



Film Making Tips

By Declan Cassidy, multi-award winning Irish television and film director.

Camera Work

1. Amateurs often feel they need to zoom or move the camera a lot. Most often it's best to set up the shot nicely and let the actors do all the moving around.
2. Amateurs often put the subject in the middle of the picture. Correct 'framing' is to have the subject to one side with some space to move or look into on the other. Look up 'the rule of thirds'.

Lighting

1. Lighting is complicated. Often you can get great results by reflecting or 'bouncing' available light by using a large sheet of white cardboard or styrofoam.
2. If you're using lamps, you can make the light softer by putting some transparent grease-proof baking paper in front of it. Keep it away from the hot bulb, though, to avoid fire risk.

Sound

1. The biggest sign of an amateur film is bad sound quality. It often ruins it completely. Don't rely on the microphone built into your camera. Plug in an external microphone and get it as close to the actor speaking as possible. You can use something as simple as a broom handle for a 'boom pole'.
2. If you are filming outdoors you'll need a wind-cover for your microphone. 'Wind noise' spoils the audio.
3. If you are using a smartphone or camera with nowhere to plug in a microphone, use a simple digital audio recorder to record the sound and synchronise it later when you're editing.

Editing

1. Look up 'jump cuts' on the internet and avoid them.
2. Use music to help create an appropriate atmosphere but make sure it's copyright free - friends with bands are often a great idea.
3. You don't always have to show the person speaking. Sometimes the reaction of the person they're talking tells the story better.
4. Don't leave the editing to the last minute. It usually takes longer than you plan so don't risk missing the deadline because you have miscalculated the time it takes in the editing process.

Music

1. Don't use music that you don't have the copyright for. It's illegal so your film can't be shown anywhere.
2. Use either free music libraries that come with music software or find a band who are happy to have their music used in your film and who will sign a release form to allow that.