

The RD-Connect guide to making videos: filming people

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Videos need to look professional, dynamic and engaging, otherwise they will repel instead of attracting. **It's better to have no video than a bad video.** This guide is to help you avoid most common mistakes in video recording. It covers the following approaches:

- A YouTube-style “talking head” – subject looking straight into the camera. It may involve screen sharing and use of graphics.
- An interview or a conversation of two or more people

Other approaches could work equally well, e.g. a documentary showing the history of one patient, a TED talk-speech or a recorded talk at a student class or a conference. Please contact me if you plan to use a different approach than the two above.

Video production takes time and effort, so plan it well. Ideally, you would do it in a studio and use a professional microphone. This is sometimes impossible, so try to get as close to the ideal as you can.

Before you start: pre-production

Make sure you have a clear idea what your video should contain. Prepare your script before, don't improvise! If you record in a professional studio at your institution, you can probably display the text on a screen attached to the camera.

Try to keep it as short as possible. Best videos last 1-3 min. Don't exceed 10min. If you have much content, better split it into several short videos on specific topics.

If you plan a more complex film, here is a nice tutorial on how to prepare it:

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/itservice/digital-media/mediaproduction/preproduction/>

Video recording – how to make best out of it

Stabilise your camera.

Fix it on a **tripod**. Don't film from hand, or it will look like The Blair Witch Project.

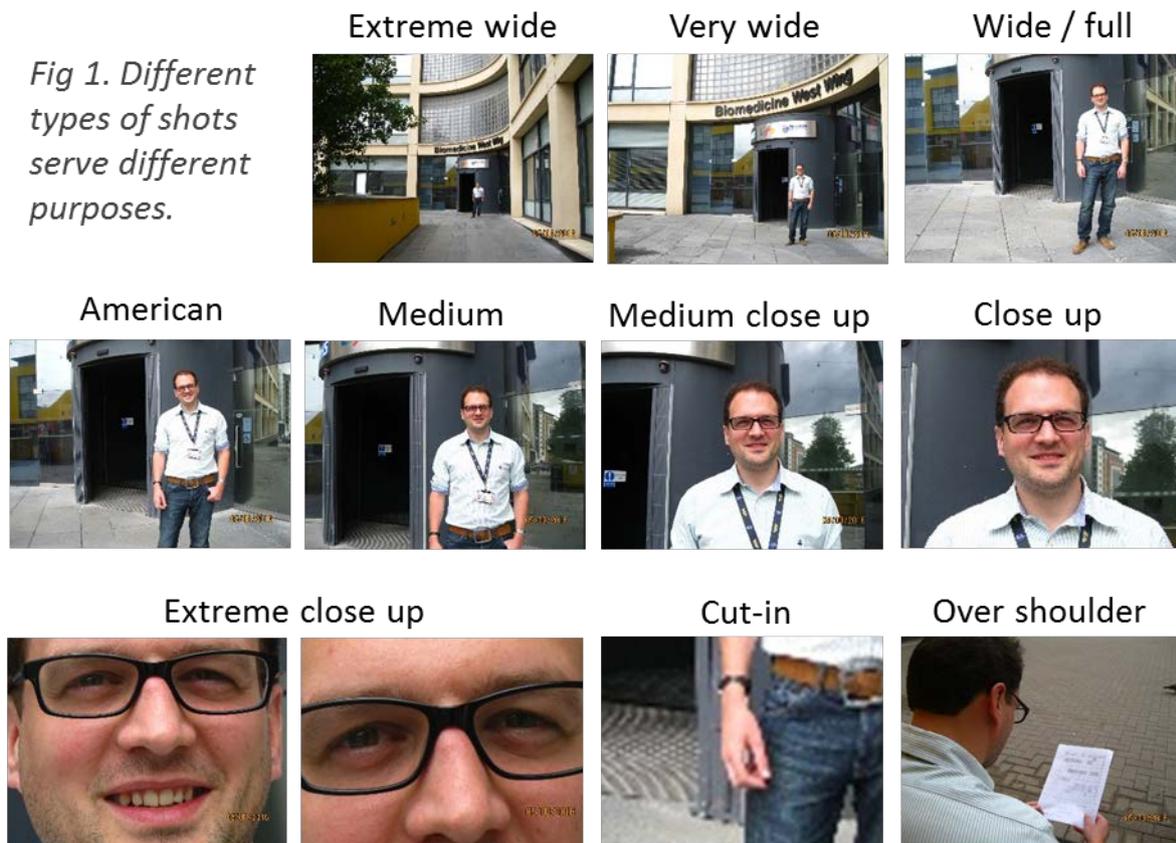
Don't film alone

Ask a colleague to operate the camera and make sure the shot is correct, the battery doesn't end, the sound is recorded etc. He/she might also show you cards reminding you what to say.

Pick the best shot

Different types of shots are best for different purposes. For our videos, the **Medium close up** will be probably the most relevant, but in certain cases, other shots might be better.

Fig 1. Different types of shots serve different purposes.



For static videos – a single subject talking (a “talking head”) – **Medium close-up** will be perfect.

Medium shot will be better if you like to include a little bit of gesticulation (which is great since it makes the video more dynamic).

The American shot – from knees above – is best to show hand movements (was often used in Westerns for cowboy duels), so it is an option if you talk standing and use a lot of gesticulation. It is also great to film a speech for a bigger audience, e.g. a class for students or a conference talk.

Extreme close ups (and sometimes cut-ins) are typically used to emphasise subject's emotions. **Over shoulder** can be used to show subject's perspective or to show an interlocutor in a conversation.

In general, the more the subject moves, the wider should be the shot. If you are unsure, the Medium shot is probably the safest option.

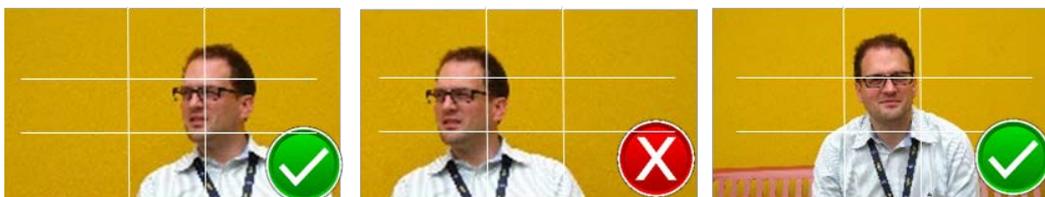
Picture composition

It is important where the subject is in the frame. A common mistake is to leave too much or too little space above the head of the subject.



Don't leave too much or too little space above the subject's head.

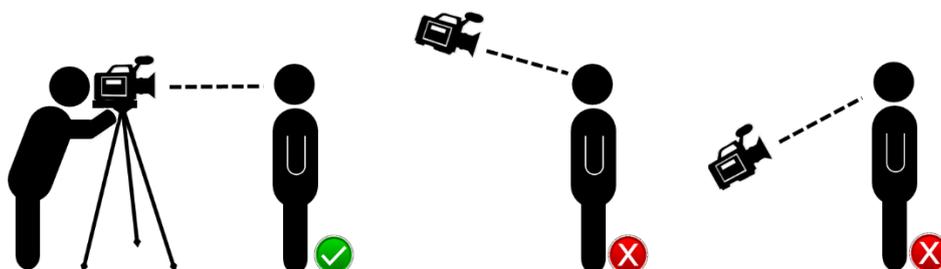
According to the **Golden Ratio Rule**, the subject should be located on the golden ratio lines, particularly in the *Power Points* on their intersections. If your subject looks straight into the camera, place him/her in the middle. If you film a conversation and your subject looks to the side, he/she must be looking into the picture, not at the picture border.



Place your subject on the lines of the Golden Ratio. If looking on the side, he/she should look into the picture. If looking straight into the camera, the subject should be in the middle.

Camera height

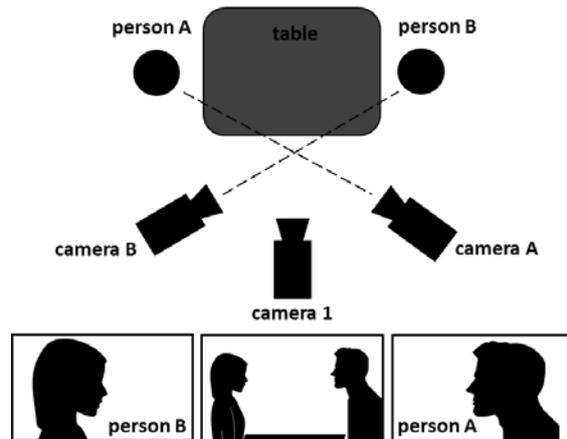
A common mistake in videos shot with webcams, is to film the subject from the. Make sure the **camera is at eye-level with the subject** (not with the operator), whether he/she is standing or sitting.



The camera (operated by your colleague!) should be at the subject's eye level.

If you're filming a conversation...

If you film a conversation/interview of two or more people, film the same thing simultaneously from **2-3 cameras from different angles** (all cameras are on the same side of the table). Alternating shots from different cameras in editing software will make your video dynamic and pleasant to watch.

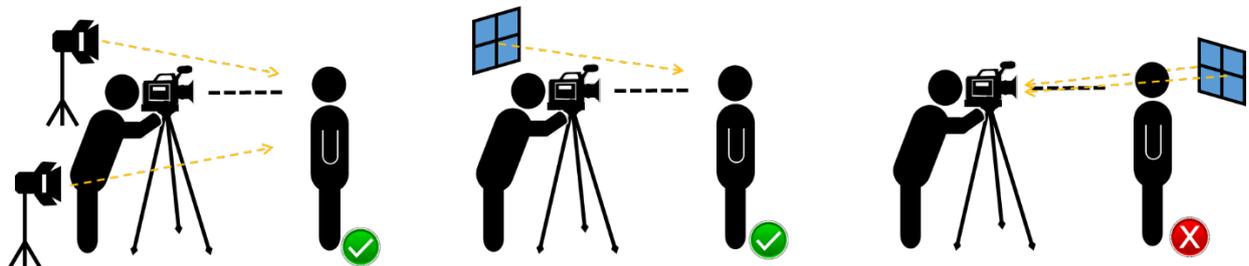


The main camera should be immobile and show the room and both people (American or medium shot). The other two film close-ups of the faces. If you have only two cameras, fix the second one on a tripod with a movable handle. The operator should film switch back and forth between close-ups of both subjects' faces (min. 10 seconds of continuous filming of one subject without moving the camera!). The operator can also record other details, such as hand gestures.

Different brands use different sensors in their cameras, which makes the colours appear different. Optimally, **try to use all the cameras from the same brand**.

Position the light source

A common mistake is to have a window behind the subject. Always have a **light source behind the camera**, illuminating the subject.



Adjust the light settings

Remember to adjust the camera settings for daylight or artificial light, according to your camera's manual. To **avoid saturation** of your picture, adjust the aperture, which controls how much light gets into the camera. It is better to have your picture too dark (which can be fixed in editing software) than too bright.

Select simple background

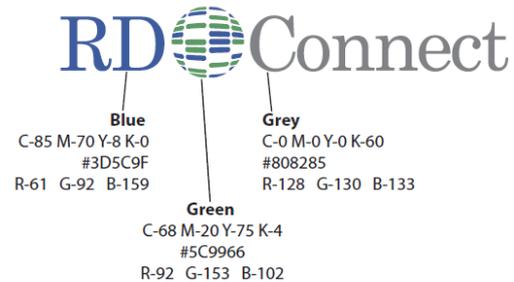
If not in a studio, film yourself in front of immobile, **non-distracting background**, such as a plain wall or a bookshelf. You can also make the background a bit blurry, so that the excess of details does not distract the attention of the viewer.

Consider including graphics

For complex topics, use **graphs and charts**. It not only makes the topic clearer, but also **allows you to record your video in shorter pieces**, which later can be put together in editing software. Cuts between pieces will be hidden under the displayed graphics.

For quality reasons, **avoid screen sharing** unless necessary. Quality graphics should be added in video editing software, instead.

Graphics should look uniform across videos and have RD-Connect colours. Graphic titles should be in **Cambria** and content in **Calibri** fonts.



Technical issues

Optimally, **use a decent camera** –8 megapixel or better. Only use a webcam if it's of top quality and has a good frame rate.

Frame rate– for simple video tutorials 24-25 frames per second (**fps**) or more is ok. It should be not less than 24 fps! You need higher frame rates (e.g. 30 fps) for videos with a lot of movement, such as walking, running, intensive gesticulation.

Aspect ratio - YouTube uses **16:9** aspect ratio (e.g. 1440 x 1080 frame size). For best quality, try to set your camera to 16:9 ratio, but don't worry if the ratio is different.

White balance - In case the picture looks too blue or too red, try different settings e.g. sunlight and artificial light more. If it doesn't help, do the white balance (set a white object, e.g. a sheet of paper, as a reference – see your camera's manual). Most likely, your camera will already have correct settings and you don't need to change anything.

How to hold a microphone in a correct position

If you're using a professional microphone, be aware that it's recording only sounds in front of it and filters out sounds from the sides. Thus, it's important to hold it at **45° angle**, app. **15 cm away** from your mouth.

If you're recording in a quiet room, most likely it will be sufficient to use the microphone installed in your camera.

If you use a tiny microphone pinned to your clothes, make sure it doesn't rub on them.

Control the sound quality before you start final recording !!!



On the shooting day...

- Shoot in a **quiet place** where you won't be disturbed.
- **Turn off your mobile phone** and any other devices that can make noise or distract you.
- Make sure the camera and microphone **batteries are fully charged**.
- Make sure you have **enough storage space** in your camera. Have an extra SD card as backup.
- Before the final recording, **make a test recording** of the subject talking, to check if everything looks ok and the sound quality is good. Watch it with the operator and judge together.
- Be in **good mood**. You don't want to look sad or grumpy.
- Making videos is fun, so don't forget to **enjoy** it 😊

Talking to the camera

Look into the camera, but don't stare at it (applies only for "talking heads").

Be alive! Act like you're talking to someone, don't just read of your script. Even if you stay facing the camera, shift your weight, use limited hand gestures, **speak with more than monotone**, and use your face to reinforce your words.

Many people feel uncomfortable in front a camera, which shows in their voice and body language. **Try to smile and sound friendly**. You don't want to scare your viewers off by seeming sad or grumpy. The best solution is to practice.

Don't expect your recording to be perfect from the first time. You will probably need to repeat it several times. For most people it gets better after few attempts.

Even **if you make a slip of the tongue**, keep speaking and recording. You might combine the best shots from different attempts using video editing software. If the error is tiny, it's ok to keep it in the video.

If you find it difficult to talk continuously in front of the camera, **you can record shorter pieces**, and combine them in editing software– applies only **if you have graphics** or slides to cover the cuts between the pieces.

Avoid fidgeting, such as frequent touching your hair or scratching your nose. Stress enhances it, so try to relax and focus on the fun of being a filmmaker 😊

Speak clearly and without heavy accent – this applies particularly for native speakers. Think about non-native English speakers – they have to be able to understand you as well.

Don't speak too fast. It's easier to follow and gives you time to think what to say next.

Remember to **breathe and make pauses**. Pauses are where you can make cuts when editing.

With stress, the voice tends get a high pitch and pronunciation gets blurry. **Warm up your facial muscles** by chewing and yawning movements. **Relax your voice strings** by gurgling some water, tapping your chest while saying "Aaa" and stretching your body – yes, you will look silly, but it really works 😊 A massage of your arms and neck can do miracles as well.

Use concealer and **make up powder** (also men!), particularly if you shoot in a studio.

Post-production (video editing)

Video editing is where you can make your video look professional and dynamic. **Video editing software**, such as Adobe Premiere Pro and Final Cut Pro, can do many tricks to make cuts and correct some mistakes.

Since all videos should have a common corporate style, editing should be done by one person. The Newcastle University has a license for video editing software, so I will be happy to do it.

Music. If you want to add music, make sure it's not copyright protected. Good sources of free music are: [Tunefruit](#), [Jamendo](#) and [Vimeo music](#). If you want, feel free to use the music from the RD-Connect promo video, which we have the license for ([download the music file here](#)).

Corporate style

IMPORTANT: All RD-Connect videos must begin with the RD-Connect intro ([download here](#)). If possible, the videos should end with the RD-Connect outro ([download here](#)).

Before starting the work on your video, please contact me (dorota.badowska@ncl.ac.uk) to discuss the details.

Good luck and have fun making videos! 😊

Dorota

The End
