

FILMING CONTENT – TEN TOP TIPS

There are lots of people who know more about filming than I do. I had done no filming pre-Lockdown, which shows that pretty much anyone can get the basics. Here's some things to think about:

- 1. What are you wearing?** White top in front of white wall? Lots of writing on your t-shirt? I've got to read it all before I start listening to you.
- 2. Think about your surroundings.**
 - a. What's your background like? Look at your screen. Have you managed to set up so that it looks like a wall clock is balanced on your head? [That was me!] Do you have photos of your children and you're about to put them out for the world to see? Is your phone level? Outside, you won't notice, but if the top of the wall behind you isn't at least nearly straight, some people will be distracted. A fairly plain background is best. Neutral colours. I've now moved my main filming point so my bookcase full of games isn't over my shoulder. Look at it (right). Are you thinking, 'I've got that game'? Your viewers will be thinking that too.
 - b. Stand forward from your background to stand out. Don't stand right against the wall if you can avoid it.
 - c. What's the background noise like? Check your recording afterwards. You may not have noticed the birds fighting, bin lorry, motorbike and lawnmower but everyone else will.
 - i. It is impossible to film outside well on a windy day with the equipment most of us are using. Can you film with your door open, so it looks like you're in your garden but you're cutting down all the noise of the wind?
 - ii. Try to use a simple lapel mike that works with your camera/phone if you can. They do make a huge difference, especially outside.
 - d. Is it light enough? Filming outdoors gives a nice light. If you must film inside, put all the lights on and try to get your face lit from the front.
- 3. Set up your camera/phone:**
 - a. Use a secure stand for your phone for a longer talk. You can get away with holding it yourself or having someone hold it for a shorter, relaxed feel but you'll notice the wobble after a while. So far, I have used a microphone stand and propped my phone in it. I've just invested in a flexible stand that clips onto a desk. But if it's a bit bouncy after you've pressed the 'Record' button, wait for it to be steady before starting.



- b. Whatever you are using, put the phone/camera **level with your face**. Don't be looking down at your phone or you may look like you're frowning. The viewer doesn't want to be seeing my nasal hair.
4. **Talk to the camera lens** rather than the screen. This is really important over the internet. It's easier to hold your listener's attention if they see you are looking at them. If you can't remember where it is, put a sticker next to it.
 - a. When praying, don't bow your head. Close your eyes and keep your head up.
 - b. I use the free Parrot Teleprompter app. It's a good option for a longer talk (I'm sure there are other options out there). You can use it on your smartphone, or on a tablet at a greater distance. If you've got the app, but not the teleprompter hardware, try putting the app on a tablet, putting your talk on the tablet just below the camera and if you're not right up close to the camera, it should look OK, but practise. All you need to do is load the talk on the app, set the size (you don't want to be leaning forward and squinting), set the speed, start it, smile and off you go.
5. **Try to get your talk right, rather than editing it.** Better to film a one-minute piece five times to get it right than to have to cut and paste bits together. So, don't edit your giggly bit later, just go back and do it again.
6. **Leave editing gaps.** Start the camera, step back, count to three slowly (not out loud) while smiling, then start talking. Be especially aware of this when retaking a piece - you're frustrated, so you just step back and start talking. When you're finished, count to three slowly, step to the camera then turn the camera off. Those three counts will be where you cut later. If you say, 'Amen,' then you have to immediately cut into, 'Now we've heard the talk...' it will seem a bit of a gear change. If you count to three as you finish, then the person coming next counts to three, there can be a 6-second delay with people on camera not moving for people to relax and think.
 - a. While you're counting at the start, smile. Why? Because if you're uploading your piece to social media, it may ask you for a cover photo to use. You'll look through the first few seconds of your clip. You probably want a smiling photo of you, rather than you turning away, adjusting the camera, whatever. If you smile, you'll probably find that photo you want.
7. **Illustrations.** Because it is so hard to pay attention to a long talk on a screen, it is more important than ever to work hard on the key areas of illustrations and applications. There's much more about these in my book, ['Raising the Bar'](#). Show slides, show movie clips and tell stories. Even just editing in key verses, questions and points from your talk will break things up for the viewer.
8. **Encourage your listeners to be active.** Encourage them to make notes, and read the passage. If they are younger you might want a worksheet to fill in during the talk.
9. **Work out your means of transferring before you're on a deadline.** Googledrive or WeTransfer are good ways for someone to get a movie to you. You'll probably find your email provider panics when they see a 20-minute movie clip attachment. Dropbox or wetransfer.com are good. A shorter talk can be sent via WhatsApp or

attached to an email, but don't wait until the last minute to check you have all of the talk. A recent talk I was sent had dropped from 9.10 to 6.30 minutes after being sent by WhatsApp. It did end on a cliff hanger! If you've been sent a video on WhatsApp and find you can't download it, it's probably because you need to have watched it before you download it.

- a. **Uploading takes time.** The first 10-minute talk I uploaded to Instagram took 22 minutes. If you want the talk uploaded by a certain time, start early. Next time I try to run a residential online, I plan to use software that drops content onto, say, Instagram at a specific time. Test your upload (not your download!) speed with a simple internet speed check and you can work out roughly how long it will take, but if everyone else in the house is on Zoom or streaming their gaming live, it will take longer.

10. **Quality?** Linked to 9a, 1080p is generally a high-enough quality for most of us and it takes half the time to upload than 2160p. When your software asks at what quality you want to save your movie, unless you're a professional, go for 1080.

Editing

John Spence, Youth Worker at St. Mary's, Chesham, UK writes, "**Simple. Keep it simple.**"

Remember what I said for point 5 above. Having said that, most of us can manage a bit of editing with the right software. I use YouCut (I'm sure other software is available and I have no business link with them). I've got an Android phone and it works perfectly well for our youth group. Biggest benefit is that it's free and it doesn't have much on that I don't use, so I don't get lost in it. You can add titles, main points, Bible verses. You can splice two or more videos together. You can easily trim the start and end of the video to cut the bits where you're turning the camera on and off. You can add photos into it. It's as good as most of us need.

After one week of using YouCut intensely, I can edit a 20-minute video in a fairly basic fashion in half an hour.

Instagram

1. The limit for uploading to Instagram from a phone is 10 minutes. BUT you can put up longer talks if you're using a desktop. Don't only discover this with 20 minutes to go before you want your talk aired.
2. Stories on Instagram stay up for one day unless you save them for longer. But, they can only be up to 15 seconds long. Reels can be 90 seconds.
3. Videos on your Feed stay up longer and can be up to one hour on IGTV.