MEDIA PACK
RESOURCES & TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL-FILM-MAKING

BY

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of resources is designed to help you to make successful digital films. The resources are designed around the stages of production which are: development, pre-production, production, editing and distribution. They were originally designed for use in primary schools but have been well used in my 15+ years of film-making of training and participatory video projects with young people, teachers and academics in the UK, Europe and India as well and they will hopefully help you on your own film-making journey. The step-by-step guide at the beginning of the PDF is a checklist designed to be useful for any scale of project large or small. From that point on, the resources are organised into their appropriate production category, as detailed below.

Production Stages

(1) Development

This is where when the research is done and the concept for your film decided. You can then determine how to structure that concept into a narrative by using a script, storyboard or shot list.

Movie Tips Pg 6

Shot Types Pg 7

Storyboards (Blank) Pg 8

Script Storyboard (Blank) Pg 9: A variation of the above storyboard with scope for more text if the piece is dialogue-driven

Doc/Report Storyboard Example Pg 10

Doc Shot List Example Pg 11

Drama Storyboard Example Pg 12

Script Example Pg 13

(2) Pre-Production

Once you have an agreed script, storyboard or shot list you will need to use these as guides to everything that is required for the filming, or production. Logistically, you need to decide whether you have enough time and resources to do what you had originally planned or restructure your plans if you do not. Rehearsals and camera tests can be carried out here.

Schedule Pg 14

(3) Production -The Shoot

The stage in which all the shots and assets you need for your script are filmed.

Technical Checklist Pg 15

Protocol Pg 16
### (4) Post-Production – The Edit

All the filmed shots and assets are assembled onto a computer and structured into the final film using the script and storyboards as a guide. Special effects, music, voice-overs, animations, titles and text can be added at this stage.

Editing Workflow Pg 17

Editing Software Pg 18

### (5) Upload & Screening

The final video is distributed and now you want to get it screened and seen.

Distribution Notes Pg 19

Please watch this space for a more comprehensive guide to successful digital film-making including many tips on facilitating successful community and participatory projects. Check our website, FaceBook and Twitter for updates on this book and other Catcher Media projects. Feedback as to what you feel needs to be included in the upcoming book would be gratefully received.

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Vimeo: [www.vimeo.com/catchermedia](http://www.vimeo.com/catchermedia)

### About the author

Rick created Catcher Media, and is now co-director. Catcher Media were established in 1996, and are a specialist media company dedicated to improving lives through digital technology, participation and creativity. We are a video and web production company who get people involved in hands-on creative media projects. We involve people because it’s more fun and the results can be much more interesting. The work we do with children, young people and adults, communicates important social and health messages.

Our mission is to empower children, young people and adults to reflect on their own behaviour, adopt beneficial lifestyle strategies and increase their resilience. Previous clients include Welsh Assembly, NHS, Open University, Department for International Development (DFID), National Children’s Bureau (NCB), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Food Standards Agency (FSA) as well as many local authorities, school clusters and charities.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1: DEVELOPMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Research your Subject</td>
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<td>2. Decide on a concept or treatment of your subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Tell someone ('pitch') about your concept in simple terms - get feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Create a script, storyboard and/or shot list</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 2: PRE-PRODUCTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>5. Decide on locations / make sets</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Obtain permission from individuals &amp; organisations connected with film for courtesy &amp; legal reasons e.g. consent forms</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Assign Producer, who is responsible for orchestrating logistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Assign Director, who is responsible for creative concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Assign technical production roles e.g. camera &amp; sound</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Cast actors or presenter/s</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Create a schedule &amp; call sheet (if contact details are required)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NB:</strong> Have a Plan B, C &amp; D!</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Recruit &amp; book any experts / interviewees</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Gather costumes, props &amp; materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Minimise health &amp; safety hazards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Rehearsal: Equipment &amp; Actors /Presenter rehearsal</td>
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</table>
### Stage 3: PRODUCTION

16. Film the main action

17. Collect other footage (or B Camera) e.g. General views (GVs), cutaways

18. Collect other assets e.g. graphics, music, stills, stock video footage

### Stage 4: POST-PRODUCTION

19. Transfer your media onto your device / computer

20. Assembly all your media & all assets into a basic order (or 'Assembly')

21. Make a first edit ('First Cut') & get feedback

22. Make a finished edit ('Final Cut') with titles, graphics, music, voice-over, special effects, colour correction, sound mixing, animation, transitions. Get feedback - tweak if required

23. Double-check you have permission to use all the materials in your film

24. Export your film in a desired format e.g. for web, DVD or HD

25. Archive your project e.g. to a spare hard drive or disc

### Stage 5: MARKETING & DISTRIBUTION

26. Get your film known & shown e.g. festivals, social media, video hosting

27. Have a premiere screening / celebration & invite everyone involved

28. Plan your next film!

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10 THINGS TO THINK ABOUT FOR A SUCCESSFUL MOVIE

1. KEEP IT SIMPLE – Think about the basic message you want to convey and the best way to communicate this message to your target audience

2. Study the conventions of the type of film you intend to make e.g. news reportage or documentary

3. Consider the duration of your film

4. Try not to rely exclusively on Talking Heads (people talking to camera)

5. Use interesting camera angles and a variety of shot types

6. Cutaways - Visually represent what you’re describing e.g. if talking about a hospital, film exterior and interior shots of a hospital (See SHOT TYPES)

7. Sound is as important (if not more so) than the image. Obtain best sound with external microphones and monitor using headphones

8. Effective script and storyboard will highlight your logistical needs (e.g. locations, interviewees, props) (See STORYBOARD)

9. Be realistic about your filming schedule

10. Watch your footage and select best takes or best sections of interviews (use EDIT/RUSHES LOG)
SHOT TYPES

**WS - Wide Shot**
**ES - Establishing Shot**

**LS - Long Shot** - Used for action. Good for telling us who the character is and what they do.

**MS - Medium Shot** - Used for dialogue and interviews

**CU - Close Up** - Good for emotion.

**CA - Cutaway** - A shot related to the action

**Ex CU - Extreme Close Up (or)**
**BCU - Big Close Up**

**OS 2S - Over the shoulder two shot**
Used in dialogue and interviews

**2S - Two Shot** - A shot with 2 people in it.

Please note: This is a basic list - there are a greater variety if you want to investigate more; e.g., MLS (Medium Long Shot)
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NEWS/DOCUMENTARY STORYBOARD

LS - Reporter Introduction

Graphic - Titles + Info

MS - Shots of ACTIVITY e.g. COOKING

M2S - Reporter interviews person about activity

MS - Person speaks about activity (INTERVIEW)

MS - Vox Pops - other opinions

TITLES HERE

Graphics

LS - Reporter's Conclusion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHOT LIST for NEWS or DOCUMENTARY</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction (presenter to camera or voice-over) to topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title – subtitle (text information)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic coverage (5-10 shots which illustrate the topic being discussed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main interview – with an expert/interested person</td>
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<td>Vox pops – shorter interviews – to represent a spread of opinions or viewpoints</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information e.g. as text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis – or a concluding statement – usually done by the narrator or the main interviewee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concluding shot e.g. Presenter walks away or a door closes or a simple fade</td>
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1. MS - Person at table throws litter

2. CU - Hand throws litter

3. CU - Rubbish lands with Mr Rubbish

4. CU - Person's face - hears a strange noise - looks down

5. CU - Rubbish (paper) is moving!

6. CU - Person looks worried edges back

7. CU - Rubbish reveals simple message

8. MS - Person looks concerned then quickly
SCENE 1 – EXT. SCHOOL PLAY-GROUND. DAY

This tells us where the action happens (and whether it is an exterior EXT or interior INT scene)

SPOOF FILM NOIR-style PRIVATE EYE – KIM walking around school with a small notebook noticing behaviour of other pupils.

This tells us where the characters are positioned and what they are doing

KIM - PRIVATE EYE

This is the dialogue spoken by the characters.

It was well weird. Things were changing around here. I couldn’t quite put my finger on how or what was different but I was determined to get to the bottom of it.

A GIRL walks by moving her hips exaggeratedly. KIM gives a ‘what’s-that-all-about’ look. Then she sees 2 GIRLS arguing – falling out.

KIM – PRIVATE EYE (CONT’D)

Take these two - best friends since nursery – never apart, never an argument – now look at them.

GIRL 1

Whatever!

GIRL 2

I never want to be your friend ever again!

GIRL 2 rips off her friendship necklace and throws it – storming off. PRIVATE EYE picks up the necklace. A football hits her on the head. She looks to where came from.

BOY 1 + BOY 2 are really pushing and shoving each other and arguing about who should get the ball. In the background the GOALKEEPER is sniffing his armpits.

KIM – PRIVATE EYE (V.O. – VOICE-OVER)

The boys are always fighting over nothing. Calm down boys it's only a game.

Script extract © Rick Goldsmith & Therese Collins.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPS</th>
<th>CREW</th>
<th>ACTORS</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>DATE &amp; TIME</th>
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TECHNICAL CHECKLIST

CAMERA - Set up camera. Use tripod for stability. Hand-held adds energy to a shot. Check your shots through the screen or viewfinder. Keep the camera level. Make your shot is in focus. Try a selection of interesting shot types e.g. Long shot (LS) for action, Medium shot (MS) for dialogue or Close Up (CU) for detail.

COMPOSITION - Ensure your shot has dynamism or is well-balanced. Try framing your subject to the right or left of screen, following the rule of thirds. Give enough space in the frame for your subject to move. Do not leave too much space above their head. Make sure the background isn’t distracting or even better adds to the composition e.g. a doctor interviewed in his surgery.

POWER - Make sure your equipment has sufficient power or has charged batteries.

MEDIA - Do you have enough tape or media space for the filming you intend to do?

LIGHT - Ensure your subject is well lit. Position yourself to make best use of natural light or incidental light e.g. lamps. Avoid silhouetting e.g. your subject stands in front of a sunlit window and because there is so much light form the exterior, detail of your subject is lost.

CAMERA SETTINGS - If your camera has manual controls, experiment with these to have more control over your shots. These include focus, exposure, shutter speed and white balance.

(i) Focus – the sharpness of the image, or portion of the image
(ii) Exposure – the amount of light allowed into the shot by the iris
(iii) Shutter Speed – the effective time the camera’s shutter is open to allow light in. Higher shutter speeds are more effective at capturing quicker movements, but need more light.
(iv) White Balance – automatic or manual camera setting that corrects colour bias, helping to make skin tones look more natural under different conditions e.g. natural, tungsten and fluorescent lighting. Try to avoid special effects or transitions as these can be added later.

AUDIO - Audio if highly important, and can be neglected. Use headphones or playback shots to monitor sound quality. You are much more likely to detect buzzing sounds or other distracting noises this way. Our brains cut out unwanted noise but microphones do not discriminate. If you use a separate microphone, always monitor sound. Check sound levels and look after the audio cables. Re-position your microphone or camera set-up to improve sound if possible.

Adapted from T156 Digital film school: Technical rehearsal checklist written by Rick Goldsmith and Chris High CC BY SA, The Open University 2011
FILMING PROTOCOL

So that everyone knows when filming is about to start and can prepare for their particular job, there are a set of instructions called out by various crew members.

Assistant Director says:  
“QUIET ON SET”

Director says:  
“ROLL CAMERA”

When camera is recording
Camera Operator says:  
“CAMERA’S ROLLING”

NB: If you have a clapper board this is the time to place it in front of the camera. It will detail scene, shot number (with reference to your script or shot list) and take number.

Director says:  
“ACTION”

AT THE END OF THE SHOT

Director says:  
“CUT”
EDIT WORKFLOW

(1) **Transfer your media and organise your project** - Bring your media and assets into your computer. Organise into folders. There are automated functions for importing material in most software. Try to maintain the highest quality that you can, or at least match the final format/s in which you will export.

(2) **Assembly edit (or block edit)** - The editor or director will follow the script or storyboard to assemble the best shots and takes, and to arrange these in correct order on the timeline. As yet the film will have no music or special effects. The director/editor will then watch through and make notes. As well as following the script, the editor will look out for unscripted or improvised shots that may enrich the project.

(3) **First Cut** - A first cut is an advanced stage from the assembly edit to make the overall video work and get the structure, taking out what doesn’t work. The editor will trim down edits and get sequences to work. It’s at this stage that the programme should start feeling like a film. Basic titles, voice-over, music and any photographs can be added. The story will be told in a linear way following the script at this point. At this stage you can get vital feedback on what you’re trying to achieve. The viewer can tell you if they feel it’s communicating what you as the director want to communicate.

(4) **Fine Cut** - The fine cut is the shape of the final film. The director/editor may change the order of sections at this point so that the film works really well, and to make the story more interesting. This is often about the best time in which to give the viewer certain information, and how that info should be relayed e.g. text, voice-over or motion graphic. The director may need to honestly ask themselves if the film might need an extra shots or added text to make it’s message clearer.

Fine tune the image with colour correction, filters or transitions at this stage polish the audio mix too. Add credits, being aware of Creative Commons, legality and rights. Creative commons video clips, photos and music are available from a number of sites e.g. [http://ccmixter.org](http://ccmixter.org) or [http://freemusicarchive.org/](http://freemusicarchive.org/) or [http://archive.org/](http://archive.org/). Moral rights require the recognition and correct representation of the creator of a particular piece of work. The final cut is the finished film ready for screening and distribution.

(5) **Export** - Finally export the work for viewing on the web, mobiles, DVD or large screen. Different cameras and edit software will have different delivery formats. Programmes should be delivered on correct formats with approved codecs, frame rates, screen sizes etc. Media players now recognise a variety of file formats but not all. A mobile phone may capture footage on a different format from a high definition video camera. Video hosting platforms e.g. YouTube and Vimeo, will sometimes recompress formats, but many operations have stricter rules about what file sizes and formats they will accept. This can be a real issue affecting upload capabilities and viewing quality of the final uploaded films. Try to become familiar with the file formats of your media e.g. wmv, mov, avi, frame sizes e.g. 1080p, 1080i or 720p (HD) 720 x 576 (HD) and their file sizes e.g. 115MB or 1.25GB

(6) **Archive** - The media and all the assets from a project should be retained and organised. This means that the programme can be re-edited more easily or re-used by a different film crew at a later stage. This could be highly beneficial in an educational context. A single 500GB or 1TB hard drive can hold a good number of projects.
EDITING SOFTWARE

(1) BASIC EDITING SOFTWARE

(i) *iMovie* (Mac)
(Free with Mac/App available). Good for a beginner. Integrates photos and music. Edit/trim facilities. Filters, transitions and sound effects.
http://www.apple.com/support/ilife/tutorials/imovie/

(ii) *Movie Maker* (Windows)
(Free with Windows) Good for a beginner. Integrates photos and music. Edit/trim facilities. Filters and transitions.
http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/getstarted/default.mspx

(iii) *Audacity*
(Free facility for audio editing). http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/tutorials
NB: Good introductions to editing software: http://makeinterneev.org/edit/edit-intro.php

APPS

Many edit software manufacturers now make versions editing software for use on smartphones or tablets e.g. *iMovie* for the iPhone/iPad. They are often free or available for a small fee.

(2) INTERMEDIATE EDITING SOFTWARE

This software has more features than those mentioned above and allows for more complexity. (All Windows). Although these packages are not free, they can be used for a trial period of 30 days.

(i) *Movie Edit Pro* (MAGIX)
http://www.magix.com/us/movie-edit-pro/

(ii) *Studio* (PINNACLE) http://www.pinnaclesys.com/PublicSite/us/Products/Consumer+Products/Home+Video/

(iii) *VideoWave / Easy Media Creator Suite* (ROXIO)
See also: Ulead Movie Factory & Ulead Video Studio; Corel Video Studio

(3) ADVANCED EDITING SOFTWARE

These examples have professional editing features and often come bundled with other products for advanced DVD/Blu-ray authoring, titles, sound, motion graphics etc. Although these packages are not free, they can be used for a trial period of 30 days, or in the case of Adobe hired on a monthly basis.

(i) *Adobe Premiere* (Adobe) (Mac / Windows)
http://www.adobe.com/products/premiere/features/

(ii) *Final Cut Pro* (Mac) http://www.apple.com/finalcutstudio/

(iii) *Avid* (AVID) (Mac / Windows) http://www.avid.com/products/studiotoolkit/

Distribution

There are more avenues than ever before to get your films seen. Video hosting platforms, film competitions, film festivals (including specialist film festivals devoted to topics as wide-ranging as mental health, young people or horror or 90 second films), social media and crowdsourcing are all ways of alerting people about your films once they are made. Festival Information can be found at:

http://www.filmfestivals.com/

File Formats and Compression

When it comes to uploading your video to the internet, editing software quite often contains presets designed for video-hosting websites such as YouTube, Vimeo or FaceBook. However, the editing software may also give you the option to customise these presets. You can play with the output settings to get the best possible quality image and audio. It is a good idea to keep a high-quality version of your film as a master on your computer or external hard drive. Spend some time experimenting with different settings using a short piece of media of 5-20 seconds that can export relatively quickly. Try to look at the properties of the resulting clips. You may notice a big difference in image quality and file size.

Film-making Community

It is good to show your work to other film-makers. Try and give feedback to people and they should comment on your work. Forums, events and online communities are great for this. Remember, practise good netiquette.