stories full of powerful details. I remember his story of the violence in Northern Ireland between the Catholics and the Protestants. He chose to mention a teenaged girl who had been attacked. Her attackers, full of religious righteousness, had carved the girl's face with a knife. The scar, Hart observed, "was in the shape of the Cross."

Strong Stories are the Work of Strong Storytellers

I was working in a small television station in Alaska and part of my first reporting job was to write down what happened on *NBC Nightly News* every night. The program had many strong writers and reporters back then: Tom Petit, Tom Brokaw, Ken Bodie, John Hart, Judy Woodruff, Roger Mudd. I noticed some reports were very professional, but not very interesting. I noticed other reports were professional *and* interesting – informative *and* moving. The same reporters, regardless of the subject, consistently did the best stories. It didn't matter if it was a story about the White House, a flood in the Midwest, a protest, or a riot – the best reporters moved from one subject to another and made it compelling. An assignment manager once told me, "There are no bad stories, only bad reporters." He was wrong. (I thought to myself, "There are no bad stories, only unimaginative assignment managers.") There are plenty of bad stories – pointless, unimportant, unworthy of our attention. However, the assignment manager was right about one thing: A strong reporter consistently tells powerful stories, whereas weak reporters do not.

Challenge Yourself

When I was a reporter in Seattle, I learned the highest broadcast journalism award was the DuPont-Columbia Baton – given to broadcast journalists around the world by Columbia University, the same institution behind the Pulitzer Prize. Only the best are recognized. So, I wrote to Columbia for a copy of that year's winners, explaining that I was "teaching a course on excellence in journalism."

A box of winning stories arrived around Christmas each year. I pored over them.

I was teaching a course, but there was only one student enrolled – me. I cut out a picture of the Baton and hung it in my closet so I would see it every morning when I dressed.

I'd say to myself, "Somewhere a reporter is doing work worthy of the duPont. What can I do *today* to make it be me?" It took a few years, but eventually I won a duPont for an investigation of the insurance industry. A few years later, I won another. But my long journey to the award ceremonies really began back in Seattle, opening that box of tapes each year and studying the finest work the world had to offer, all by myself.

At the awards ceremony in New York, I confessed my deception to the duPont director, the woman whom I had written to years earlier and who had faithfully sent me the tapes each year. She laughed, her eyes lit up, and she said, "Obviously, the course was a complete success."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Always remember, reporting and storytelling require different tool sets. A reporter works on sources, gathering information and getting it right. A storyteller works on transmitting an experience in a powerful and meaningful way. When strong reporting and strong storytelling converge, the result is great journalism – work capable of both informing and moving its audience.

Like great reporting, great storytelling demands that we challenge ourselves and dig deep. We have to care about the individuals we encounter and listen for the deeper resonances of their stories. Storytellers must "show" their stories, instead of just "report" their stories. They must involve viewers with powerful pictures, sounds, and thoughts. To do this, all the tools of the medium—video cameras, microphones, writing, editing, and your own passion—must be engaged and in sync.

The payoff is twofold. You become the best storyteller you can be, usually moving ahead of the less imaginative individuals working around you. More important, your work will help others care about their world and bring people together with meaningful information.

SUMMARY

The best stories and storytellers transmit experience. In a sense we are "tour guides," who take our audience by the hand and walk them into and through the story. Show them around; point out the pictures and sounds that matter most. Help them focus and understand what they are seeing. And then tell them deeper stories while they watch.

Writing a compelling story can be difficult. An even more daunting challenge can be writing the first sentence. If you have trouble starting your story, demand less of yourself and begin to write. Often the simple act of writing will lead you to something better. Get something down on the page, even if it fails to meet your standards. You can polish it later.

Powerful video stories require that you use effective storytelling tools, engines that make stories compelling and meaningful. Three of the most important tools are the three horses: surprise, quest, and character.

Surprises are the unexpected elements in a story, the U-turn that helps elevate a story from routine to exceptional. Surprises require a setup. You prepare the audience to expect one thing, only to deliver something different, always in that order – much like the unexpected punch line to a joke. You delay and hold back some information until the stage is set to deliver your surprise. Surprises can occur multiple times in stories, and the best are delivered by the field video and audio, rather than a reporter’s narrated track. Reporters find it difficult to hold back information. Storytellers do it naturally.

Another important tool is quest. It is similar to plot in that it consists of “someone trying to get something done,” often against opposition. Showing a person’s effort to achieve a goal gives storytellers a way to draw in the viewer, to drive home the meaning and context of events. Quests can be something as small as a fire victim trying to find her missing pet, or a rancher trying to move horses away from an approaching wildfire. The key is to use even small quests to demonstrate the larger story in an interesting or powerful way.

A third important tool is character. All good stories involve people, so the challenge is to find telling details about the people in your stories, their lives, or their dreams, goals, and hopes. Compelling video can help reveal character and make someone memorable. Even small things like an heirloom or the sound of a voice can be powerful details, provided they symbolize larger meaning, such as the influence of a grandparent, or the ways in which the blind “see” through sound. Other times, you might use a personal fact or a special quote to help illuminate character. You will know the detail is “telling” if it strikes you, moves you emotionally, surprises you, or adds depth and new dimension to the story.

As you learn to write as a storyteller, you will be the only teacher who will watch your every step and stay with you for your entire career. You can learn new writing approaches by seeking out the work of journalists whose writing you admire. Educate yourself by studying their examples and even imitating their style as you begin your writing career. This doesn’t mean you should plagiarize, but that you should notice and practice *how* other people tell their stories, and then try to use their techniques. Find writing heroes; absorb and analyze their work as you begin to develop your own unique style.

No one ever perfects writing or storytelling. We only improve our skills and become better at our jobs through observation, practice, and long experience. It's fun and rewarding, even if it takes us the rest of our lives to master.

DISCUSSION

1. Why is it important to transmit a sense of experience in your video stories?
2. What is meant by the tour guide school of writing for video?
3. Why is writing the first sentence of your story so challenging? How does John Larson suggest you solve the problem?
4. John Larson speaks of the “three great horses”—the storytelling tools—which every storytelling reporter must master. Discuss the use of each tool from the perspective of (a) traditional journalism, as it is typically practiced in print media and (b) by a few notable storytellers in television and on the web. What qualities do these horses lend the storytelling process?
5. How do you set up surprises in stories?
6. Why do you delay surprises in stories?
7. Describe how storytelling reporters can use surprises, telling details, and memorable moments as little golden nuggets to keep the viewer interested as the story unfolds.
8. Some storytellers equate surprises in stories with the layers of an onion. Explain how you can use their insight in your own storytelling.
9. Why is it more important to let viewers experience the surprise in field video and audio instead of just reporting the surprise to them?
10. How does the search for surprises change the way you gather news?
11. Define *quest* and explain its role in the storytelling process.
12. Define and discuss the differences in writing and story structure between the straight news script in this chapter about Bright City's L Street vote, and the script that emphasizes storytelling quest.
13. You can find people pursuing quest in many activities. Name ten newsworthy situations that involve quest and specify the nature of the quest in each instance.
14. Define *character* and explain why it's important to find the small, telling details about a person's character, life, or quest to make your stories and characters memorable.
15. Describe the steps a storyteller can take to create a lifelong system of continuing education as a writer.

EXERCISES

1. Obtain some of John Larson's stories (some shot with photographer Mark Morache), accessible by entering the following search string in your browser: John+Mark+Larson+Morache.

View the stories and review Larson's advice regarding storytelling. Write a two-page, double-spaced summation of your findings after viewing at least three Larson stories.

2. Select five newspaper stories. Read them closely to absorb important information about each story. Next, follow the advice for how to write a compelling lead sentence for each story you chose. First, review examples of straight news scripts and storytelling scripts in this chapter. Follow the advice to “lower your expectations” for your opening sentences and “throw up” your immediate ideas on the page rather than edit yourself before you start. Finally, write the most powerful lead sentences you can for each of the stories you chose.
3. In your everyday interactions with people, begin to recognize when you feel something about what they say or do. It may be the way an elderly widow wipes her kitchen table clean repeatedly, or how a person walks, or unselfconsciously sings to himself or herself. Look for the larger meaning in these behaviors; how are they symbols you can incorporate in your stories to address larger issues?
4. Study the parking meter script in this chapter and view the story (see exercise 1). Identify the three surprises in the story and explain how each surprise is set up. In what way are the three surprises revealed through video? Interviews? Other audio? Reporter narration?
5. Watch a local television newscast. Identify how many stories do, or could, emphasize quest: someone trying to get something done. Describe what force or forces in each story oppose the story subject’s efforts to accomplish a goal.
6. Write two stories about the same subject: (a) a straight news report; (b) the same subject but told as a story that emphasizes someone’s quest for a goal. Review the city council story in this chapter before you begin.
7. Read the work of authors and journalists whose writing you admire. Make a list of telling details that appear in their writing and describe how the writers use these details as symbolism of something larger. Review the sections “The Third Horse: Character” and “Telling Details” before you begin.
8. Create a lifelong plan for ongoing education as a writer committed to developing and perfecting a unique and compelling storytelling style. Review the section “Physician, Heal Thyself” before you begin.
9. Describe in detail the tour guide philosophy of writing for video, as described in this chapter.
10. Watch a television newscast and read through your local newspaper’s website. For each medium, describe the stories that (a) moved you or made you laugh; (b) made you say “Wow!” In each instance, describe the story elements that influenced your reaction(s). Next, describe how you might share such moments with your audience in a video story.
11. Describe the qualities that define moments. How do moments differ from telling details?

NOTE

- 1 Howard Weaver, comments shared in a personal letter to John Larson, circa 2006.

PRODUCING THE STORY MINUTE-BY- MINUTE

11

John Larson

You can watch the author flying a drone, access videos with valuable insights about visual storytelling, and find links to stories mentioned in this chapter at www.story201.com. Recognized around the world for their seminars and presentations, the authors provide updated, specific instructional content available nowhere else. We invite you to join us.

I didn't always work by myself. Often, I still don't, but I've learned first-hand the challenges and advantages to shooting, writing, editing and producing stories on my own. Some call it being a **One-Man Band (OMB)**. Others call it being a Multimedia or Backpack reporter. In truth, even a typical day may require more equipment than you can fit in a backpack (Figure 11.2). Whatever you call it, it means video storytelling by yourself.

THE BIG PICTURE

In news coverage or comparable endeavors, **crew size** varies from a single person to as many as a dozen. I've worked in small market, major market, public broadcasting, and network television. In small market television, I worked with a part-time videographer, who was also employed as a half-time used car salesman (I call this the "One and a Half Person Crew"). As a magazine correspondent for *Dateline NBC*, I worked with eight-person crews. Every step of the way, I tried to learn how the best people were doing things. By watching excellent videographers, I gained valuable insights about composition, sound and editing. I studied how audio and lighting specialists did things, and why. When I began trying to do it all myself, I discovered I'd picked up more knowledge than I first realized (Figure 11.1).

SIZE MATTERS – BIGGER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER

Wherever and however you work during your career, you can expect to work alone at times, and at other times with crews of varying sizes, outfitted with appropriate gear (Figure 11.2). The most common configurations take several forms.



Figure 11.1 John Larson, on assignment as a video journalist.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 John Larson

1. **One-person crew** (a single individual who shoots video, writes, and edits)
2. **Two-person crews** (photographer and reporter) allow great flexibility and creativity. Assuming the photographer and reporter communicate well, and “work on the same page,” they can produce powerful, creative stories in short turnaround times. Even working side-by-side, each person can apply individual strengths and creativity while working independently. They can move efficiently in the field, and change direction and focus as the story changes, with little time for deliberation or setup. The photographer often edits the video, making sure to use the best elements.
3. **Three-person crews** (photographer, reporter, and soundperson) usually mean an audio specialist is on board. This is especially helpful when more than one person is interviewed at a time, or when the environment presents audio challenges – wind, background noise, radio frequency interference. An ambitious audio person can help share almost every task –gather information, troubleshoot logistics, carry gear, and even meet prospective interviewees. The audio specialist also can “watch the photographer’s back” when shooting in dangerous or fluid situations. Drawbacks to a three-person crew include the extra expense and less spontaneity. Adding a third person sometimes slows down the process.



Figure 11.2 Some days you can throw all the gear you'll need into a backpack. Other days, the required gear can reach pack-mule proportions.

John Larson

4. **Four-person crews** usually add a producer or assistant producer in the field. Drawbacks include the added expense, and some loss of spontaneity – four people must now discuss every move.
5. **Six- to eight-person** crews are standard on two-camera interviews for network news magazine shows. Programs such as *60 Minutes* and *48 Hours* commonly use eight-person crews, and even larger teams in special circumstances. Here, lighting is critical; a dozen lights are common. Set-up time for an interview averages around three hours. The benefit is that the video usually looks great – well lit and color enriched. Mistakes are few. The audio is carefully monitored. If necessary, producers can help the correspondent research questions, and craft follow-up questions. The downside is that big crews diminish spontaneity, and seldom can react fast enough to capture the unexpected. I've watched helplessly as important moments occurred just off camera, while the eight-person crew—with all its lights, mics, and producers—could not react quickly enough to capture it (Figure 11.3, 11.4.)



Figure 11.3 Equipment requirements can interfere with big crews' ability to react quickly to fast-breaking events.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 Dustin Eddo



Figure 11.4 At the network level, large crews use top-end equipment to generate video and audio with unparalleled realism and clarity.

Dustin Eddo

BIG EVENTS CALL FOR BIG CREWS

Networks may send several crews to meet impending deadlines, or to cover disasters, international summits, or other one-time events of such magnitude that no single crew would suffice (Figure 11.5).

Crews covering a major event—a hurricane, earthquake, or a military invasion, for example—might work on more than one story at a time, with changing rosters, for multiple programs on their network. Such duties require smart, fit, adaptable, and travel-hardened professionals (Figure 11.5).

From one network to another, crews generally have similar configurations:

- **Director of photography** (in charge of the camera and lighting crews)
- **Camerapersons** (one or more videographers or cinematographers)
- **Sound Recordists** (these individuals record interviews and other audio from multiple cameras. They also time code digital copies and transcriptions at the same time. They also act as assistants to the DP, helping with lighting and grip work)
- **Producer** (This person coordinates and manages the project, assembles the crew, and works closely with the correspondent.) The producer on four-person crews may pre-interview potential sources, line up final interviews, gather information and file video, feed video, make overseas travel arrangements, troubleshoot anything that gets in the way, and even shoot



Figure 11.5 A CBS crew works on assignment to cover Brazil's booming economy.

Dustin Eddo

video in a pinch. Six- to eight-person crews commonly include an Associate Producer who can oversee logistics, and serve with equivalent authority in the producer's absence.

- **Associate Producer** (This person conducts and/or oversees research, sometimes writes or edit scripts, assumes final authority in the producer's or correspondent's absence, and serves as a segment producer on complex stories.) Most of all, the assistant producer excels at multi-tasking, whether to help supervise crews; monitor expenditures; act to safeguard the crew and equipment; and when things change or go wrong, assure that air freight, catered meals, and hotel beds materialize when and where needed.
- **Correspondent** (the reporter, or reporter-anchor.)
- **Miscellaneous** (experts in law, science, animal behavior, law enforcement, additional lighting or electrical personnel, among others and whenever necessary)

Depending upon the country and the story, other crewmembers may be necessary:

- **A local "fixer"** (often a respected local journalist, who speaks the language and has already developed excellent sources and contacts.)
- **Drivers**
- **Security**

BOTTOM LINE

In the end, the ideal crew size is whatever it takes to get the best job done. Your audiences seldom care how many people helped tell your story. They care most about, "How good is it?" They may recognize or prefer a given reporter, correspondent or anchor on a story, never or rarely aware of those behind the camera, and even then only when the credits roll.

STARTING OUT, OVER OR UP

A prerequisite for every video storyteller is to become an aggressive learner. If you're already good in one area, don't be afraid to learn something new. I began as a reporter, and learned about camerawork and editing by watching other people on the job. I also studied network television news, which represented the best writing, storytelling, and editing at the time. But eventually, I had to take a course in *Final Cut Pro™* for video editing, and I hired a professional to help me become more proficient with my video camera. I still call friends to ask for help and advice.

If you're a reporter who wants to learn how to shoot and edit, or a photographer who'd like to become a writer and text editor, fear not. Thousands of people have already made the jump. It can be intimidating at first, but it can be rewarding, too.

SIX OVERLOOKED TOOLS FOR VIDEO JOURNALISTS

VJs do everything: produce, shoot, write and edit. A hundred other tasks accompany those basic duties: pre-producing, scheduling, traveling, finding locations, meeting people, filling the gas tank, getting directions, charging batteries, packing and unpacking equipment, updating software, pre-interviewing, gathering information, fact-checking, and repairing broken equipment in the field. Over time, experience helps teach us how to work more efficiently, tell better stories, and still manage the other obligations. Through personal experience and by watching others, I've discovered six tools that VJs often overlook.

- 1. Pre-Producing.** Educate yourself about your story before you begin to shoot. This process usually requires research and phone work. Learn everything you can. Google relentlessly. Read news articles. Call experts and people close to the story. "Pre-interview" them. Ask questions you would ask in the field. Begin to outline the direction your story might take. Identify locations where you will need to shoot. Decide whom you will interview on camera and the topics you will cover with your interview subjects.

Follow this with more sharply focused pre-producing: What responses will interviewees likely give to my questions? What information might I need to ask them as strong follow-up questions? When possible, decide not only what you need to shoot and who to interview on camera, but also what you DON'T need to shoot and whom you DON'T need to interview on camera. Ask yourself, "What would be the most powerful way to open this story, or close it? What video and sound might I want?"

- 2. Focused Listening.** I try to sit down in the field and listen to people before I take out my camera and start shooting (Figure 11.6). This, of course, depends on how much time you have. In general, the best way to begin any interview is to introduce yourself and listen closely, but it's difficult when you're carrying and setting up your own gear.

Figure 11.6 Correspondent John Larson prefers to talk and interact with the interviewee before he begins an on-camera interview. Both parties learn more about one another, while Larson gains valuable insights and information he otherwise might not discover.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 John Larson



Be mindful that your interview subjects are sizing you up. They're trying to figure out how much you know, care, and whether they can trust you. It's surprising how quickly people can form an opinion of you, and how it can affect the interview. Whenever I can have a conversation with interviewees, the personal details they share often help me create more compelling stories. Ask them about their families, and why the story means so much to them. If you have the time, try to meet people and listen to them.

Lisa Berglund, named Photojournalist of the Year by the National Press Photographers Association, often shoots her own stories in Africa (Figure 11.7). "Listening and having conversations is all part of being human while you're in the field," says Berglund. "You're trying to break down the barriers between people and just tell stories honestly and naturally."¹

Dave DeLozier (Figure 11.8), another NPPA Video Journalist of the Year, says he always wears his headphones in the field; but when he sits down for an interview, he checks his sound and then takes his headphones off. "I don't wear headphones during my main sit-down interviews because I don't want my subjects to think about being recorded all the time," he says. "I just want to talk to them and listen normally."²



Figure 11.7 Lisa Berglund, NPPA Photojournalist of the Year, moves in close to her subjects to gather powerful sound and pictures.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 Jon Warren/World Vision



Figure 11.8 Dave DeLozier earned recognition as National Video Journalist of the Year for his reporting, photography, editing, writing, and storytelling abilities.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 Dave DeLozier

- 3. Gather Great Sound.** Gathering sound is well covered elsewhere in the book, but it deserves special mention here. Many video reporters overlook good, clear, crisp sound. Don't. Pin a wireless mic on everyone you can. Wear your headphones, mindful of Dave Delozier's advice regarding sit-down interviews. Get your shotgun mic off your camera and close to whatever you are shooting. Listen to what is being said! "Get creative in your video," says Delozier, "but not in your sound – I want crisp sound, of their words and their feelings. Once I have that, I have the foundation."³

If you hear sound that would add meaning to your story, you can react to it like no one else: you can ask a question about it, shoot a good shot to illustrate the sound, follow with your camera what a person is pointing at during the interview, think of the line you will write to showcase a sound – or even its absence.

I once began a story about the bad economy with the words, "The first thing you notice at the Rayonier pulp mill is the silence." I stopped voice-over narration at that point to let the camera linger on the old mill's vast interior. A few spider webs and an old shoe occupied a dusty window casing; elsewhere machinery lay gutted, the mill now silent and forsaken. In an old break room, we found a deck of cards; a work glove whose sculpture reflected a working man's hand; and an old punch clock, still keeping time for employees long since departed. Silence served as metaphor to help symbolize larger issues—international competitors, market conditions, government policies, and environmental regulations—that led to layoffs that would further debilitate the area's already fragile economy.

"You have to do this every day," says Delozier. "When you stop thinking about the process, that's when you can focus on storytelling. That's when great stories happen."⁴

Another way to stay ahead of the story is to listen. Greg Bledsoe, a Digital Journalist at KNSD in San Diego, CA says, "Shoot with your ears. I constantly try to listen to what's going on around me. I may be pointing the camera in one direction, but my ears are scanning 360 degrees. While I'm getting one shot, my ears are already telling me where the next shot will be."⁵ Other video journalists sometimes find stories by driving around with their car windows open, or by just sitting somewhere like the San Diego Zoo and listening.⁶

- 4. Ask for Help.** Asking for help makes most journalists uncomfortable; it just feels unprofessional. Sometimes, though, VJs must ask for help. They have too much equipment; too many challenges; too many questions needing answers; too much to do in too little time, not to occasionally need help. It's okay to ask someone to help carry or fix something if you genuinely need help.



Figure 11.9 Danish painter helps a fellow in need by removing a stuck filter from video journalist John Larson's camera lens.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 John Larson



Figure 11.10 A Danish homeowner helps John Larson with his gear.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 John Larson



Figure 11.11 An Ethiopian boy carries a tripod to help VJ Lisa Berglund, on assignment in Africa.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 Lisa Berglund

A Danish house painter once freed a stuck UV lens filter on my lens after everyone else failed (Figure 11.9). Another time, I asked a homeowner to help me off his roof. I felt it was too dangerous to try it on my own (Figure 11.10). When Lisa Berglund, a NPPA National Press Photographer of the Year, needed help, she asked an Ethiopian boy to carry her tripod (Figure 11.11). "He was so little, but he really wanted to help," Lisa said. "He couldn't carry it far, but it was fun for him and it helped me."⁷

Avoid crossing ethical lines by letting police or people involved in the story become part of your news gathering effort. But, when necessary, *Ask, and Ye Shall Receive*.

5. **Write in Your Head.** Writing in your head as you shoot is the digital storyteller's single, greatest advantage. If someone else normally shoots your video, you may already know how previewing and logging the video can generate new ideas. When you shoot your own video, these ideas not only occur *while* you're shooting, they can change *how* you shoot.

Whenever you're shooting and see an exceptional moment in your viewfinder—a certain scene or powerful moment—immediately think of a line you might write about it. Change your shooting to reflect how you will phrase the line, and other lines you will write before and after it. In other words, let the video/audio inform your writing on the spot – react to it, and build on it.

- 6. Let Your Writing Inform How You Shoot.** As you write lines in your head, let your writing inform how you shoot. If you know you plan to write a line about how something happened, for example, write the line in your head, and then shoot video that illustrates that line perfectly. Remember, you not only “write” with words, but with the sounds you gather, the pictures you choose to take, the composition, the silence.

MINUTE BY MINUTE – LESSONS LEARNED IN THE FIELD

PBS’s *World Focus* sent me to Denmark in advance of the Global Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen. Usually, we would travel with three or four people – the correspondent (me), a producer, a cameraperson and often a fourth person who could run audio, shoot an extra camera, and/or help with the difficult logistics of working in a foreign country. This time I traveled as a VJ, employing only a Danish friend who helped me with local knowledge and language. I shot, produced, wrote, and edited the stories myself. While I had already shot some video, this was the first time my video and editing would appear on a national broadcast.

A GUIDED TOUR: LESSONS LEARNED

Below you’ll find a link to one of the five stories I shot in Denmark, called *Everyday Danes Profit from Wind Power*. If you first view the story on the web, and then go back through it, you can learn what I learned, and see what worked and what didn’t work.

Here’s the link to enter in your browser: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvTtt-tWoSY>

After you view the full story, go back to the beginning. You’ll see a time code somewhere on the screen. You can use this code to scrub through the video, stop it, and replay segments as you reference the following comments regarding what I learned, what I did, and what I should have done.

Everyday Danes Profit from Wind Power

- 0:03 **Opening Shots (Good and Bad).** A wide opening shot is good, but even better with the sound of the waves. I walked to the water’s edge to capture clean sound of the waves. The shot of tulips is off the tripod, and to my eye, too shaky. There was no reason I had to shoot it off the tripod.
- 0:08 – 0:23 **Writing an Open.** I began my story with a question, “What can one Danish art dealer, one Danish farmer, and two pigs tell us about how Denmark became a world leader in renewable wind power?” I rarely begin a story with a question, but



Figure 11.12 You also can access the story by photographing the tag immediately above on your smartphone, using an app such as Mobiletag or Scanlife.

(Q-Code)

Figure 11.13 John Larson, dressed in protective clothing and breathing gear, meets a friend at a Danish windmill painting facility. Larson is about to shoot in hazardous conditions while a painter spray-paints inside a partial section of windmill tower. The shots Larson made inside the tower section begin at 1:04 in the video story, *Everyday Danes Profit from Wind Power*, which you can access above.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 John Larson



here a question helped me introduce the three “characters” right away. The Rule of Threes even works in opening sentences. I tried to invite viewers into the story with interesting sound and video right at the top, all while foreshadowing the story’s ultimate theme: *Everyday people helped build the most successful wind power network in the world*. And, I liked the pigs.

- 0:23 **The Most Basic Sound.** Never forget to record sound of your most basic, important subject. If your story is about a vote, record sounds of voting – murmuring voices, the ratcheting of privacy curtains closing and opening. If it’s about construction, record the sounds of construction. Because this story is about windmills, I needed the “whooshing” sounds of windmill blades.
- 0:25 **Allow Shots to Unfold.** Not all shots have to be quick. To me, the silhouette of the wind turbine is good, but I felt the sun creeping out from behind made it better.
- 0:57 **Remember to Avoid Autofocus.** The tight shot of the welder is out of focus. You can see that parts of the background are in focus. I didn’t realize my autofocus was on, so the camera focused on the background, resulting in soft focus on the welder. Shoot in manual focus whenever you can. The same goes for auto-audio and auto-white balance. Try to stay in manual settings whenever possible.
- 1:06 **Matched Cuts Editing.** One of my favorite shots is of the painter. The raw video contained overlapping action, so I could match the action of his arm while cutting from the medium shot to the medium-wide shot. Then, I made sure the painter

appeared in the last shot in the sequence, so I could dissolve from his white coveralls to the white windmill tower.

1:09. I arranged to meet the company vice president at the base of a windmill at the Copenhagen Convention Center. The VP was late. The mill was broken. Two guys were working on it, one of them way up on top. Still no VP, so I interviewed them. I knew it would be fun to “reveal” the worker on top of the mill, so I shot the tilt-to-the-top-of-the-mill shot. As I was shooting, a line occurred to me: “To get a sense of just how heady these times are for Vestas, we went straight to the top,” so I shot the tilt-to-the-top-of-the-mill shot several times. I wanted the timing to match the line, revealing the worker at end of the sentence. I wasn’t very good with my tripod, so you can see it jiggle.

1:25 **Interesting Interviews/Telling Details.** Interviews can be interesting in many ways, including their physical location. Interviewing the worker atop the mill is visually more interesting to me than interviewing him at the bottom (but impossible without a wireless mic). His interview also is symbolic – a “telling detail.” He represents the many new employees in the wind industry who have left traditional jobs to work in renewable energy. He’s working on the mill that will soon power the Conference by itself.

1:52 **Shooting Standups (Good and Bad).** On the good side, I waited for the best light during the last hour before sunset, the “**golden hour**,” to shoot the standup with the mills behind me. On the bad side, notice the fuzzy, over-modulated audio. I checked the audio level before I shot the standup, but I spoke more loudly when I actually shot it. You can sometimes boost low audio when you edit, but you can’t do much to correct over-modulated audio.

For the standup, I asked my Danish friend to stand in for me while I framed the shot. If I’m alone, I record consecutive practice standups, each time checking the video until I have the desired framing. I also turn the viewfinder around, so I can locate myself in the frame while I shoot the standup. If you want, you can always set up a light stand extended to your height and focus on that. Mark its location—where you will stand—with removable tape or an object such as your notebook. Be mindful that some tapes can damage fragile surfaces. Once the lens is focused, remove the light stand from view, and then step back into frame on your designated mark, and deliver your standup. If you plan to move during the shot—say into frame and out of frame, or walk around the corner into frame—you can **block your shot** by marking where to begin and end your movement.

2:04 **Repetition. Reprises**—repeating sentences and sound bites—are uncommon storytelling tools in news and corporate video, but they can be effective. Here, I

reprise sound bites from the top of the story. You hear the farmer say, “I think it was too good, too good to tear down” at the beginning and at the end. A reprise helps reintroduce a character, and helps prevent confusion. It can also help emphasize central themes (Everyday people helped build the wind industry). A reprise is like a chorus in a song. Sometimes, repetition is a good thing.

2:14 **Natural Sound.** I remembered hearing the farmer’s laughter on the wireless microphone as he walked to his windmill. It matched the sense of joy and accomplishment he shared when he told me how he outwitted investors, and put up the mill himself. Here, natural sound supplies not only meaning but also punctuation, in this case both to insert a little “exclamation mark” and to “underline” the farmer’s sense of accomplishment.

2:31 **Bad framing.** Notice that my microphone is showing in the upper right hand of the shot. I did it again at 3:42. I didn’t know yet that my camera “overscans” –



Figure 11.14 John Larson asks on-camera questions of his subject during a “re-interview” to create reverse angle shots that can later be intercut to help improve the story’s pace and permit matched-cut editing.

John Larson

meaning that it actually shoots a wider shot than I see in the viewfinder. I also didn't know yet that I could just zoom in a little more, or that during editing I could crop out the mistake in Final Cut Pro™.

- 3:00 **Shaky Out-Zoom.** When you use a tripod to in-zoom, out-zoom, tilt or pan, it's advisable to practice first, always with a good tripod. I had not practiced enough. This video was again shot during "Golden Hour" to give it that rich, saturated light.
- 3:54 **Bad Lighting.** Notice the poor exposure on the man sitting at his computer. The window behind him is too bright, requiring that I provide additional light to "fill" or supplement, the light on his face. I didn't take time to set up the light, and the shot suffered.
- 4:00–4:32 **Back-and-Forth Conversations.** This technique makes the story look as if two cameras were used to record one conversation. Actually, one camera was used to "match cut" between two similar conversations. During the interview, I noticed several answers that could be more specific. I wanted to ask those questions again. After the original interview, I set up the camera again, this time pointing at me, and re-asked the questions: e.g., "How much is your salary? It is all volunteer?" His answers were virtually identical the second time.

Reversal questions are common in one-camera shoots. Some journalists may wonder if the practice is ethical, but one test considers whether the VJ's actions would be acceptable under public scrutiny. Acceptable conduct requires that you only re-ask the same questions while still in the interviewee's presence, with the person's full understanding and consent; it means never to misrepresent the conversation; never to match a reversal question with a different answer; or to create a misleading or false context for the interview. Stay true to the conversation.

- 4:45/5:09 **Engage. Have Fun.** When I struggled with the Danish pronunciation of the Power Cooperative I was not intending to use it in my story (You'll notice that I did not mic myself). When logging the tape, I realized that my poor Danish was interesting and playful, so I wrote it into the story. Sometimes it's appropriate to interact and have fun with your interviewees. Even to share a beer from the camera's point of view. The "Skol!" toast wound up being the story's final closing sound.

ADDING DRONES TO YOUR TOOLKIT

The wind power story works, but today I'd add a few drone shots to give viewers even more valuable perspectives. I realized several years ago how drones can capture powerful, expansive views. I was shooting a documentary in south central Alaska. Alaska is such an immense place, we needed aerials to help tell the story. I was working with a helicopter photographer who, of course, had state-of-the-art equipment, and shot spectacular aerials (Figure 11.15).



Figure 11.15 Spectacular aerals help make drone shots memorable and informative.

actionsports/depositphotos

During the shoot, however, we also used a couple of small drones – moving along a ski run, a running path, and up over some mountain ridges. I realized that a thousand-dollar drone was, in some cases, doing the work of a million dollars worth of helicopter and photo gear. The shots weren't as sophisticated, but they were close. I bought my very first drone. Dollar for dollar, pound for pound, they're the next best thing to having a helicopter and a million dollars worth of gear.

Practice Makes Perfect

On the first day of practice with my new drone, I was out behind a school in a vacant ball field. I flew my new drone around for about 30 minutes, and promptly flew it into a chain link fence and broke it. I patched up the drone, but a flight or two later, I crashed it again. The moral of the story? Practice somewhere you can't harm others or their property (Figure 11.17).

From Hobby Thing to Storytelling Machine

Since those early days, I've learned the value of drones in telling visual stories. I was covering the severe drought in Central California Valley. Hundreds of thousands of acres of agricultural



Figure 11.16 Safe, unpopulated areas allow drone pilots to practice making picture-perfect maneuvers.

Stockr/depositphotos.com

land lay scorched – everything from lettuce fields to fruit orchards. At one point I flew the drone through a dying orchard, and then flew it higher and higher, revealing that the burned-out orchard was in the middle of thousands of acres of dying orchards. At another point, I followed a cattle rancher as he drove an ATV into a pasture to feed his cattle. You could see his grassland had died, but when the drone rose higher you realized the grass was dead for as far as you could see. It was the first time I walked away from a story thinking, “How in the world could I ever have told this story without a drone, without aerials?” I couldn’t otherwise have captured a sense of the historic magnitude of the drought. I realized that you can do a lot of fancy shots with drones, but the simplest ones are often the best – say a shot from a high vantage point, a slow journey through a field, or accompanying someone into their life’s story.

Scale and Perspective

Drones let you achieve an unparalleled sense of perspective. They add new ways to transmit information. I’ve done stories along the Mississippi river, stories of small towns, showing things you can’t see or understand until you get above them.

Add a drone to your storyteller's toolkit, and your viewers can better appreciate the devastation of an earthquake – it's now the enormity of thirty blocks, not just the three damaged buildings in front of the camera.

Drones are sometimes about having the most sensational shots. Early on I flew my drone over Niagara Falls. It's hard to get a more sensational shot than that, but the most useful shots don't need to be sensational. All they need to do is add new, valuable context.

“Being There”

Many times I've been covering a story – a hurricane, or a fire for example, and I have thought there's no wide-angle lens in the world wide enough to capture what I'm seeing. Drones can sometimes fix that. They offer big pictures of big events.

The Magic Carpet

I think humans have always dreamed of flying. A bird's eye view offers a sense of expansiveness that is difficult to replicate. Drone video can bring that sense to a story. Drones can sometimes get shots when there's no other way. They can fly out over a lake and look back at the shoreline, for example, or fly high enough to show someone's neighborhood, or to capture an immense geographical area—an ocean, a mountain range, or a melting glacier field—stories that take viewers on a journey and let them travel into a landscape, often side by side with the story's subject. Drone shots can also provide a great transitional tool, moving from past to present, for example, in your story's unfolding narrative.

Practice Discipline

Sometimes it's easy to get carried away with new technology. I only haul out my drone if I can't show something in any other way. In reporting a story on solar panels in Nevada, I couldn't otherwise see the panels on the roof, or communicate a sense of size, context, or proximity. Sometimes I might want to show a small village in relationship to the countryside, or perhaps a small forest that thrives in the middle of a city.

Handy Maneuvers

A drone can be a steady tripod with almost unlimited height. If you wish you had a tripod that's 100 feet high, then a drone can do it. It can also act as a dolly, or a jib (the equivalent of a mechanical crane). You can make subtle little moves, left or right, all with unlimited height and unlimited length. Instead of laying down track for a slider shot⁹, you can use the drone.

I've found simplest shots are frequently the best. Any shot that reveals new information, as the shot unfolds, helps viewers better understand. You might start down low, looking at a neighborhood at ground level, then fly higher to reveal how large or small the neighborhood

really is. Or you might start high, with an overall view, and come down to reveal where someone lives or works.

In essence, you start at Point A and go to Point B, perhaps following the migrant in the field, a kayaker paddling down the river, or the rancher feeding his cattle. Such shots give viewers a sense of place you can't capture any other way.

A favorite shot? Try the passing, “Over the shoulder shot.” Imagine a cowboy riding away from you. As the drone catches up to the cowboy with a wide shot, the audience becomes more involved. Then as the drone moves past the cowboy its camera can pivot, and “look back, over its shoulder” at the cowboy. You can do all this while tilting down, or tilting up, giving a sense of where the cowboy has come from, and where he is going.

Many drones are getting increasingly portable and affordable, so small you could fit several drones in a backpack. Many incorporate collision avoidance sensors. Software makes tilting, tracking, and circling easy. Just tell the drone who (or what) is in your viewer finder and how you want to capture the action. Drone technology is advancing rapidly, but in the end all drones offer height, context, and perspective that you often can't get in any other way.

Use a Spotter

Whenever I fly a drone, I always want a spotter – someone looking behind me and to the sides, always looking where I'm not (Figure 11.17). I learned early on not to trust only what you see in the viewfinder, and the dangers of focusing too much only on my drone. I once almost hit a tractor-trailer truck in an agricultural field. It came from behind me, out of my field of vision. I didn't hit it, but I learned.



Figure 11.17 The spotter's job is to keep watch behind and to the sides of the drone pilot, constantly looking for hazards, whether invisible in the viewfinder or outside the pilot's line of sight. Here, the drone “looks back over its shoulder” to observe its pilot and the pilot's spotter.

John Larson

Another precaution is never to fly too close to anything, whether it's a car, a building, or a person. Absolutely never fly anywhere you can't see the drone – not only in the viewfinder but also with your own eyes. And never use your drone to spy or pry.

For detailed information about registering and insuring your drone, up to date information about FAA rules and regulations that govern drone operations, and other useful links, please see Chapter 14, Digital Media Law.

THE FUTURE OF VIDEO JOURNALISTS

Video journalists are playing an increasingly important role in gathering information around the world. Scandinavian countries like Norway and Denmark have used VJs with success for many years. In the United States, most broadcast news operations have replaced some two- and three-person crews with video journalists. They do it to save money, or to increase the number of journalists gathering and producing stories in the field.

The results have been mixed. When companies use VJs only to cut costs, the product has suffered. Reporters usually can't shoot as well as gifted photographers. Photographers usually can't write and dig for information as well as gifted reporters. When VJs are asked to do the same amount of work each day that once required two or three people, the content usually suffers.

But, where companies use VJs to cover stories once considered too distant, complex, time-intensive or expensive, the results can be outstanding. Sometimes, the VJ can travel overseas to shoot and tell the stories three-person crews rarely or never cover. At home, given adequate time, VJs enjoy a sense of ownership and control over stories that few other journalists can match.

Increasingly, some VJs become **Multi-Media Journalists**. They not only shoot, write and edit their stories, but they write stories for the web, blog, assemble computer slide shows, tweet, and write other content for social networking sites like Facebook. Multi-Media Journalists with such skills and creativity can play powerful roles in the emerging landscape of journalism, but with a caveat. All of this takes time to learn. Even when you can do everything, you can't do everything all the time. Choose your strengths. Become proficient in one medium, and challenge yourself in others. I am stronger at storytelling, and less strong at editing. I need to work on editing. I also want to learn more about various forms of online storytelling. I will continue to explore and learn. You can, too.

SUMMARY

New technology and tight budgets have prompted television news, corporate video firms, and comparable organizations to re-introduce the so-called One-Man Band (OMB), a term for the

individual men and women who have learned how to shoot, write, and edit video stories by themselves. Equivalent terms include **Backpack Journalist**, Video Journalist (VJ), All-Platform Journalist, and Solo Video Journalist.

Beyond shooting, writing and editing stories, the video journalist also must conduct research, find good stories, set up interviews, find locations, maintain and repair equipment, and meet all deadlines – among dozens more duties in a typical week.

Networks, local stations, and other organizations use video journalists to cover stories otherwise too expensive, or too impractical for larger crews, which can range from two- to eight-people or more, including producers, sound recordists, the correspondent, the Director of Photography (DP) and the DP's assistant. Network crews working abroad frequently add to that roster a respected local expert who speaks the native language fluently, drivers, and security personnel.

Six commonly overlooked tools can help the VJ produce interesting stories quickly. They include pre-producing the story, or learning everything possible through research and phone work, talking with experts, and conducting “pre-interviews” by phone to determine the story's most likely direction.

A second tool when time permits is to practice focused-listening. Before shooting the story, try to talk and interact with people in your stories before you begin your on-camera interviews. This approach helps the VJ and story subjects come to know one another better, and sometimes uncovers valuable insights and information otherwise unobtainable.

A third tool is to gather great storytelling sound, which serves as the other half of the image. Great sound conveys information, sense of place, feeling, experience, and emotion. Many VJs overlook the small sounds that can enhance the viewer's sense of “being there,” and that inform the ear just as surely as images inform the eye.

Your greatest advantage lies in knowing where the story is headed. Work aggressively to capture good “shots” with the microphone. If you listen for sounds, anticipate the action, and think like a video editor as you shoot, you can react like no one else, whether it be to ask a question, illustrate the sound with a good shot, or “thought write” an accompanying line as you record a shot.

The fourth tool is a willingness to ask for help when you genuinely need it. You may have too much equipment to descend a ladder safely, or perhaps you can't carry all the gear to another location on your own. Most VJs must ask for help at times, and most will usually find someone willing to lend a hand.

The fifth tool is to practice “thought writing,” or writing in your head as you shoot or log video. What you see and hear in the field influences what you will say in the story’s voice-over script. You may change your shooting to reflect how you wish to phrase a line, or think of a line you might write. The goal is learning to let the video/audio inform your writing, on the spot, as you react to images and sound, and build on them.

The sixth tool is the opposite of thought writing. You write or think of a sentence or more of voice-over copy you want to use, and then shoot video/audio that will illustrate that line.

Thus, using these six tools, you “write” not only with words, but with the sounds you gather; the pictures you choose to take; the composition, moods, and silences; and the actions and behaviors that occur within your storytelling environment.

This chapter contains a section entitled “A Guided Tour: Lessons Learned”, in which John Larson, former *Dateline NBC* correspondent, self-critiques a PBS story that he shot, produced and reported in Denmark. Larson was on his first international assignment as a VJ. He provides access to this web story and a self-critique so that others may learn what he learned, and to help show what worked and didn’t work. See also www.story201.com

VJs play an important role in gathering information worldwide. They work in many countries, and some travel widely. In the United States, organizations have replaced some two- and three-person crews with video journalists, whether to cut costs or to put more journalists in the field gathering and producing stories.

The results have been mixed when companies replace crews with VJs, while expecting one person to do the same work every day that once required two or three people. When companies use VJs to cover stories once thought too remote, expensive or time-intensive, VJs can shoot and tell exceptional stories that most crews only rarely or never cover.

As technology becomes easier to use, more VJs also are becoming Multi-Media Journalists (MMJs). They still report, write, shoot and edit, but also write stories for the web, blog, tweet, and write content for social networking sites like Facebook. Such skills and creativity can play powerful roles in the emerging landscape of journalism and comparable fields, but they take time to learn. Even if VJs or MMJs can do everything, seldom can they do everything all the time. A good approach, then, is to choose your strengths. First, become proficient in one medium, and then challenge yourself in others.

KEY TERMS

Backpack Journalist
block the shot
Cameraperson
crew sizes

Director of
Photography
Golden Hour
Multi-Media Journalist

pre-producing
Producer
One-Man Band
reprises

Sound Recordist
Video Journalist

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the primary reasons that television news stations and numerous organizations have replaced some video field production crews with VJs who do everything alone.
2. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of respective crew sizes with those of the VJ working alone.
3. Assume you're counseling a mid-career professional – perhaps a photographer, video editor or reporter. The person feels pressured to retool as a VJ who can do it all, but is confused about where to begin. What advice would you give that person? What approach would you recommend? Explain how long the transition might take before the person is fully capable in all areas.
4. Assume a fully capable VJ comes to you, asking how to become a Multi-Media Journalist. What would you tell that person? What skills should the person acquire? Explain how long it might take the person to become proficient in Multi-Media Journalism.
5. Discuss the important contributions of storytelling sound in video stories, and explain the meaning of “sound is the other half of the image.” Finally, provide an example of how you might record sound while shooting a story to use as the “other half of the image.”
6. Explain what “write in your head” means, provide an example, and explain how you might apply the concept while shooting video in the field.
7. Explain how a specific shot might inform your writing, even after you return to the edit bay.
8. Based on your existing knowledge gained from experience, readings and observations, list at least five additional techniques and/or approaches that John Larson might have added to his wind power story in an ideal world, given sufficient time and resources. Before you complete this exercise, re-read the section in this chapter, “A Guided Tour: Lessons Learned” as you review John Larson’s accompanying video story, *Everyday Danes Profit from Wind Power* at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvTtt-tWoSY>.
9. Discuss your current or planned approach to shoot your own standup in the field without any help.
10. When, if ever, is it appropriate for a VJ to ask someone for help? In what situations might a request for help be inappropriate, if ever?
11. Discuss what you have learned at large to this point about video journalists and their responsibilities – while working as a VJ yourself; interning or otherwise observing VJs at work; or in your own research and readings. Also, share your thoughts regarding

appropriate attire and public conduct for VJs while on routine assignments, and while attending more formal or solemn events.

12. How do you see the future of the “One-Man-Band”? In what representative situations and under what conditions is it an ideal approach to visual storytelling? How likely is “burnout” among VJs? How can they avoid burnout? What are an organization’s professional and humanitarian obligations to its VJs?
13. Why is it important to practice flying your new drone before you shoot your first story with it?
14. What valuable elements can drones add to visual storytelling?
15. Explain how to use the drone as a “storytelling machine.”
16. How can you use the drone to lend scale and perspective to your stories?
17. In what ways can drones help you impart new information to your stories?
18. What type of drone shots are often the best? Why?
19. What is meant by the term, “Over the shoulder shot”?
20. Discuss in-air flying maneuvers that can add interest and new information to drone shots.
21. Why is it important to use a spotter whenever you fly a drone?

EXERCISES

1. Assume you’re in charge of all video production at your operation, including budgeting and hiring. List and explain the minimum qualities you look for when you hire a VJ. Include education, experience, attitude, creativity, professional abilities, and minimum physical abilities.
2. List several situations where a large crew(s) would be necessary to cover a story in your region, and explain how you would deploy that crew(s).
3. Create a pocket field guide of the “Six Overlooked Tools for Video Journalists” that you can laminate and carry for reference while pre-producing, reporting, writing, and shooting stories in the field.
4. Explain in detail why sound is such an important storytelling tool for VJs, and how audiences benefit when VJs go the extra mile to capture good sound.
5. Create a flow chart or time line that lists all education and proficiencies a person must acquire before becoming a competent VJ – and from that point forward a competent Multi-Media Journalist.
6. List the main points John Larson makes in this section about what did not work in *Everyday Danes Profit from Wind Power*. Next, list additional techniques or approaches, which in an ideal world might have made the story even stronger.
7. Write a job description for an organization’s human resource manual, outlining the duties, responsibilities, and expectations for a new VJ position your company soon will announce. Include educational requirements, work experience, probable work schedule, salary, and benefits including vacation time. Include any other requirements you wish, such

as recommendation letters, need to pass a drug test and criminal background check, satisfactory driving record, valid driver's license and passport, car ownership, and ability to carry x pounds of gear for x distance.

8. Assume that you work, or soon will begin work as a VJ. Drawing upon personal experience, and your sense of what is fair and reasonable, write guidelines that will help your organization better appreciate VJs and the role they play; provide them proper working conditions; develop fair work schedules; and prevent burnout. Include an explanation of likely benefits to the organization should it adopt your recommendations.
9. Explain in detail how experience as a VJ might help you become a more efficient and professional crewmember at some point in your future. Next, explain in detail how working as a crewmember could help you become a better VJ.
10. Conduct sufficient online research to make an informed prediction about the future of digital storytelling. Include an assessment of technology's continuing impacts. Also address what VJs must do every day to attract ongoing audience patronage and loyalty, given today's unlimited content choices on numerous media platforms.
11. Assume you oversee the local branch of a national organization that specializes in video production, whether in news or an allied field. Upper management wants you to replace all two- and three-person crews with VJs in the coming year, claiming a VJ can produce just as many stories as a crew, allowing the company to save money on salaries, equipment, transportation, and benefits. Respond to upper management in a one-page memo, outlining specific reasons where you agree and/or disagree with this plan.
12. Conduct a web search for "drones YouTube," and watch several examples from your search, such as "Top 5 Drone Fails," "My first day with my drone," "Epic Drone Videos," and "drone crash video." Compare the videos with John Larson's observations in this chapter about flying drones, common flight maneuvers, and the benefits drones bring to visual storytelling.

NOTES

- 1 Lisa Berglund, comments to John Larson, Detroit, October 2010
- 2 Dave Delozier, comments to John Larson, Denver, CO, March 2010
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Dave Delozier, comments to John Larson, Denver, CO, February 2009.
- 5 Greg Bledsoe, KNSD-TV, in comments to John Larson, San Diego, CA, May 2010. For more insights, see Deborah Potter, "Shoot With Your Ears," *NewsLab*, <http://www.newslab.org/2009/09/11/shoot-with-your-ears/>, accessed January 22, 2017.
- 6 John DeTarsio once uncovered an original story angle at the San Diego Zoo, simply by listening. Stumped for ideas about another Day-At-The-Zoo assignment, he sat down to think about his assignment. Moments later, he heard a guide who sounded more like a street performer, warming up his next tour group. He asked to ride along, and shot a memorable story that helped viewers feel part of the tour.
- 7 Lisa Berglund, comments to John Larson, regarding tips and insights about video journalism, May 2010.

8 Golden Hour refers to the rich, saturated light that occurs under clear skies during the first hour after sunrise and the last hour before sunset. See the Golden Hour Calculator with input for your region and time of year at <http://www.b-roll.net/goldenhour/>. You also can photograph the following tag with an app such as MobileTag or ScanLife on your smart phone.



9 Photographers have long laid track to move a camera dolly along a horizontal path, sometimes to follow action, sometimes to reveal a new element in a shot, or to record a master shot. By contrast, the slider is basically a metal pole attached to a tripod. You can position it horizontally or vertically and move the camera along the slider either up and down, or side to side.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR STORYTELLING ABILITY

12

Every viewer wants storytellers and stories to be interesting and appealing. Even when your intentions are noble but your work suffers, viewers can only judge your stories by what you put on the screen. In the end, nothing else matters. Filmmaker and author Edward Dmytryk believed the ability to appeal, *whatever the subject matter*, separates the successful creator from the artistic failure. Survival and professional advancement depend on a commitment to producing stories sometimes defined as R-O-I – relevant, original and interesting.

SEEK GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT

As you work to make your stories ever more attractive and compelling, you may notice competitors who seem more capable than you. Perhaps they have more experience and confidence, or their stories just seem more inviting. While it helps to study the techniques of others, you are in competition primarily with yourself to improve each new story you produce.

Self-improvement raises the possibility of failure, a hazard that keeps some people from realizing meaningful accomplishments in their careers. You can't fail if you don't try, after all, but neither can you succeed. Expect some failures along the way, because they're how we learn. Often, some new success builds on some past failure. Improvement is a gradual process that creates its own frustrations. The trick is to go for the minor victories, says best-selling author and reporter Bob Dotson. "Don't try to hit a home run every time out, just get on first base every time at bat. You find the right word, or write a phrase that works, or shoot a scene that tells the story."¹

The **commitment** to slow, steady development can result in significant improvements over time. The key to moving your career along is learning to look at people, events, and life itself as others have not – converting even the mundane into something extraordinary and memorable time after time.

HAVE A STORY

Often, reporters and videographers confuse their accounts of events with stories.

Routinely they identify the story subject, but not the story itself: “My story is about consumer spending.” But as you will have discovered, a story focus or commitment is one of the storyteller’s most potent tools. The **focus** statement provides a way to give the story life and help drive it forward.

Typically, in a team setting, the reporter is left to identify the story, although in reality that job should fall to everyone involved. Because you may see the story differently than the producer or someone else who accompanies you into the field, remember to communicate your ideas to one another so that all agree on a single focus.

Even when you work alone in the field, if you can invest just two or three minutes to develop a focus statement, you can have a stronger story and spend less time in the field. Even when the action is moving quickly all around you, and it seems as if you must purely and simply react, force yourself to take time to think. Recognize that you must be flexible enough to change your story commitment if the event changes.

INVOLVE THE CAMERA

Viewers hunger for a sense of involvement in stories. Indeed the promise of a sense of first-person experience is one reason we turn to television and web video even for news.

The involved camera helps create the experiential illusion and thereby provides a way to help differentiate your reporting from the competition. Try to involve the camera more directly in the action – to place the viewer in the very heart of the story (Figure 12.1). When you involve the camera, you involve the viewer.

Look also for unique camera angles to help tell your story and to make it more visually memorable. Avoid extreme angles that could destroy the viewer’s sense of direct involvement in the story.

SEQUENCES ADVANCE THE STORY

Sequential video produces a continuous, uninterrupted flow of action that tells much of the story, even without narration. A series of shots are edited together to create for viewers the illusion of continuity along a timeline from beginning to end. Rather than voice-over narration, pictures, sound bites, and natural sound communicate much of the information.

A commonly used, but much less effective, alternative is called **illustrative video**. This reporting approach simply uses video that illustrates the script, roughly in the proportion of one scene per sentence of voice-over narration. It is similar to a series of unrelated slides or scenes with little regard for the order or rhythm or even for the meaning of individual shots



Figure 12.1 When the camera is involved in the action, so is the audience.

Ernie Leyba Photography

BOX 12.1 THE ESSENCE OF STORYTELLING

The essence of all storytelling is conflict. There is no very good story in the premise “He wanted her and he got her; the end.” Conflict—the quest for a goal against opposition—keeps the story going.

The eighty-two-year-old woman who nurses heroin-addicted babies back to health is engaged in one of life’s greatest conflicts: life and health over death and suffering. The runner who has lost his leg to cancer but rides across America in a wheelchair to raise money for athletes with physical disabilities illustrates his character under pressure.

Because so many stories are accounts of things gone wrong in human affairs, conflict and struggle are inevitable components of visual storytelling. To ignore them is to ignore part of nature itself. Life is neither all bad nor all good, however, so it’s useful to remember most viewers prefer a balance of information that reflects life as they experience it from day to day.

working together. Illustrative video builds mostly around talk, and rarely tells a story along a **timeline**.

DON’T TRY TO SHOW ALL OF NEW ZEALAND

A frustration every video reporter faces is lack of sufficient time to tell complex stories. “If only I had a couple more minutes,” pleads the reporter. “You can have five more seconds if you’ll give up a week of your summer vacation,” the producer replies. At such times you can emulate the techniques you see in the strongest thirty-second or even a fifteen-second commercial. These “mini-stories” make every frame count. They use every moment to best advantage. They are simple, yet powerful and memorable.

In the face of insufficient airtime, one approach is to follow the maxim that “less is more.” Photojournalist Larry Hatteberg has crystallized the concept in his philosophy not to try showing “all of New Zealand” in short-form storytelling. Hatteberg forged this conviction while on assignment to portray New Zealand in a four-part series. Confronted with showing the nation’s overwhelming complexity in only four two-minute reports, Hatteberg dramatically narrowed his focus. In the end he chose a sheep rancher, a street magician, a fishing boat captain, and a railroad engineer, and told his stories through them. Still, Hatteberg’s portrayal of New Zealand feels representative because his storytelling approach is both wide-ranging and powerful. Hatteberg’s style mirrors the sentiments of John Grierson, the British documentary historian and filmmaker, who once observed that you can write an article about the mail service, but you must make a film about one single letter.

PURSUE YOUR INTEREST IN PEOPLE

It's important to care about the people in your stories. Caring simply means that you are interested in your subject and that you listen hard to what the person has to say (Figure 12.2). This does not mean you should become emotionally or personally involved. The key is to report honestly and with appropriate feeling. Many of the most powerful stories originate in the heart, with what authors and poets sometimes refer to as “a lump in the throat.” Storytellers often must feel the story and therefore its significance, before they can reconstruct it for viewers.

MOTIVATE VIEWERS TO WATCH

In helping viewers want to watch your stories, it is important to avoid telling them everything they need to know in the voice-over script. Rarely, in the narrative built on words, will you have to watch a story to understand it. Often, you can listen from the next room with little loss in meaning. Such video, of course, is radio with pictures and is neither involving nor engaging.



Figure 12.2 The strongest visual stories normally result when the journalist is interested in the subject and pays attention to what the person has to say.

Ernie Leyba Photography

A more powerful reporting method is to help people watch through voice over, natural sounds and silences that invite the viewer to reengage with the screen constantly. In this approach, voice-over narration and standups invite a “This” versus “This tea ceremony” approach. If you read the next two sentences aloud, you can hear the difference: “All hikers should carry one of these . . .” versus “Every hiker should carry a compass in his backpack.” The first sentence motivates viewers to watch the screen.

DEVELOP VIDEO FLUENCY

In this word-oriented culture, the effort to express the story visually without stating it flatly, in words, is a trick easier said than done. For all its eloquence, the visual image receives short shrift among some journalists, even in the face of generations of filmmakers who have proven the power of visual communication. “Very early . . . I discovered that viewers are more attentive to silent sequences than they are to dialogue scenes,” observed filmmaker Edward Dmytryk. “When the screen talk[s], so d[oes] the viewer. Silent scenes command attention.”²

What to do then, should your organization require you to report on multiple platforms?

Throughout the day the storyteller or reporter may use desktop-based editing, create computer graphics, cut voice-over tracks, post a web article, stream video, record a news tease, appear on set for an anchor debrief, create a blog or podcast, even select still photos from video for web-based articles, and transmit story updates to mobile phones.

Reshaping stories for multiple platforms takes time and requires versatility. Software helps enable such flexibility by letting the reporter write a single story but publish it in various formats – perhaps as a web article, news script, and social media page.

The key is to learn when to use specific tools to best communicate your message in the medium at hand. It is no longer a matter of spoken words and moving images, but rather of graphics, audio only, audio with video, still photography, the spoken word meant to be heard, the written word meant to be read, text messages, and the like – and to make it all as original and interesting as possible.

EXCUSES

In the face of deadline pressure, budget constraints, and equipment breakdowns, virtually every video story is imperfect in some sense, and some are outright forgettable. Inquire why a particular story failed, and often you’ll encounter The Excuse.

Some excuses, of course, are legitimate. They explain something beyond our control that went wrong. Other excuses masquerade for indifference and procrastination. Note that some of the most common excuses are admissions of failure, and tell of stories seldom remembered:

- “It was a dumb assignment. The producer didn’t know what he wanted.”
- “I don’t have enough time to do a good job. I have to cover six stories a day.”
- “My equipment is no good.”
- “I didn’t have time to set up the camera on a tripod.”
- “They don’t pay me enough that I have to do everything around here.”
- “You can’t shoot sequences when events are beyond your control.”
- “It’s the photographer’s job to take the pix. I don’t feel I can suggest shots.”
- “Audiences don’t expect that level of quality.”
- “It’s not my job, that’s up to the reporter.”

Professionals leave such excuses to the competition. Ultimately, on every story, the choice comes down to a simple yes or no whenever you ask yourself, “Am I going to do my best job on this story today?”

KNOW THE COMMUNITY

At one time market hopping may have helped further careers, but today tenure in the marketplace seems to hold greater rewards. Organizations need employees who want to live in the community and are willing to stay long enough to learn something about it. No one who arrives in town and leaves eight months later can discover much about the community, and even two years is little enough time for a video journalist to learn about an area, its politics, and its people. Generally, assuming acceptable pay and working conditions, the longer video journalists can stay in an area the better. Tenure in the marketplace allows journalists to develop more recognition and acceptance among viewers and to report stories about the community with a depth and sensitivity not found in the work of reporters on their way through town.

BOX 12.2 COMMUNITY-ORIENTED REPORTING

Try as you might to make your accounts objective, inherent in all stories is a point of view. The storyteller’s job is determining which point of view is most valid. Will a particular story be simply an account of an event or situation, or of how the event affected people and how they responded? Will Durant, the American educator and historian, pondered such questions from a philosopher’s perspective:

Civilization is a stream with banks. The stream is sometimes filled with blood from people killing, stealing, shouting and doing things historians usually record, while on the banks, unnoticed, people build homes, make love, raise children, sing songs, write poetry. The story of civilization is the story of what happened on the banks.⁴

In a sense you are a historian for the market area you serve. You tell the stories of the soldiers, the boat builders, the archaeologists, the miners, and the musicians of your region. Someday, should you reach the network level, you will tell similar stories from your travels, but share them with larger audiences.

CURIOSITY PAYS

Curiosity is a prerequisite if video journalists are to understand the market or the field they work in. Cities and communities reveal themselves to explorers, so soon upon your arrival in town, come to know everything you can about street names, geographical oddities, regional pronunciations, community leaders, and Saturday night dances. Introduce yourself to the municipal court judge and walk along the riverfront. At restaurants, pass up the cheeseburger and sample the regional specialties like alligator tail or huckleberry pie. Attend or visit area churches and synagogues and take in a movie at the local drive-in. In short, immerse yourself in the area's history, culture, commerce and religion, and your knowledge will lead you to become a more effective storyteller.

SEE BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

Every day media reports reaffirm that viewers will never care more about a story than the reporter. If you can find a new way to cover the routine story, even those you have covered repeatedly over the years, then it will be more interesting and memorable for your audience.

Art Donahue, National Television News Photographer of the Year, endorses the Boy Scout motto, "Be prepared." He encourages storytellers to look at every story assignment with fresh eyes—even routine assignments—rather than merely shooting a standup and two talking heads on every story. Donahue's search for fresh, creative story treatments often shows viewers what other reporters might have overlooked, or perhaps never have happened upon or otherwise seen with such clarity. A master at showing familiar subjects in a new light, Donahue once told the story of freeway traffic jams caused by a bridge under repair using only pictures and off-air sound recorded from truckers' radio chatter.

SHOW AUDIENCES WHAT THEY MISSED

Try to show viewers what they would have missed, even had they witnessed the event. Search for unique story angles that other reporters may have overlooked in their rush to cover the story. While the competition is shooting the smoke and flames at the apartment house fire, look around you. Perhaps you will notice an elderly man next door trying to fight back the fire with a garden hose to save his modest home. The observant looking for a better story seem to encounter such "lucky breaks."

Bob Dotson notes that after a tornado strikes, reporters seem to gravitate to the governor touring the area and ask how things look. But when Dotson covered the aftermath of a tornado

BOX 12.3 INTERNATIONAL VIDEO REPORTING

Mark Carlson, an Associated Press video journalist based in Brussels, Belgium, says his occupation as a journalist has produced the most rewarding experiences in his life (Figures 12.3 and 12.4).

“I have found life to be a lot easier to understand when I listen to other people tell their stories,” says Carlson. “I can’t count how many times I’ve had someone lead me on a guided tour of their home after it has been destroyed by a natural disaster. Each time I walk through the ruins, I know that I’m not just telling a story, but sharing someone’s life with the world. It is a most awesome responsibility . . .”⁵ Below, Carlson’s bio profiles his career from college to the present, and his advice on how to make it all work.

Bio (excerpted)

I am a videographer, reporter, writer, video editor, producer, assignment editor, travel agent, and accountant for the AP. Video journalists have different responsibilities at different news organizations, but the job is the same everywhere, and it is for one person to do the work of two or three different people.

I am entrenched inside the European Union producing significant interviews and video with political leaders. My work involves stamina, detailed planning and ability to quickly adapt to change because political decision making is never simple. Outside of politics, I cover major news events like the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris. The BBC described my live video of police convoys chasing the Hebdo suspects down a motorway as “extraordinary live pictures broadcast around the world.” I also plan, organize, and execute news coverage with colleagues and freelancers for Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

I began my career as a radio/television news-broadcasting student at Southern Illinois University/Carbondale and worked there for WSIU-TV, a PBS affiliate, for four years. In my sophomore year, I also was hired at local ABC affiliate WSIL-TV as a part-time news/sports photographer and worked my way up to a one-man-band TV reporter.

I then moved on to WBIR, the NBC affiliate in Knoxville, TN, as a news/sports photographer. My next job was as a news photographer with the Fox affiliate WITI-TV in Milwaukee, WI.

After working in local TV news for nearly ten years, I began exploring jobs with broader news opportunities, and that’s when I accepted the position of video journalist for the Associated Press based in Chicago. In 2010, I transferred to Brussels to cover the capital of Europe as a VJ for the AP.

Whenever I go out into the field on an assignment, I am up against network TV crews with endless staff and resources. But that is not intimidating because I perform all of their jobs faster, cheaper, and more efficiently.

Everyone has limits on what they can and cannot do. The key to success is maximizing what you can do within those limits. Journalism is a business of competition. How does one person succeed when the competition is a crew of multiple people doing the same thing? Well, you have to figure out ways to force the competition to compete against your strengths.

—Mark Carlson



Figure 12.3 Video Journalist Mark Carlson on assignment to cover the Beijing Olympics.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 Mark D. Carlson



Figure 12.4 Video Journalist Mark Carlson, covering the presidential campaign, appears on camera in addition to reporting, shooting, writing, and editing the story on his own.

Copyright © 2012, 2016 Mark D. Carlson

in South Carolina, he found a man perhaps more articulate than the governor. “Well, it got my teeth, but it didn’t get me,” the man said. And he reached down in the debris and held up his mud-covered dentures, thus distilling the story’s essence.³

HELP VIEWERS EXPERIENCE THE STORY AS YOU DID

Our hopes and dreams, our victories, failures, and despair, and our love, our loneliness, and faith, are woven within each of us from life’s complex fabric. We swim in a sea of commonality. Sometimes, 500 million to a billion people may watch live broadcasts of a mine rescue, a Presidential inauguration, or a Super Bowl game. Such stories attract huge audiences because they address what we all feel in common about life’s challenges, struggles, and our need for closure –to learn how events and situations turn out in the end.

Any time you work on a news report, a reality program, or even an on-camera interview, try to stuff human experience into your work – a reconstruction of what it was like to be there. You can conduct interviews while your subjects remain focused on a familiar task in a familiar environment, perhaps talking to a tow truck driver about to repossess another luxury car in a down economy. At every turn, the key is to look for meaningful detail and capture it in images and sound that help illuminate the story subject’s life, situation, passions, and struggles. Even adding storytelling elements to straight news and informational reports can make facts more interesting and compelling to watch and build loyalty toward those that offer such content. Those little extra details can elevate viewer experience and help viewers better understand, remember, and relate to story content.

Gary Reaves, as senior reporter at WFAA-TV, Dallas, told the story of a woman whose 13-year-old daughter died in a ski accident. The victim’s mother hoped someday to meet the person who received her daughter’s heart. One day on the Internet she located the woman, a 40-year-old nurse whose heart began to fail after her second child’s birth.

When the teen’s mother and the heart recipient finally met and hugged one another, photojournalist Chris Mathis was recording video while reporter Gary Reaves stayed out of sight in an adjoining room. Later, back at WFAA, Reaves finished his script and handed it off to video editor Robert Hall, who created a visual and auditory narrative from that most human language of tears, hugs, and silences. On home screens, those moments conveyed a tangible sense of what each woman must be experiencing – grief and joy mingling in shared understanding for how one lost life could enable life in another. An equally poignant moment followed when the heart recipient, a nurse, handed the mother a stethoscope. Holding the scope to her ears, the mother listened to her late daughter’s heart beating strong and steady in the nurse’s chest.

“On a story like that, I know from the beginning that the big payoff will come at the end. I’m trying from the first word to get viewers to the point that they feel like they are in the room with two people they care about,” says Reaves. “At that point, I want to get out of the way, and let them experience it the same way I did.”⁶

ABC World News rebroadcast Reaves’ report nationally to offer insights about organ donation from the viewpoints of the donor family and recipient.⁷ Imagine the power of the medium whenever viewers, too, can hear that healthy heart beating away in a stranger’s chest, or any other storytelling sound that helps viewers “see with their ears.”

BOX 12.4 A CONVERSATION WITH GARY REAVES

How do you describe the difference between reporting and storytelling?

Reporting is gathering and confirming information, and working at it until you have all the essential facts.

Storytelling is how you convey that information and how you make it meaningful to your audience.

I want viewers to understand and remember my stories. But I also rewrite my video stories for the web. I find it more difficult to create images off a flat piece of paper – that video script I created to tell the story with video, audio, and where I position them.

I have great admiration for anyone who can convert video and sound into a compelling print or web story and make it look easy.

Then in one sense, storytelling is choosing the elements that best convey that story. Say, for example, you cover city government. What elements might turn a dull news conference with the mayor into a story that viewers will talk about the next day?

At a news conference, while everybody else is recording what the mayor says, I might turn around and look for someone in the audience. Chances are my viewers can relate to the guy with the problem and how he talks, more than to the mayor who only speaks to the problem in calculated language. As the reporter and writer, I can still define the issue and why it matters, but I can convey its essence most powerfully through a guy who looks and talks more like our viewers.

Media observers have said that print media report first to the intellect, video first to the heart, meaning it affects viewers emotionally. Many journalists try to eliminate emotion from their stories, believing it somehow biases their work. When and how do you use emotion as an element in fair and accurate visual storytelling?

In some way all stories are about people, and all people respond in some way to significant events in their lives. It’s not only anger or fear. It might be joy, grief, humor, cowardice, or disdain – any legitimate human emotion that fairly lends insight and meaning to my reporting.

Your story has to connect with viewers. Any reaction to the story is better than no reaction. I want my viewers to watch and understand, and somehow relate to what they see. Otherwise, they're only waiting for the next reporter's story, or turning away altogether.

—A Conversation with Gary Reaves⁸

ADAPT YOUR REPORTING TO STORY DEMANDS

Unthinking loyalty to pictures can be just as harmful as an unreasonable loyalty to words. Strong storytelling demands using the best way to communicate from moment to moment. If pictures and natural sound can best tell the story, then use them. If the story can best be told through a reporter, with graphics, or through silence, then shape the story accordingly.

REPORTING THE NONVISUAL STORY

Many of the stories you cover will be static and nonvisual, unless you can find a way to make them move. Into this category fall meetings, public hearings, empty fields to be used as major building sites, and vacant buildings that have just been designated as historical landmarks. To lend essential movement and interest to such reports, several approaches can help:

- Look for preshot video, file film, and old newsreels, which show the subject in action.
- Look for life and for things that move in the scene, be they rippling flags, flying birds, or people riding by on bicycles.
- Research the story so that you have a more complete idea of the story's visual potential.
- Try to humanize the story by focusing on people, people-related subjects, or symbols of people and how they live. (In the aftermath of a house fire, perhaps the close-up of a charred box of Valentine candy can remind us that fire left people like ourselves homeless.)
- Find a hook for the nonvisual story. Try to relate this event to a larger event or to an existing interest or issue.
- Shoot and use sequences in your report: To see is to believe, but to see sequentially is to experience.
- Use art, models, or, if ethically warranted, recreations.
- Pick out the main issue and do a story on that.
- Use digital video effects, as CBS once used in the story of a man's death after a police dispatcher had refused to send an ambulance. Through the use of a squeeze zoom, a freeze frame of the victim's house was shown on one side of the screen; a still shot of the dispatcher was shown to the other side of the frame. A graphic artist connected the two images with renderings of transmitted signals as viewers listened to a recording of the fateful interchange.
- Work a reporter standup into the story, preferably as a sequence.

- Create imagery in the mind's eye through sound.
- Write to create imagery.
- Touch feelings through little surprises and moments of real-life drama.
- Use innovative lighting that helps define the story's mood and environment.
- Pitch reporting opportunities to people in the news – let them define and describe their environment, the event, and the moment.
- Shoot pictures that share experience.
- Challenge yourself. Improve your attitude. Remember that your audience will never care more about the story than you do.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE AND CONDUCT

Whenever you are in public, you not only represent your organization, in some respects you become the face of that organization. How you conduct yourself and how you dress can influence not only how the community thinks of your organization, but even the quality of your stories. You can even gain access to stories, or be denied, based on your appearance.

Some TV stations and corporate or community organizations provide reporters and anchors with a wardrobe allowance, because they believe personal appearance and image matter. But aside from the typical jackets, caps, and golf shirts that display the organization's logo, photojournalists rarely receive such benefits. If the photographer ruins clothes covering a story, an employer may pay the cleaning bills or replacement costs. Otherwise, consider paying it yourself to maintain your own standards of appearance.

ETIQUETTE

Media representatives around the country have made a name for themselves as pushy, rude, and aggressive. Deservedly or not, the public sometimes thinks of journalists as uncaring and unsympathetic. Competition and deadline pressures are partly to blame, but sometimes the problem can be a simple lack of sensitivity.

At funerals, or in similar stories that involve death or illness, first seek the family's permission before you shoot any video or conduct interviews. As you cover the story, conduct yourself according to the considerations you would expect from a reporter or photographer if this were your family. Dress appropriately for the occasion and try to shoot the story with a longer lens to remain as far away and inconspicuous as you can.

SHOOTING AND REPORTING EVENTS OUTSIDE YOUR CONTROL

Covering **spot-news** or other events beyond your control is almost an art form in itself. The following discussion offers guidelines that can help you transform chaos into good storytelling.

Seconds Count

Timing can be everything when you cover spot news. Those first on the scene usually get the best video and the most awards for spot-news coverage. Early on, people are still excited (and exciting) and events are still happening.

Learn to Shoot by Instinct

Equipment familiarity is essential if you are to develop an instinct for shooting fast-moving events. The equipment should become such a natural extension of yourself that your reactions are automatic; you don't have to stop and think about it. Practice makes perfect. During lulls in the news day, practice rack-focusing from one object to another. Imagine shots. Think about how to cover stories, even when you're at home sitting in the easy chair. And learn to listen when the interviewee speaks so you'll know whether to move in for a close shot or pull back for a shot of the speaker's husband.

Be Ready

The Scout motto "Be prepared" is the first rule in shooting and reporting uncontrolled events. That means having batteries that are charged, white balance and audio levels set, and the mind switched to "think." One photojournalist is said to have photographed five planes crashing, over the course of his career, because he's always ready.

Avoid "Sticks"

When you shoot spot news, tripods are impractical. Get off the tripod and shoot handheld, but remember the rules that affect handholding: Don't handhold on telephoto; to minimize shakiness, consider leaving the lens on wide angle; determine the near plane of focus for the lens you are using and don't go closer to your subjects than that distance.

Anticipate

Covering spot news or other events outside your control means working ahead in your mind and asking what you will need to shoot next. Although no rehearsals are possible when you shoot spot news, you can try to understand in advance what is likely to happen or to imagine what may happen. Remember the maxim, "If you see something you like you've probably missed it."

Shoot the Essentials First

Shoot the essentials first when you cover events outside your control; you can't go back and ask for retakes. As you shoot, edit in your head. Previsualize and shoot what you know you'll need. Think of three shots at a time: the shot you're taking, the shot you just took, and the shot you'll take next. Remember to shoot reactions. Pick up cutaways and other shots after the event.

Shoot Sequences

Shoot sequences or into-frame/out-of-frame action, even during events outside your control, or you'll wind up with a slide show. You can't always shoot uncontrolled action sequentially, but you can create the illusion of sequences by shooting one firefighter's face, another firefighter's hands, and yet another firefighter's feet. Or you can photograph a basketball player shooting the ball, then cut to a CU of a basketball photographed at another time during the game as it goes through the hoop. You also can "snap zoom" while you're shooting, as discussed in Chapter 2 (a long shot, for example, followed by an instant zoom to a medium shot or a close-up). During editing, the few frames of the snap zoom can be eliminated from the scene to create the illusion of a matched-action sequence.

Tell a Story through People

Impose a theme on your story. Good spot-news coverage is partly a product of your ability to show the human effects of an event. And although you don't control the event, you can shoot the essential scenes and sounds that help make it meaningful. Look for shots that tell us how the event affected people: the charred luggage at a plane crash, improperly installed electrical wiring at a mobile home fire, or perhaps the photograph of a child now the subject of a mountain search and rescue.

Be Considerate of Authorities at the Scene

It pays to be nice in the field, never rude or demanding. If an official won't let you into the scene of a spot-news event, try to talk your way in. Sometimes you can begin to shoot without permission—and continue to shoot—with a statement to the police/fire/military authorities as simple as, "Let me know if I get in your way." Such a statement implies you're willing to cooperate with those in charge, and sometimes that's all they need to hear. A word of warning: Don't be intimidated; don't be shooed away from the event too easily. Many of the best scenes may occur soon after you have been told to go home.

Be Considerate of People in Spot-News Events

Spot-news subjects, be they mine rescue workers or helicopter pilots, are under intense pressure and stress. They may be grieving or in physical shock. Learn to "read" the physical and psychological signs of stress and fatigue to know when it's better to press ahead or to stop pushing.

People in spot-news events are less aware of the camera than they would be in slower-moving stories. Often, the reporting crew is the last thing on the minds of victims caught up in tragedy or in emotional, stressful events. Sometimes they will remain unaware of your presence, until someone tells them days or months later that you covered the story. Still, to avoid upsetting people, don't crowd or otherwise violate their personal space, but do work to get good

close-ups, and remember to treat people—and their privacy, dignity, and emotions—the way you would want to be treated in similar circumstances.

Play it Safe

You face risks each time you cover spot news. You may encounter downed power lines, smoke, dioxin, asbestos, PCBs, bare electrical wires, high water, toxic spills and chemicals, heat, fire, cold, high winds, explosions, falling walls, ice, and people with knives, guns, and explosives. And if those don't get you, you can even be run over by a parade float while you're shooting a cutaway of the onlookers.

Carry everything you will need to cover the story, because you may be unable to return to the vehicle or helicopter for spare recording media, a first aid kit, protective clothing, a change of clothes, food, or adequate lights for night shooting. Be prepared, and remember that no story is worth your life.

Don't Try to Be an Emotional Superperson

Some spot-news and similar events are so gruesome and unimaginable they can affect you more than you might realize or admit. Such conditions are no different than soldiers returning from the battlefield with post-traumatic stress disorder. Be conscious of your feelings, and if necessary, talk them out with somebody who understands what you've gone through. Otherwise, those experiences and memories could catch up with you some day.

Remember Good Taste

When you report spot news, show what is appropriate and nothing more. You may decide to show only a recent photo of a drowning victim rather than the covered body, or a very long shot of a resuscitation effort rather than close shots. Some images are off limits, such as a sequence of someone putting a gun into his mouth and pulling the trigger. How does one know whether to record such footage? Some folks make the shot, regardless of content, then decide later whether it should be aired, or else leave the decision to the producer, anchor, managing editor, or news director. Although the practice of "shoot now, decide later," often is valid, it can lead to charges of invasion of privacy and other legal entanglements (see Chapter 14, "Digital Media Law"). Often, the best guidance in such situations is, "If you don't want it on air, don't shoot it." The competition may air shots you chose not to make, but remember good taste and decency and their role in helping you protect your credibility and the community's respect.

TOWARD A NEWS PHILOSOPHY

In the past, video reporters and storytellers have commonly defined their job as information gathering and delivery. "We deliver the information; it's up to the audience to understand," the reasoning went. Communicators could practice such elitism in the days when viewing

options were limited. But today, audiences control media. Viewers with computers, action cams, smartphones, tablets, mobile satellite dishes, cable- and wireless-streaming TV, and digital video recorders control the program schedule. They decide whom they will watch, when, where, for how long, and on what platforms. When stories are powerful, compelling, and engaging, viewers may stick around to watch. They seldom watch dull, routine, or predictable stories. As always, the heart of captivating video remains the story, with true celebrity achieved only by mastering the visual storytelling process.

SUMMARY

The most successful visual storytellers produce reports and stories that appeal to audiences, regardless of the story's subject matter. Improving storytelling ability is a gradual process of learning to do the routine things extraordinarily well time after time. Whereas some journalists seek perfection in their work, a better approach is to seek excellence.

Because storytellers need stories, a good approach is to summarize the story to be told in a simple, declarative sentence called the focus statement. Once the story's focus is defined, the storyteller, even in journalism, must look for elements of opposition or conflict. Active conflict, such as a person's drive to overcome a handicap or fight illiteracy, helps illuminate the essence of individuals and even communities. Not every story contains conflict; some stories are merely accounts or announcements of events and fall outside this discussion.

As a photojournalist, avoid excuses. Audiences can judge your work only by what you put on the screen. Some excuses are legitimate, but they can too easily become alibis. Strong storytellers try to show familiar subjects in a new light. Some even succeed in showing viewers familiar with a subject what they have overlooked. In such endeavors, the more the camera is involved in the action, the more realistic the story will be.

Other devices to strengthen the storytelling effort include telling the story through people, the use of matched-action sequences, and narrowing story focus to a manageable level. As John Grierson, the British documentarian, observed, while newspapers can tell the story of the entire mail service, moving images are often at their best when they tell the story of a single letter.

Although words are crucial to the storytelling process, too many words can overwhelm a report. Use words, pictures, sounds, and silences sometimes by themselves, sometimes together – in whatever combinations best tell the story. Through such dedication, even so-called nonvisual stories can be made compelling and interesting.

Many of the same considerations apply to spot-news reporting, with the important proviso that reporters and photographers must anticipate fast-developing action and be extraordinarily

conscious of personal safety. In the course of all conduct, television journalists are public figures. Their actions reflect not only on themselves, but also on their employers and their profession.

KEY TERMS

commitment
focus

illustrative video
sequential video

spot news
timeline

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss steps the visual storytellers can take to make the style and substance of informational stories more appealing while still preserving the story's fundamental accuracy and integrity.
2. What is the difference between excellence and perfection in the reporting process? Which of these options is the wiser pursuit?
3. Explain why it is important to identify the story you're reporting and to state it aloud, or at least sum up the story in your mind, before the reporting process begins.
4. Why is communication between the reporter and photographer so vital throughout the reporting process?
5. Discuss the role of conflict in storytelling and how the concept applies to television news stories.
6. When excuses become a habit, a way of life almost, they can erode the photojournalist's ability to produce work of consistent excellence. Identify the attitudes and personal practices that can help you avoid making excuses about your work.
7. Identify a half-dozen or more activities that can help you learn more about your community. Explain why those activities are important to help make you a better reporter, photographer, or storyteller.
8. What steps can you, as a photojournalist, take to show viewers what they might have missed, even had they been eyewitnesses to the story you're reporting?
9. Why is it important for the photojournalist to capture and transmit a sense of experience about the story being reported?
10. Discuss the approaches you can follow when you must tell complex stories briefly, yet with power.
11. Why is it important for you to care about the people in your stories, or at least to be interested in them? If you care too much about the people in your reports, can you remain detached and objective when reporting their stories?
12. Describe a good reporting method that can help make viewers watch stories by frequently inviting them to reengage with the television screen.
13. Discuss ways you can make so-called nonvisual stories more visually appealing and informative.

14. Photographers have to work in all manner of environments and weather extremes, so to what extent should they have to maintain a well-groomed, well-dressed appearance in public? As part of your answer, describe the proper attire that you believe a photographer or video journalist normally should wear on a field assignment.
15. Describe effective reporting practices and considerations for personal safety when covering spot-news stories.
16. When all is said and done, what is the journalist's most important obligation in reporting the news?

EXERCISES

1. To help improve your ability to develop focus or commitment statements, choose a very simple object or phenomenon, such as a pumpkin, a Christmas tree ornament, or a spring breeze, and identify a focus statement that will help you generate a visual story about the subject. Example: "The spring breeze is a trash collector." Further identify two or three main points you want to communicate about the subject and find visual proof for those main points. In a story centered around a car wash, for example, a main point might be, "Every time you clean something, you make something else dirty."
2. Find an ordinary subject and strive to make it more appealing through your lighting, audio, photography, or reporting.
3. Construct a visual story that uses only pictures and sounds, but no voice-over narration, to tell a visual story complete with beginning, middle, and ending.
4. Study books, films, and compelling stories for the presence of conflict. Analyze the role of conflict in storytelling.
5. Take a fresh look at the community in which you live. Learn more about the area's history, culture, commerce, and religion. If you can do so safely, jog or take walks through areas of the community that are unfamiliar to you. Find a story to photograph and report, based on your new awareness, on some aspect of the community and its people.
6. Take a complex subject such as cyber crime, immigration, unemployment, women in combat or home schooling, and shoot two or three simple reports that illustrate the principle that "you can write an article about the mail service, but you must make a film about a single letter."
7. Write a script to accompany a story you have photographed and/or reported that constantly reengages viewers with the screen. Use sounds, sound bites, and phrases such as, "Be sure to include one of these in your backpack," rather than "Be sure to take a compass."
8. Choose a "nonvisual" story subject, such as a historic cabin or other building in your community that is open for public tours. Strive to make your photography and reporting about the subject powerful, compelling, and engaging.
9. Study video stories for evidence of the video journalist's or reporting team's ability to tell

such events through people. Note how often sequences are present in the stories you view. If sequences were absent, would they have been possible to photograph?

10. Interview police, fire, or sheriff's authorities and inquire about their greatest frustrations when working with video reporters and photographers.
11. Visit a federal, state, or local environmental safety official and learn more about toxic chemicals and other environmental hazards you can expect to encounter while covering stories in the field.

NOTES

- 1 Interview with the author, Mystic, CT, May 21, 2013.
- 2 Edward Dmytryk, *On Film Editing*, (Stoneham, MA: Focal Press, 1984), 78.
- 3 Dave Riggs, "Reflections on a Matchless Reporting Style", *News Photographer Magazine* (October 2015), 55.
- 4 Quoted in Jim Hicks, "Spry Old Team Does It Again," *Life* (October 18, 1963), 92.
- 5 Mark Carlson, in e-mail comments and bio to the lead author.
- 6 Gary Reaves, compiled from email comments to the lead author.
- 7 "American Heart: Two Mothers, One Heartbeat", *MeFeedia*, www.mefedia.com/news/33010894, Posted September 23, 2010, Accessed September 14, 2016.
- 8 Excerpted from various telephone interviews with the lead author.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

IMPROVING ON-CAMERA AND VOICE-OVER PERFORMANCE

Being a visual storyteller sometimes requires making yourself visible. On-camera reporters may appear on screen daily, and anchors report both from the studio and field. Even folks who commonly work off camera or behind it—whether photographers, producers, or even writers—sometimes conduct interviews, cut voice-over tracks, and occasionally appear on-camera. No matter your responsibilities, this chapter can help you feel more comfortable in front of the camera and microphone, more appealing to your managers and viewers, and perceived as a more polished and professional communicator. Ultimately, such qualities can help make you a better communicator and accelerate your career.

DEVELOP QUALITIES THAT MAKE YOU INTERESTING AND INTERESTED

Our individual uniqueness makes us interesting. It begins with our appearance and physique. It continues with how we walk and talk. Perhaps you are tall and have freckles. Maybe you drag out the vowels in your words and clip your consonants. Maybe you scowl or blink too much or always wear a friendly smile. How you dress will make a difference. Where you grew up, and with whom, also matter, as do your personal beliefs and convictions, your education, your value system, and your life experiences. In a word, you are unique. That is the first quality that makes you interesting.

To be interesting, you also must be interested. To learn to care more intensely about every story that you report, you can use a model that Barry Nash, a Dallas-based talent development consultant, shares with field reporters and news anchors throughout the country. “Ask of every story you report whether the community wins or loses with this event,” says Nash.¹ Using this approach, every story is about winning or losing. To some extent then, every story is about communicating that win or loss.

REASONS FOR STANDUPS

“Why do standups?”

“Why must we?”

“Do I have to?”

Reporters ask such questions now and again when they’re told, “Do a standup.” Some reporters hate standups. Others embrace them as a chance to appear on television at every opportunity, sometimes multiple times within a story with little justification. The most legitimate standups, of course, exist to communicate information in visual, compelling ways through a one-to-one relationship with viewers or on-set anchors.

Sometimes you can just stand and talk through the facts, but so could the anchor back at the studio. Audiences almost universally regard anchors as the best informed and most knowledgeable about the stories they present. Audiences assume that anchors make the most money, have the greatest experience, and they can see for themselves that anchors occupy the most coveted chairs on the set. Therefore, viewers usually prefer that anchors deliver all the news all the time, except when a reporter can report more powerfully or tell a better story. Otherwise, why would a station pay you for reporting what audiences believe their favorite anchor or personality can do better?

Why does the producer or assignment editor send you into the field? To report and show things in ways no one back at the station could manage. Or, to confirm, update, or add new information and perspectives the anchor and producer cannot access from the studio.

Standups enhance otherwise nonvisual stories. In the absence of appropriate visuals, they may offer the best way to communicate. Standups also help establish the reporter’s credibility. As first-person, on-site observers, reporters can be assumed to know more about the story than those who get their facts from third-party sources without ever having set foot in the field. Without your standups, viewers may assume the anchors do most of the field reporting.

BOX 13.1 AD-LIB YOUR STANDUPS

You generally appear most natural on camera when you ad-lib your standups, rather than memorize them, because you will deliver them with appropriate thoughtfulness, emphasis, and pausing. Because most standups are but two or three sentences, write the two or three main points on a 3 × 5 card for security and ad-lib the material. Sometimes you may want to memorize the script or use notes with complicated or unavoidably exact information, such as official or potentially libelous information. Otherwise, when you memorize, you may sound like you’re reading aloud from a script. Why read something to your viewers when you can just as easily speak conversationally to them?

How to Prove Close Knowledge

Sometimes on-camera reporters ask, “How do I prove authority and credibility if I don’t talk loudly or speak sternly?” Content drives everything you do, including your best performances. LOUD, S-T-E-R-N, and fast count for next to nothing in standups, unless they arise naturally from content. Simply speak with good energy as you would in a normal conversation in which the other person is 3 to 5 feet away from you. A better way to prove your close knowledge on camera is to understand the topic, think through what it means, and then deliver your standup ad-lib with conversational emphasis and pausing. Natural emphasis and pausing occur instinctively when we speak with authority and close knowledge. That same state of grace helps you naturally achieve appropriate levels of energy, emotion, pitch, pace, and volume in your delivery.

Often, you will speak into a lavalier microphone, which lies on your chest. The resulting audio sounds so intimate it’s like letting your collective audience place its ear on your chest. Even if you speak into a hand-held microphone, it will be close to your mouth (about 10 inches or so), which means you can still speak at conversational volume. Sometimes you may see the camera in the distance and think you must shout to be heard, but remember: the lavalier mic is on your chest or the hand-held mic is but 10 inches from your mouth. There’s no need to shout.

Avoid Rushed Delivery

Additionally, you will want to avoid rushing your delivery. Sometimes, given time restraints, you may feel tempted to “overwrite” so you can stuff as many facts as possible into your standup and voice-over copy. The result resembles trying to stuff 10 pounds of facts into a 5-pound bag. You delivered the facts all right, but no one remembers what you said. Furthermore, folks who talk too fast lose credibility.

Even the people who sign your paychecks need to be reminded occasionally who’s out there on the “front line.” At contract renewal time, recognition of you and of your work is vital. Whereas not every story needs a standup, many stories and almost every career can benefit from standups used wisely.

KEEP YOUR ATTENTION ON THE STORY

Look for ways to show something or do something during the standup, and thereby transfer focus off your performance to the story. It’s natural to wonder, “How do I look?”, “Is my hair okay?”, “Are my earrings too bold?”, or “How can this sweater look so good in real life, yet so hideous on camera?” Always remember, the reporter is never the story, nor is your standup a fashion show or statement.

Cosmetically, your appearance and wardrobe are like the music in a film – audiences should never leave a theatre humming the soundtrack or turn away from your story to talk about that

gosh-awful tie or blouse. If they do, the music—your “music”—has become a distraction. The same principle applies to your wardrobe and cosmetics.

GIVE YOURSELF SOMETHING TO DO

Even in field settings, some reporters may not sound or appear natural, comfortable, and relaxed. The problem may worsen during on-set appearances in the studio or whenever reporters cut voice overs in the audio booth. To solve such problems, it may help to give yourself something to do or explain when you are on camera or in front of the microphone. This practice can help you transfer focus from yourself back onto the story and relieve your anxiety by giving your natural tension somewhere to go. Your on-camera appearance and narration tracks will usually feel more comfortable and natural.

When you show or do something on camera, you can often provide visual proof of one or more of the story’s main points. This creates a range of justifiable uses for standups, and a motive to make them informative and compelling. Happily, reporters can be interesting people in people stories and reports, too.

JUSTIFIABLE REASONS FOR STANDUPS

1. To show viewers what you look like – why remain anonymous?
2. To prove to viewers you were on location and therefore know more about the story than the audience or the anchor otherwise could.
3. As a bridge between unrelated segments of your story.
4. To comment on physical experiences in the environment.
5. To show viewers something the anchor can’t. For example, a location reporter says, her breath visible as she talks, “Search and rescue teams believe the boy could have survived overnight if he found adequate shelter and stayed put, out of the wind.”
6. To confirm a viewer’s reaction to story content through your own reactions. For example, describing the growing courthouse suspense as a murder suspect awaits sentencing or narrating the morning commute on icy freeways while streaming a live web shot.
7. To justify your presence in the story by showing or explaining something to viewers that otherwise could not have been shown.

FIVE COMMON STANDUPS²

Following are the five most common types of standups, those in which you show or demonstrate something. These are in addition to the “stand-upper,” in which a person simply stands before the camera and talks. Even then, be aware of your body. Natural gestures help animate your upper body and make you more interesting to watch. When you’re less active, hold your arms naturally at your side. Angle your body toward the camera, rather than confronting your audience straight on and appearing adversarial.

Various organizations may use slightly different terminology for the following standups, but the concepts are the same.

1. Reference or location standup
2. Reveal or transition standup
3. Prop standup
4. Effects standup
5. Demonstration standup

Reference or Location Standup

Reporters use the reference or location standup to create a tie-in between the story subject and the background. In such standups, reporters stand in front of the courthouse and talk about the trial under way inside or the sentence about to be handed down. Words seldom match the video.

In a live shot, the reporter might stand outside the mine entrance where miners are trapped deep underground. This location may be your best or only option on short notice. At least it proves you're at the scene, with the unspoken implication that you should know more than someone far removed. In such standups, it's good to acknowledge the background, even to turn your back to the camera as you do, to show viewers where to look – and to tell viewers what you see off screen that would be interesting or important to them.

Reveal or Transition Standup

Beyond the simple reference standup is the reveal or transition standup. Here, the reporter might be standing on a beach as the standup begins, telling viewers that high bacteria levels make swimming unsafe. The reporter now moves out of frame and into a new frame to finish the standup by a “Beach Closed Until Further Notice” sign. The reporter also could walk the few steps from where the standup began over to the sign. One caution that applies to all standups: avoid staging.

Movement can help make the story come to life, but the movement has to make sense. Just like your scripts and ad-libs, your movement and delivery need to be crisp and conversational. Any movement should be natural, too. If it feels awkward or forced, odds are it will look that way.

Check out all the reporters who do the “walk to nowhere” in standups, and you'll get the idea. Walking from Point A to Point B in a standup for no reason except to add movement makes little sense. Walking from Point A, where a runaway truck swerved to avoid kids in a crosswalk, to Point B, where the truck overturned, looks natural and helps viewers better understand the

story. Standups must come across as natural, honest, and spontaneous – just as if you were showing someone in real life something important.

Prop Standup

The prop standup is just as simple as the reveal standup. The reporter holds something and shows it to viewers, often as part of a long shot, medium shot, close-up, or matched-action sequence. The object you show offers proof of a story's main point. Examples include:

1. "Golf-ball-sized hail fell across the Fenimore farm." (Show a handful of golf-ball-sized hail)
2. "The complaint is only two pages long, but it calls for \$2 million in damages." (Hold up, and look at, a copy of the legal complaint)
3. "Authorities say this baseball may be worth \$1.5 million." (Show the baseball and look at it in your hand)

Avoid using prop standups if real people in the news could show the object more effectively. Perhaps the defense counsel can show the legal complaint to camera, or Farmer Fenimore can show us the golf-ball-sized hail, or the person who caught the 756th home run can show us the ball himself. Again, another cardinal rule is: the reporter is never the story.

When you do standups, allow yourself to look at the environment, to interact with it, and even to turn your back to the camera as appropriate. If you have followed itinerant farmworkers on their rounds for most of a long, hot, grueling day, perhaps it will be appropriate for you to do a "sit-down" standup as you remove your hat and conclude for the audience that no one would work such long hours for such low pay if other employment were available.

To demonstrate the difficulty of balancing the federal budget, ABC senior political correspondent Jonathan Karl borrowed an idea from computer programmer Matt Shapiro, who specializes in visualizing complex information. You can find examples of Shapiro's work on YouTube.

Using \$100 in pennies (10,000 pennies), Karl covered a large conference table with 2,000 stacks of five pennies – each stack representing \$2 billion in government spending, each penny thus worth \$400 million. He divided the table of pennies into pie-like slices to illustrate defense spending and entitlements such as social security and Medicare; interest on government debt; and discretionary spending.

In the 1:34 standup, Karl shows that to date, Congress and the President have been willing to address only one slice of the pie representing discretionary spending, and even then proposed cuts in community action programs amount to one-third of a cent, which he represents by cutting off a third of a penny. For more information, see: www.mediaite.com/tv/abc-reporter-attempts-to-explain-the-budget-with-100-in-pennies/.

Avoid the melodramatic in demonstration standups. The point is to communicate meaning, and to have a good time doing it. Make your time on camera relaxed, natural and easy to watch, and use every action to help illustrate the story.

A good way to evaluate a given standup is to ask two questions: “Did my audience enjoy watching it?” and “Did I enjoy doing it?” In the most successful standups, the answer to both questions is *yes*. Another way to critique your standups is to watch them without sound. If you look like someone we’d like to watch, even with the sound off, your standup probably works.

Whatever activity you give yourself in demonstration standups, the cardinal advice against staging still applies: your presence should never change the story. If, in your standup, you operate the controls on a ham radio and speak to the eyewitness of a volcanic eruption in Alaska, then your activities as a reporter have become the story. The story has been altered because the event is no longer what it would have been in your absence. On the other hand, no harm should result if you merely pause to shake the loose railing on a rusty old bridge as a way to show how fragile and dangerous the bridge has become.

Provided the reporter has the viewers’ best interests at heart and is not simply posturing on camera, audiences often find demonstration standups interesting and educational. Powerful standups also can advance a reporter’s career. Using the medium to its fullest potential is a guaranteed way to build credibility and prove close knowledge. It also honors the adage that “content drives all performance.”

Effects Standup

Some reporters use effects standups— computer-generated graphic and visual effects—to demonstrate otherwise abstract information. An effects standup might show the statistical chance of winning the lottery or what has to happen for astronauts to re-enter the atmosphere safely.

In Houston, reporter Charles Hadlock began a memorable “standup” showing black and white film of the two main actors driving along in the old TV show *Route 66*. Hadlock then dissolved into a color shot in which he drove a similar Chevy Corvette up to an old service station sitting alongside the abandoned highway, commenting as he sat in the driver’s seat, “Buzz and Todd took a wrong turn in 1964, and were never seen again. I don’t suppose they ever made it to Conway, Texas, but if they did, they probably stopped here. We stopped here to see Cecil and Zelma Walker.” A sound bite with Zelma Walker follows.

Effects standups require creativity and time to plan, but they give reporters a way to show what most viewers could not otherwise know or see for themselves.



Figure 13.1 Reporters can give themselves something to do when they are on camera as a way to transfer focus from themselves to the story they are telling. The technique is called a demonstration or performance standup.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Demonstration Standup

Work to make every standup a visual story and commit yourself physically and mentally to selling that story. Where appropriate strive to be physically and actively involved in its telling, a technique called the performance or **demonstration standup** (Figure 13.1). The standup activity can be something as simple as a reporter pointing out the rusted bolts and flaking paint on an old bridge for a story on highway safety. Or it can be something as complex as huffing and puffing your way up a steep mountain road to illustrate the difficulty of reaching a recluse in a story about the healing power of solitude.

SEEK REACTION

Some folks may fear their reactions will impose an editorial bias on content, even lead viewers in how to think about content. But when you react legitimately to content, you come across as honest, natural, and thoughtful. Once again, audiences expect to see legitimate reactions from professional communicators.

The main reason we tell anybody anything is to elicit a response, to see how the other person will react. Yet, when you present information to the television camera, the lens gives you no

reaction. To improve your performance in front of the camera, begin to treat the lens as if it were a person. Use whatever device works best for you. Maybe you tape a picture of your best friend to the camera lens and talk to that one person. Perhaps you imagine someone in the viewing audience and speak through the lens to that one individual. Whatever you do, believe that someone is there to react to you and to your story.

The key to eliciting audience reaction is simple: Learn to predict in your mind's eye how the audience is going to react to you and to your story. Remember that anchors and on-camera reporters lead audience reaction by demonstrating how they want the audience to react. If you want viewers to smile, for example, you must smile. If you say, "We're glad you could join us," then visually you have to prove to your audience that you really are glad for their presence, especially through your facial expressions.

COMMUNICATE WHAT YOU FEEL ABOUT THE STORY

Much of the energy in your reporting comes from what you feel about the story, both from the standpoint of your emotions and your sensory experiences. Expressing your *emotional experience* is valid, so long as you report honestly and with appropriate feeling. However, extreme emotion is unwarranted. It would be inappropriate, for example, to show extreme emotion, such as crying or anger, when reporting a story in which someone you know has died or been seriously injured.

From the standpoint of *sensory experience*, what you feel can be more important than what you do in reporting that story. "The important thing is the feeling, the experience of the moment," says Barry Nash, "and the sensory experience is vital." To communicate that vital sense of experience to your audience, you must first understand the event in all its dimensions. Imagine for a moment that you have been assigned to report the outcome of a hockey game. Ask the following questions of yourself for this exercise – and for every story you cover.

1. **What do I SEE?** Perhaps you see tons of fans yelling, sweating, drinking, and cursing. You see the spray of powder as skate blades knife across the ice. You see the rhythm of the skaters and the grimaces on their faces. You see the scoreboard, and you see the puck skitter across the ice before it glances off a goalpost.
2. **What do I HEAR?** Now you hear the echo of the public address system, the crash and grunts of players. The crowd screams and there are occasional obscenities. "PEANUTS, get your red hot PEANUTS," a vendor in the crowd yells. "That son of a bitch!" the coach yells, and in the background music with a heavy beat blares through speakers.
3. **What do I SMELL?** Waves of scent wash over us from the beer, the player's sweat, and the popcorn. The air smells cold and crisp. The aftershave on the fellow next to you shouts for your attention. On the other side of you, a woman's perfume lingers.

4. **What do I FEEL?** Now, almost subconsciously, you become aware that your face is cold and you feel goose bumps on your arms. You feel adrenaline pumping through your body and you are flushed with excitement. Beneath your coat you feel, for the most part, cozy and warm.
5. **What do I TASTE?** You taste the afterbite and maltiness of the beer. There is the sharp, acid taste of the mustard on your hot dog and the crunchy, toasted flavor of the almonds in your chocolate bar.

DELIVERING FROM THE STUDIO

As an anchor or anytime you appear *on set* as a reporter, you will face two immediate problems:

1. if you are an anchor, making sense of other people's writing.
2. sounding spontaneous and conversational when you read copy, even your own

To overcome these problems you will have to understand the story, know how to draw on your energy, and learn to talk to the audience with your whole self.

Words are your first ally, because the way words are built helps convey their meaning. Just for a moment, say the words *bowling ball* aloud. Roll the sounds around in your mouth, and as you say them aloud, throw the ball down an imaginary bowling alley. Notice how "heavy" the words sound when compared, for example, to the words *Ping-Pong ball*. Now say *Ping-Pong ball* aloud and toss it lightly as you "hold" it in your hand.

Having gone through this exercise, were you now to stand before a camera and say these words aloud, you could make your audience feel the difference because you've given your words some thought. You've felt the meaning of the words before you tried to communicate them. There is no right or wrong way to deliver words to an audience, only degrees of commitment and involvement in how you report stories that can distinguish you from your competition.

PUT EXPERIENCE INTO YOUR REPORTS

When you understand the experiences of a moment or an event, you can use words and actions to communicate what the pictures don't. Reporters call the technique "writing to the corners" of the picture. It is a descriptive form of reporting, sensual and tactile, which transcends two-dimensional imagery. "You could smell the storm's path before you could see it," correspondent Bob Dotson once wrote in describing the path of a hurricane that had snapped tall pine trees and released their resinous fragrance.³ Writing to the corners of the picture can help improve any story with static images or shots of aftermath.

When you set out to make your reporting experiential, create accurate mental pictures and experiences and speak to your audience of those moments. Try to make your story a report of what we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Largely your excellence as a visual storyteller lies in your ability to capture the moment and to communicate the texture of that moment, for when viewers experience an event they are more likely to understand and remember it.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL REPORTING

So often, reporters concern themselves more with how they look and sound in front of the camera than with how well they understand the story. However, the secret to being great lies in how effectively you communicate the story through **multidimensional reporting**. This means that you communicate with every reporting tool available – the camera, the microphone, the spoken word, the video editing process, and even by portraying the actions and behaviors of news subjects as warranted.

Audiences become interested in the story when they see you think about the story, interpret, and react to it. If viewers don't see your interest, they may wonder whether you like people, your job, or even if they can trust what you say. So, be *visually aggressive*. Use your body to communicate your interest and enthusiasm for the story and your audience. If you have reason to be sitting on-camera in a report or interview, sit on the edge of your chair and incline toward the camera with your body. Gesture with your hands when appropriate (Figure 13.2), and react in suitable ways, especially with facial expressions.

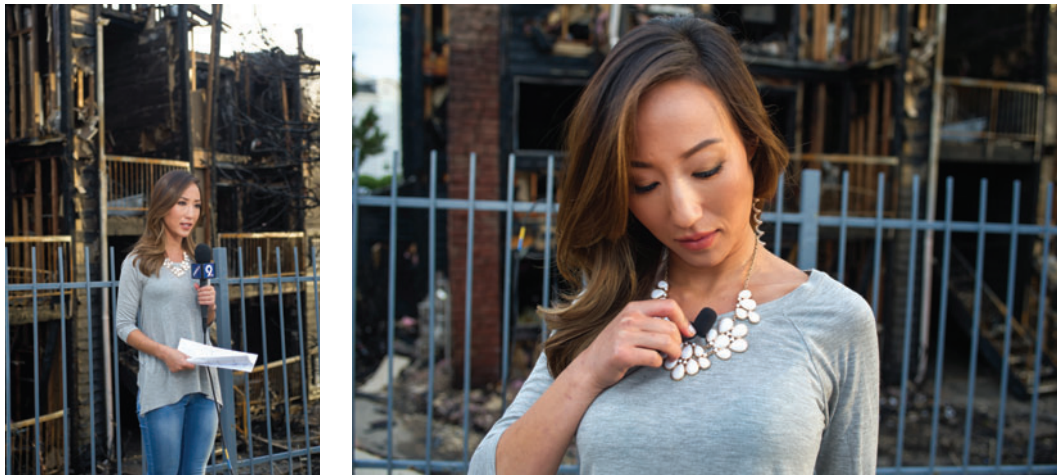


Figure 13.2 Handheld microphones can impede the reporter's ability to gesture and interact spontaneously with the story subject or environment. More natural and spontaneous standups can result when the reporter uses an inconspicuous lavalier microphone, ideally in combination with a wireless transmitter-receiver system.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Whenever we speak, our natural inclination is to emphasize contrasts and new ideas. When we emphasize a word, we imply a contrast. We subdue old and less important ideas by deemphasizing them in our delivery. One of the quickest ways to improve your voice performance, then, is to go through your copy and underline the *ideas that contrast* (“angry crowd”—“did not react”; “human labor”—“machine-made goods”), as well as new *ideas*.

Some other considerations:⁴

- Never stress pronouns, unless they’re used for contrast. EXAMPLE: “They voted for *you*, not *him*.”
- Don’t stress any word you can eliminate without changing the meaning. EXAMPLE: “The course you recommend leads to *progress*, but the policy he sanctions leads to *disaster*.”
- When an adjective modifies a noun, it’s often more reasonable to stress the adjective. EXAMPLE: “It was the *smallest* turnout in the county’s *history*.”
- Seldom stress anything in a parenthetical expression. EXAMPLE: “He was (said the chair) the last to leave the meeting.”
- When you read a construction that contains a preposition with a personal pronoun for its object, stress the word before the preposition, perhaps stress the preposition, and subdue the pronoun. EXAMPLE: “A night in jail will be *good* for him.”

Some exceptions:

- When the pronoun is followed by a restrictive modifier. EXAMPLE: “They *sent* for *him* before the votes had been counted.”
- When the object of the pronoun is compound. EXAMPLE: “We have reporters standing by *here* and *there*.”
- Normally you would not stress when the word immediately preceding the preposition is a personal pronoun or some other word. EXAMPLE: “Take it *with* you.”
- Stress verbs infrequently.

As a rule, try not to let either your momentum or your inflection drop when reading copy. When either flags, so does audience attention. As you read copy, let your voice stay up and keep it up until you’ve completed your thought. Regardless of your inflection, pitch, or volume, the key is to maintain your energy through the ends of thoughts and sentences.

LEARN HOW TO RELAX

To communicate effectively on camera, you must feel comfortable and relaxed. You must relish everything you do and say, and not rush the delivery. Pause now for a moment and become

aware of your body. If your muscles are tense, relax. Tense muscles tell your brain, “Hey, I’m really tense,” and your on-camera performance will suffer.

Pause also to become aware of how you breathe. One secret to performance success is to let your tummy pooch. Breathe with your diaphragm instead of your chest. You may notice that you tend to breathe differently when you sleep and after you first awake than during the rest of the day. If you do, begin work to establish more effective breathing patterns that will help you relax.

DEVELOP CONVERSATIONAL DELIVERY

Whether you are before a field or studio camera, or sitting at a microphone in an audio booth, one of your primary obligations is to establish an intimate connection with your audience. Television can place the reporter visually closer to an audience than the reporter could possibly be in real life. “Television puts you as close to your audience as if you were kissing them with their eyes open,” says Barry Nash. When you are that close to an audience, your voice will have to be close to an ideal level in conversational delivery, a process made easier if you follow three rules of thumb:

1. The pitch of your voice goes up when you’re tense, so strive to relax.
2. The pitch of your voice goes up as volume increases, so lower the volume of your delivery.
3. The message we communicate has to do with how we think about others, not with how we think about ourselves. Think about the meaning of your words and the story’s content, rather than what you look and sound like on camera.

To help reporters keep vocal pitch at conversational levels, voice coaches often have them read a real script into the microphone. As the practice session begins, the voice coach advises using a lower volume to keep pitch at conversational levels. As script delivery progresses, the voice coach may urge, “Softer, still softer, down-down-down” or may even recommend that the reporter read the script in a half or full whisper. Whispering serves two purposes in this exercise: First, it emphasizes the need to lower volume in order to lower pitch; second, it helps to reveal the nature of intimacy. We sometimes tend to pay more attention to people who whisper than to those who shout.

Another valuable exercise is to practice standup delivery at varying distances from the field camera. The farther you are from the camera, the greater the danger that you’ll try to yell to it. This is true even when the field mic is clipped to your lapel. When yelling occurs, up goes tension, up goes pitch, and out goes intimacy. The problem occurs in part because we are “talking to the camera,” not to the audience. Outside, you may have to yell if there’s a bulldozer at work behind you, but in that case the environment will tell you what to do.

In standups, just as when you write voice over, remember to keep it conversational and to incorporate moments of silence or “white space.” You can be silent if you’re doing something meaningful. If you taste a new food, it is acceptable to taste, savor, swallow, react, and then speak.

To communicate intimately with your audience, keep your focus off yourself. The messages we communicate have to do not with how we think about ourselves, but with how we think about others. If you wish to make an audience laugh, it will work better to tell yourself “I’m going to make the audience laugh” than to say, “This is funny.” The goal is to have a relationship with the unseen audience and to elicit a response.

YOUR APPEARANCE

Although it may seem that set design, clothing, cosmetics, hairstyles, and accessories have little to do with informational reporting, they mimic problems that confront web and print journalists in layout, design, and format. If the layout is sloppy, confusing, or unattractive, it can damage the story’s very message. The video story is just as vulnerable to errors in personal appearance.

Even the length and style of your hair will influence how the audience perceives you. Generally, women can dress the part of the professional, which means choosing clothing that is both feminine and elegant – blouses and silks, for example, and clothing with softer lines. Mindful of prevailing hair styles, younger women may want to ask their stylists how to achieve a more mature, credible look.

Avoid Distractions in Wardrobe and Accessories

Do everything you can to focus viewer attention on your face, not on your clothes or accessories (Figure 13.3). Eyeglasses may add another filter to distract the audience and yet another barrier through which you must project yourself. Sometimes all you have to communicate is what’s in your eyes. If eyeglasses create a distraction, consider substituting contact lenses.

Whenever you appear on camera, dress appropriately for the story. This advice is important to all video reporters, male or female, because if viewers worry about your tie or scarf, they may miss the story. If you report from a recycling plant, you may want to loosen your neckwear and hold your jacket over your arm or shoulder, or ditch it altogether. If you report from the ski slopes, trade your wool coat for a ski jacket. On skid row, a silk business suit may be out of place, both because it doesn’t fit in and because it may psychologically distance you from your news sources.

Colors and Cut Matter

This same advice applies when you conduct interviews: Dress to reinforce your credibility. If the moment is relaxed and informal, your demeanor and the way you dress should help reinforce a sense of informality so take off your coat and roll up your sleeves. If the story is investigative and confrontational, professional clothing in darker tones may help reinforce the sense of your story. If the setting is a hospital lab, you may want to wear a lab coat so that you don't look out of place.

Whatever you do, dress to avoid "disappearing into the background." If the background of trash against which you appear at the landfill is bland and brown, a jacket of the same tone will do you no favors. Similar problems arise if you wear "cool" colors for an appearance on a "cool" set. If you know in advance which colors are present, you can dress to create at least some contrast between you and the background. Remember, too, to consider textures when you dress. Some texture in clothing helps create visual interest.

LET THE AUDIENCE KNOW YOU AS A FRIEND

Over time, viewers will evaluate you the same way they evaluate their best friends. When we first meet strangers at parties, part of our evaluation is based on their appearance. If you were asked to talk about your best friend, you could describe your friend's voice, dress, manner, and speech patterns. You could tell us something about your friend's birthplace and background and his or her age and approximate income. All these things we come to know about people we like. And all these things help make each of us unique.

Your individuality and growing experience thus are among your greatest strengths in a medium that communicates through people. Let the things that make you unique show through. Soon your reporting will take on added depth as viewers come to know and appreciate your unique personality and talents.

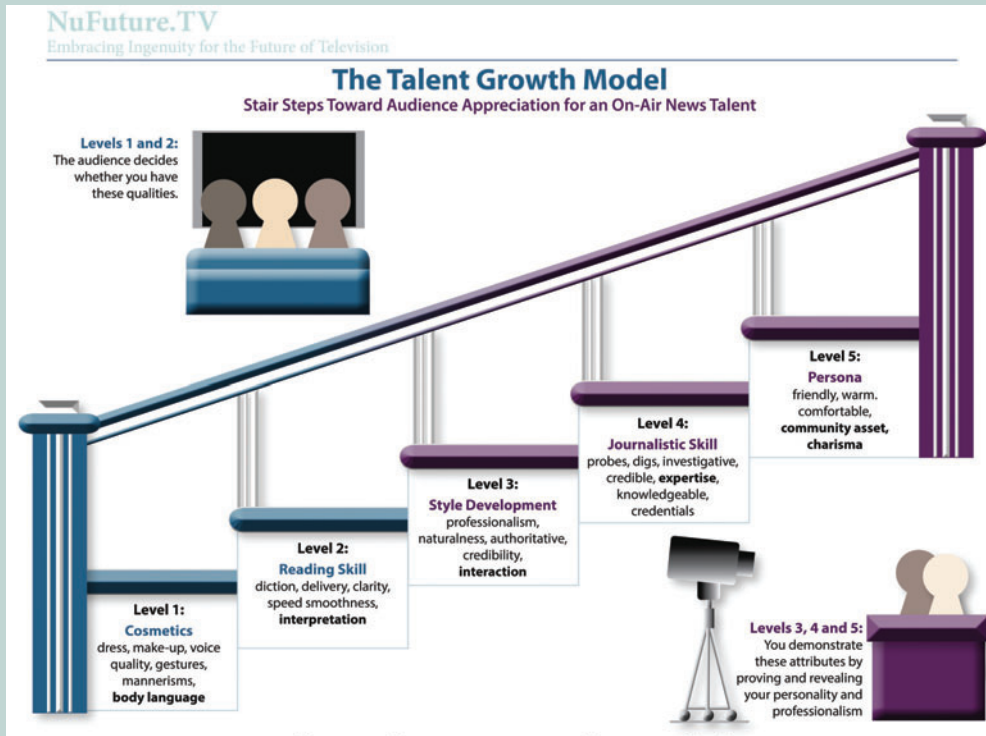
IMPACT HOW PEOPLE PERCEIVE YOUR INTERVIEW SOURCES

Your body language, purposeful or unconscious, influences how viewers perceive the people you interview. If you "open up" the interview, both visually and physically, the interview will appear to be more casual and relaxed. If, through body language, you communicate your friendship for and concern about the news source, your audience will more likely feel a sense of friendship and concern toward the person.

As a rule, interviews carry a more "adversarial" tone when the following visual elements are present:

- Reporter and interviewee wear coats and ties or other business attire.
- Something physical separates the news source from the reporter. The object may be as obvious as an office desk or something as seemingly innocent as a handheld stick mic.

BOX 13.2 THE TALENT GROWTH MODEL



The Talent Growth Model represents the process on-air personalities undergo in developing a relationship with the viewing audience. Many anchors are unable to establish more than a surface relationship with viewers. It takes time, dedication to the process, and patience to achieve the ultimate relationship with viewers.

The Talent Growth Model is divided into five phases of growth, each phase evolving and expanding from the other.

- Viewers first notice appearance. The audience reacts to the on-air person visually (Level 1). What does he or she look like? Included here are such things as hair, make-up, clothing, and overall appearance. When the viewer accepts the anchor or reporter visually, he or she is ready to move on to the next level.
- Next, viewers listen. The developing anchor or reporter works to improve delivery (Level 2). Is the voice pleasant and easy to listen to, with no apparent impediments? It is important to read copy smoothly, using conversational pacing, vocal variety and inflection, appropriate volume, and good diction. The anchor or reporter needs to sound relaxed, comfortable, and friendly.

- “S/he’s so professional.” Being comfortable and confident in his/her role epitomizes what a professional should be (Level 3). The anchor or reporter looks and acts like a journalist and can be seen to do “journalistic” activities. Viewers accept the person’s apparent authority in the absence of contrary actions. The viewer also perceives talent to have an exciting job, and finds it off-putting if the anchor seems bored or uninvolved. Many anchors never progress beyond this point. Those who find themselves road blocked at Level 3 often exit the profession.
- Being involved in community activities reinforces success (Levels 3 and 4). Making personal appearances, doing public speaking engagements, and letting the audience see the anchor as a “real person” participating in “real life” activities is essential in continuing the growth of the relationship.
- Respected Journalist. Despite all the remarks within the industry about pretty or handsome “blow-dried talking heads,” viewers appreciate responsible, capable journalists. At Level 4, the anchor or reporter has earned true authority, having served the community long and well. Level 4 talent show insight and can analyze complex issues in understandable ways. S/he must appear knowledgeable about current events in the community and country. Doing important stories and series, being seen as a working journalist, helps. A fine anchor or well recognized and respected reporter can reach this level.
- The chosen few. A few anchors manage to reach Level 5. They become Community Assets. The anchor has reached this level when viewers see him/her as a trusted friend who is invited into their homes each evening. Viewers turn to this person because they depend on him/her to help them get through the day and make their lives better. Longevity in a market is a major factor in reaching this phase, and it definitely takes time to get to this level. At this stage, viewers are forgiving of the less-than-perfect qualities that block an anchor’s growth in the beginning stages.

The Anchor Growth Model represents how the anchor develops this relationship. Whether he/she is able to implement the ideas depends on self-motivation, effort, and a strong desire to succeed in the business. However, even such dedication does not guarantee hitting the bull’s-eye. To be seen as the trusted friend – an asset to the community – often depends upon a charismatic bond between an anchor and the viewer.

Graphic © 2016 Laura Schaub Designs. Used with permission.

Research findings and text used with permission, courtesy Bill Taylor, NuFuture.TV

- Physical distance is great between reporter and interviewer.
- Interviewee appears to be “trapped” or “pinned” behind a desk in a corner or against a wall, with nowhere to go.
- Reporter and interviewer face each other squarely, almost head-on.

Conversely, reporters and interviewees appear to be more relaxed and friendly when the opposite visual elements are present:

- Reporter and/or interviewee take off coats or at least unbutton them, and men often remove their ties
- Reporter sits beside the interviewee with nothing between them, not even a stick mic.
- Physical distance between reporter and interviewer is comfortably close.
- Interview is taken outside where the visual message is a sense of freedom, a clear impression that the interviewee has agreed to the interview of his or her own free will.
- Reporter angles in toward the other person, rather than facing the individual straight on in a confrontational manner.

Influencing how the audience perceives a source may seem to smack of bias and staging, but in television or any form of human expression, there is no such thing as a neutral transaction. If an interviewee is kind at heart, honest, and friendly, no purpose will be served by inadvertently communicating an opposite impression. Unlike print media, people interact with television. No matter how hard we strive to be objective and unbiased, it is well to remember that in television, and in all human communication, even no action is a reaction.

Rather than failing to react, the key to being objective is to cover all sides of an issue with equal energy. Aggressively pursue all sides of the story so that your delivery remains committed and energetic throughout coverage of all the issues. If the story is about taxes going up, you may observe that it's great news for folks who live on the east side of town where new schools are needed, but bad news on the west side where elderly people need that money to pay their medical bills.

POSTURE MATTERS

Your posture—how you hold your body—is obvious to the audience and will affect how viewers perceive you and your reporting ability. Often, you can improve your posture by concentrating on how you hold your head and shoulders: Stand, run, and walk as if a string attached to the very crown of your head is lifting you – almost as if you were a puppet. This technique helps you keep your chin down and in, helps make the crown of your head go up, and helps prevent the appearance of “leading” with your head as if you're about to fall forward when you walk. Remember, too, to keep your shoulders down and rounded. You should feel relaxed and natural whenever you are on camera, and your appearance should reflect that feeling. Study the appearance of reporters you respect; often, you will discover that their posture is impeccable.

SPLIT-FOCUS PRESENTATION

Throughout your on-set interaction with an anchor, the audience normally will look at whichever of you is speaking. While the anchor talks, you should also look at the anchor. When you speak, the anchor should look at you. As you speak, remember to divide your attention between the anchor and the audience, a practice known as **split-focus presentation**, which helps make

the audience part of your conversation. This technique is vastly preferable to the method in which both anchor and reporter resolutely face the camera and take turns speaking without ever turning to acknowledge one another.

THE ANCHOR DEBRIEF

Going into your report, the anchor normally will set up your story with a brief remark or two, then turn toward you and comment briefly so that the two of you can interact. When you finish interacting with the anchor on set, be looking at the camera as you begin your introduction to the story. After your report has aired, you will need to return control of the show to the anchor. When transitioning back to the anchor as you finish your presentation, look at the anchor. At this point the anchor normally will ask a follow-up question or two, a form of debriefing that serves to reestablish the anchor's command of the show. This interchange is known as the **anchor debrief**.

Most often, you will be expected to have a question for the anchor to ask when you come out of a story back to the set. In formulating your questions, remember that good anchors will want to ask questions that represent the viewers' interests as well as the community's perspective. Ideally, you will take time to discuss your anticipated responses briefly with the anchor prior to airtime.

WHEN YOU APPEAR ON CAMERA

Anytime you are before the camera, whether in the studio or the field, your work will demonstrate to your viewers the extent to which you are well groomed, conversational, professional, and incisive. Resolve, therefore, to develop a consistent and recognizable visual style and prove that you are a good communicator who knows what your audience needs to know about the stories you report. Inform, as *Time* columnist Hugh Sidey urged, rather than perform. Express, rather than impress.

Ask questions, process information, show that you are a team player, and prove that you care about the community in which you work. Finally, show us that you care about us as viewers and, yes, even that you like us. If you do all these things, you may become the person in your market that viewers most often seek out as their most authoritative and likable source of information.

HOW REPORTERS EVOLVE INTO ANCHORS

For most reporters the dream of becoming an anchor remains just that, although reporters who aim their careers can sometimes evolve into anchors. If management thinks of you primarily as a reporter, your aspirations may come to nothing, so the first trick is to give yourself opportunities to demonstrate your anchor potential. This can most easily be accomplished by producing stories that require on-set or split screen follow-up and amplification. Whenever

practical, suggest to the producer that your story justifies putting you on set to discuss it with one or more anchors. Further, anchors can react to the story and prove their own knowledge about the topic. When you make it on-set or split screen, your performance will be crucial, so follow the pros' advice:

- Hone in on the anchor with your eyes and ears.
- Listen intently.
- Gesture appropriately, perhaps with a pencil, and even tap on the desk to make your point.
- Be natural and energetic.
- Be interested and interesting.
- Focus on something outside yourself rather than your performance, and enjoy what you're doing.

SUMMARY

Video journalists often communicate certain story elements through the reporter's on-camera performances in the field. Routinely, the most effective and memorable standups occur when performance originates as a natural outgrowth of story content. To be interesting on camera, the reporter must be interested—in stories, in the subjects of stories, and in the community and its residents—and be photographed in such a way that viewers see the interest.

Most communication attempts to elicit a response. Yet the camera and microphone never respond to the journalist. Some good ways to seek a response are to treat the lens as if it were a person, imagine that you're talking to a friend, and/or envision in your mind's eye how the audience will react to you and your story.

Video journalists can further enhance the story by capturing related sensory experiences—the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures—and to fill in with words and actions what the pictures don't communicate. Audiences become more interested in the story when they see you think, react, or otherwise do something interesting on camera. Also try to capture the reporter's honest reactions during field interviews and other appropriate moments.

Reporters can use body language to communicate interest and enthusiasm for the story and the audience. To be more visually aggressive, the reporter can sit on the edge of the chair or other object, lean forward toward the camera or interview subject, make hand gestures, and alter facial expressions as appropriate.

Effective performance depends on thorough knowledge of the story and its subjects. You can improve voice delivery by studying and practicing with words and by giving their sounds and meaning some thought. The way words are built helps to convey their meaning: "For years, citrus

growers have likened the tang of Texas grapefruit juice to the crisp smack of an ocean wave.” For natural voice delivery, emphasize contrasts and new ideas, and mark copy accordingly.

Whereas it’s important to relax on camera, it’s also important to project a sense of energy. Proper breathing and vocal techniques can help the reporter achieve energetic yet conversational delivery. A valuable exercise is to practice standup delivery at varying distances from the field camera. The goal is to overcome any tendency to yell to the camera, even when it is some distance away. When yelling occurs, tension and vocal pitch increase, while intimate connection with the audience decreases.

Even in standups it is acceptable for the reporter to stop talking occasionally in order to do something meaningful, such as show a padlocked gate or taste and savor a food. Demonstration standups, in which the reporter has an activity to perform while on camera, can help the reporter appear more natural and relaxed. However, no story should be altered by a reporter’s presence in a standup.

Beyond their ability to enhance otherwise nonvisual stories, standups help establish the reporter’s credibility and remind viewers who does the actual field reporting. Viewers might otherwise mistakenly credit anchors for originating many of the reports they see. Reporters and photographers can work as a team to help make standups visually reinforce the story to be told.

It is important for the reporter to dress appropriately for the story and to dress to keep attention on the face rather than on clothing, hair, or jewelry. Accessories should be subdued, and the reporter may want to avoid eyeglasses altogether. To succeed as an on-air reporter, you must allow the audience to come to know you as a friend and see the qualities that make you special.

Some reporters may evolve into anchors more quickly by producing stories that need on-set or split screen follow-up and amplification. When practical, suggest to the producer that you should appear on set to discuss your report or related issues with the anchor. Techniques for interaction with the anchor include split-focus presentation and the anchor debrief.

Finally, photographers and reporters should strive to understand the people who watch reports. You are better qualified to serve audiences when you know their needs, interests, concerns, and aspirations. Likewise, tenure in the marketplace serves most reporters well. After serving for years as a trusted friend in the community, most reporters are welcomed as authoritative and likable sources for relevant yet interesting stories.

KEY TERMS

anchor debrief

multidimensional

split-focus presentation

demonstration standup reporting

DISCUSSION

1. To what extent is the photojournalist a partner in helping reporters develop their on-camera performance potential?
2. What are the qualities that help make on-camera reporters and presenters “unique”?
3. What is the basic motive behind most acts of communication? How can this motive be used to enhance the reporter’s on-camera performance?
4. Why is it important for reporters to communicate something of their emotional response to stories?
5. Why is it important to communicate some of the sensory experiences to be found in the environments of the stories you’re reporting?
6. Describe what is meant by the “body language” of effective reporting.
7. Why is it important to relax while presenting information on camera?
8. List the practices you can observe to help develop conversational on-camera delivery.
9. Describe the demonstration standup and provide two examples of effective use of this technique.
10. Take a manager’s point of view and respond to a reporter who asks, “Why do we do standups? Why must we? What purpose do they serve?”
11. What considerations govern the reporter’s on-camera appearance and dress?
12. How do the reporter’s posture and body language impact (a) story content and (b) the viewer’s perceptions of the reporter?
13. What considerations are important to keep in mind whenever the reporter appears on set with the studio anchor?

EXERCISES

1. Practice speaking to the television camera. Strive to be truly relaxed, conversational, and natural. Show your imaginary audience how you want them to react through your own reactions to the material you are delivering. If a camera is unavailable, talk to the end of a peanut butter jar taped to a camera tripod or use any other device that will work for you. Even try talking to yourself in the mirror.
2. Set up a television camera and record yourself on video as you taste and savor a food, think about the experience, and react to it.
3. Take a walk, go to the museum, or bake a cake and note all the physical sensations you encounter, including what you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. As a video reporter or photographer, practice using the camera and microphone as well as your own presence on camera to communicate such sensations to an audience.

4. Make a series of voice-over recordings or else appear on camera and practice breathing with your diaphragm rather than your chest during delivery.
5. Practice controlling the pitch of your voice. As you read a script, lower pitch and volume until you reach a half or full whisper, then raise pitch and volume to conversational levels. When you lower volume you also lower your vocal pitch, a good way to establish a greater sense of intimacy with your audience.
6. Practice speaking to the camera from various distances. Strive to keep your voice pitch and volume at the same conversational level, regardless of the distance you are from camera.
7. Study how words are built as a way to more effectively communicate their meaning. Practice enunciating such words as *butterfly*, or *ping-pong ball*, or even such phrases as *My name is Bond . . . James Bond* to determine their weight and feeling.
8. Read a video script or newspaper story aloud and practice marking and delivering the copy to better emphasize contrasting ideas and words as well as new ideas.
9. Work to develop a more acute awareness of your body and an ability to relax tense muscles, especially when you are in front of the camera or when you are handholding the camera.
10. Analyze how you can most effectively dress to focus attention on your face, not on your clothes or accessories. Practice making presentations in front of the camera and record your appearances for analysis and critique.
11. Watch a television newscast. For each story that contains a reporter standup, think of a demonstration standup activity that might have been more effective to enhance the story.
12. Devise and deliver three demonstration standups on camera, using your choice of subject matter.
13. Record a series of practice standups under the following conditions: (a) while holding a handheld microphone, then using a miniature lavalier microphone attached to your clothing; (b) while wearing a jacket and tie or scarf, then with the jacket removed; (c) with no jacket, but with the shirt sleeves rolled down and buttoned, then with the shirt sleeves pushed or rolled up; (d) with your body facing the camera straight on, then angled slightly. From these activities, summarize how wardrobe, cosmetics, actions, and behaviors can impact story content and viewer perceptions of a reporter's knowledge, authority, credibility and experience.
14. Practice improving your posture. Keep your chin in and hold yourself as if a string is attached to the very crown of your head and is lifting you. Ask someone to record your posture while standing and sitting, and analyze the results.

NOTES

- 1 Barry Nash is a professional talent consultant. A majority of remarks in this chapter are derived from his work with students at Colorado State and with professional talent in markets of all sizes throughout the country. He is a partner in The Coaching Company, Dallas, TX (www.coachingcompany.com).
- 2 Greg Luft, undated manuscript shared with the principal author, Colorado State University.
- 3 *NBC Nightly News*, March 29, 1984. Reporters still “borrow” this line. The principle author has heard it parroted in Texas, Maryland, Louisiana, and Colorado.
- 4 The “Guide to Marking Copy” used as a general reference for this chapter was provided courtesy of Barry Nash, Barry Nash & Company, Dallas, TX.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

This chapter focuses on US laws that govern information gathering and dissemination. Everyone involved in such endeavors*—including reporters, photographers, writers and producers— are advised that regardless of their home country, the work they produce may be viewed by a world audience, and as such is subject to diverse laws in other nations.

No matter the country of origin, online content reaches viewers where contradictory laws may apply. Even a negative book review written in one country may qualify as defamation in another. Libel, privacy and copyright laws vary drastically from one country to another. In the U.S., public figures must generally prove defamatory statements are false. In some other countries, defamation is presumed to be false. The person defaming another must prove the statement is true.

Privacy rights also vary. In the U.S., it might be legal to photograph a famous fashion model leaving a drug treatment clinic on a public sidewalk. In Great Britain, that same photograph might be found to have violated her privacy rights.¹

As the Digital Media Law Project observes, “If you post something online that upsets someone in another country, that person may use several means to contact you about their complaint: sending a cease-and-desist letter or e-mail; filing a lawsuit; and/or sending a subpoena. If a lawsuit is filed against you, it could be in a U.S. court or in a foreign court.”²

Such realities compel at least a basic familiarity with media law. Every day, journalists have to make ethical and legal judgments that hinge on familiarity with First Amendment guarantees of *freedom of press and speech*, Fourth Amendment guarantees of the individual’s *right to privacy*, and Sixth Amendment guarantees of the *right to a public trial by an impartial jury*. Many legal transgressions occur in the field as journalists *gather* and *report* the news. Journalists unfamiliar with state and federal statutes that govern news coverage remain vulnerable to anyone willing to seek compensation or other advantage through the courts. People can sue for anything,

* For simplification throughout this chapter, the term *journalist* signifies anyone involved in information gathering and distribution, whether engaged in news reporting or any other communication endeavor.

and some news sources may use their apparent command of the law to censor, influence, or otherwise profit from news reports and their timing.

The **Internet** raises further legal questions. Who owns the rights to published or “repurposed” material? Should journalists observe a print or a broadcast legal model, or both, when using the Internet? If a site defames an individual or institution, who is responsible? Is it the original author, the online service, and/or the journalist who quoted the information?

Some business ventures buy up blanket copyrights to the output from newspapers and other publishers, and then trawl web sites and social media for material that has been reposted without their permission. “Media companies’ assets are very much their copyrights,” says Steve Gibson, the CEO of Righthaven, a copyright trawling firm. “These companies need to understand and appreciate that those assets have value more than merely the present advertising revenues.”³ Gibson believes infringements occur by the millions, if not billions.⁴

Such companies prosecute even private, obviously innocent violators, and frequently collect monetary damages. Law firms also trawl the Internet, looking for libelous reports against their clients, whether corporate or individual.⁵ As technology and media platforms influence how electronic journalists gather and report the news, courts struggle to answer ever-changing questions and issues.

This chapter discusses legal questions that journalists face routinely and offers guidelines to help journalists know when to seek advice. A generous application of fairness can help eliminate the need for some routine legal advice, but the guiding rule should always be “If in doubt, seek help.” In no way should any part of this chapter be considered as actual legal advice, or as a substitute for appropriate legal counsel.

GATHERING THE NEWS

The First Amendment usually protects the right to speak and publish, but it does not automatically protect the right to gather information. Even so, the courts have generally held that if journalists are to report information they must also have the right to gather it. As a rule when gathering news, journalists may go anywhere a person can go without special permission – so long as their equipment doesn’t get in the way. Although journalists may attend a theatre opening, a political rally, or a courtroom trial, they almost never can light, photograph, record, or transmit live pictures of these same events without first obtaining special permission. When it comes to gathering the news, nowhere in the **law** are reporters and photojournalists more likely to cost their stations money than in matters of libel (defamation) and invasion of privacy.

LIBEL

Libel (defined in the courts as malicious defamation) is the use of factual information (as opposed to opinion) that holds someone in hatred or contempt, subjects the person to ridicule, or otherwise lowers esteem for the individual. Property, businesses, and institutions can also be libeled. **Defamation** can occur as soon as you communicate a false statement of fact to a third party, even if you never broadcast the statement. Although oral defamation might qualify as **slander**, in television news it's considered to be libel, even if the alleged defamation is made orally.

Know the Statement Is True

Because libel is a statement of information that constitutes defamation (as opposed to a statement of opinion), an excellent protection against liability is to have good reason to believe a statement is true. Few journalists can know with certainty that a statement is false. For the most part, journalists can only know what they see in documents or hear from sources. If a reporter uses evaluative judgment words, such as, "probably," "in most people's opinion," or "any sane person can see," those words would probably fall under the heading of opinion, which cannot be false in the same sense that a statement of fact can be false. Fortunately, for journalists to be liable for defamation, they must normally know a statement is false or be aware that it is probably false. Such latitude offers a heady measure of legal protection.

In some states a common test for defamation is negligence. In other words, courts look for evidence that the journalist used "due care" in evaluating the truth of a defamatory statement. To protect yourself against charges of negligence, always adopt a higher standard than the law sets. Ask yourself, "Do I believe the statement to be true?" This is a much easier and more practical question to ask than, "Do I believe the statement to be false?"

Another test is to ask, "Whom am I talking about? Might what I report in some way lower our esteem for that person?" In applying such a test, it's important to remember that most substantive news is derogatory to someone. Still, if you can answer yes to the question "Does this look and feel authentic?" you'll probably be safe even if the statement later proves to be false. As yet another safeguard, ask yourself, "Does the public have a right to know this?" Perhaps the information addresses some aspect of public business, for example, or comes from sworn testimony or from subpoenaed information that is part of the court record.

Evaluate Sources to Eliminate Malice

Whenever someone makes derogatory statements about another person, try to evaluate the person's motives. Was he just fired? Is he bitter? Perhaps you interview a woman whose sister has been beaten to death, and the woman tells you, "Her husband was a no-good bum. He beat her for years." In that moment, you are helpless to know whether the statement is true or false.

Only if the statement is made during a live broadcast, and only if you used due care to stop it, might you escape liability should the broader standards of defamation be applied. In the previous example, the woman could make the statement; you could say what the woman told you; you could make the statement without attribution; but in all three instances the court would typically consider your responsibility for the allegation to be the same. Later you might be able to establish the woman's malice, but if you air the allegation without first evaluating your source, the court may ask whether there was something further you should have done—and there usually is—to establish the source's motives.

Note the distinction between the two concepts of malice applied in this discussion. An older, common-law version of malice applies in establishing the malice of the news source. As a result of the 1964 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *New York Times v. Sullivan*, however, a second concept of malice is operable as it applies to the journalist. This more recent concept, called "actual malice," or the Sullivan Rule, as later modified, results from the Court's opinion that "Constitutional guarantees require, we think, a federal rule that prohibits a public official from recovering damages for a defamatory falsehood relating to his official conduct unless he proves that the statement was made with 'actual malice' – that is, with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not."⁶

The ruling applies to public figures or to persons who have voluntarily placed themselves in the public view. The issue of actual malice as it applies to private plaintiffs is left to state law. Some states allow reporters to repeat charges they suspect are false. Other states require that reporters investigate such charges before they repeat them.⁷ You can study a fascinating array of up-to-the-minute free speech, copyright, and invasion of privacy decisions by entering such terms in your Internet browser as you encounter them while reading this chapter. Other resources are noted within the endnotes.

Assume the Highest Standard

Actions for libel can be brought in any state in which a station's signal is received. A Pennsylvania resident libeled by a New York station could bring suit in his home state, for example, although Pennsylvania courts normally would use the libel standards that apply in New York. This offers some protection against individuals who might otherwise sue in the state with the most favorable chances for settlement. Consequently, attorneys generally advise that you assume the standard for your own state, or preferably an even higher standard.

Use Caution When Dealing with Police

Any time police serve as your primary source for potentially defamatory statements, or any time you're tempted to publish information obtained from the police radio, use caution. A street cop may tell you on the record, "This looks like it could be a gangland drug-related shooting," but

to protect yourself check further; otherwise, simply through inference, you could be defaming an innocent person. In one libel action, a reporter aired police-supplied photographs of alleged “thieves and burglars” at a flea market. One of the persons clearly identified in the photographs had no police record and sued for libel. A court ordered the police to pay a penalty for libel.

INVASION OF PRIVACY

The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution protects the individual’s right to privacy, including the “right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects.” As defined in the courts, **invasion of privacy** is any act of intrusion that occurs without an individual’s consent, including trespass and publication of embarrassing facts (even if true), and that violates an individual’s reasonable expectation of the right to privacy (Figure 14.1).

As the concept affects journalists, it has parallels with libel law, but note the distinction about truth. Libel is actionable only if the report is false. Invasion of privacy can be actionable even if the report is true. Exceptions occur if the information is already part of the public record or if the



Figure 14.1 The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the individual’s right to privacy. Violations of state or federal privacy laws can lead to a journalist being charged with invasion of privacy, trespass, eavesdropping, and unauthorized surveillance.

Ernie Leyba Photography

report concerns activities that occurred in public. Such information is privileged, even though it might be false, provided it is reported completely and as accurately as it was made available to the journalist.

One of the most common forms of invasion of privacy is **trespass**. Trespass occurs when you enter someone's property or premises illegally. Often, trespass is inadvertent. Someone with apparent authority gives you permission to enter the scene of a news event; later, someone with greater authority tells you to leave and threatens you with a lawsuit. What are the damages for walking into a person's home and invading privacy? The answer can be anything from one dollar in actual damages to clean the carpet you soiled, to punitive damages that are anyone's guess for causing "emotional distress."

DEFAMATION

An area of great danger is unsuspecting defamation, which often occurs when pictures or video are used to carry most of the reporting load. Each of the following examples conceivably might lead to claims of an alleged invasion of privacy called *publicizing in a false light*.

- The camera shows a reporter on a crowded street corner, then pans over to show a hapless passerby as the reporter says, "And when drug users leave jail, and often can't find work, one in four ends up on welfare."
- Voice-over narration discusses the problem of overweight Americans while the television screen shows generic cover footage of women walking along a street. The women, through "guilt by illustration," are implicated as being overweight.
- Reporter voice-over narration says, "Drug dealers are using their profits to buy huge homes like these." The narration is unwittingly married with generic cover footage that shows the home of a respected commodities exchange executive. A lawsuit follows.
- Several young women walk along a street against voice-over narration that charges that the area being shown is full of prostitutes. The women sue.

The use of **generic video**, which some attorneys call "inadvertent cutaways," is a dangerous practice that can lead to libel and invasion of privacy suits. When suits are filed against reporters who shoot a street scene, then use it generically for two years to illustrate scripts about prostitutes, thieves, and tax evaders, judges are likely to say, "When you were talking about the mad rapist, you could be understood to have been talking about the person you showed on the screen. Let's let the jury decide."

USE OF THE WORD ALLEGED

A time-honored way to handle criminal cases is to remember the adage, "No charges, no name." In criminal cases, withhold the person's identity until charges are filed. At the

point charges are filed, the word *alleged* can be one of the reporter's most important legal protections. This is because how much you can say (and sometimes show) about anyone associated with a crime or a criminal depends on the level of that person's involvement.

There are at least three critical levels to consider:

1. Material witnesses: Some people are brought in as material witnesses, nothing more.
2. Suspects: Other individuals are brought in as suspects, or material witnesses may become suspects.
3. Arraignment: Only at arraignment does actual "alleging" begin; at this point someone charged with murder becomes an alleged killer.

In a sense, even someone *convicted* of murder remains an alleged killer. The jury may say he was the killer, but the journalist can rarely know with absolute certainty. Although conventional wisdom may hold that the word *alleged* is useless under the law, it may help establish the journalist's "state of mind" toward the suspect when the story was reported.

APPARENT AUTHORITY

Technically, you are liable for trespass if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time. Typically, however, courts determine a journalist's guilt or innocence on the basis of **apparent authority**. The following examples illustrate some of the everyday challenges journalists are likely to encounter.

Fatal Fire

You seek permission to shoot video of a fatal fire at a retirement facility. Your story angle is that many facilities in your area may not be fireproof. The manager on duty tells you, "Go on in." The fire chief, at your request, later also grants you access to enter the facility. You shoot video until the fire is almost out, but as you prepare to leave, the facility's owner arrives. The fire chief has long since left, but the owner tells you to leave immediately. The moment the owner tells you to leave, you must leave, but the most immediate question is whether you're liable for trespass for having entered the facility in the first place.

Courts generally answer this question on the basis of apparent authority. If someone on the scene says, "I own or lease this property; come on in," and you have no reason to doubt that person's authority, it's normally safe to enter the premises. If you can't find the owner or manager and the fire chief gives you permission to enter, you may still enter the premises. However, once inside, you might still be liable for trespass or invasion of privacy if, for example, you inadvertently shoot into a private room and show an elderly resident in an embarrassing situation.

Assuming you do not invade anyone's privacy, it's probably safe to air any footage you shot while you had apparent authority to shoot, that is, from the facility's manager or from the fire chief. If the owner (the last person to arrive at the scene) tells you not to use any footage you've shot, even under the fire chief's apparent authority, it's probably still safe to air anything shot before the owner's arrival. In this example, if anyone were to be sued, it probably would be the fire chief. If in doubt, consult your attorney.

Day Care Center

You receive permission from a city building inspector to enter a day care center that has been cited for safety violations. The city building inspector is the apparent authority, although you must leave if the manager or owner (either of whom have greater authority than the building inspector) tells you to leave.

Landlord–Tenant Dispute

You're covering a landlord–tenant group dispute. You normally may enter someone's private apartment at that person's invitation, even if the landlord tells you to leave, because in many states tenancy rights give the individual greater apparent authority than the landlord. You also may stand on public property to photograph the apartment complex and you may be able to stand on a common area of the apartment grounds and shoot video, again with a tenant's permission.

Entering a Restaurant

You learn that your state health department may close a local restaurant if unsanitary conditions aren't corrected. As part of your report, you enter the restaurant with cameras rolling, walk to the manager, and begin to ask questions. The restaurant is open to the public, so at first it might seem reasonable that anyone can come in. If the manager asks you to leave, however, the question is whether you're liable for what you shoot before you're asked to leave.

In this example, the concept of **limited invitation** also applies. The courts have held that in the case of restaurants (or even car dealerships), the public has a limited invitation (see *LeMistral, Inc. v. Columbia Broadcasting System*, 402 N.Y.S.2d 815, 817. N.Y. App. Div. 1978). The public is welcome to come in to eat at a restaurant, or buy cars at a dealership, but not to come in and shoot video. Such practices in your state may therefore fall under the heading of invasion of privacy.

Often, private homes, businesses, and institutions can assume quasi-public status because of some event. Generally, you can shoot anything your eyes can see, if you have permission to shoot in the first place. Be aware, however, that examples are simply that. Check state laws to be certain where you stand and where you can stand. In one incident, reporting crews from two

television stations sought permission to enter leased land to photograph horses that were said to be starving. The crews obtained permission from the landowner but not from the individuals who had leased the land. In this case, the overriding question was whether the reporters had reasonable belief that the owner had apparent authority, an answer that will vary from one state to the next.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology has created new opportunities for trespass. The drone is but one example. In numerous states, property lines are considered to extend from the boundaries of the property to the heavens. Technically, any time a drone or other aircraft flies over someone's property it may be trespassing. Practically, however, the damages of such an act are minimal – unless, for instance, a drone camera invades someone's privacy or a news helicopter hovers for too long above a burning home and fans the flames.

BOX 14. 1 THE DRONE AGE

The Federal Aviation Administration defines the recreational drone as an “unmanned aerial vehicle” (UAV). Another term is unmanned aircraft system (UAS), which refers to the drone, the remote controller, and the wireless transmitter/receiver that communicates with the drone.

Drones let viewers fly on a magic carpet. They let us show life from extraordinary points of view – no airplanes, helicopters, blimps, or balloons required. Yet, as insurance companies remind us, drones pose ‘significant risk.’ People break drone regulations all the time. Amateurs chase planes battling forest fires, endanger helicopter pilots and commercial aircraft, fly above private property, encroach on individuals’ right to privacy, scare livestock, and even disrupt outdoor weddings. Drones can destroy property, injure onlookers, kill people, and even bring down commercial airliners. The following information and links to resources can help you avoid liability for property damage, personal injury, or even death resulting from illegal or improper use of a drone.

Is the Drone Registered?

The Federal Aviation Administration requires registration for all “personal” drones. This category includes any drone that weighs more than 250 grams (about 8.8 ounces) up to 55 pounds. These weights include payloads such as on-board cameras.

Registration requires a small fee and is available online to those 13 years of age and up at www.registermyuas.faa.gov. Registrants must provide their name, home address, mailing address (if different from home address), and e-mail address. The registration generates a Certificate of Aircraft Registration/Proof of Ownership that includes a unique identification number for the UAS owner, which must be marked on the aircraft. Registration is valid for three years.

Penalties for flying a drone without registering are up to three years in jail, or up to \$250,000 in fines.

Drones weighing less than 250 grams do not require registration. See general guidelines at

www.faa.gov/uas/getting_started/fly_for_fun/media/UAS_Weights_Registration.pdf

Note: Those who fly drones for profit or business require FAA authorization to fly commercially. This category includes media companies, TV stations, farmers, surveyors, weather researchers, professional photojournalists and the like. See the following sources for guidance:

www.faa.gov/uas/getting_started/fly_for_work_business/becoming_a_pilot/
www.faa.gov/uas/getting_started/fly_for_work_business/beyond_the_basics/

This link provides information on how to apply for a waiver under the small UAS rule (part 107), flying a UAS that weighs more than 55 pounds, and flying a UAS as a government entity.⁸

www.faa.gov/uas/getting_started/fly_for_work_business/

Is Insurance Adequate and Up to Date?

Contact your insurance company for information about the minimum legal (liability, personal injury/death, and property damage) and financial coverage you personally need to fly drones or to engage in their hire. Also understand under what conditions you might be personally responsible should trouble occur during your watch. For general information, your State Insurance Division may be able to provide additional guidance.

Even if you have the necessary insurance, for such coverage to be valid any employees or other associates must still be in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations that govern a drone's actual use.

Is the Drone Flown According to Current Rules and Regulations?

Common sense dictates that drone operators never recklessly endanger the public. To that end, the rules covering personal drones require:

- Educational or recreational flying only
- They weigh more than 250 grams (0.55 lbs) up to 55 pounds.
- They operate only during daylight or civil twilight (30 minutes before official sunrise; 30 minutes after official sunset local time).
- They fly no higher than 400 feet (about the height of an eight to ten story building).
- They are kept in sight at all times.

- They stay at least five miles away from all airports in the area. These can include facilities with heliports such as high rises, hospitals, TV stations, and government facilities.
- They avoid flying over national parks and military reservations
- They avoid flying over crowds and heavily populated areas
- They avoid flying over private property
- They avoid invading anyone's privacy
- No operations from a moving vehicle or aircraft

For a complete list of operational limits, see the FAA Small Unmanned Aircraft Rule (Part 107) at www.faa.gov/uas/media/Part_107_Summary.pdf

You can find the complete text of the FAA Small Unmanned Aircraft Rule (Part 107) at

www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/06/28/2016-15079/operation-and-certification-of-small-unmanned-aircraft-systems#h-8

Excellent information on the safe and responsible use of unmanned aerial systems is available from the Know Before You Fly organization at www.knowbeforeyoufly.org/. The site covers recreational users, business users and public entities, along with information about registering your drone, requesting exemptions for the use of unmanned aircraft through the FAA, and how to avoid flight restrictions around airports, stadiums and racetracks. This site also offers videos and a handy reference brochure you can download as a PDF.

See also the smartphone app *B4UFLY*, available for Apple and Android. Note, however, the importance of staying abreast of any state and municipalities that may further regulate how and where you can fly a drone. If you work internationally, other regulations may apply. In the UK, for example, you may not fly within 50 meters of a building or person, and pilots must complete a training course.⁹

You can find a helpful reference for shooting video from a drone at www.raindance.org/10-tips-for-shooting-film-from-a-drone/

Also see www.zdnet.com/pictures/most-drone-photography-sucks-heres-how-to-make-it-amazing/

For an examination of the ethics involved in flying drones, see www.dronejournalism.org/code-of-ethics/

As a rule, journalists have been able to record anything they could see, even with a telephoto lens and a shotgun mic, but rules can change as technology becomes ever more sophisticated. A key question to consider is whether subjects of the long lenses and shotgun and parabolic mics have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Hidden Microphones

If someone stands unclothed before an open living room window in a crowded city, that individual might be expected to know someone could be lurking in the distance with a telephoto lens. But if that individual is holding a private conversation inside the home, that same person should have a reasonable expectation to privacy, which extends to protection from “snooper” microphones or even from normal shotgun mics, which can pick up hushed conversation from great distances.

Shotgun Microphones

In some states, intrusion with shotgun mics can constitute eavesdropping, a transgression governed by state and federal statutes. Hence, the recording of a restaurant conversation that could be overheard passively by any third party might constitute intrusion because of the patron’s reasonable expectation of privacy while dining.

However, you may get by with airing portions of the district attorney’s comments you recorded at opening night of a new theatre presentation, even if the DA said he didn’t like the play and even though you recorded his comments without his knowledge and as a third party to his conversation.

Purposefully concealing microphones can lead to lawsuits for intrusion. Before you plant a microphone in a flowerpot or make secret recordings of any kind, first check with an attorney.

Telephone Recordings

Telephone recordings have great potential to cause legal problems because they can so easily be misused to invade someone’s privacy. Recordings do help ensure exact quotes, and they are commonly used as the electronic equivalent of a reporter’s notes (something to consider should you ever be subpoenaed), but sometimes their use can backfire (Figure 14.2).

To prevent problems, it’s mandatory that you always advise the person on the other end that you intend to record a conversation, regardless of who initiates the call. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule 47 C.F.R.S73.1206 governs the broadcast of live and recorded telephone conversations. *Before* recording a telephone conversation for a future broadcast or broadcasting a telephone call simultaneously with its occurrence (live), journalists must inform any party to the call of their intent to broadcast the conversation. It is not sufficient to give notice just before the broadcast of a recorded call. An exception exists when the party is aware, or may be presumed to be aware, that the conversation is being or likely will be broadcast, as in the call placed to a broadcast program that features call-in telephone conversations.



Figure 14.2 Even routine telephone use can lead to lawsuits for invasion of privacy. No recordings or broadcasts of a conversation can be made unless the source is so advised.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Even if you intend to record the conversation only for your records, you should advise the person, preferably before the conversation begins. For maximum protection, record not only your statement of intent, but also the other person's verbal consent. If you intend to air excerpts of the conversation on air, you should advise the person before the primary conversation begins – again, as near the start of the call as possible.

SURVEILLANCE IN STATES WITH ONE-PARTY CONSENT

Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 regulates recorded conversations. The act allows law enforcement agents to conduct electronic surveillance, provided a judge has reviewed the plan and agrees. In many states and under federal law, an exception can be made for the reporter, provided the reporter doesn't intend to damage an individual's reputation falsely or to violate someone's privacy without newsworthy justification. Generally, under such laws, it is legal to monitor telephone calls or make surveillance recordings when one party to the conversation knows what is happening.

Hidden Voice Recorders

Although using a hidden voice recorder where a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy may not violate federal law, in some states the practice might add to a plaintiff's claim for invasion of privacy or trespass. In states with one-party consent and under federal law, a person acting in the reporter's place may be able to record a conversation without the reporter's presence, provided the person who carries the recorder understands what is happening. To be safe, always check with legal counsel.

TWO-PARTY CONSENT

States with "two-party consent" require that all parties to conversations, even if more than two, give their consent if the conversations are recorded. Those states are California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Washington. Unless consent is obtained from all parties, severe criminal penalties are possible. At issue in some states is whether citizens can record police actions in public. In general, such recordings are discouraged but not altogether banned.¹⁰

Reporters who wish to record conversations in two-party consent states should seek knowledgeable counsel to avoid the possibility of severe criminal penalties. In Nevada, all parties to a recorded *telephone* conversation must give their consent, whereas only the consent of at least one party to a *private in-person* conversation is required.¹¹ For the most recent list of one-and two-party consent states, see The Reporter's Recording Guide, a service of The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (RCFP) website at www.rcfp.org/rcfp/orders/docs/RECORDING.pdf

JUVENILE NEWS SOURCES

With some exceptions, a child is defined as anyone under the age of eighteen years. Normally, you can use juvenile names and pictures if you obtain them legally – and if the identities are already part of the public record. But to be on the safe side it's always wise to consult your state law for the exceptions.

Children's right to privacy is protected from the streets to the home to the courtroom. When a reporter wishes to interview a child on a public street, there is no guarantee of the child's legal consent to talk unless the person is at least eighteen years of age. The same caution extends to news coverage in schools. Because of the principle of limited invitation, a school principal may legally refuse a reporting crew the right to take pictures or to conduct interviews with children in the school unless the crew first obtains parental permission. Reporters are also routinely excluded from juvenile trials.

From one state to another, juvenile law varies. A juvenile charged with murder, habitual crime, or other felony may forfeit his or her right to privacy. Occasionally, stations may jointly decide

not to reveal a child's identity, even though the child's name has been legally obtained and can legally be broadcast. When the choices are difficult and competition a factor, a guiding principle is to ask, "What does the public need to know?" and "Does the public have a right to know this child's identity?"

SUBPOENAS AND SHIELD LAWS

A reporter's notes, outtakes, and sources are normally protected because it is generally held that no one has the right to determine a reporter's editorial judgment. In a number of states, this protection is formally extended through **shield laws**. However, members of the legal community may ask a judge or jury to rule otherwise. The mildest form of **subpoena** or court order to produce documents or other information is for an on-air recording; the most severe is for a reporter's notes or the names of sources.

A reporter must never tell anyone the identities of secret sources or the content of notes or outtakes. Once you've revealed such knowledge, you forfeit your right to withhold the same information from the courts. If your attorney or manager asks whether you have source material, you may answer that you have the material, but never divulge the contents. Attorneys and managers are the ones paid to say, in court, "Yes, there is material, but we're not producing it."

In protecting sources, the key is never to promise a source complete confidentiality unless you're willing to go to jail indefinitely.

ACCESS LAWS

Whereas shield laws allow the journalist to protect confidential sources under certain circumstances, *access* or *sunshine laws* protect the journalist's right of access to judicial, legislative, and executive records, extraordinary school board and city council proceedings, and the like, which otherwise might be kept off limits to the public. Such open meeting and open records laws may apply to state government but not to local government.

Journalists are routinely excluded from closed sessions of sensitive personnel and legal matters at all levels of government, although some officials may invoke such exclusionary rules as a way to bar journalists from meetings that should remain open to the public. Legal counsel may be necessary to gain permission to attend such meetings or even to learn of actions taken during meetings that should have been conducted in public.

COURTROOM TELEVISION

Because the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution guarantees defendants in criminal cases the right to a *public* trial, television journalists have fought for decades to bring television

cameras into the courtroom. “We have watched wars live on television,” the argument goes, “so perhaps it’s time that American news viewers are able to see what happens in American courtrooms.” Slowly, in state courts at least, they are winning the battle.

The Role of Cameras in the Courtroom

For years, media observers have argued that televised trials help ensure that public trials are indeed public and that they subject judges and other public officials to greater public scrutiny.¹² They believe trials recorded on video are more accurately reported, and that cameras in the courtroom help audiences better understand the judicial process (Figure 14.3).

When cameras are allowed in the courtroom, still more concerns must be answered. If the camera is within the jury’s view, will jurors be influenced as to what the reporter and photographer feel is the most newsworthy or most significant testimony? Will undercover police be publicly identified should they be called to the witness stand? Will journalists use the camera to cover only the most sensational trials or to record only the most sensational



Figure 14.3 The Sixth Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the individual’s right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury. The issue of free press–fair trial involves such considerations as shield laws, subpoenas, and television in the courtroom.

Ernie Leyba Photography

testimony (i.e., the star witness breaking down on the witness stand)? What if the rape victim's name is inadvertently spoken, or her face shown, during a courtroom broadcast? What if a prisoner is called to testify, then later faces retribution from prison cellmates? What if perspiration on the judge's bald head is unsightly? What if the prosecutor can't match the defense attorney's performance? What if . . . ?

Most States Allow Courtroom Media Coverage

Some form of extended media coverage, meaning coverage by television, radio, or still photography, is permitted in all fifty states,¹³ with a majority allowing cameras in a criminal trial. Consent of the presiding judge is usually required, and many states require advance written application for permission. Nearly all states prohibit coverage in cases that involve juveniles, victims of sex crimes, domestic relations cases, and trials involving trade secrets. Coverage of jurors normally is either prohibited or restricted, to prevent juror identification. For a comprehensive summary of TV cameras in state courts, see www.rtdna.org/content/cameras_in_court

Television Cameras Banned in Federal Courts

After trials and experiments that have banned or limited television cameras from federal courts since 1946, the issue remains unsettled. After a three-year experiment in six U.S. district courts and two appeals courts, the Judicial Conference of the United States ruled in late 1994 to ban television cameras in federal courtrooms. "[The] basic concern was the potential impact on jurors and witnesses; potential distraction of witnesses; and whether jurors were made nervous by any fear of possible harm," said David Sellers, a spokesperson for the twenty-seven-member panel of judges that issued the ruling.¹⁴

Criminal trials were excluded from coverage, and during the first two years of the experiment, media covered only a handful of civil cases. Judges repeatedly cautioned against media apathy, warning journalists the experiment might fail unless they increased coverage of federal court proceedings.¹⁵ Still, the ban surprised many observers who fully believed the experiment had been a success.

In September 2010 the Judicial Conference of the United States, the policy-making arm of the federal courts, approved a pilot project lasting up to three years that permitted cameras in some federal district courts. Only court employees could set up and operate the cameras. The program only permitted coverage of civil cases. It continued the rules that have banned cameras from federal criminal trials since 1946.

The pilot program ran from June 18, 2011 through July 18, 2015. Fourteen courts took part in the pilot. On March 15, 2016, the Judicial Conference authorized three districts in the Ninth

Circuit—the District Court for the Northern District of California, the District Court of Guam, and the District Court for the Western District of Washington—to continue the pilot program under the same terms and conditions, and laying down the “circumstances under which judges may authorize cameras in courtrooms”:¹⁶

A judge may authorize broadcasting, televising, recording, or taking photographs in the courtroom and in adjacent areas during investitive, naturalization, or other ceremonial proceedings. A judge may authorize such activities in the courtroom or adjacent areas during other proceedings, or recesses between such other proceedings, only:

- (a) for the presentation of evidence;
- (b) for the perpetuation of the record of the proceedings;
- (c) for security purposes;
- (d) for other purposes of judicial administration;
- (e) for the photographing, recording, or broadcasting of appellate arguments; or
- (f) in accordance with pilot programs approved by the Judicial Conference

When broadcasting, televising, recording, or photographing in the courtroom or adjacent areas is permitted, a judge should ensure that it is done in a manner that will:

- 1) be consistent with the rights of the parties;
- 2) not unduly distract participants in the proceeding, and
- 3) not otherwise interfere with the administration of justice.

You can find continually updated information on the status of *cameras in federal courts* at the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) web site at www.rtdna.org or the United States Courts web site at www.uscourts.gov; and for *state courts* at www.rtdna.org/article/cameras_in_the_court_a_state_by_state_guide_updated.

Standards for Courtroom Coverage

Gradually, judges, attorneys, and journalists establish the standards that govern courtroom coverage. Journalists normally operate with one television pool camera (and one still camera for combined newspaper and news service coverage). With **pool coverage**, a single camera is set up at a stationary point in the courtroom, and its signal is fed live to the station, to video recorders just outside the courtroom, or to a central receiving location elsewhere within the courthouse. All stations that wish to cover the trial are provided access to the video signal from the courtroom camera, a method designed to create the least distraction. Sound can be supplied simply by tapping into the public address system found in most courtrooms (Figure 14.4).



Figure 14.4 Pool coverage minimizes disruptions in the courtroom through the use of a single camera to feed signals to all stations that wish to cover the proceedings.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Cameras normally are excluded from pretrial hearings in criminal cases, from voir dire (a preliminary examination to establish a prospective juror's competence and suitability), and from proceedings in the judge's chambers. Depending on the state and the judge, cameras may be allowed at other proceedings such as trial hearings, sentencing, resentencing, and the like (Figure 14.5).

In many states, the judge is the absolute authority when it comes to cameras in the courtroom. Each judge handles the procedures differently. Some judges will not allow zooms or camera movement. Others will allow zooms, but not pans – so as not to distract the jury with camera movement. The judge may require the photographer and reporter to wear a coat and tie or other suitable dress. Some judges require that once set up, the photographer and reporter remain in the courtroom — even though the next three days of testimony may not make a newsworthy story – so jurors won't be influenced by the reporter and photographer's judgment about the most newsworthy or most significant testimony. At any point in the trial, a judge may terminate coverage if it hinders the judicial process or appears to jeopardize an individual's right to a fair trial.



Figure 14.5 Television cameras in the courtroom are becoming a more common sight as technology reduces the levels of disruption that were once common in broadcast trial coverage.

Ernie Leyba Photography

Where new courtroom facilities are under construction, spaces to conceal the television camera are an ordinary part of courtroom blueprints. Two-way windows at the back of the courtroom conceal the camera so no one in the courtroom is aware of its presence. If cameras cannot be seen it is more difficult for them to influence the trial's outcome, though it is possible, especially if courtroom participants know the proceedings are being televised. However, almost without exception, the camera's presence is quickly forgotten, becoming as common a fixture as the gavel or the witness stand.¹⁷

Some Do's and Don'ts

When a news organization wishes to originate trial coverage, the first step is to submit a written request for camera coverage to the judge at least twenty-four hours in advance. If the judge denies access, the decision is final: There usually is no appeal process. If the judge allows trial coverage, rules will almost certainly be imposed – undoubtedly similar to those that follow.¹⁸ You can find specific regulations for any state regarding cameras in the courtrooms and how to gain approval for media coverage, at www.ncsc.org/Topics/Media/Media-Relations/State-Links.aspx.

This site also lists Court Media Centers, where you can access news releases, recent orders and opinions, alerts, cases of interest, and other useful information.

Cameras in the Courtroom

Do's:

- Do pool all TV and audio coverage.
- Do use only one operator for TV coverage using only one camera set in one location.
- Do dress and conduct yourself in a manner consistent with the dignity and decorum of the courtroom.
- Do use the existing court audio system for sound recording if technically feasible.

Don'ts:

- Don't leave media identification on cameras or clothes.
- Don't take close-ups of jury members.
- Don't use auxiliary TV lights.
- Don't take audio recordings of attorney–client conversations or conferences held at the bench.
- Don't change tape or disk drives while court is in session.
- Don't use portable voice recorders.
- Don't ask the judge to referee a media dispute, such as over pooling.

After the Verdict Is In

Once the verdict is in and the jury has been dismissed, courthouse reporters traditionally have been free to question jurors about the verdict, their secret deliberations, and why they voted as they did. Still, individuals called to jury duty remain private citizens, and today some courts extend the right to privacy to jurors as they return to everyday life. In *re Express - News Corp.*, 695 F.2d 807 (5th Cir., 1982) the fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that “jurors, even after completing their duty, are entitled to privacy and to protection against harassment.”

Should attorneys appeal the verdict in a televised trial, their first request may be for video recordings of the trial. The news organization's own rules should apply in governing whether to honor the request. Some organizations might supply whatever footage has been aired, but no outtakes. Others might supply nothing at all—even in the face of a subpoena. The reasoning is that if pool coverage is allowed, bar associations, watchdog groups, and attorneys can record the trial themselves, unless coverage is limited to news organizations as it sometimes is.

THE DIGITAL MILLENNIUM COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1998¹⁹

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) is the outgrowth of a 1997 Supreme Court decision that gives the Internet the same free speech protections as print media. The Internet

is the first electronic medium afforded such protections (as opposed to news programs broadcast over public airwaves, for example) because it's easy to access and has so many voices, many of them unedited.²⁰

Copyright Defined

The United States Copyright Office defines **copyright** as “a form of protection provided by [U.S. law] (title 17, U. S. Code) to the authors of ‘original works of authorship,’ including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works. This protection is available to both published and unpublished works.”

If you own the copyright, you can do whatever you want with the work, whether it's an audio recording, a book manuscript, video or video script, an original photo, video story or publication, slideshow, drawing, artwork, poem, or sheet music. You can duplicate your original work; rent, lease or sell it; put it on the Internet; or otherwise show or display it publicly. You are protected when the work is created and “fixed in a physical form.” You also can transfer ownership to someone else.

Duration of Copyright

Copyright protection typically extends for the author's life plus an additional 70 years beyond the author's death. If two or more authors created the work, copyright continues for 70 years after the last surviving author dies. Exceptions to copyright eligibility include, in the copyright offices' exact language, the following:²¹

- “Works that have not been fixed in a tangible form of expression (for example, choreographic works that have not been notated or recorded, or improvisational speeches or performances that have not been written or recorded)
- “Titles, names, short phrases, and slogans; familiar symbols or designs; mere variations of typographic ornamentation, lettering, or coloring; mere listings of ingredients or contents
- “Ideas, procedures, methods, systems, processes, concepts, principles, discoveries, or devices, as distinguished from a description, explanation, or illustration
- “Works consisting entirely of information that is common property and containing no original authorship (for example: standard calendars, height and weight charts, tape measures and rulers, and lists or tables taken from public documents or other common sources).”

Copyright Notice

You are not required to register or publish anything you create in order to establish copyright.²² Such copyright is conferred automatically. Note, however, that registration *is* necessary if you were to sue someone for using your work without permission. Legal protection is greatest

when you register your work within 90 days after first publication, rather than after you discover someone is using your work without permission.

Without registration, you may be able to recover only actual damages—which are usually tough to prove—and/or what profits the defendant(s) realized from infringing your work. Timely registration may also help you recover significant statutory damages and attorney fees.

Registration Proves You Own the Work

Registration provides a public record of proof that you own the work, and that your copyright is valid. A formal copyright notice identifies you, the year of first publication, and tells the public your work is protected by copyright.²³

How to Register Copyright²⁴

If you place a formal copyright notice on “visually perceptible” works such as video, scripts, graphics or magazine articles, the notice must contain three elements:

- Either the symbol ©, the word Copyright, or the abbreviation Copr.
- The year the work was first published. (Exceptions occur when the picture, graphic or even a sculpture is reproduced on jewelry, stationary, postcards, or similar items.)
- A name or an abbreviation that identifies the owner.

Thus, any of the following forms of copyright notice would suffice:

- © 2012 Hans Jensen
- Copyright 2012 Hans Jensen
- Copr. 2012 Hans Jensen

Notice of copyright on sound recordings uses the symbol “P” in a circle © (the designation for phonorecord) rather than the copyright symbol ©, i.e. © 2012 *Wowza Records Inc.*

You can copyright your work online. Go to www.copyright.gov/eco/ and click on “Log in to eCO.” That will open a screen where you must create a User ID and password. See www.copyright.gov for information regarding your specific work and the number of copies to submit. You can download the most common copyright forms at www.copyright.gov/forms/.

What You Own

If you (or an organization) wanted to hold a yard or tag sale to sell or give away some books, old newspapers, magazines, CDs, DVDs, film reels, phonograph records and VHS tapes, you could. While you don't own the content (it's copyrighted), you do own the recording media (printed materials, DVDs, and video cassettes). Moreover, the publisher or other creator has already received a payment or royalty for every item you wish to sell.

Under the DMCA it's a different story with content you download from the Internet. You could not sell that downloaded content, whether you bought an e-book novel or e-textbook, a Netflix movie streamed to your computer or TV, a digital copy of a *Chicago Tribunes* or *Time* article, or copies of music from iTunes or Amazon.com. That's because *such items are copies of the original*. Just as you can't copy and distribute entire books, DVDs, CDs, magazines, newspapers, video or cassette tapes and phonograph records in physical form, neither can you copy and distribute them in digital form.

Nothing on the Internet, other than a live webcast, is in its original physical form. While it's true that physical media are rarely available in their original form either, *the issue is whether the content originator is fairly compensated for copies downloaded from the Internet*. Anyone who copies and distributes digital media illegally deprives artists, writers, musicians and other copyright holders of lawful income.

Fair Use

The doctrine of **fair use** provides a defense against copyright infringement. As a reporter, web, or video journalist, you may wish to show, quote or otherwise display part of someone else's work. You might quote part of an article or a book, for example, or show clips from a theatrical film as part of your critique of a copyrighted work. You might include a photo or two in your report from a touring exhibit. Copyright law allows publication of representative examples, or "fair use" of such materials, without permission from the copyright owner, provided you credit the work and its author(s). The "Fair Use" doctrine assumes that the public and the copyright owner potentially benefit from such limited but "enhanced" publication.

Section 107 of the United States Copyright Law extends "fair comment and criticism" to "news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research." Still, how do you know whether a particular use is fair? Section 107 sets out four factors to help you decide:²⁵

1. the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes
2. the nature of the copyrighted work

3. amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole
4. the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

In the words of Section 107, “. . . distinction between ‘fair use’ and infringement may be unclear and not easily defined.” Despite general guides for brevity, no generally applicable definition is possible. The most important consideration is the impact of fair use on the copyrighted work’s commercial value.²⁶ Acknowledging the source of the copyrighted material does not substitute for obtaining permission.”²⁷

If you were to innocently include more content than fair use would allow in a story, you could put yourself, your employer, its owners, and its web host at risk. Whenever you’re in doubt, even in private or semi-public communication, hesitate. You can’t always know what to do regarding copyright and fair use, but you can always ask for legal guidance. As the Knight Citizen News Network notes, “Newspapers, magazines, and broadcast networks typically have their own lawyers. But citizen media outlets, bloggers, social network members and other Internet users generally don’t have lawyers on standby.”²⁸ Beyond such guidance lies yet another backup plan: “If in doubt, you must leave it out.”

BOX 14.2 GENERAL FAIR USE GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION AND PUBLISHING

Definitions for fair use vary, but the educational and publishing communities have generally agreed on guidelines contained in Circular 21 from the U.S. Copyright Office, available at www.copyright.gov/circs/circ21.pdf.²⁹

Prose:

A complete article, story or essay of less than 2,500 words

OR

An excerpt from any prose work of not more than 1,000 words or 10 percent of the work, whichever is less, but in any event a minimum of 500 words

Illustration:

One chart, graph, diagram, drawing, cartoon, or picture per book or per periodical issue

Internet Service Providers

Section 512 protects the Internet Service Provider (ISP) from liability if it simply serves as a “passive conduit” for illegal or copyrighted content that a client or other user uploads. Protections vary according to the type of service the ISP offers. If it provides storage for caches, web hosting or hyperlinking, then it must comply with a provision called “notice and take-down”.³⁰ This provision requires that any online service provider must take down infringing material when the copyright owner gives notice of its presence on the provider’s service.^{31, 32}

Plagiarism

The doctrine of fair use has an evil twin called **plagiarism**, the act of representing someone else’s work as your own. Anyone who appropriates copyrighted material without identifying the source is guilty of plagiarism. Stealing another’s work is as simple as copying and pasting material off the Internet. It can lead to litigation and moreover represents an ethical and moral lapse. Even unintentional plagiarism can get you fired. Telling the boss you acted innocently probably won’t help much.³³

You can avoid plagiarism if you simply attribute other people’s work. No matter the source, attribute the material, whether you quote something from a book or a newspaper article, show a video clip, a web page, use a line from a song, or even a direct or paraphrased quote from a conversation with another person. Also remember to attribute the source of ideas, opinions, and claims that others originate.

Even content that appears to reside in the public domain may have copyright protection. This includes email, postings to social sites, and stories derived from or based on an existing work. You must also cite information that has passed out of copyright and that now exists in the public domain.

It’s unnecessary to attribute common knowledge, such as the medical consensus that smoking is dangerous, or the popularity of gambling in Atlantic City and Las Vegas.

Chip Scanlan at the Poynter Institute offers a handy guide (see Figure 14.6) to help you avoid plagiarism at www.poynter.org/uncategorized/3323/the-first-peril-fabrication.



Figure 14.6 To access Chip Scanlan’s guide to help you avoid plagiarism, you can photograph the above tag with your smartphone, using an app such as Mobiletag or Scanlife.

Obtain Rights When Necessary

Universities commonly notify faculty, staff, and students to first obtain the rights to use copyrighted material that exceeds fair use guidelines. You can find information about *protecting yourself* at many university web sites, including, for example, Indiana University.³⁴

You can access information about *obtaining permission to use copyrighted works*, including the following works, at web sites such as the U.S. Copyright Office (Circular 22),³⁵ the Poynter Institute,³⁶ the University of California,³⁷ and eHow.com.³⁸

- Works in Print
- Online Works
- Musical Works
- Images/Pictures
- Motion Pictures
- Software
- Syndicated Cartoons
- Syndicated Editorials
- Religious Works

Government Publications³⁹

As a rule, works produced by the United States government have no copyright protection. Title 17 of the United States Code (17 USC § 105) states, “Copyright protection under this title is not available for any work of the United States Government, but the United States Government is not precluded from receiving and holding copyrights transferred to it by assignment, bequest, or otherwise.”⁴⁰ (Note that all works without copyright must still be attributed.) The government has no obligation to make *all* works publicly available, and it can deny access to even non-copyrighted works for reasons of national security, export control, and patent applications.

Sometimes the federal government acquires ownership of copyrighted works, which continue to retain their original copyright protection. The government does own copyright to the work, however, if an independent contractor assigns copyright back to the government. Hence, government works, such as public service announcements, sometimes carry copyright notice.⁴¹

Outside contractors may own copyright to the work they produce for the federal government, so it can be difficult to know which documents are in the “public domain” and which are not. Furthermore, the government doesn’t have to give notice that its works carry no U.S. copyright, and it or its agencies may still copyright the works in other countries.^{42, 43}

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS

If you believe your local, state, or federal government is withholding information in the public interest, but that it would cause no harm other than to those who would deny its publication, you can file to see the document under Freedom of Information provisions for disclosure of government information.

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press offers the *Federal Open Government Guide* to open records and meetings laws, how to file requests for documents and records, and typical response times at www.rcfp.org/fogg/index.php.

RCFP also offers the *State Open Government Guide* regarding open records and meeting laws in your state, and how to request such information, at www.rcfp.org/open-government-guide.

See also a state-by-state guide for access to government data at www.rcfp.org/access-electronic-records.

Municipal regulations, such as access to city council records, will be handled locally. Consult your local government for that information.

Using Information from Government Web Sites

Government websites are not subject to copyright protection in the United States, provided government employees created the work as part of their official duties.⁴⁴ The rules change if a contractor develops or maintains a government website. Then, any qualifying work the contractor created has copyright protection. Copyrighted work that others own but post to a government site carries similar protection.⁴⁵

State and Local Government Copyright

Note that guidance up to this point refers only to the United States government and provisions of Title 17 of the United States Code. Assume that nothing covered herein applies when it comes to state and local governments. These entities often claim copyright to works they create, and they can demand, prohibit, or even restrict copyright on the works their agencies produce.⁴⁶ Your best protection is knowing how your state and local governments approach copyright practices, or at least know where to look on short notice.

Works Made for Hire

Your employer owns the copyright should you create or prepare a work as an employee, through you, the author. Neither would you own copyright if you signed a contract to create a “work for hire,” nor would you own copyright for your contributions to a collective work, motion picture, or audio recording.⁴⁷

In the case of works made for hire, and for anonymous and pseudonymous works (“unless the author’s identity is revealed in Copyright Office records”), the duration of copyright extends for the shorter of 95 years from publication or 120 years from creation.^{48, 49}

You will avoid copyright issues if you respect every creative individual’s contributions through fair and accurate attribution, and if necessary, by seeking permission to use that person’s copyrighted material.

A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

Questions about the law and its interpretations confront every journalist, frequently under the pressures and deadlines of field reporting. Whereas legal counsel may not be immediately available, every journalist can rely on a powerful ally called common sense. The answer to many legal questions is a product of nothing more than a sense of good judgment, fairness, taste, and a concern for the dignity—and privacy—of others. Treat others as you would expect to be treated in the same situation and, above all, remember: When in doubt, consult an authority—either station or legal.

SUMMARY

Self-interest requires that journalists stay abreast of laws that apply to the reporting process. Although the act of reporting the news can lead to legal challenges, many legal transgressions occur in the field during the process of gathering the news. Even when journalists are on solid legal ground, defending against lawsuits can be costly and time-consuming and tends to make reporters overly cautious in covering subsequent stories.

Two of the most important areas of concern to journalists are libel and invasion of privacy. Libel is the use of factual information, as opposed to opinion, that holds someone in hatred or contempt, subjects the person to ridicule, or otherwise lowers our esteem for the individual. Invasion of privacy is any act of intrusion, including trespass and publication of embarrassing facts, even if true, that violates an individual’s reasonable expectation of a right to privacy.

Normally, to be liable for defamation, journalists must know that a statement is false or be aware it probably is false. An excellent protection against libel, therefore, is to have good reason to broadcast only statements you believe to be true, and to use due care in evaluating the truth of defamatory information. Another problem area is unsuspecting defamation, which can occur when generic or file video is used to illustrate a script that carries most of the reporting load.

One of the most common forms of invasion of privacy is trespass. The guiding rule is to obtain permission to enter any private or semiprivate area before you shoot, not afterward. Often, trespass is inadvertent and occurs because someone with apparent authority, perhaps a police

officer or fire official, gives the photojournalist permission to shoot. Generally, the footage can be aired up to the point that someone with greater authority, perhaps the building owner, arrives and tells the photographer to leave.

The principle of limited invitation prohibits journalists from freely entering quasi-public businesses and institutions, such as restaurants and supermarkets, to report and take pictures.

Technology has created new opportunities for trespass and eavesdropping. Telephoto lenses and tiny microphones that can pick up hushed conversations from great distances are but two examples. In no case should you attempt to use concealed microphones or make secret recordings without first obtaining competent legal counsel.

Telephone recordings can easily be used to invade an individual's privacy. Always advise the person on the other end that you intend to record the conversation, even if you intend to record it only for your records.

Some states require that both parties to conversations give their consent if the conversations are to be recorded. In other states a person acting in the reporter's place may be able to record a conversation, provided the person who carries the recorder understands what is happening.

Courts are extra sensitive about protecting children's rights to privacy. Be especially cautious about broadcasting children's names, pictures, or other information that would allow them to be identified, even when such information already is part of the public record.

Shield laws help protect the reporter's confidential sources, conversations, notes, and outtakes, but attorneys routinely try to subpoena such information. For maximum protection, tell no one the identities of secret sources or of the content of notes or outtakes. Once you reveal such knowledge, even to your news director, you forfeit your right to withhold the same information from the courts. When protecting sources, never promise a source complete confidentiality unless you're willing to go to jail indefinitely.

Whereas shield laws allow the journalist to protect confidential sources under certain circumstances, access or sunshine laws protect the journalist's ability to inspect records and other vital information that otherwise might be kept off-limits to the public.

Although most states allow television cameras and microphones into trial courts, permission normally is granted at the sole discretion of the trial judge, who may also require the defendant's or the attorney's consent. To help preserve the right to televise courtroom trials, reporters and photographers are obliged to dress appropriately for the courtroom environment,

and they must strive to create the fewest distractions possible and follow the judge's rules and instructions to the letter.

Copyright is conferred automatically upon works created after March 1, 1989. Neither publication nor copyright registration is required. Registration is required if you sue someone for using your work without permission. Legal protection is greatest if you register a work within 90 days of first publication, an action that could help you recover not only actual damages but significant statutory damages and attorney fees.

Fair use allows publication of representative samples of work, such as a quote, a video scene, book passage or one or two photos from a touring exhibit, without obtaining the copyright owner's permission, although what constitutes "fair use" is open to debate. Some firms that buy up others' copyrights trawl the Internet, hoping to reach lucrative settlements even for innocent infringements.

Generally, United States publications carry no copyright, although such works may still be copyrighted in other countries, and some publications may be withheld for reasons of national security, patent applications, and export control. The federal government does own the copyright to some donated works, and whenever an independent contractor assigns copyright back to the government. Whether a work is copyrighted or not, it must be attributed.

Works made for hire belong to the employer, or by virtue of a contract to create a "work for hire." You would not own copyright for contributions to a collective work, motion picture, or audio recording.

Plagiarism is the act of representing someone else's work as your own. To avoid the problem, seek permission to use the work, and be certain to attribute it. Otherwise, follow fair use guidelines and always attribute.

In all matters regarding law and the gathering and reporting of news, the best guide to the proper course of action is to be found in good judgment, fairness, taste, and a concern for the dignity and privacy of others. Beyond these considerations, remember the adage "When in doubt, seek help."

KEY TERMS

apparent authority

copyright

defamation

fair use

generic video

Internet

invasion of privacy

law

libel

limited invitation

plagiarism

pool coverage

shield laws

slander

subpoena

trespass

DISCUSSION

1. At what point during the reporting process must journalists be concerned about considerations of law? Explain your answer.
2. Discuss the potential chilling effect that litigation or the threat of litigation can have on video content. Provide an example or two as part of your response.
3. What right, if any, does the journalist have to gather the news?
4. Explain the customary definition of libel as it applies to digital journalists. Is it possible to “visually libel” a person with the video camera or through a television graphic?
5. What actions on the part of video journalists might constitute invasion of privacy?
6. What steps can the journalist take to avoid libel suits?
7. What are the most important actions a journalist can take to protect against charges of negligence in libel suits?
8. Discuss the Sullivan Rule as it applies to public figures or persons who have voluntarily placed themselves in the public view.
9. Why is it important to use caution when using police information as the main source of potentially defamatory statements?
10. Discuss the potentially dangerous journalistic practice of using generic video, also known as inadvertent cutaways, which can lead to libel and invasion of privacy suits. Suggest alternatives that can help the journalist avoid unsuspecting defamation or “guilt by illustration.”
11. Discuss the principle of apparent authority as it applies to invasion of privacy.
12. Explain the role of technology in creating new opportunities for trespass and invasion of privacy.
13. As part of a class discussion, address the following:
 - a. Common hazards associated with flying drones for recreation or as a hobby.
 - b. List FAA registration requirements, and penalties for flying drones without registration.
14. Search online for a minimum of ten video stories involving drones that address the following issues.
 - a. invading privacy
 - b. causing property damage
 - c. causing personal injury
 - d. creating hazardous flying conditions for commercial aircraft
 - e. “drone intrusions” into the airspace over and around active wildfires, and threats to firefighting pilots flying helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft.
 - f. intrusions into commercial airspace surrounding airports
 - g. hazardous incidents at or near sporting events

15. Even routine telephone use can lead to lawsuits for invasion of privacy. Describe steps the journalist can take to avoid legal problems, especially when making telephone recordings.
16. What precautions are essential for the journalist to observe in reporting news that involves children or juveniles?
17. Although shield laws may help the journalist protect a source's identity, that right can easily be forfeited. Explain how.
18. Discuss sunshine laws and the degree of protection they typically afford journalists and the public.
19. Discuss your views about the role of television in the courtroom. To what extent do you believe journalists should have an unqualified right to record and report courtroom trials? How do you respond to the Judicial Conference of the United States ruling in late 1994 to ban television cameras in federal courtrooms?
20. What standards of conduct and dress should the photojournalist observe when photographing courtroom trials?
21. What considerations should govern a journalist's relationship with jurors both during and after the trial?
22. When is legal to use other people's music, images, and words without their permission under the doctrine of fair use?
23. Discuss common limitations on what constitutes acceptable length or duration of material cited or used under provisions of fair use.

EXERCISES

1. Invite a commercial drone operator to address safe practices and regulations governing drone flight, and to demonstrate a commercial drone in operation.
2. Invite a news manager or public relations expert to discuss steps the organization routinely takes to avoid libel suits and other legal challenges. A number of stations conduct ongoing legal seminars to help news employees stay sensitive to legal issues and aware of changes in the law. Some stations may allow you to attend such seminars.
3. Interview a web, newspaper, or television reporter whose story has resulted in litigation.
4. You can request personal copies of pocket-sized legal references from many state bar, press, and broadcast associations. Such references commonly cover libel and invasion of privacy laws (including trespass and eavesdropping), and state laws that help protect the journalist's right of access to public records.
5. Attend a trial where television cameras are allowed in the courtroom and observe the procedures reporters and photographers follow.
6. Watch television, web or cable newscasts for the use of generic video or inadvertent cutaways that might potentially lead to libel or invasion of privacy suits.
7. Write a short letter to an imaginary trial judge requesting permission to shoot video at an

upcoming criminal trial. Attempt to anticipate and answer whatever objections a judge might have to your request.

8. Suggest reporter guidelines for recognizing where the limitations of “fair use” become “infringement of copyright.”

NOTES

- 1 See Judgments – Campbell v MGN Limited, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200304/ldjudgmt/jd040506/campbe-1.htm>, accessed January 29, 2017.
- 2 “Dealing with Foreign Legal Threats,” *Digital Media Law Project*, www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/dealing-foreign-legal-threats, published August 2015, accessed June 06, 2016.
- 3 David Kravets, “Newspaper Chain’s New Business Plan: Copyright Suits,” *Wired.com*, www.wired.com/threatlevel/2010/07/copyright-trolling-for-dollars/, published July 22, 2010. Accessed February 25, 2016.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Kravets, Op. Cit.
- 6 U.S. Supreme Court, *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, 376 U.S. 254 (1964), No. 39, Argued January 6, 1964, Decided March 9, 1964. For full text see www.supreme.justia.com/us/376/254/case.html
- 7 Jim Redmond, Frederick Shook, Dan Lattimore, and Laurie Lattimore-Volkman, *The Broadcast News Process*, 7th ed. (Englewood, CO: Morton, 2005).
- 8 “Beyond the Basics,” Federal Aviation Administration, www.faa.gov/uas/getting_started/fly_for_work_business/beyond_the_basics/, accessed July 11, 2016.
- 9 “First successful ship-to-shore drone delivery takes place in New Jersey,” *The Guardian*, www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/24/first-successful-ship-to-shore-drone-delivery-new-jersey?CMP=oth_b-aplnews_d-1, published June 24, 2016, accessed July 12, 2016.
- 10 “What’s Wrong with Illinois’ New Eavesdropping Law,” *Jurist Twenty*, www.jurist.org/hotline/2015/01/jacob-huebert-eavesdropping-law.php, published January 29, 2015, accessed March 1, 2016.
- 11 www.rcfp.org/rcfp/orders/docs/RECORDING.pdf
- 12 “Shop Talk at Thirty: A Case for Courtroom Cameras,” *RTNDA Digest*, as reprinted with permission from *Editor & Publisher*, from a speech delivered May 18, 1984 by Edward Estlow, president of the E. W. Scripps Company, before the Judicial Conference of the Sixth U.S. Circuit, 3.
- 13 www.rcfp.org/digital-journalists-legal-guide/access-courts, accessed May 22, 2016.
- 14 “TV Cameras Barred from Federal Courts,” *San Francisco Examiner*, September 22, 1994, A-11.
- 15 Tony Mauro, “Use It or Lose It,” *RTNDA Communicator* (August 1993), 9.
- 16 “History of Cameras in Courts,” www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/cameras-courts/history-cameras-courts, accessed September 14, 2016.
- 17 Radio-Television News Directors Association Legal Seminar, “Broadcast Coverage of the Courts,” Denver, CO, June 2, 1984.
- 18 Excerpted from “Cameras in Colorado Courtrooms,” (Aurora, CO: Colorado Broadcasters Association), 1983, and “Expanded media coverage of court proceedings,” Media Alert, Colorado Courts, ensuing from Colorado Supreme Court Rules, Chapter 38, Rule 2, Media Coverage of Court Proceedings, effective July 1, 2010, www.courts.state.co.us/userfiles/file/Court_Probation/20th_Judicial_District/

- Court%20Business%20Resorces/Instructions%20%28Administrative%20Order%2002-102%29%208-1-13.pdf ,accessed August 03, 2016.
- 19 Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998, www.copyright.gov/legislation/dmca.pdf, accessed February 24, 2016.
- 20 You can download a summary copy of *The Digital Millennium Copyright Act Of 1998* from the U.S. Copyright Office at www.copyright.gov/legislation/dmca.pdf
- 21 "Copyright Basics," *U.S. Copyright Office*, www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.pdf, accessed February 24, 2016.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Susan Montgomery, John Welch, and Tom Hemnes, "United States: Benefits of timely copyright registration," International Bar Association, Committee L News, Newsletter of the Intellectual Property and Entertainment Law; Committee of the Section on Business Law, Vol. 9, No. 1, www.foleyhoag.com/newscenter/publications/general/benefits-of-timely-copyright-registration.aspx, accessed January 11, 2011.
- 24 "Copyright Basics," *U.S. Copyright Office*, www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf, accessed February 25, 2016.
- 25 "Limitations on exclusive rights: Fair use: § 107," *Copyright Law of the United States of America Circular 92*, www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html, accessed January 23, 2017.
- 26 "What Every News Organization Needs to Know About Copyright Law", *RTDNA*, www.rtdna.org/article/what_every_news_organization_needs_to_know_about_copyright_law, accessed August 09, 2016.
- 27 "Copyright – Fair Use," *U.S. Copyright Office*, www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html, accessed January 11, 2011.
- 28 "Top 10 Rules for Limiting Legal Risk," *Knight Citizen News Network*, an initiative of J-Lab: The Institute for Interactive Journalism, accessed January 11, 2011.
- 29 "Reproductions of Copyrighted Works by Educators and Librarians," www.copyright.gov/circs/circ21.pdf, accessed April 29, 2016.
- 30 "Protecting Internet Platforms for Expression and Innovation," *Center for Democracy and Technology*, May 03, 2010, www.cdt.org/insight/protecting-internet-platforms-for-expression-and-innovation/, accessed January 11, 2010.
- 31 "Protecting Internet Platforms for Expression and Innovation" (Sec. 2: "EU and U.S. Policies Protect Intermediaries from Liability"), *Center for Democracy and Technology*, www.cdt.org/policy/protecting-internet-platforms-expression-and-innovation, accessed March 9, 2016.
- 32 "Copyright Law Meets the World Wide Web," www.acm.org/crossroads/xrds2-2/weblaw.html, accessed January 11, 2011.
- 33 Susan Kinzie, "An Education in the Dangers of Online Research," *Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/09/AR2008080901453.html, published August 10, 2008, accessed January 11, 2011.
- 34 See www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml.
- 35 See www.copyright.gov/circs/circ22.pdf.
- 36 See www.poynter.org/uncategorized/775/copyright-issues-and-answers/.
- 37 See www.universityofcalifornia.edu/copyright/permission.html.

- 38 See www.ehow.com/how_18035_permission-copyrighted-material.html.
- 39 "Frequently Asked Questions About Copyright: Issues Affecting the U.S. Government (Section 3.0 U.S. Government Works)," *CENDI* (the Commerce, Energy, NASA, Defense Information Managers Group), www.cendi.gov/publications/04-8copyright.html, accessed January 12, 2011.
- 40 "17 U.S.C. § 105. Subject matter of copyright: United States Government works," *Copyright Law of the United States of America and Related Laws Contained in Title 17 of the United States Code*, Circular 92, *U. S. Copyright Office*, www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html#105, accessed January 12, 2011.
- 41 "Can the government copyright its works? (3.6)," *Copyright Law, The [Stason] Ultimate Learn and Resource Center*, www.stason.org/TULARC/business/copyright/3-6-Can-the-government-copyright-its-works.html, accessed January 12, 2011.
- 42 "Freedom of Information Act Guide," *U.S. Department of Justice*, www.justice.gov/oip/foi-act.htm, accessed January 12, 2011.
- 43 "Frequently Asked Questions About Copyright: Issues Affecting the U.S. Government," *CENDI Copyright Task Group*, www.cendi.gov/publications/04-8copyright.html#317, accessed January 12, 2011.
- 44 *Ibid.*, (3.1.9)
- 45 "17 U.S.C. § 201 (D), Copyright Law of the United States of America and Related Laws Contained in Title 17 of the United States Code", Circular 92, Chapter 2, www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap2.html, accessed March 1, 2016, 2016.
- 46 "Frequently Asked Questions About Copyright: Issues Affecting the U.S. Government," (3.2.3) *CENDI Copyright Task Group*, www.cendi.gov/publications/04-8copyright.html#317, accessed January 12, 2011.
- 47 See www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html
- 48 "Copyright Basics," *U.S. Copyright Office*, www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf, accessed February 25, 2016.
- 49 "Works Made for Hire," *U.S. Copyright Office*, www.copyright.gov/circs/circ09.pdf, accessed February 29, 2016.

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

ETHICS: DEFINING YOUR CONTRACT WITH VIEWERS

Numerous journalists* make unethical decisions during their careers, sometimes further diminishing public trust and confidence in the profession. Some reporters use deception to expose deception, citing occasions when it may be necessary, even ethical, to break the law to expose a larger wrongdoing. A reporter working undercover may buy false documents, for example, to show how criminals create false identities. Others might misrepresent themselves as a patient's relative to gather evidence of nursing home fraud. Photojournalists, equally committed to serving the public good, may leap from concealed areas with cameras rolling to ambush unsuspecting adversaries. Later they may march with those same cameras, unannounced, into offices, businesses, and other private property.

The defense for such practices can be persuasive. "How else could we prove fraudulent practices at the cancer clinic unless we posed as cancer patients ourselves?" they ask. "If I hadn't sneaked a look at documents in the DA's office, our community might never have learned of prostitution kickbacks to local police," another maintains. "Television is a visual medium; how else can we demonstrate the national problem of illegally obtained passports unless we misrepresent the identities of crew and misrepresent the reasons we're shooting this footage?"

DEFINITION OF ETHICS

As such discussion implies, law and ethics are intertwined. Often, unethical activities also are illegal. Breaking and entering, theft, trespass, and intentional libel are but a few examples. However, ethics is a branch of philosophy, not of law, and the distinction between the two is clear. Whereas laws are rules of living and conduct enforced by an external authority (usually through penalties), ethics are the rules of living and conduct that you impose on yourself, or that your profession strongly suggests you should impose on yourself, but with few enforceable

* For simplification throughout this chapter, the term *journalist* signifies anyone involved in information gathering, packaging and dissemination, regardless of the platform, whether print, the web, or via commercial or public broadcast.

penalties. At its core, ethics include your own determination of what is fair, truthful, accurate, compassionate, and responsible conduct.

EFFECTS OF COMPETITION

Many ethical problems that reporters encounter come from knowing the competition is in head-to-head combat – and pushing hard (Figure 15.1). In their zeal to be first with the best story, some reporters overstep the boundaries that define ethical behavior. Every few years a reporter gains national notoriety for faking news stories or plagiarizing the work of fellow reporters. Other reporters trample lawns, snoop in mailboxes, misrepresent their identities, speak falsehoods to reticent news sources to force responses, stage news events, and generally conduct themselves unprofessionally. The public notices such transgressions and, over time, journalists and their profession may lose credibility because of it.

Gallup Poll interviews have long indicated mistrust in media. Today that trust has reached historical lows.¹ Only four in ten Americans say they trust mass media “a great deal” or “a fair



Figure 15.1 The pressures of competition to be first with the best story can significantly influence the journalist’s ethical and professional conduct.

Copyright © 2012–2016 Scott Rensberger

amount” to report the news “fully, accurately and fairly.”² Mainstream media have occasionally stumbled, to the point that even network news anchors admit to having embellished or otherwise “misremembered” events.³ Inaccurate or unbalanced citizen journalism and social media reporting further influence public regard for media accuracy. The journalist’s most valuable asset is not simply the headline-making story, but credibility itself. If the audience does not find the journalism profession credible, little else matters.

SITUATIONAL ETHICS

One story after another invites the reporter and photojournalist to redefine ethical conduct. The practice of judging a situation based on the good that will likely come from a particular course of action is called **situational ethics**. As a philosophical theory, situational ethics can either help or harm the journalist. Will coverage of a suicide attempt illuminate the helplessness of unemployment, or is the reporter’s first obligation to save the person’s life? Is it the photographer’s duty to rescue victims from an overturned school bus, or to shoot footage of the rescue for a story addressing the larger issue of school bus safety? The answers to such questions vary according to the story, its treatment, and the person covering the story.

Given that journalists as a class adhere to no universally accepted code of ethics, who then regulates the journalist’s conduct and establishes the norms for competence and ethical behavior? Traditionally, individuals and institutions throughout most levels of society have searched for methods to force journalists to conduct themselves ethically and to license them, if necessary, to achieve that objective.

LICENSING

On first inspection, the call to license journalists may not seem extraordinary. Before doctors or lawyers can practice their professions, they must complete rigorous study, demonstrate their competence before peers, and be licensed in the state in which they practice. By contrast, anyone can become a journalist by assigning oneself the title; no license or formal review of competence is required. Yet journalists remain as accountable to their clients as lawyers and doctors, and their ethical behavior must be equally above reproach. Why, then, should journalists not have to meet the same standards as other professionals?

In the United States, a predominant attitude has been that journalists cannot be licensed, because to do so would be to license their ideas. Only journalists who disseminated an approved doctrine might qualify for licenses. If a journalist’s point of view differs from that of a review board, who can reasonably say such difference constitutes “incompetence”?

Because every administration and special interest group wants to cast itself in the most favorable light, and wants its views heard above all others, concepts like “competence” and

“official doctrine” vary according to who is in power. If licensing were imposed, whose versions of truth should be used as the foundations on which to license journalists? Republicans? Democrats? Socialists? Protestants? Muslims? Jews? White supremacists? Abortion rights advocates? Right-to-life advocates? Hunting groups? Environmentalists? Conservative courts? Liberal courts? The most reasonable answer would seem to advocate the responsible dissemination of all ideas. Ultimately, the engine that drives a democracy is precisely the freedom to debate and to adopt and promote differing philosophies and points of view.

CONTRACT WITH THE PUBLIC

In the end, a far more powerful review board than any public agency or congressional law governs journalistic conduct in the United States. Each hour of each day, this same entity—the public—extends and renews the journalist’s license to operate, by virtue of its patronage. The author David Halberstam, a former New York Times correspondent who received the Pulitzer Prize for his reporting, once likened the journalist’s press card to a social credit card that is subject to periodic renewal. While this social credit card is not a formal document, it represents an extension of trust that viewers can withdraw at will and without advance notice. Even when the public overlooks a journalist’s indiscretions, there remains a group of peers, employers, and even advertisers who can bring powerful sanctions against that journalist.

Today, as suspicions of malpractice increase, disgruntled individuals ask in magazine and newspaper advertisements why reporters don’t at least practice the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), a code outsiders sometimes view as a rough equivalent of the Hippocratic Oath for physicians. However, no code of ethics could answer every dilemma the journalist faces in covering the news.

Protecting the Public Welfare

Ethical behavior requires that you minimize harm to others, whether that means respecting others’ right to privacy or obeying drone flight rules. As the SPJ Code of Ethics counsels, “Balance the public’s need for information against potential harm or discomfort.”⁴ Obey traffic laws, fly drones safely, respect people’s privacy, and treat other media organizations at the scene with respect. See the complete codes of ethics from the Society of Professional Journalists and the National Press Photographer’s Association following this chapter. Ethical guidelines and more about using drones in the field is available at www.dronejournalism.org/code-of-ethics/.

Another useful reference is the operations manual from the Drone Journalism Lab at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You can download this manual, sponsored by the Knight Foundation, at www.dronejournalismlab.org/manual.

AT ISSUE: IMAGE MANIPULATION

“Photographs have the kind of authority over imagination today, which the printed word had yesterday, and the spoken word before that. They seem utterly real. They come, we imagine, directly to us without human meddling, and they are the most effortless food for the mind conceivable.”

Walter Lippman, Public Opinion

Cultural values may have led earlier generations to believe in the inherent fairness and accuracy of reality-based video. Sometimes this category includes content on sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and other television and web-based reality programs. Such sites feature content ranging from comedy to satire, commentary, drama, personal perspectives, and political entertainment. They may turn to riveting and accurate reporting and analysis from time to time, provided it builds ratings or enhances their brand. In the main, however, they most often emphasize peer-to-peer communication, advertising, entertainment, satire, and comedy.

Note the distinction between reality-based video and reality-based programming. Reality programs may stage events; direct participants to perform certain activities; or imply through word, deed, and omission that what you’re watching is reality. Such programs may feature ordinary people in supposedly unscripted situations, but their primary emphasis is on entertainment and the sensational.

By contrast, legitimate video news organizations and comparable outlets strive to present accurate, fair, and impartial news content. They place primary emphasis on reporting, packaging and disseminating accurate visual reports *and stories* of news, public affairs, and extended formats such as investigative specials and documentaries.

We expect news organizations, then, never to omit essential information and to avoid all fraudulence, manipulation, deception, and misrepresentation. Their obligation is to fairly reconstruct or represent what actually happened, or to fairly portray the person or issue in question. This may require alerting viewers that they’re watching a staged or re-enacted event, but that it fairly and accurately depicts what happened.

Not all communication is true, of course. Reporters make mistakes, misunderstand what they see and hear, omit vital facts or main points, trust inaccurate information they’ve confirmed with multiple sources, or accept at face value what police and political sources tell them. Producers, assignment editors, and news directors sometimes influence story angles and content via personal bias, reliance upon assumptions or amended facts, or their inability to keep up with what’s happening in the field.

BOX 15.1 CLASSIC VIEWS OF ETHICAL NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY IN JOURNALISM

“Journalism,” says *Toledo Blade* ombudsman Jack Lessenberry, “is supposed to show the world as it is, not as we would like it to be. That is perfectly understood by anyone who gets into the business. To do otherwise is to lie not only to your boss, but to your market – the public you serve.”⁵

“Multimedia journalism demands that you learn how to gather and edit audio and video content, and write web-based articles, create podcasts, and sometimes produce blogs. Such multi-tasking invites journalists to create troublesome shortcuts,” says Rich Beckman, a multimedia storyteller and professor at the University of Miami, School of Communication. “We need ambient sound, but lack the time to record it on location. Why not just use stock sound available on-line or from the station’s audio library, or transfer an audio track from one soccer game and use it in another? The point is, ‘borrowed’ sound never amounts to actual content recorded at the source. It never existed until you created it. It is an inaccurate representation.”⁶

The same considerations apply to digitally-altered still photographs and video. While such editing may make an image more aesthetically pleasing, it may lead to distortion, falsehood or misrepresentation. Purists may argue that composition, exposure, even the photographic angle itself amount to editorial manipulation, thus impacting viewer perceptions of content and meaning. Audiences need to know they are watching reconstructions of actual events, rather than recreations embellished to create greater viewer appeal. For such reasons, many media organizations avoid image manipulation.⁷

Ethicists suggest it’s never acceptable to alter news photographs, even if the intent is to preserve “good taste”.⁸

MAKE YOUR CASE ABOUT DIGITAL MANIPULATION

In the main, either an employer provides ethical guidelines to follow, or else you must decide for yourself what is right or wrong. The following questions can help you define, perhaps challenge, your ethical viewpoints regarding digital manipulation. As you answer each question, please assume your mandate is to present accurate, fair, and impartial information at all times.

1. It’s often said, “Perception is reality.” How do you define the differences?
2. Consider the different meanings of “reality,” “perception,” and “a reality.” To what extent, if any, are these terms similar in meaning? How do they differ?
3. Do you believe it’s possible to capture what really happened with a single still or video camera, or even several cameras? Please explain your viewpoint.
4. In your experience, is it reasonable to assume every photographer will photograph or otherwise document the same event from the same locations, angles, focal length lens settings, camera settings, composition, time, or lighting conditions? If yes, please explain

- why you believe this. If you believe such an outcome is statistically impossible, explain how such differences in approach might impact the viewer's perception of reality.
5. Do you believe you have or will encounter situations in your own life where you must earn and keep the public trust? If yes, please list five representative situations that might require your most ethical conduct while gathering, writing, and editing the content in question.
 6. As a professional in a competitive media environment, is it possible to capture reality, or only to reconstruct a reasonable characterization of how you saw and photographed something?
 7. If two photographers cover the same event or issue, what might prevent audiences from coming away with the same perceptions of what happened or was considered? Could a still or video editor, graphic artist, or even a writer, similarly impact meanings through choice of words, artwork, or typography? Explain how or why not.
 8. Are not images much the same as words whose meanings people perceive subjectively, according to their own teaching, prior experience, and emotional makeup?
 9. To what extent does the still camera capture "truth." That is, can a single photo capture an accurate, representative portrayal of reality—whether of a subject, event, or issue—in a single photograph? Explain either how that might be possible, or why it's impossible. Provide an image that proves your point.
 - a. Is it possible to lie about or misrepresent reality with a still camera? With a video camera? Please explain your viewpoint.
 - b. Assume you're the manager at a newspaper, magazine or web production facility. The photo editor asks you to rule on a photo showing a winsome woman with facial blemishes. *"They create too many distractions,"* says the photo editor. *"You'd never notice her blemishes in person, but they dominate the photo."* Do you tell the editor to leave the photo as is, or to diminish or remove the blemishes with software? You might either decide, *"Leave the photo as is,"* or *"Let's make her look the same as she does in real life. That should harm no one."* As manager, what do you tell the photo editor, and how do you justify your decision to her?
 10. As a photographer, explain how you could manipulate viewer feelings (emotional responses) with a still or video camera. Further, explain how you could influence viewer feelings by manipulating images or video using software.
 11. Do you believe images or video can ever convey the same meaning as words? Why or why not?
 12. Is one picture ever worth a thousand words? If no, why not? If yes, how so?
 13. Is one word ever worth a thousand pictures? Please explain your viewpoint.
 14. It's said that images most often report to the heart, while the printed word reports first to the intellect. Do you believe that a viewer's emotional reaction originates from something in the images you recorded, or in how you recorded them – or both? Explain your reasoning.

15. To what extent do you believe it's acceptable for a legitimate news organization to manipulate still or video images using computer software?
16. Is a still photograph more accurate if you eliminate distractions that occurred naturally or unavoidably in the still photo you will show viewers? Assume, for example, you want to show a high school scoreboard but eliminate some tennis shoes that belong to students standing behind the scoreboard? Your editor says "change nothing." How do you make a case that it's fair to eliminate unnecessary distractions, whether in writing or in images? Contrast your answer with the notion that journalists omit much of what they observe in written reports. Are not their omissions made to reinforce clarity? In what ways is the written report different from editing a photo to enhance clarity or eliminate distractions and the non-essential?
17. Do you believe it's acceptable to use software to change the exposure or contrast in a photo?
18. Back to the scoreboard: what will you say and do if the same editor who told you not to eliminate legs and feet, now wants you to enhance the same shot's exposure and contrast so viewers can see minute but important detail that otherwise would remain invisible? What if the winning coach could see game time remaining, but the losing coach couldn't see the scoreboard against the sun's glare? If the story hinges on the losing coach's inability to see the scoreboard, what should the image show? If the story hinges on the winning coach's advantage, what should the image show? Which best represents "reality" or what actually happened?
19. Composition sometimes is defined as showing viewers what you want them to see. Is it acceptable to recompose a shot with your camera while in the field?
20. Is it ever acceptable to crop or recompose a shot with software after you return from the field?
21. Is it acceptable while in the field to soften contrast or color if you only use lens filters or change exposure? How about using software after you return from the field? What do you say if a team member or superior demands that your still photo or video is "too harsh – make it look like it really was just before dawn"?
22. Long focal length lenses, wide apertures, and long distances between a subject and your camera can result in backgrounds that appear out of focus. Should you ever use a certain focal length lens, or perhaps change distance between the camera and subject to place viewer attention where you want it within the frame? To sharpen focus or soften it? Is it acceptable to use software to manipulate the image after you return from the field? Why or why not? Under what conditions, if any?
23. Is composing a shot or scene in the field more ethical than recomposing or cropping it with computer software? If so, in what way?
24. Zooming in no way replicates how viewers see an event. The human eye never zooms. Is a zoom therefore ethically permissible in video shots? Why or why not?

25. The human eye cannot pan a scene like a video camera does. The eye looks here, then there, and forms a composite of all the “shots” it takes. Is a panning movement therefore ethically prohibited? Why or why not?
26. Assume that a person photographed under indoor fluorescent light shows up on screen with a greenish skin tone. Later in a video story or photo spread, a different person photographed under incandescent light appears orangish-yellow. In both cases, the photographer forgot about color balance. Is it ethically warranted to digitally manipulate these shots to more accurately portray a person as they appear in real life? Please explain your position. Does your answer conflict with anything you’ve said elsewhere in this section?
27. A renowned media ethicist conducts an ethics workshop at your organization. During the presentation, she shows two video network news stories, both identical except for one difference. The original photographer produced both videos, using the same equipment, with the same settings and composition, and edited them identically. The first video tells the story on a sunny day; the second video shows the story on a rainy, fog-shrouded day. Viewers saw only one story, not both. In your view, does one version distort the “truth” more than another? Could viewers watch either video and come away with the same understanding and sense of place? a) Please explain why or why not. *Note:* You may have read elsewhere that the heart of most good stories lies in how story subjects react to situations that confront them. b) Could both stories convey the journalist’s identical message and focus, or would the weather—and changes in mood and subject reaction — alter what viewers remember about the story and the central character?

CASE STUDIES IN ETHICAL DILEMMAS

With few opportunities to define ethical standards under the pressure of deadlines and instant reporting, journalists must establish solid editorial and ethical philosophies before those dilemmas arise. The following situations are offered to help the reporter and photojournalist accomplish that objective. They encompass such situations as trespass, illegal surveillance, and invasion of privacy. As in most ethical deliberations, there are few answers, mostly questions.

As you consider the following ethical situations,⁹ you might want to know that professional journalists were divided in roughly equal numbers about whether to proceed in such circumstances or to avoid becoming involved. Panels that addressed these issues convened at the NPPA Television News-Video Workshop. Panel members included news directors, photographers, and reporters. The legal principles raised here are addressed in Chapter 14, “Digital Media Law.” You’ll find a discussion of each situation at the end of this chapter.

Trespass

Case 1. Safety officials have condemned an abandoned, privately owned building and posted it as unfit for human habitation. The owner has constructed a fence to keep out transients and children who might otherwise enter. “No trespassing” signs are prominently posted. Last evening a child died and two others were injured when a stairway collapsed inside the building. A community citizens group says the building is one of dozens that pose such dangers. You are assigned to shoot video and a reporter standup inside the building. You can’t locate the owner to obtain permission to enter the building, but police suggest they might look the other way should you decide to trespass. Will you enter the building illegally or stay out?

Case 2. You are researching an investigative report about a palm reader who is said to con elderly people out of their life savings. You visit the palm reader at her place of business and she tells you to get lost. Later you decide to visit her at her residence. A “No trespassing” sign is posted on the front gate of the fence around her property. Will you go up to her house and knock on the door? Will you jump the fence if the gate is locked?

Surveillance Photography

The palm reader regularly invites elderly people to her residence, where you believe she conducts many of her con operations. One night you notice she has left the curtains open and the shades up, and you can see her sitting at a table with people who appear to be clients. Will you stand on the street and photograph the woman’s activities through the open window? Will you try to obtain sound with a shotgun or long range microphone?

Hostage Coverage

Case 1. A man who is emotionally disturbed holds hostages inside a sleazy bar. He says he’ll kill one of the hostages unless he can broadcast a message to his wife. Police ask you to loan them your video camera so two of their officers can pose as a reporter–photographer crew to gain entry to the bar. You don’t have time to contact the assignment desk or news director for advice. What will you decide?

Case 2. A distraught father holds his children hostage in a private home. Through the window he can see your camera. He opens the door and shouts that he’ll kill himself unless you leave the area. Unknown to the man, police plan to rush the house in about fifteen minutes, and your assignment editor has told you not to miss the action. Do you retreat? When police rush the house, do you follow right behind them to photograph this dramatic, if unpredictable and possibly dangerous, moment?

Entrapment

To show how easy it is for minors to buy liquor, you send a seventeen-year-old minor into a couple of liquor stores, record video of the purchases through the store windows with a long lens from a van across the street, then walk into both stores, camera rolling, to interview the clerks. The clerks protest that you are guilty of entrapment and ambush journalism. How do you reply?

Invasion of Privacy

You wish to document an historic medical procedure in which your cameras would peer inside the patient's body. The patient is too ill to respond to your request. The doctors will give their approval, provided the patient's family doesn't object. You tell the family your audience has the right to see this moment of history unfolding. The family says, "Sorry, but we don't want our relative to become a sideshow for TV people. Permission denied." What should you do next?

Violence

Case 1. You cover a demonstration that turns violent. Four persons are injured. Your camera is rolling as a demonstrator steps into the frame, shoots, and kills a police dog. Police club some demonstrators. Elsewhere, demonstrators threaten police officers with baseball bats. Will you show this violence to give the audience an accurate portrayal of the event?

Case 2. You're photographing a federal informer as he walks along a courthouse hallway between two marshals. Suddenly a man steps from a staircase and shoots the informer dead. You capture the event on video. Will you show the scene of the killing on tonight's news? What if your competition shows it?

Protecting Confidential Sources

You're preparing a story on a radical terrorist group. You promise not to reveal sources or confidential information when you first talk with the terrorist leader. Later he tells you the group has lost control of one of its members who plans to bomb the federal court building tomorrow night. Will you go to the police or FBI with your information?

Breaking and Entering

You're producing a half-hour special on drug use in your city and have learned the address of a drug dealer. You go to the house, but no one answers when you knock on the door. You then notice that a window is open. You determine the house is vacant. Will you climb inside to check out the place or will you not enter the house?

Destroying Police Evidence

A person has been stabbed to death in a hotel. You arrive with your camera just as police arrive. The detective, an old acquaintance, tells you to go in, shoot your video, and leave before crime

lab technicians arrive. He says if you don't act now, the technicians won't let you in for fear you might disturb evidence, perhaps even destroy clues to the murderer's identity. The detective doesn't seem all that worried that your presence inside the room might destroy evidence. Do you shoot the murder scene or not enter the room at all?

Televising Executions

Your state has approved your right to stream and televise live broadcasts of executions. Your manager believes the public is ready for live broadcasts, and wants to record the execution for broadcast during the late evening news for the event's "deterrent value." The general manager also has endorsed a delayed broadcast of the execution, holding that if a society endorses capital punishment, then citizens should see the consequences. What do you say – and do?

Covering Suicide Attempts

Case 1. You're en route to work when your assignment editor calls you about a woman who's threatened to jump from a bridge with her one-year-old child in her arms unless her estranged husband returns immediately and makes up his arrears in alimony. You're one of the first people on the scene. When you arrive, the mother makes a further demand that your station broadcast a live appeal from her to her husband. A woman who identifies herself as the distraught woman's mother runs up to her daughter, clutches her, and says to you, "Put down that damn camera and help me grab her!" Do you put down your camera, or do you continue to record video?

Case 2. An emotionally disturbed man has perched himself atop an office building and says he plans to jump to his death because long-term unemployment has made it impossible to provide for his family. He's called your newsroom and competing stations to publicize his planned suicide. Do you cover the event?

Illegally Obtained Information

You're at the district attorney's office. He leaves the room to find some information you've requested. While you wait, you notice an interesting file folder lying open on his desk. Do you look at the top page? The top three or four pages? Do you make notes if the information appears to be of interest? If the file folder is closed, would you open it, especially if you believe it could provide information that appears to be critically important to a story you're doing?

Yielding Editorial Control of News Content

A truck carrying nuclear warheads overturns on a highway in your area. The defense department prohibits any photographers at the area on grounds of safety and national security. Defense department officials say they will escort reporters into the area and permit them to

photograph selected views of the accident, on condition they submit all video recordings for defense department screening before they are aired. Should you agree to these conditions to obtain footage?

Cooperating with Police

Inside an office building, now surrounded by a SWAT team, an armed man has shot out several windows and asked for a live television interview so he can broadcast his message to the public. Officers say that unless they can impersonate your crew, they may have to storm the building with resulting injury or loss of life. They promise you can air any of the footage they manage to record. If you hand over your credentials and camera to the police, will you air any footage or interviews the police manage to shoot? If you don't hand over your camera, would you use video the police later shot with their own camera?

Private Lives of Public Officials

What will you do if you are the first to confirm information that a prominent individual, perhaps a state senator, is having an affair? Has been diagnosed as having a serious but not life-threatening illness? Is undergoing psychiatric counseling for marital difficulties? Is showing early signs of senility in everyday conduct, which, although not evident to the public, is readily apparent to a loyal staff? Is an alcoholic or abuses other drugs? Is gay or lesbian?

Misrepresentation

Case 1. You are sitting in a bar where you happen to engage in a conversation with the new city attorney. The attorney thinks you're just another person at the bar and begins to open up, pouring out information that would make a great story. At this point do you tell the attorney you're a reporter or do you hide the fact?

Case 2. You're investigating a person's death that occurred under mysterious circumstances. Relatives won't talk with reporters, but your supervisor suggests you pose as a coroner's assistant to obtain information from them. Will you act on this suggestion?

Accepting Favors

Few news operations allow employees to accept favors from news sources. In the past such favors have included free airline, sporting events, and concert tickets; books; meals; magazine subscriptions; taxi fares and limousine service. Freebies are dangerous precisely because of their intent: to obligate journalists to news sources in the hope of at least some coverage or more favorable coverage.

Today the general wisdom is that if the public pays, so does the journalist. If the story is newsworthy, the organization can afford to cover it. Most journalists would agree that it

is permissible to accept something as insignificant in value as a cup of coffee or an hors d'oeuvre at a charity ball that is equally free to the general public.

Reporting in Context

The video camera is notorious for its ability to isolate events from the larger environments in which they exist. The camera, focusing naturally on the drama and the spontaneous evolution of an event, can turn the reality of a few flooded streets into the illusion of a flood-ravaged city. It can make the angry faces of a few hundred protesters seem like a mob of thousands, or the towering flames of an apartment house fire seem like a reenactment of the burning of Atlanta.

No news report makes its journey into the minds of all viewers intact, and the potential for misunderstanding increases when events are reported out of context. The next time protesters rally against a property tax increase to fund more parks and green belts, it may be appropriate to contrast the protesters' viewpoint with the rest of the city's residents. Although it is important to show the event, and to provide a vicarious experience of what happened, it is equally important to place the story in perspective.

REVERSE-ANGLE QUESTIONS

As in all questions of ethics, the overriding precaution is to do nothing that would unjustifiably inflict damage on others or that anyone could misperceive and later use to damage your credibility. The advice applies to the practice of shooting reverse-angle questions after the interviewee has left the scene. Perhaps the reporter has phrased the question ineptly and wishes to restate it more articulately, this time on camera, or perhaps the reverse-angle question will be used during editing to condense the interview with no loss of visual continuity.

To preserve your integrity, ask reverse-angle questions while the interviewee is still present. Offer the interviewee a simple explanation of the need for such a shot. Otherwise, accusations may surface that the interview was edited out of context or that the interviewee was made to appear to say things he or she never said and does not believe.

STAGED NEWS EVENTS

Occasionally you may need to stage an event to be photographed. In fact, numerous events and interviews are staged – their time, location, and even the content and context determined in advance (Figure 15.2). Such staging is normally acceptable because it's so apparent to the viewer. The audience recognizes that no one can force interviewees to answer questions against their will, although unethical reporters have been known to coach persons to answer interview questions with predetermined answers. When we stage unfairly, we create something that did not exist. It would not have happened in our absence. When we stage fairly, we recreate what already existed, what would have happened even in our absence.



Figure 15.2 Media events are one example of stories that are staged in the sense that the time, location, and even the general content and context of the event are determined in advance.

Scott Rensberger

Not every instance of staging needs to be identified. No breach of ethics should occur if you ask subjects to perform some action common to their everyday routine that, even in your absence, they would normally perform anyway. You might, for instance, wish to ask a person to come through the door to her office again, so you can reshoot the scene from a more appropriate angle. Perhaps an artist is not working in her studio the day you wish to shoot. No loss of public confidence should result if you ask the artist to sit down in the studio and paint for a few minutes, so you can shoot some video for your story. It is perhaps less ethical to tell the artist where to sit, how to sit, or what to paint, or to rearrange any part of the studio or any other environment to create a more pleasing composition for your own shots.

REENACTMENTS

Reenactment also is occasionally permissible, especially when you believe viewers will understand and support your decision to reenact an event or situation. Perhaps you want to

show how psychiatrists treat child abuse victims, but don't wish to interrupt therapy or invade the actual victim's privacy. Use reenactments sparingly, and anytime you do reenact an event, tell your audience. They will respect your candor, and have further reason to believe what you show and tell them.

FILE VIDEO

Always identify file video to prevent any possibility viewers would assume the old video is current. Many media organizations label such video "File," "File Video," or "Library Footage" and often include the date it first aired. Often, you may have only a few crucial seconds of video to illustrate a story that advances over time (stale footage showing the aftermath of an airline crash as the investigation advances over weeks, months, or even years, or perhaps old footage of a murder suspect walking to court as the trial, sentencing, and appeal processes run their course). Ideally, use such file video sparingly and try to advance it over time to avoid endless repetition.

MATERIAL PROVIDED BY OUTSIDE SOURCES

Equally important is the need to identify all video that comes from any source outside your organization. Normally, the origin of network and news syndication stories is self-evident. In everything from mic flags, screen graphics, and reporter signoffs, the authorship and logos of network and syndication services receive obvious and prominent treatment. The biggest problem occurs with electronic press kits and footage from businesses, public relations firms, government agencies, and other special interest groups. Such stories are free of cost; reduced budgets make their use tempting. News organizations frequently produce their own stories from such footage, updating and localizing the material as warranted, and may use their own reporters and anchors to voice such stories from the studio. Unless stations identify the source, audiences have no way of knowing the story may represent a special interest point of view.

TOWARD AN INDIVIDUAL CODE OF ETHICS

Ethics can be thought of as promoting fair play, even for those individuals and institutions we dislike. Often the best response to a news situation is detachment, the hallmark on which objective reporting is founded. But ethical reporting is more than the simple transmission of facts and truth, and it is more than fairness and accuracy. It is also the dedication to good taste and to a regard for human dignity and life. Not infrequently, ethical reporting is possible only when the journalist has made a much broader ethical commitment to be sensitive in reporting how others live, believe, and behave.¹⁰ Sensitivity and compassion are not frequently mentioned as journalistic virtues or as prerequisites for employment, but they are qualities the public can rightfully demand from a profession often noted, and occasionally disdained, for its cynicism.

As you develop a personal code of ethics, you may wish to consider the following guidelines. They form the basis for many individual codes of ethics in journalism:

- Report only information that you know to be accurate, fair, and complete.
- Tell your audience what you don't know.
- If you make a mistake, tell your audience.
- Respect the privacy of others.
- Do nothing to misrepresent your identity.
- Whenever you disclose information that damages a person's reputation, disclose the source.
- Leave the making of secret recordings to authorized officials.
- Respect the right of all individuals to a fair trial.
- Promise confidentiality to a source only if you are willing to be jailed to protect the source.
- Pay for your own meals, travel, special events tickets, books, music, personal items, and services.
- Accept only gifts, admissions, and services that are free of obligation and equally available to the public.
- Avoid outside employment or other activities that might damage your ability to report fairly or might appear to influence your ability to be fair.
- Avoid making endorsements of products or institutions.
- Guard against arrogance and bad taste in your reports.
- Stay out of bushes and dark doorways.
- Never break a law to expose a wrong.

Many news organizations also encourage employees to follow guidelines in the Radio Television Digital News Association (**RTDNA**) and National Press Photographers Association (**NPPA**) codes of ethics.

BOX 15.2 CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Radio Television Digital News Association

The RTDNA Code of Ethics does not dictate what journalists should do in every ethical predicament; rather it offers resources to help journalists make better ethical decisions—on and off the job—for themselves and for the communities they serve.

Journalism is distinguished from other forms of content by these guiding principles:

Truth and accuracy above all

- The facts should get in the way of a good story. Journalism requires more than merely reporting remarks, claims, or comments. Journalism verifies, provides relevant context, tells the rest of the story, and acknowledges the absence of important additional information.

- For every story of significance, there are always more than two sides. While they may not all fit into every account, responsible reporting is clear about what it omits, as well as what it includes.
- Scarce resources, deadline pressure, and relentless competition do not excuse cutting corners factually or oversimplifying complex issues.
- “Trending,” “going viral”, or “exploding on social media” may increase urgency, but these phenomena only heighten the need for strict standards of accuracy.
- Facts change over time. Responsible reporting includes updating stories and amending archival versions to make them more accurate and to avoid misinforming those who, through search, stumble upon outdated material.
- Deception in newsgathering, including surreptitious recording, conflicts with journalism’s commitment to truth. Similarly, anonymity of sources deprives the audience of important, relevant information. Staging, dramatization and other alterations—even when labeled as such—can confuse or fool viewers, listeners, and readers. These tactics are justified only when stories of great significance cannot be adequately told without distortion, and when any creative liberties taken are clearly explained.
- Journalism challenges assumptions, rejects stereotypes, and illuminates—even where it cannot eliminate—ignorance.
- Ethical journalism resists false dichotomies—either/or, always/never, black/white thinking—and considers a range of alternatives between the extremes.

Independence and transparency

- Editorial independence may be a more ambitious goal today than ever before. Media companies, even if not-for-profit, have commercial, competitive, and other interests—both internal and external—from which the journalists they employ cannot be entirely shielded. Still, independence from influences that conflict with public interest remains an essential ideal of journalism. Transparency provides the public with the means to assess credibility and to determine who deserves trust.
- Acknowledging sponsor-provided content, commercial concerns, or political relationships is essential, but transparency alone is not adequate. It does not entitle journalists to lower their standards of fairness or truth.
- Disclosure, while critical, does not justify the exclusion of perspectives and information that are important to the audience’s understanding of issues.
- Journalism’s proud tradition of holding the powerful accountable provides no exception for powerful journalists or the powerful organizations that employ them. To profit from reporting on the activities of others while operating in secrecy is hypocrisy.
- Effectively explaining editorial decisions and processes does not mean making excuses. Transparency requires reflection, reconsideration, and honest openness to the possibility that an action, however well intended, was wrong.
- Ethical journalism requires owning errors, correcting them promptly and giving corrections as much prominence as the error itself had.
- Commercial endorsements are incompatible with journalism because they compromise credibility. In journalism, content is gathered, selected, and produced in the best interests

of viewers, listeners, and readers – not in the interests of somebody who paid to have a product or position promoted and associated with a familiar face, voice, or name.

- Similarly, political activity and active advocacy can undercut the real or perceived independence of those who practice journalism. Journalists do not give up the rights of citizenship, but their public exercise of those rights can call into question their impartiality.
- The acceptance of gifts or special treatment of any kind not available to the general public creates conflicts of interest and erodes independence. This does not include the access to events or areas traditionally granted to working journalists in order to facilitate their coverage. It does include “professional courtesy” admission, discounts, and “freebies” provided to journalists by those who might someday be the subject of coverage. Such goods and services are often offered as enticements to report favorably on the giver or rewards for doing so; even where that is not the intent, it is the reasonable perception of a justifiably suspicious public.
- Commercial and political activities, as well as the acceptance of gifts or special treatment, cause harm even when the journalists involved are “off duty” or “on their own time.”
- Attribution is essential. It adds important information that helps the audience evaluate content and it acknowledges those who contribute to coverage. Using someone else’s work without attribution or permission is plagiarism.

Accountability for consequences

- Journalism accepts responsibility, articulates its reasons and opens its processes to public scrutiny.
- Journalism provides enormous benefits to self-governing societies. In the process, it can create inconvenience, discomfort, and even distress. Minimizing harm, particularly to vulnerable individuals, should be a consideration in every editorial and ethical decision.
- Responsible reporting means considering the consequences of both the newsgathering—even if the information is never made public—and of the material’s potential dissemination. Certain stakeholders deserve special consideration; these include children, victims, vulnerable adults, and others inexperienced with American media.
- Preserving privacy and protecting the right to a fair trial are not the primary mission of journalism; still, these critical concerns deserve consideration and to be balanced against the importance or urgency of reporting.
- The right to broadcast, publish or otherwise share information does not mean it is always right to do so. However, journalism’s obligation is to pursue truth and report, not withhold it. Shying away from difficult cases is not necessarily more ethical than taking on the challenge of reporting them. Leaving tough or sensitive stories to non-journalists can be a disservice to the public.

RTDNA also offers coverage guidelines for use on a range of ethical issues at www.rtdna.org/content/coverage_guidelines.

*Revised Code of Ethics adopted June 11, 2015.
Reprinted by permission of the Radio Television Digital News Association.*

BOX 15.3 CODE OF ETHICS

National Press Photographers Association

Preamble

The National Press Photographers Association, a professional society that promotes the highest standards in visual journalism, acknowledges concern for every person's need both to be fully informed about public events and to be recognized as part of the world in which we live.

Visual journalists operate as trustees of the public. Our primary role is to report visually on the significant events and varied viewpoints in our common world. Our primary goal is the faithful and comprehensive depiction of the subject at hand. As visual journalists, we have the responsibility to document society and to preserve its history through images.

Photographic and video images can reveal great truths, expose wrongdoing and neglect, inspire hope and understanding and connect people around the globe through the language of visual understanding. Photographs can also cause great harm if they are callously intrusive or are manipulated.

This code is intended to promote the highest quality in all forms of visual journalism and to strengthen public confidence in the profession. It is also meant to serve as an educational tool both for those who practice and for those who appreciate photojournalism. To that end, The National Press Photographers Association sets forth the following.

Code of Ethics

Visual journalists and those who manage visual news productions are accountable for upholding the following standards in their daily work:

1. Be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects.
2. Resist being manipulated by staged photo opportunities.
3. Be complete and provide context when photographing or recording subjects. Avoid stereotyping individuals and groups. Recognize and work to avoid presenting one's own biases in the work.
4. Treat all subjects with respect and dignity. Give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy. Intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see.
5. While photographing subjects do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events.
6. Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects.

7. Do not pay sources or subjects or reward them materially for information or participation.
8. Do not accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.
9. Do not intentionally sabotage the efforts of other journalists.

Ideally, visual journalists should:

1. Strive to ensure that the public's business is conducted in public. Defend the rights of access for all journalists.
2. Think proactively, as a student of psychology, sociology, politics, and art to develop a unique vision and presentation. Work with a voracious appetite for current events and contemporary visual media.
3. Strive for total and unrestricted access to subjects, recommend alternatives to shallow or rushed opportunities, seek a diversity of viewpoints, and work to show unpopular or unnoticed points of view.
4. Avoid political, civic, and business involvements or other employment that compromise or give the appearance of compromising one's own journalistic independence.
5. Strive to be unobtrusive and humble in dealing with subjects.
6. Respect the integrity of the photographic moment.
7. Strive by example and influence to maintain the spirit and high standards expressed in this code. When confronted with situations in which the proper action is not clear, seek the counsel of those who exhibit the highest standards of the profession. Visual journalists should continuously study their craft and the ethics that guide it.

Reprinted by permission of the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA).

SUMMARY

Ethics are rules of living and conduct that you impose on yourself or those your profession strongly suggests you should follow. Laws, by contrast, are rules of living and conduct that are enforced by an external authority, usually by means of penalties.

The pressures of competition tempt some journalists to commit unethical practices. Sooner or later, however, such acts end up reflecting unfavorably on the profession at large. Other problems can result when journalists practice situational ethics, the practice of determining what to do from one situation to the next on the basis of the good that will likely result from a particular course of action.

In the absence of a universally accepted code of ethics, it falls to the individual journalist to determine what is good and bad, right and wrong, fair and unfair. Given the indiscretions of some journalists, ranging from accepting favors and staging news to trespass and entrapment,

some groups and individuals would seek to impose their own notions of ethical behavior on journalists and to license them. However, ideas are difficult to license.

In the end, the public extends to journalists somewhat the equivalent of a license to operate through its trust and patronage. Without these fundamental components in place, no journalist can be heard.

KEY TERMS

ethics

NPPA

RTDNA

situational ethics

DISCUSSION

1. Describe the essential differences between ethics and law.
2. Based on your observations of news coverage and promotion, discuss how the pressures of competition can influence the journalist's ethical decisions.
3. Discuss what role situational ethics should play in your professional career.
4. Describe from personal observation any reporting practices with which you disagree.
5. Discuss your views about the wisdom of licensing journalists to (a) certify journalistic competency and (b) help ensure fairness in reporting.
6. In the absence of review boards and licensing boards for journalists, what other forces exist to help ensure that the journalist reports fairly and competently?
7. Under what circumstances, if any, are reenactments of stories ethically defensible?
8. Should a journalist refuse all gifts or just those above a certain value (ten dollars and higher? twenty-five dollars and up)? What about a cup of coffee at a restaurant? A drink at a bar? A meal? A movie ticket?
9. Under what circumstances is it acceptable for a journalist to hold another paying job, say as a speechwriter for a public relations company or as a video editor for an industrial telecommunications company?
10. As a journalist, when is it permissible for you to accept pay from a special interest group for a speech you make? To shoot video for a paid political spot?
11. When is it acceptable for you to publish information about a public official that you learned secondhand because your spouse or friend works in close association with that public official?
12. Under what circumstances, if any, is secret recording ethical?

EXERCISES

1. Respond to your choice of any five of the ethical conflict situations that begin on page 316 of this chapter, and defend your answers.
2. Choose five individuals to play the roles of (1) assignment editor, (2) news director, (3) person in the news, (4) photographer, and (5) reporter. Ask penetrating questions to prompt

the various individuals to respond to the ethical conflict situations beginning on page 316 and lead them to defend their responses.

3. Invite working journalists, perhaps a reporter–photographer team from a local station, to describe how they would react to the ethical conflict situations outlined in this chapter.
4. Make a list of favors you would accept without reservation from news sources and those you would refuse to accept under any circumstances. Explain your decisions.
5. Construct a personal code of journalistic ethics that you will follow as a working professional.

DISCUSSION OF ETHICAL CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Following are discussions of possible scenarios in response to the ethical conflict situations posed on pages 316–320. Your answers may vary, and you can expect a spirited defense of differing points of view whether you raise these issues in class discussion or with working professionals. In the end, there is no “right” answer, unless the response you advocate runs counter to humanitarian considerations; would harm an individual’s safety, reputation, or mental well-being; results in the breaking of a law; or runs contrary to your station’s ethical guidelines.

Trespass

Case 1. You could be guilty of trespassing unless you obtain permission to enter the building. If you are unable to locate the owner, ask a police officer to give you permission to enter the building. If you are later challenged, you can at least cite your decision to act based on “apparent authority.”

Case 2. Even with a “No trespassing” sign on the front gate, there would seem to be little harm in knocking on the woman’s door. You have virtually no other way to announce your presence. If the gate is locked and you jump the fence, however, you may be guilty of trespassing.

Surveillance Photography

If the palm reader leaves her curtains open and her shades up, she might be expected to know that someone might try to take a picture. If you attempt to record sound with a shotgun or long range mic, however, the judge might rule the palm reader had a reasonable expectation to privacy in her private conversations, even though her windows were open.

Hostage Coverage

Case 1. In this instance, the police have chosen to misrepresent their identity. If you hand over your camera, you have chosen only to lend the police a camera. If the man holding hostages calls your company to confirm that the individuals with your camera are station employees, not police, serious harm could result to the hostages, especially if the assignment desk or manager is uninformed of your decision.

Case 2. In the first instance, retreat. Don't endanger the man's life or his children's lives. In the second instance, when police do rush the house, your decision to follow immediately behind the police involves your own safety. No story is worth your life.

Entrapment

You have asked a minor to break the law by purchasing liquor, a common example of breaking the law to expose a wrongdoing. This job may be better left to police. You can then record the purchase through the window with a long lens from a van parked across the street, because generally you can photograph anything that you can see from a public location. The tactic of walking, unannounced, into the liquor store with camera rolling is less ethical. Ambush journalism gives interview subjects no time to collect their thoughts or to respond to questions in a rational, thoughtful way.

Invasion of Privacy

Honor the family's wishes. Wait for another day and another time when you do have permission. If you are convinced your cause is right, state your case once again, gently.

Violence

Case 1. The violence is the most eloquent statement you have to communicate the essence of this story. To edit it out would be to portray the demonstration as far more benign than it was. Be cautious, however, to avoid showing activities that would violate ordinary sensibilities and good taste.

Case 2. Some stations air such footage, others convert it to a still-frame image or graphic. Some viewers will expect to see the actual footage; other viewers will be outraged if you show it. The judgment call is yours.

Protecting Confidential Sources

The first step could be for you to plead with your source to inform the police or FBI himself. Otherwise, you might notify the police anonymously, without naming your source or his group, although such action would violate your promise not to reveal confidential information. You might also wish to inform your source of your decision to call police. If you fail to tell police, your decision could result in property damage and injury or death to innocent persons.

Breaking and Entering

Stay outside. Call police. Cover the action if they decide to enter the premises.

Destroying Police Evidence

You are better off staying outside. Murder trials can be lost over allegations of destruction of evidence.

Televising Executions

If viewers are given sufficient warning and time to prepare for a delayed television or web broadcast, then they can choose to watch or tune away as they wish. Unsuspecting viewers, however, may still tune into the delayed broadcast. To broadcast the execution live might capitalize on the event more for sensational or shock value, because an understanding of capital punishment and its deterrent value is far more complex than watching a person being put to death on live television.

Covering Suicide Attempts

Case 1. Delay the woman by calling the station. Do what you can to help save her and her child. Human decency and compassion take precedence over this story.

Case 2. Do not cover the story. If you do, you will be subject to this form of modified “hostage taking” for months to come. Anyone with a message could threaten suicide and expect you to come running.

Illegally Obtained Information

Keep your eyes where they belong. Curiosity might kill the cat in this case, especially if the DA has planted the folder for your benefit anyway. Even if the information were accurate, it would be illegally or at least unethically obtained.

Yielding Editorial Control of News Content

Air the footage, provided you tell viewers how it was obtained. You may want to do a follow-up story at a later time to show the potential consequences of moving hazardous materials through populated areas.

Cooperating with Police

Air the footage and interviews, provided you inform your audience how the footage was obtained.

Private Lives of Public Officials

If the official’s situation affects his or her ability to conduct the office, report it. Otherwise, let the information remain private. If the competition reports information that you believe should be kept private, refrain from reporting it. Most members of your audience will respect your decision.

Misrepresentation

Case 1. Inform the city attorney of your identity when he first begins to take you into his confidence.

Case 2. The misrepresentation of a journalist's identity may lead viewers to discredit the honor and integrity of all journalists. Don't pose as the coroner's assistant.

NOTES

- 1 Americans' Trust in Media Remains at Historical Low," www.gallup.com/poll/185927/americans-trust-media-remains-historical-low.aspx. Published September 28, 2015, accessed September 15, 2016.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 "Americans' Trust in Media Remains at Historical Low," op. cit.
- 4 See www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp.
- 5 Donald R. Winslow, "Truth Will Out: Allen Detrich & The Toledo Blade," *News Photographer*, (May 2007), 51.
- 6 Rich Beckman, "Those Who Put Us At Risk," *News Photographer*, (May 2007), 14–15.
- 7 Donald R. Winslow, "Truth Will Out: Allen Detrich & The Toledo Blade," *News Photographer*, (May 2007), 51.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Based on panel participation seminars conducted intermittently from 1985 through 2003, "Situation Ethics for the TV News Photographer," originated by Dr. Carl C. Monk for the National Press Photographers Annual Television News-Video Workshop, Norman, OK.
- 10 Gene Goodwin, "The Ethics of Compassion," *The Quill* (November 1983), 38–40

For video examples, demonstrations, and an updated library of author-generated content, join the authors at www.story201.com

Glossary

Action Cam. Miniature camera weighing only a few ounces that allows for spectacular point-of-view, aerial, and underwater shots. Various mounts permit these high-resolution cameras to record or live stream point-of-view shots using smartphone apps to control, view, stream, and record the output.

Aerial Shot. Shot taken from a drone or camera mounted in an airplane, helicopter, or similar conveyance. (Visual Grammar)

All-Platform Journalist. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute).

Anchor Debrief. The question-and-answer period between an anchor and on-set reporter immediately after the reporter's story has aired. (Improving On-Camera and Voice-Over Performance)

Aperture. An adjustable iris inside the camera lens that controls how much light enters the camera.

Apparent Authority. The authority of an individual that can be reasonably assumed to be sufficient for a reporter or photographer to enter someone's premises or other property, as in the case of permission from a police officer to enter an apartment in the building owner's absence. (Digital Media Law)

Aspect Ratio. The ratio of width to height in a television image. (Visual Grammar)

Assignment Editor. Selects, develops, and plans reporting assignments, either news events or feature stories, to be covered by reporters. (How to Improve your Storytelling Ability)

Axis Line. An imaginary straight line projected from the tip of the camera lens through the center of the subject and beyond. If the photographer shoots on both sides of the axis line, false reverses in the action may result. (Visual Grammar)

Backlight. A light placed opposite the key light and shone down on the subject from behind. Also called a “rim light.” (Writing with Light)

Backpack Journalist. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Backpack Reporter. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Barndoors. The hinged metal doors or “wings” used on light heads to block or direct light. (Writing with Light)

Bidirectional. A microphone pickup pattern in which sound is picked up in front and back, but not to the sides of the microphone. (The Sound Track)

Blue Eye. A live television report that consists solely of a reporter talking on camera from a remote location, without supporting video or prerecorded interviews. *See also* “Naked Live” and “Thumb Sucker.”

BOPSA. A term used to describe boring scenes normally shot at meetings and luncheons that show a “bunch of people sitting around.”

Bounce Light. Light is reflected off a surface to make it appear more soft and natural. (Writing with Light)

Broadlighting. The lighting pattern that results when the key light illuminates the side of the subject’s face closest to camera. (Writing with Light)

Butterfly Light. A variation of top lighting in which the main light is placed high and slightly in front of the subject, resulting in a butterfly-shaped shadow beneath the subject’s nose. Also called “glamour lighting.” (Writing with Light)

CG. Character generator, a computer device that electronically produces words to superimpose over a live or recorded image.

Close. The closing shot of the story; the ending, toward which the rest of the story builds. (Writing the Package)

Close-Up (CU). A shot that fills the screen with the subject or with only a portion of the subject, as for example the face of a person or the full screen shot of a wrist watch. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Visual Grammar)

Cold Cut. A cut in which an outgoing shot and its accompanying sound end simultaneously, only to be replaced at the splice line by new picture with new sound. The effect can destroy a story's otherwise smooth, fluid pace. (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Color Temperature. An expression of the proportion of red to blue light that the light source radiates. As color temperature increases, the light becomes progressively more bluish. (Writing with Light)

Combination Shot. Camera follows action until a new moving subject enters frame, then picks up the new subject and follows it. (Visual Grammar)

Command Post. A temporary headquarters established at the scene of emergencies to control the flow of information, and to help reporters and photographers obtain access to the scene.

Commitment. A declarative sentence that identifies the story to be told. The journalistic equivalent of the terms **theme, story line, premise, or point of view** as commonly used in literature and theater. *See also* "Focus." (Planning and Shooting the Story; Writing the Package; How to Improve Your Storytelling Ability)

Composition. The placement and emphasis of visual elements on the screen. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Contrast. The proportion of white tones in a scene in relationship to black or gray tones. High contrast results when objects in a scene are white and black, with few intermediate gray tones. Low contrast results when objects in scenes are white on white, black on black, or mostly medium gray. (Writing with Light)

Cookies. Opaque panels with cutouts that create patterns of light and shadow on backgrounds. *See also* "Flags." (Writing with Light)

Crossroll. Prerecorded video or interviews that roll on air following the reporter's live, on-camera introduction in a remote field report.

Cut. The point in edited video at which audience attention is transferred instantly from one image to the next. *See also* "Edit Point." (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Cutaway. A shot of some part of the peripheral action, such as a clock on the wall or football fans in a stadium, that can be used to divert the viewer's eye momentarily from the main action. Commonly used as an editorial device to help eliminate jump cuts and to condense time. *See also* "Motivated Cutaway." (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Cut-In Shot. A shot such as a close-up or insert that emphasizes particular elements of the action in a master shot. (Visual Grammar)

Cutting at Rest. Editing together scenes of matched action at points in which the action has momentarily stopped. (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Cutting on Action. Cutting out of a scene as the action progresses and continuing the action without interruption at the start of the incoming scene. (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Decibel (dB). A measure of sound intensity that corresponds roughly to the minimum change in sound level that the human ear can detect. (The Sound Track)

Defamation. Any statement that damages a person's name, reputation, or character. (Digital Media Law)

Demonstration Standup. The reporter addresses the field camera while engaging in an activity that helps visually prove and reinforce the story being reported. (Improving On-Camera and Voice-Over Performance)

Depth of Field (DOF). The range of acceptable focus in a scene. Normally, about one-third of the total range of depth of field occurs in front of the subject or focus point, and two-thirds behind the subject. (Writing with Light)

Digital. Information is recorded on video, disk drive, computer, SD card, flash or thumb drive, or other medium as a series of 1s and 0s. No quality loss occurs during duplication. (Visual Grammar)

Digitize. The process of transferring previously recorded sound and/or pictures to a storage medium, where they reside in final form as digital data. (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Digital Manipulation. The practice of altering original still, video, or motion picture images by cropping, adding, removing, changing, substituting, or otherwise manipulating elements within the image or scene. (Ethics: Defining Your Contract With Viewers)

Dissolve. A scene optically fades to black on top of another scene, which optically fades from black to full exposure. The effect is a melting of one scene into the next. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Distancing. The feeling that a news happening is remote or even unreal, which can overcome photographers as they watch events unfold in the camera viewfinder. (Shooting Video in the Field)

Distortion. Any signal that unintentionally sounds or appears different on output from a transmission or recording device than it did on input. (The Sound Track)

Dolly Shot. A shot made from a camera that moves either toward the subject or away from it. *See also* "Tracking Shot." (Visual Grammar)

Drone. An unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that can fly autonomously or via remote control. Used in various digital media platforms as a platform for aerial photography. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Dropouts. Temporary interruptions in transmitted or recorded sound or picture. (The Sound Track)

Dynamic Microphone. A rugged, handheld microphone often used in news applications. (The Sound Track)

Editing. The editing of video and its attendant sound is the "conscious and deliberate guidance of viewer thoughts and associations." The editor strives both to create illusion and to reconstruct reality, as well as to guide viewers' emotional responses. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Editing in the Camera. The practice of shooting sequences and overlapping action in generally the same order in which they are to be aired. (Shooting Video in the Field)

Edit Point. The point at which one shot is surrendered and a new shot begins. *See also* "Cut." (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Electronic Journalist. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Electronic Reporter. A journalist using digital media, or a person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Establishing Shot. Used to introduce viewers to the story's locale or to the story itself. (Visual Grammar)

Ethics. A philosophy of what is right and acceptable as it governs the rules of living and conduct that impact on professional deportment. (Ethics: Defining Your Contract With Viewers)

Exterior Shot. A shot made outdoors. (Visual Grammar)

Eyewash. Pictures whose meaning has little to do with the main point of the story being reported. *See also* "Wallpaper Video" and "Generic Video." (Planning and Shooting the Story)

Fade. The scene fades to black (fade-out) or fades from black to full exposure (fade-in). (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

False Reverse. A subject moving in one screen direction is seen in the next shot to be moving in the opposite direction. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art; Shooting Video in the Field)

Feather. A technique used in zooming and panning shots, in which the artificial camera movement begins almost imperceptibly and builds to the intended speed, then slows and again ends almost imperceptibly. The technique reduces audience distraction by eliminating the abrupt and obvious beginning and ending of artificial camera movement. (Visual Grammar)

Fill Light. A secondary light source set to produce illumination approximately one-quarter to one-half as intense as the key light. (Writing with Light)

Filmic Time. The representation of time in motion picture media as an elastic commodity. In television and film, time can be compressed or expanded far beyond the constraints of real time, which is inelastic. (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Filter. A colored glass or optical gel used in photography to control exposure, contrast, or color temperature. (Writing with Light)

Filter Factor. A measure of the amount of light that is lost when a filter is used in photography. Each factor of 2 cuts the original amount of light in half. (Writing with Light)

Flags. Opaque panels used to block light from certain areas. *See also* “Cookies.” (Writing with Light)

Flash Cut. Brief fragments of shots are cut to exact rhythm against a musical beat or sound. Also called “rapid montage cutting.” (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Flat Light. A flat, uninteresting light with little sense of depth or modeling that results when the primary light is mounted on the camera or very near it. (Writing with Light)

Focal Length. The designation of a camera lens and its angle of view as determined by measuring the distance from the optical center of the lens to the front surface of the camera’s imaging device.

Focus (of the story). A simple, vivid, declarative sentence expressing the heart and soul of the story as it will be on air. *See also* “Commitment.” (Planning and Shooting the Story; Writing the Package)

F/Stop. An aperture setting expressed as a fraction.

Futures File. A collection of story ideas, notes, and news releases about upcoming events.

Generic Video. Visuals from file video or similar source originally shot for one purpose, then later used haphazardly to “illustrate” a script. Often the pictures are inappropriate to the message being communicated. (Digital Media Law)

Gray Scale. A printed scale of contrast values ranging from black, through the various shades of gray, to pure white.

Great Depth of Field. The term used when a scene appears to be in focus from quite near the camera to and including the background. *See also* “Maximum Depth of Field” and “Shallow Depth of Field.”

Hatchet Light. Side light that appears to “split” the subject’s face in half. (Writing with Light)

Head-On Shot. Action in the shot moves directly toward camera. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Heat. The emotional or intellectual intensity often present in the most spontaneous and believable soundbites. (Shooting Video in the Field)

Hertz (Hz). A unit of frequency expressed as one cycle per second. *See also* "Kilohertz."
(The Sound Track)

High-Angle Shot. A shot taken with the camera high and looking down at the subject. High angles tend to diminish the subject and give viewers a sense of superiority. (Visual Grammar)

High-Pass Filter. An audio filter that diminishes the low frequencies where most wind and some equipment noises originate. (The Sound Track)

HMI Light. Short for Hydrargyrum Medium Arc-Length Iodide, HMI lights produce a soft, natural look with the color temperature of sunlight while using only about a fifth the energy of quartz lights. (Writing with Light)

Illustrative Video. Separate shots of video keyed to each sentence or paragraph of script, with little regard for continuity in subject matter or consecutiveness from one shot to the next. (How to Improve Your Storytelling Ability)

Impedance. A characteristic of microphones similar to electrical resistance. (The Sound Track)

Insert Shot. Close-up, essential detail about some part of the main action. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Internet. A global network of cables and computers encompassing thousands of smaller regional networks scattered throughout the world. *See also* "World Wide Web (WWW)."
(Digital Media Law)

Internet Reporting. Digital reporting via an organization's web site using web updates on breaking news stories, original video shot for web streaming, video provided by citizens with video phones, news scripts converted to web articles, anchor and reporter blogs, podcasts, video reports from traditional newscasts streamed to the web, and interview material not originally broadcast on air. (Digital Media Law)

Invasion of Privacy. Any act of intrusion, including trespass and publication of embarrassing facts, even if true, that violates an individual's reasonable expectation to privacy. (Digital Media Law)

Iris. An adjustable aperture inside the camera lens that can be regulated to control the amount of light entering the camera.

Jump Cut. An action that is seen to jump unnaturally into a new position on the screen. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Key. Words or graphics electronically inserted into the video scene.

Key Light. The primary or dominant light that illuminates a subject. (Writing with Light)

Kilohertz. A unit of frequency equal to 1,000 cycles per second (kHz). *See also* “Hertz.” (The Sound Track)

Lavalier Microphone. A miniature microphone that can be clipped to or hidden beneath the speaker’s clothing. (The Sound Track)

Law. The rules and principles of conduct enacted through legislation, and enforced by local, state, and federal authority, that dictate how the affairs of a community or society are to be conducted. (Digital Media Law)

Lead. The first shot in a news package. Its purpose is to telegraph the story to come. (Planning and Shooting the Story)

Lead-In. The anchor copy that introduces the story and sets up the video package or prerecorded audio report. To best serve audience understanding, the lead-in should instantly reveal the story rather than act merely as the introduction to a package still to come. The term *lead-in* also can refer to the sentence of copy that leads into a sound bite in a radio or television report. (Writing the Package)

LED (Light-Emitting Diode). A portable, light-weight system that provides adjustable lighting in environments ranging from live shots and interviews to sports stadium lighting. LED lights use little energy and some can run for several hours on a single charge or set of disposable batteries. LED lights allow for variable color balance, commonly from 3200K or lower to 5600K and higher, and dimming from 0–100 percent illumination. LED lights can be stand- or camera-mounted, or attached to walls and ceilings. (Writing With Light)

Libel. The use of factual information, as opposed to opinion, that holds someone in hatred or contempt, subjects the person to ridicule, or otherwise lowers one’s esteem for the individual. (Digital Media Law)

Limited Invitation. A principle that holds that even in public places, such as restaurants and supermarkets, photography may be prohibited and the reporter’s conduct limited to the

primary activities of the business in question – in this example, eating or shopping.
(Digital Media Law)

Long Lens. See Telephoto Lens.

Long Shot (LS). A full view of a subject. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Visual Grammar)

Low-Angle Shot. A shot taken with the camera low and looking up at the subject. This shot tends to make the subject more dominant and to reduce the viewer's sense of control or superiority. (Visual Grammar)

Macro-Focusing. An adjusting lever permits the front lens element to be extended beyond the limit for normal focus in order to produce larger-than-life images.

Master Shot. A single camera is used to record a continuous take of the entire event from one location and generally at one focal-length lens setting. (Visual Grammar)

Matched Action. The action of a subject in an edited sequence appears to flow smoothly and without interruption from one shot to the next. *See also* "Overlapping Action." (Planning and Shooting the Story; Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Maximum Depth of Field. The maximum or deepest range of depth of field, or what appears to be in focus in a scene, available in a given shot at a particular focus setting, focal length, and aperture setting. *See also* "Shallow Depth of Field."

Medium Shot (MS). Brings subject matter closer to the viewer than a long shot and begins to isolate it from the overall environment. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Visual Grammar)

Mic Flag. A small, four-sided box imprinted with the station logo and attached to handheld microphones. (The Sound Track)

Motivated Cutaway. A cutaway that contributes desirable or essential new information to the story. (Visual Grammar)

Moving Shot. The camera swivels on a tripod or other fixed base to follow action. Different from a pan because the photographer's motivation is to follow action, rather than to show a static object in panorama. (Visual Grammar)

Multidimensional Reporting. An attempt to heighten the viewer's sense of experience by addressing as many of the five senses as possible in a report, and by allowing viewers to see

the reporter think, interpret, and react to the story. (Improving On-Camera and Voice-Over Performance)

Multi-Platform Journalist. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. *See also* Multi-Media Journalist (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute).

Multi-Media Journalist. A person who shoots, writes, and edits stories alone, and also writes and produces content for the web, creates and updates blogs, assembles computer slide shows, tweets on Twitter, and writes other content for social networking sites such as Facebook. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Multi-Platform Reporter. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. *See also* Multi-Media Journalist. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Naked Live. A live television report that consists solely of a reporter talking on camera from a remote location, without supporting video or prerecorded interviews. *See also* “Blue Eye” and “Thumb Sucker.”

Nats. Natural (nat) sounds from an environment that help communicate a sense of experience and often heighten the listeners’ or viewers’ sense of realism. *See also* “Natural (nat) Sound.”

Natural (Nat) Sound. Natural sounds from an environment that often heighten the viewers’ sense of realism. (Planning and Shooting the Story; The Sound Track)

Negative-Action Shot. Action in the shot moves away from camera. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Nets. Panels or other devices used in artificial lighting to enrich or subdue particular areas of illumination within the scene. (Writing with Light)

Node. The optical center of a lens.

NPPA. National Press Photographers Association. (Preface; Ethics: Defining Your Contract With Viewers)

Objective Camera. Action is portrayed as an observer on the sidelines would see it. *See also* “Subjective Camera.” (Visual Grammar)

Ohm. A measure of electrical resistance. (The Sound Track)

Omnidirectional. A microphone pickup pattern in which sound is picked up from all directions. (The Sound Track)

One-Person Band. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Open Shade. The quality of shade produced when an outdoor environment is protected from direct sunlight, but with nothing above the subject to obstruct secondary light from the sky itself. (Writing with Light)

Optical Center. The point inside the lens at which light rays first bend as they are brought to bear on the target during the focusing process.

Overlapping Action. Action that is contained in one shot to be edited also is present in the shot to which it will be joined. *See also* "Matched Action." (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Package. An edited, self-contained video report of a news event or feature, complete with pictures, sound bites, voice-over narration, and natural sounds. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Writing the Package)

Pack Journalism. A high concentration of journalists from competing news organizations jammed into an area, each concerned primarily with his or her own interests. (Writing with Light)

Pan. The camera swivels on a tripod to show an overall scene in a single shot, or the handheld camera is moved in similar fashion. *See also* "Moving Shot." (Visual Grammar)

Parallel Cutting. Intercutting between separate but developing actions. (Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Perspective. The apparent sizes of photographed objects in relationship to one another as they appear at certain distances, in comparison with how the human eye would view the same scene from the same distance.

Phoner. A telephone interview either recorded or broadcast live as part of an audio or video report.

Photojournalist. An individual who uses or relies on the camera not merely to take pictures, but to tell stories. (Planning and Shooting the Story)

PIO. See “Public Information Officer.”

Pickup Shot. Any shot—such as a close-up or insert shot, reaction shot, point of view, or even a new camera angle—that emphasizes particular elements of action in the master shot. *See also* “Cut-In Shot.” (Visual Grammar)

Point of View (POV) Shot. The view as seen through the subject’s eyes. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Pool Coverage. An effort to minimize distraction by which information or video signals generated by one news agency are made available to all interested organizations. (Digital Media Law)

Pop Cut. The visual “pop” or jump created when the zoom lens is used to shoot a long shot of a subject from a distance, followed immediately by a cut to a close-up from the same camera taken without having moved the camera off the original axis line. (Video Editing: The Invisible Art; Shooting Video in the Field)

Public Information Officer (PIO). A police, fire, sheriff, or similar agency person who coordinates news coverage and access to news events, provides information, and helps arrange access to official sources during emergencies. (Live Shots and Remotes)

Rack Focus. Adjusting the lens or electronics to shift the focus point from one subject to another while a shot is being recorded.

Radio Frequency. The means through which audio and some video signals are transmitted. (The Sound Track)

Reaction Shot. A shot that shows a subject’s reaction to an action in the previous shot. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Reader. A brief story read on camera from the studio.

Reestablishing Shot. A shot similar to the original establishing shot of an overall scene. Used to reintroduce locale or to allow the introduction of new action. (Visual Grammar)

Remote. A news report originating live from a remote field location, whether via telephone, video streamed wirelessly, microwave relay facility, or satellite truck.

Reportorial Editing. The process of previsualizing the story, including the pictures, sounds, words, and other production elements that will be needed to give the story logical structure and continuity; a form of mind's-eye storyboard. (Planning and Shooting the Story)

Reveal Shot. See "Transition Shot." (Visual Grammar)

Reverse-Angle Shot. A shot made by moving the camera so that it shoots back along the axis line as originally established in the first shot. (Visual Grammar)

Room Tone. The ambient sound peculiar to each separate environment that is inserted during editing to prevent sound dropouts. (The Sound Track)

RTDNA. Radio-Television Digital News Association. (Ethics: Defining Your Contract With Viewers)

Rule of Thirds. An approach to photographic composition in which the viewfinder is mentally divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically. Subjects are placed at points within the viewfinder where the lines can be imagined to intersect. (Visual Grammar)

Scanner. A radio receiver that constantly monitors crosstalk on police, fire, aviation, coast guard, military, and similar noncommercial broadcast frequencies. Scanners help alert journalists to breaking news and help them monitor competitors in the market.

Screen Space. The space that surrounds subjects in the frame, including headroom, gaps between people, and the space into which subjects move. Improper use of screen space results in visual imbalance. (Visual Grammar)

Sequence. A series of related shots of an activity in which continuing action flows smoothly from one shot to the next to create the illusion of an uninterrupted event. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Visual Grammar)

Sequential Video. Video that produces a continuous, uninterrupted flow of action that tells a story and communicates a sense of experience. (How to Improve Your Storytelling Ability)

Shallow Depth of Field. Only a narrow area of depth within the scene appears to be in focus, as when a foreground object is reproduced in razor-crisp focus but the background is blurred.

Shield Law. A law that protects journalists from having to disclose the identities of confidential sources. (Digital Media Law)

Short Lighting. The lighting pattern that results when the fill light shines on the side of the subject's face closest to camera. (Writing with Light)

Shot. The single, continuous take of material that is recorded each time the camera is turned on until it is turned off. (Visual Grammar)

Shotgun Microphone. A long, cylindrical microphone with a pickup pattern similar to a telephoto lens that picks up sound from as far away as 30 feet or more. (The Sound Track)

Situational Ethics. Deciding story coverage because of the good that will likely result. Situational ethics is sometimes used to justify unethical journalistic practices, and may help or harm the story subject and/or journalist. (Ethics: Defining Your Contract With Viewers)

Slander. The defamation of a person made orally, as opposed to in writing. Generally, a broadcast organization would not be charged with slander but rather with libel (i.e. written defamation), especially whenever the broadcast originates from a written script or notes. (Digital Media Law)

Snap Zoom. A shot in which the photographer snaps the zoom lever, instantly zooming in or out to a different composition of an action. When the few frames of the snap zoom are eliminated during editing, two separate shots result. (Visual Grammar)

SNG. Satellite news gathering.

Soft Focus. A scene, or an area within the scene, appears to be out of focus.

Solo Journalist. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Solo Video Reporter. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

SOT. Sound on tape, a standard reference to a sound bite.

Sound Bite. A short excerpt from an interview, public statement, or spontaneous comment that normally is aired as part of a video news story. (Planning and Shooting the Story)

Specular Light. The effect created when direct light rays throw strong highlights and distinct shadows. (Writing with Light)

Split-Focus Presentation. The practice of a reporter dividing attention between the anchor and viewers during on-set interaction with the anchor. (Improving On-Camera and Voice-Over Performance)

Spot News. Hard news events, such as fires, explosions, airline crashes, hurricanes, and tornadoes, that break suddenly and without warning. A hallmark of many spot-news events is their unpredictability. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Writing the Package; How to Improve Your Storytelling Ability)

Staging. The practice of asking people to do on camera what they normally don't do in real life, or directing people to engage in activities that are out of character. (Visual Grammar; Shooting Video in the Field)

Standup. A reporter in the field delivers one or more sentences of dialogue while appearing on camera. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Writing the Package; Improving On-Camera and Voice-Over Performance)

Storyboard. A drawing, still photograph, or the reproduction of a single frame of video that represents one scene or sequence in a video story. Similar to cartoon panels, storyboards also can be hand-drawn, computer-generated, or reproduced as photographs from still images or video. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Writing the Package)

Subjective Camera. Action is portrayed as the subject would see it. See also "Point of View Shot." (Visual Grammar)

Subpoena. A court order to produce documents or other information, including on-air video, a reporter's notes, or perhaps even the names of sources. (Digital Media Law)

Talking Head. Any interview or sound bite; often, a tedious or boring interview or sound bite. (The Video Interview: Shooting the Quotation Marks; How to Improve Your Storytelling Ability)

Telephoto Lens. Lens greater than the focal length required to yield normal perspective.

Thumb Sucker. A live television report that consists solely of a reporter talking on camera from a remote location, without supporting video or prerecorded interviews. *See also* "Blue Eye" and "Naked Live."

Tilt Shot. The vertical equivalent of a pan shot in which the camera tilts up or down to reveal new action or subject matter. (Visual Grammar)

Toss. The introduction and hand-off from studio anchor to a reporter live in the field. When the report ends, the reporter hands off or “tosses” back to the studio anchor.

Tracking Shot. Camera is moved physically through space to keep moving subjects in frame. Sometimes referred to as a “dolly shot.” (Visual Grammar)

Transition Shot. A shot that transfers the viewer’s attention from the end of one sequence to the start of another (a close shot of a ship’s whistle serves as the transition shot from scenes at a fish market along the wharf to shots of canning operations aboard a fishing ship, for example). Also called a “reveal shot.” (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Trespass. The illegal entry onto another’s land, property, or premises. Also, the unlawful injury to a person, or to a person’s rights or property. (Digital Media Law)

Trucking Shot. Camera moves through space past fixed objects. (Visual Grammar)

T/Stop. A lens aperture setting somewhat equivalent to an f/stop, but which takes into account the various light-absorbing properties of the lens.

TV Cutoff. The phenomenon by which home television receivers, whether because of their design or faulty adjustment, clip off the edges of the transmitted video image. (Visual Grammar)

Two Shot. A shot that shows two people in the frame. (Visual Grammar)

UAV. An unmanned aerial vehicle (i. e. drone) that can fly autonomously or via remote control. Commonly used for aerial photography. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute; Digital Media Law)

UAS. Unmanned aerial system, a term incorporating the drone, the remote controller, and the wireless transmitter/receiver that communicates with the drone. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Umbrella Lighting. A soft, indirect form of light created by shining artificial light into a metallic-colored, heat-resistant umbrella. (Writing with Light)

Unidirectional. A microphone pickup pattern in which only sound in front of the mic is picked up. (The Sound Track)

Visual Essayist. A photojournalist, whether photographer or reporter, who incorporates all the writing instruments of television—words, camera, microphone, and edit console—to tell compelling visual stories. (Preface)

Visual Grammar. The rules that govern the visual reconstruction of events, including the raw material shot and recorded in the field and the process of editing the material for dissemination. (Visual Grammar)

Video Journalist. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Video Reporter. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Producing the Story Minute-by-Minute)

Visual Storyteller. A person who works alone to report, write, shoot, and edit video reports and stories, whether for news, the web, or any other platform or field of employment. (Telling the Visual Story)

Voice Over (VO). Voice-over narration. The reporter's voice can be heard "over" the pictures on the screen.

Wallpaper Video. Pictures with little meaning but whose subject matter is close enough to illustrate the reporter's script. *See also* "Eyewash" and "Generic Video." (Planning and Shooting the Story; Digital Media Law)

White Balance. The adjustment of camera circuitry to reproduce pure whites under the light source at hand; the absence of color "at white." (Writing with Light)

White Light. The quality that occurs when a subject is natural, unaffected, and emotionally transparent while on camera. (Shooting Video in the Field)

White Space. Pauses in voice-over narration that allow compelling pictures and sounds to involve the viewer more directly in the story. (Planning and Shooting the Story; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

Wide-Angle Lens. A lens whose focal length produces a wider angle of view than a normal perspective lens.

Wild Sound. Natural sounds (NATS or NATSOT) from an environment that help communicate a sense of experience and often heighten the listeners' or viewers' sense of realism. (Planning and Shooting the Story)

Windscreen. A foam or metallic mesh microphone shield that reduces wind noise. (The Sound Track)

Wipe. An optical effect in which one shot appears to be shoved off the screen by an incoming shot. (Visual Grammar; Video Editing: The Invisible Art)

World Wide Web (WWW). An information system that gives users on computer networks access to a large universe of documents and variety of media. *See also* "Internet," which refers to the global network of cables and computers that allow access to the WWW.

Zoom Shot. A shot produced from a fixed location with a continuously variable focal-length lens or digital system. When the lens is said to "zoom in," the subject appears to grow larger and move closer to the screen. When the lens is said to "zoom out," the subject appears to grow smaller and move away from the screen. (Visual Grammar)

Zoom Lens. A lens that provides for continuously variable focal-length settings from wide angle to telephoto, such as 12–120 mm or 25–250 mm. (Visual Grammar)

Index

Illustrations are shown in *italics*

- accent light 119
- access laws 286
- accessories, sound and video 146–7
- Ackerman, Diane 4, 124
- acoustic foam 130, 140
- action–reaction shots 42–3, 46, 65
- actual malice 275
- ad-libbing 249–50
- aerial shots 39, 215–19; *see also* drones
- aggression 141, 258
- alleged*, use of word 277–8
- Allen, Murray R. 137
- Altman, Robert 6
- anchors 248, 249, 257; reporters evolving into 266–7; split-focus and debrief 265–6; and viewers 263–4
- antenna placement 133
- anticipation 89
- aperture 81, 108, 118, 315, 334
- apparent authorities 278–80
- artificial light, role of 105, 109, 112
- Assignment Editor 21, 22, 312, 317, 318, 334
- Associate Producer 206
- audio challenges 100, 132–3, 138–41, 202
- audio-level meters 137–8
- authorities, the 242
- axis line 51–52

- backlights 111, 114
- backpack journalism 201
- Bamber, James 11
- barndoors 119, 120
- Batteries 96–7, 133; charging 100; dead 100
- Beckman, Rich 313
- Berglund, Lisa 208, 210
- Bickham, Jack 17

- bidirectional microphone 126, 335
- Bledsoe, Greg 209
- body language 12, 158–9, 162–3, 251, 258–65; *see also* communication
- body movement, planning 84
- BOPSA (bunch of people sitting around) 335
- bounce lighting 117
- Brandon, Bob 89
- breathing 84, 260
- Brittain, Donald 176
- broad lighting 116
- Brooks, David 5
- Brownlee, Shannon 10
- butterfly lights 112–15

- camera angles 52–3, 228
- camera filters *see* filters
- camera movement 36–40, 49–50, 83, 84, 88; shakiness 40, 98–9
- Carlson, Mark 235–6
- Carpenter, John 6
- characters 23, 193–5, 212
- children, interviewing of 159–60; privacy rights 285–6
- Clark, Roy Peter 2
- close, story's 27
- close-ups (CU) 35–6, 39, 90, 117, 118, 161–2, 170
- closing shots 27, 172–3
- closing sound 27, 168, 215
- Cochran, Johnnie 190
- Code of ethics 311, 323–8
- cold cuts 71
- cold weather 96–7
- color balance 99
- color bars 99
- color temperature 105–7
- combination shots 37
- Comings, Ron 29

- command post 336
- commercials 25
- communication 12–13, 86–7, 250, 257–65;
 - see also* body language
- community, knowing the 233–4
- competition 309–10
- complexity 133, 220, 230, 253
- composition 54, 67–8, 77–82, 99
- condenser microphones 125, 134, 141
- confidential sources, protecting 286, 301, 318, 331
- conflict 230, 244
- content, and pace 67
- continuity 33, 34, 66–7, 70, 90
- contrast problems 99
- contrast ratios 118, 121
- contrast/comparison, visual 53–4
- control during interviews, retaining 159
- conversational delivery 260–1
- cookies 119, 336
- copyright 273, 292–300
- courtroom television 286–92
- crew size 201–6
- criminal trials 288
- Croshaw, Gary 79, 157
- crossroll 336
- crowd shots 43
- cultural influences 12
- curiosity 234
- cutaways 48, 64, 66, 69, 90
- cut-in shots 43–4
- cuts (editing) 60–3

- decibels (dB) 126, 138
- defamation 277; *see also* libel
- Delozier, Dave 208–9
- demonstration standups 254, 255
- Denmark, PBS story 211–15
- Depth of field (DOF) 108, 117–8, 121, 337, 340, 343, 347
- details, storytelling 30, 194–5, 237
- DeTarsio, John 23, 83, 86, 92, 95, 113–14, 162
- diffusion, light 121
- digital media law 272–307; *see also* ethics
- Digital Millennium Copyright Act (1988) 292–5
- direct observation 164
- directional patterns 125–6
- director of photography (DP) 205
- dissolves 48, 69, 72
- distancing 98
- distortion 137–8
- distractions, avoiding 92
- Dmytryk, Edward 10, 43, 232
- dolly shots 38
- Donahue, Art 234
- Dotson, Bob 11, 19, 26–7, 29, 155, 159, 173–4, 234–7
- drones 39, 215–20, 280–2
- dropouts 132, 133
- Dupont-Columbia Baton (journalism award) 196–7
- Durant, Will 233
- dynamic microphone 125, 338

- earphones 138, 139, 142
- editors/editing 5, 14, 37, 58–76, 163–4; in the
 - camera 89–90; matched action 45, 47, 212–13;
 - reportorial 19–21; software 40
- effects standups 254
- Ellerbee, Linda 8–9, 10
- emotional issues 97–8
- emotions 5–6, 155, 238, 243, 256
- equipment: in cold weather 96–7; in interviews
 - 153, 159; problems with 99–100
- establishing shots 40
- ethics 210, 243, 308–33; case studies 316–20;
 - code of 323–8; definition 308–9; *see also* law,
 - digital media
- etiquette 240
- evaluation, and defamation 274–5
- event-driven video 30
- excuses 232–3
- exposure, camera 99, 118; *see also* filters
- extreme close-up (ECU) 34, 161
- extreme long shot (ELS) 34
- eye level, photographing at 53
- eyes 91, 117, 162

- facial shots 91
- fades 72; *see also* dissolves
- fair use, doctrine 295–6
- false reverses 51–2, 68–9, 90

Farkas, Ray 7, 171, 177
 Farr, Glenn 59
 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 131, 132, 283–4
 federal courts 288–9
 file video 322
 fill lights 110–11, 113–14
 filmic time 67
 filters 99, 108, 109, 121; microphone 140–1
 First Amendment 272, 273
 flash cuts 71
 flat lights 115
 focal points 77–9, 80
 focus, manual 212
 focus problems 99
 focus statements 17, 21–2, 25, 169, 178, 228
 Fourth Amendment 272, 276
 framing 214–15
 Frank, Reuven 9–10
 Freedom of Information requests 299
 frequencies, wireless 132–3
 frequency response 127
 F/stops 340
 fun 215
 futures file 340

generic video 277
 Gibson, Steve 273
 glamour lighting 112–15
 Goheen, John 23
 Golden Hour 107, 215
 golden spots 77–8, 79, 80
 good taste 243
 glossary of terms 334–52
 government (US) publications 298
 government (US) websites 299
 gray scale 340
 great depth of field 340
 Grierson, John 230, 244
 Griffith, Thomas 5–6
 group discussions 144–5
 group shots 43

Halberstam, David 311
 Hall, Ned 124, 135

Hall, Robert 237
 Hanchett, Jim 157
 handheld cameras 83–4
 handheld microphones 92–3, 95–6, 126, 127–8
 Hart, John 195, 196
 hatchet lights 112
 Hatteberg, Larry 18–19, 154, 230
 hazards 97–8, 120–1, 219–20, 243
 head-on shot 340
 heat 92
 help, asking for 209–10
 heroes, writing 195–6
 hertz (Hz) 127, 341
 hidden voice recorders 285
 high-angle shots 53
 high-pass filter 140–1, 341
 HMI lights 341
 horizontal format 77
 human perspective 7–8

illustrative video 21, 26, 228–30
 image manipulation 312–16
 images, and meaning 12
 impedance of microphones 127
 incoming sound 70, 71
 insert shots 41, 44, 64–5
 instincts, trust your 82
 interference, electrical 131–2, 133
 Internet 273, 292–3, 295, 296
 interviews 82, 151–67; lighting 110–16; locations 213; techniques 95, 151–64, 207–8, 215; two-person 145; while shooting 94
 into-frame/out-of-frame action 63
 invasion of privacy 273, 276–7, 284, 285, 300, 317, 331, 341
 iris 99, 334, 341

Jones, Warren 159
 jump cuts 47–8, 64

Kahn, Michael 48
 Karl, Jonathan 253
 Kelvin temperature 105–6
 key lights 110–13
 kilohertz (kHz) 127, 342

- labelling, recording media 100
Landes, Mike 11
large-scale lighting 119–20
Larson, John 182, 202, 207, 212
lavaliere microphones 93, 126, 129, 130, 135–7, 258
law, digital media 272–307; *see also* ethics
lead-ins 169–70
leads, story 25–6
Lean, David 70
Lehrer, Jim 8
Lessenberry, Jack 313
libel 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 300
licensing 310–11
light bulbs 107–8, 109, 120–1
light/lighting 104–23; controlling 104; hazards 120–1; mixing/matching 107–8; styles and patterns 109–16
limited invitation 279–80
Lippman, Walter 312
listening 154–5, 207–8
Little Big Man (film) 69–70
location standups 252
lockstep, walk in 84
long or telephoto lens 98, 129, 301, 349
long shots (LS) 35, 36, 40
Loveless, Tom 28
low-angle shots 53
lyrical imagery 11
- MacNeil, Robert 8
macro-focusing 343
malice, concepts of 274–5
manners, good 152, 240
marking copy 259
master shots 43–4
matched action 13, 44–7, 62, 63
Mathis, Chris 237
maximum depth of field 343
McGaugh, James 4
McPhee, John 195, 196
meaning, and feeling 5–6
media, mistrust in 309–10
media law *see* law, digital media
medium shots (MS) 35, 36
- microphones 125–45; characteristics/types 92–3, 125–33; and intrusive sounds 138–41, 142; and the law 283; multiple 133–4; placement of 134–7, 143–5; stereo 143; wireless 130–4, 154
mike flags 128
misrepresentation 320, 332
mistakes, avoiding 98–100
Mitchell, James D. 10
Mitchell, Ron 176
mixers, microphone 133–4, 135, 138
moments, ‘wows’ 183–4
monitoring recording levels 137–9, 142
Montoya, Fidel 28,
Moon, Bob 173
Morton, Bruce 24
motivated cutaways 48
motivating action 94
movement: of reporters 252–3; shakiness 40, 83, 84, 98–9
moving shots 37
moving-camera techniques *see* camera movement
multidimensional reporting 258
Multi-Media Journalists 220
multiple cameras 44
multiple platforms 232
Murrow, Edward, R. 6
- naked live 344
narrative storytelling 177
Nash, Barry 248, 256, 260
National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) 326–8
natural light 105
natural sounds *see* sounds, natural
NBC News 10, 159, 196
negative-action shot 344
negligence 274
neutral density (ND) filters 108, 121
news: conferences 143–4; gathering 273; and the law 272–3; television 13, 19–20, 48, 50, 206; *see also* spot-news
New York Times v. Sullivan 275
nighttime action, lighting 118, 119
node 344
nonvisual stories 239–40, 249

objective camera 41, 42
 obscenities, inadvertent 145–6
 ohm 127, 345
 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (1968) 284
 omnidirectional pattern 126, 127, 135, 345
 one-eyed talking heads 162
 One-Man Bands (OMBs) 220–1
 one-party consent 284–5
 one-person band 94, 345
 open shade 345
 opening shots 211
 optical effects 63, 64, 69, 72–3
 overlapping action 45, 62

 pace 67–8
 packages, structuring 168–80
 pack journalism 345
 panning 37, 99
 pan shots 36–7, 99
 parallel cutting 66
Passage to India, A (Lean) 70
 Pelley, Scott 28
 people, emphasis on 91–2, 231, 242
 personal appearance 240, 250–1, 261–2
 perspective, camera 38–9; sound 142
 Peters, Tom 6
 photojournalists 9, 13, 18–19
 pickup shots 346
 plagiarism 297
 plant microphone 130
 point-of-view (POV) shots 41–2, 65
 point-of-view movement 50
 police 242, 275–6
 pool coverage (courtroom) 289–90
 pop cuts 64, 88
 posture 265
 Premack, John 52, 80
 privacy rights 243, 272, 273, 276–7, 282–3, 300–1;
 and trials 285, 292
 production 201–26
 progression 17–18
 prop standups 253
 psychological impact, angles and 53
 public, the 311

 Public Information Office (POI) 346
 public welfare 311–12

 questions, interview 152, 153, 155–6, 157, 160
 quests 191–3

 rack focus 346
 radio frequencies (RF) 132–3
 Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) 324–6
 rapport 151–2, 153
 reaction shots 42–3, 46, 65
 reactions 255–6
 reader 346
 realism 23, 70, 74, 145, 177
 Reaves, Gary 237–9
 reconstruction of events 33
 reenactments 322
 reestablishing shots 40–1
 reflectors 110–11, 115–16
 relaxation 259–60
 relevance 79, 89
 Rembrandt lighting 111
 repetition 213–14
 Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press 285, 299
 reportorial editing 19–21
 reports, vs stories 4–5, 191–3, 197, 238–9
 reprises 213
 research, prior 152–3, 155, 168, 173–4, 207
 reveal shots *see* transition shots
 reveal standups 252–3
 reverse-angle questions 320–1
 reverse-angle shots 43, 50
 rhythm 190
 ribbon microphone 125
 role models 195–6
 room tone 145
 rule of thirds 77–8, 79, 80, 347
 Ryan, Cornelius 153

 safety 97–8, 120–1, 219–20, 243
 Samples, Bill and Helene 159
 Scanlon, Chip 194–5
 scanners 347

- screen direction 50–1, 68
 screen space 80–1
 selective perception 61
 self-improvement 227
 Sellers, David 288
 senses 10–11, 12, 256–8
 sensitivity, in spot-news 242–3
 sequences 13, 30–1, 33–4, 87–8, 228–30, 242;
 matched action 45–7, 62, 63
 setups 187–9, 198
 shaky images 40, 83, 84
 shallow depth of field 117, 118, 347
 Shapiro, Mathias 253
 shield laws 286, 301
 shoot and move 88
 short lighting 116
 shotgun microphones 92, 129–30, 283
 shots, basic 33–6
 side lights 112
 side-rear lighting 112
 signals 157–8
 silence 10–11, 27–8, 156, 232; *see also* white
 space
 sit-down interviews 82, 95, 111, 116, 155, 162,
 208, 209
 situational ethics 310
 Sixth Amendment 272, 286–7
 slander 274, 348
 snap zooming 45–7, 242
 social networking 220
 sound bites 24–5, 92, 161, 163, 171–2, 213–14
 sound mixers 133–4, 135, 138
 sound perspective 142
 soundpeople 133–4
 sounds 19, 124–50, 209; basic 212; editing 60;
 microphones 92–3, 125–45; natural 13, 23,
 28, 145, 177, 190; problems with 100; and
 realism 24; stereo and surround-sounds 143;
 as transitional device 70
 special interest groups 323
 split-focus presentation 265–6
 sport 44, 107
 spot-checking 100
 spot-news 22, 174–6, 240–3
 spotters 219
 stabilization technology 40
 staged news 321–2
 staging 93–4, 252, 254
 standups 94–6, 171, 213, 249–71
 state courts 288
 state/local government copyright 299
 stereo sound 143
 stories, complex 230; identifying 227–8; planning
 86; commitments *see* focus statements
 storyboards 19, 174
 storytelling, video 197–201; shots 40–3; tools
 185–95; visual *see* reports, vs stories; video
 stories
 straight cuts 73
 streetlights 118
 stress 243
 studio lead-in 169
 Sturholm, Phil 66–7
 subjective camera 41
 subpoenas 286
 Sullivan Rule 275
 summary statement 17
 sunlight 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112
 sunshine laws 286, 301
 surprises 23–4, 85, 185–90, 198
 surround-sound 143
 surveillance 284–5
 Swain, Dwight 5

 takeaway
 Talent Growth Model 263–4
 talking heads 161, 162
 Taylor, Bill 23
 team-work 21, 86–7, 184
 teasers
 telephones, and privacy 283–4
 telephoto 85, 91
 television 54, 67; courtroom 286–92; and flash
 cutting 71; as horizontal format 77; multiple
 cameras in 44; as narrative medium 10;
 “reality” programs 50; strengths of 29
 television journalism, early 11, 12
 television news 13, 19–20, 48, 50, 206; *see also*
 spot-news
 telling vs showing 8

“thinking camera” 50
 “thought writing” 210–11, 222
 three-point lighting 111–15, 119
 tilt shots 38
 time, filmic *see* filmic time
 timing 241
 top lighting 112
 “tour guide” approach 182–3
 tracking shots 38, 39, 49, 83
 transition shots 48–9, 69–70
 trespass 277, 278, 280, 300–1
 tripods 82–3, 241
 trucking shots 38
 trust 151
 two-party consent 285
 two-person interviews 145

umbrella lights 115–16
 uncontrolled events 30, 69
 uniqueness, individual 248, 262
 urban lighting 118

vector line 51,
 video, editing *see* editors/editing; fluency
 232; journalists, future of 220; packages,
 as mini-movies 25
 video stories, telling 1–16
 visual grammar 33–57
 visual literacy 12
 visual narrative, value of 8–10

visual proof 21–2, 26–7, 173, 251
 visual sense 11
 voice performance 250, 259, 260
 voice-overs 170, 231–2, 248–71

walking standups 96
 wallpaper video 21
 Waterman, Robert 6
 weather 96–7, 100
 Weaver, Howard 185
 websites 59, 299
 white balance 104–7
 white light 92
 white space 13, 27–8, 71
 wide-angle 85
 wide-screen media 81
 Wilson, Christina 159
 wind noise 100, 138–41
 windscreens, microphone 139–40, 141
 wipes 48, 49, 69, 72
 wireless transmitters 130–4; *see also* lavalier
 microphones
 words vs images 6
 “works for hire” 299–300
 writing: first sentence 184–5; the package 168–80;
 from visuals 28–9; in your head 210–11, 222
 wrong filter 99

zoom lens 39, 84, 352
 zoom shots 38–9, 84–6, 99