

10 tips for better home movies.

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To help you to avoid the common pitfalls of videography and to take better home movies, Picturebox have prepared this short list that will hopefully help improve your home movies!

Camcorders that are currently on the market offer excellent video quality at an affordable price. If you can, buy a high definition video camera for the best quality picture and sound. Camcorders which use tapes, like Mini DV, are better than those with hard drives, the main reason being, is if you shoot a lot of video, you can easily change tapes, camcorders with hard drives will fill up and you won't have a convenient way to download your footage unless you have a computer handy!

Ten tips for better home movies.

1. Eliminate or reduce camera shake.

If possible, use a tripod (or monopod), they are inexpensive and a handy accessory to have for both still and video images. Failing that, use your body like a tripod, stand with your legs slightly apart and use both hands to keep your camcorder steady.

Another tip is to use the 'Shoot From the Hip' technique. Simply hold your camcorder at waist level, and look at the LCD screen rather than through the viewfinder. You'll find that your camera won't shake as much, plus it is less intrusive for your subject than having a camera pointing so obviously at them.

2. Lighting issues.

Camcorders have a notoriously difficult time in poor light conditions, like at evening time or indoors. If you're shooting footage of the kids opening their Christmas presents in the early morning, turn on as many lights as you can. This will help your camcorder record a brighter, clearer image. Other common problems with lighting are occur when you shoot your subject against a window, where the incoming light puts the subject in silhouette, or using over head lighting, which gives deep shadows on faces or can give your images a yellow colour cast.

3. Audio.

You should have good audio recording if you're no more than few metres away from your subject. Remember don't speak while you are recording, as your voice will be much louder than your subject's when you playback your footage.

4. Avoid zoom at all costs!

Zooming in and out while shooting is extremely distracting to viewers watching your movies on T.V. If you must zoom, do it slowly and steadily. Or first, pause our camcorder then zoom in to the subject, and then recommence the recording of your movie.

5. Panning pain!

New videographers are tempted to “pan” left or right as they have a 360° view, but most do so far too quickly. If you must pan do so slowly and steadily as it will make your movie easier to watch.

6. Create a narrative.

Use “establishing shots” before you capture the main activity. Show your family members arriving for a special occasion and remember to capture a few seconds before and after the moment you want to keep, as this will help us in the editing process to have those few seconds either side of that special moment for transitions and cuts.

7. Catch your subject in action.

The great thing about video is that it adds two things that still photos cannot, namely, motion and sound. The best home movies show the candid moments of family life, rather than stiff, set-up shots. People look better when they are relaxed and acting natural.

8. Too much of a good thing.

Don’t focus on any one activity or subject for too long, capture the essence of the moment by shooting in short clips. All you need is 30-60 seconds at most, as this will help the flow of your movie and make it more interesting for the viewer.

9. Compose your shot using the “Rule of thirds”.

Photographers often speak of the “Rule of thirds,” when composing their images. In other words you mentally divide your screen into three vertical columns. Rather than putting your subject in the centre of your viewing screen every shot, look at placing them one third in from the left or right edge. This will add variety and character to your shots.

10. Watch at your footage as soon as you can.

People often shoot video and never watch it and often repeat the same mistakes. If you watch your footage soon after you shoot it, you can catch and correct your bad habits and improve your video skills.

With adopting just a few of these tips, the novice videographers can create a mini production that all the family can enjoy!

About Picturebox

Picturebox is a home video editing and DVD creation company. We transform your home movies, old-media and images into crystal-clear DVD's that you can enjoy and share, time and time again. In Picturebox's studio, our production professionals use state-of-the-art technology and techniques to edit home movie video & films, video tapes, photographs and slides into full-length productions.

Founded and led by Con Kennedy, Picturebox is based in Dublin, Ireland.

For more information, visit www.picturebox.ie or call 087 243 0082.

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