

Best practices for shooting a video with your cell phone or digital camera

Woodland Management in western Oregon, a basic shortcourse

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1. Don't shoot vertical video if using your phone. Always have your phone turned sideways/horizontally.
2. If you're by yourself and want to be in the shot, prop your phone up on something stable so we aren't relying on your selfie abilities. This will give a clearer picture of you and will increase the quality of the video. Use a tripod if you have one.
3. Do not use the zoom feature on your device! If you need to show something in detail, move closer to the object. Do not zoom.
4. Pay attention to where the sun is at. It should not be behind your object, rather, your object should be facing the sun (so the sun will be behind you if you). Shoot video during a well-lit part of the day, not in the morning or late afternoon. Pay attention to shadows too. If they are covering your subject, then wait until the sun moves position and illuminates the subject to take that video shot.
5. If you are taking video of a person on your smartphone, tap on the person's face on your screen to make the camera recognize that the person is the focus of the shot.
6. If you are recording someone talking, stand within a few feet of them. No more than 5 feet away. The sound will not pick up well if you are far away from the person. Otherwise, if you are simply recording the landscape, talking at a normal audio level while you hold your phone and record should be sufficient.
7. Be aware at all times of what you're pointing your camera lens at. Ask yourself if the image displayed is helping you tell the story, and if not, how you can make it do so. Be aware of the angle you are shooting at too.
8. Before you take video on your phone, set it up properly.
 - a. One important setting is video resolution, which refers to how large your video will be. Two common resolutions are 1080 HD and 4K, which is the larger of the two.
 - b. Check your frame rate, which sets how many individual frames per second your video records. Common settings are 30 fps and 60 fps. The higher the number, the better quality the video you will produce.
9. Clean your camera lens WELL before you shoot your video. Clean with a microfiber cloth. Test your video to make sure it is clean before shooting the real thing.
10. Always use two hands to hold your phone/camera. This will eliminate any shaking that might happen with one hand – making the viewer dizzy. Remain as stable as possible.
11. If you are moving the phone/camera to show a whole area, do so slowly and with a steady hand. You don't want to make viewers dizzy.