

Video Tips

Here is some advice on how to make your presentation videos look more professional. These are meant as a good starting point to work from, and are not set in stone.

Camera

Many smartphones now have excellent cameras, and you may not need more than that most of the time, however, if you are using a camera with more complicated settings, take some time to learn how to use them. Having the right white balance, ISO, aperture and shutter speed all make a huge difference when shooting. If your expensive DSLR camera is on the wrong settings you could end up with footage that looks worse than it would from an iPhone.

You can find tutorials for pretty much any camera you might be using online.

Stabilisation

Find a tripod or something you can use to stabilise your camera. Even if that is just a secure pile of books, it will look more professional than hand held.

Lighting

Ideally, you want your subject to be a little lighter than your background, and for that light to not be so harsh that it casts dark shadows. A good way to do this is to film facing(ish) and close(ish) to a window. Windows present their own problems if the weather changes and you want to edit between different points in a clip, which is also good to keep in mind when you're setting up a shot.

If there is a harsh light in a certain direction, and you have time to do a little bit of rearranging, you can balance it out with another light source shining on the shadows cast by the first, or even a white piece of material to reflect light instead of shining it.

Sound

Sound is very important and often doesn't receive the attention it deserves.

Again, lots of smartphones have pretty good audio recording, and I would consider using this over a cheap microphone. Run little tests to make sure you're using the right one. A lot of the time recording sound with your camera will be okay, but if your subjects are far away or moving around, or outside, it's worth getting another recorder to record closer to them. Whenever possible I record the audio with more than one device, which makes you more likely to get a track that works.

A bit too loud is generally speaking worse than a bit too quiet when it comes to audio recording. Most editing software has plenty of ways to turn up the volume of an audio track, but when you are recording something that is too loud, it clips the recording at the loud parts and you lose information that you can't get back.

Structure and editing

It's usually a good idea to have an idea or, better, a plan of what you're going to say or do on camera before you get started.

If you want the cuts you make to flow as though the subject was talking in a constant stream, film with two cameras and switch angle when you make a cut.

In editing it's usually a good idea to be ready to lose everything you like to create the best final product. It's usually harder to make a very short video than a long one. Try to find ways to convey what you want as concisely as possible.