

# all about: making videos

Video can be a powerful way to share ideas and demonstrate best practice. But how do you go about making a high quality video, one that effectively communicates your key teaching points?

This **chalknote** outlines what you need to consider before, during and after filming – to help **put you in control, not your production company.**

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# 4 stages of production

There are four stages to making a video: **planning**, **filming**, **editing** and **delivery**.

**planning:** identifying the key messages that the video should communicate, and who or what will be filmed (the brief); deciding what approach to use (based on the producer's proposal); working out locations and a schedule; getting permission from parents...

**filming:** filming the classroom scenes and interviews; collecting any additional material (such as still photos or library footage)...

**editing:** editing the pictures and sounds to make the final video; adding any commentary and music...

**delivery:** encoding for and designing the DVD; designing and printing any support materials; duplicating the VHS or DVD copies; arranging a video launch event...

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# planning: the brief

The first planning task on any production is **the brief**: a statement of the overall aims of the project.

The brief might be written by you, probably no more than a page, or developed in a meeting with your production team.

It helps you to define your video's objectives and content and gives chalk a clear idea of the teaching points you want to communicate. It should address:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>the audience</b>    | who are they and what do they know already?         |
| <b>your objectives</b> | what do you hope your audience will learn?          |
| <b>the content</b>     | what are your key messages and what will be filmed? |
| <b>the timescale</b>   | when does the video need to be ready?               |
| <b>distribution</b>    | how will your audience see the video?               |

(Please see the **chalknote: template for planning a new media project.**)

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# planning: key messages

Whilst video can be a powerful medium, it can influence opinions and stir emotions, it's important to recognise that video isn't very good at delivering large amounts of information.

Research shows that **audiences remember only up to five key messages** from any one video – which means that it's essential to clarify and prioritise the information and teaching points that you want your video to convey.

As is so often the case, in a video, less is more.

Whereas a video that tries to do too much won't succeed in communicating anything of value, **modest aims can achieve impressive results.**

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# planning: the proposal

In response to your brief, chalk will usually write a **proposal**.

The first draft proposal will show you whether we have understood your aims and key messages. It will also outline possible approaches to the video and give indications of cost.

This **first draft proposal is the starting point for further discussions**.

After these discussions, and once the content, approach and budget have been refined and agreed, chalk will write a final draft proposal. And it's only once you have agreed this final proposal and have commissioned us in writing (which might only happen, if at all, after several meetings) do you have any commitment to working with us.

The final proposal will also include a commitment from chalk to assign the final video's **copyright** to you.

# planning: budget

The final draft proposal will include the agreed budget. This will be a fixed figure which won't be amended by us unless any extra requirements are requested by and agreed with you.

The budget will include:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>planning</b> | research, meetings, visits to the location  |
| <b>filming</b>  | director, crew, equipment, video tapes, travel, accommodation                     |
| <b>editing</b>  | director and editor, equipment, voice-overs, music                                |
| <b>delivery</b> | encoding, DVD design, VHS or DVD duplications, support materials design and print |

There's no getting away from it, making effective videos can be quite costly.

This is because we only use experienced and highly skilled camera crews (experienced both in broadcast television production and in filming in schools, working with children) and professional quality camera and sound equipment.

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# planning: schedule

Filming is usually the most costly part of the production and so we aim to plan the most efficient use of the crew's time.

The schedule should allocate time for filming the core content of the video, any interviews and the cutaways.

Schedules will be arranged to **minimise travelling** – when moving between locations you'll always lose as much as an hour more than it takes to do the journey, as the crew will have to de-rig and re-rig the equipment.

**Filming days should last no longer than about 8 hours** (the crew will also have to get to and from the location) and should include **coffee breaks** and at least 40 minutes for **a proper lunch**.

Crews also should be given at least a week's notice for any filming days that need to be cancelled (otherwise they will be entitled to charge anyway).

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# planning: final checks

A day or so before filming begins it's essential that all the arrangements are checked – people often don't seem to believe that filming is really going to take place until they see the camera!

- Has permission been given to film at the **locations**?
- Are all **contact details** together?
- Can the crew get **access** to rooms and equipment when they need to?
- If filming **children**, have parents been contacted and permission obtained?
- Are all the **participants** aware of what's expected of them?  
NB Don't give potential interviewees the questions in advance – it's better just to give them an idea of what they'll be asked about, to avoid them learning 'answers' and appearing stilted (and unbelievable).
- Have teas and coffees been arranged?

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# filming

The filming days can be both extremely exciting and terribly nerve wracking, particularly when so much can depend on the good will of others.

There are as many ways to approach the filming as there are camera crews.

**Chalk camera crews always try to interfere as little as possible** in the classrooms that they're filming – they always avoid asking anyone to repeat anything and instead observe as discretely as possible.

Naturally, the dynamics of the classroom do change because there's a camera crew in the room – but **classes quickly learn to ignore the crew** and to concentrate on what they're supposed to be doing!

On the first day of filming, things are bound to start a little slowly as the camera crew rig the equipment for the first time and get their bearings (the schedule will have taken this into account).

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# filming: interviews

Apart from filming situations (such as classes or other appropriate events) a significant part of the schedule is usually spent filming interviews.

Interviews might be recorded **immediately after the class** or event has been filmed (for the quick informal reaction) **or at a separate time and location** (for more considered reflections).

It's usually best to **choose locations that reflect the rest of the video**, such as another classroom rather than an empty office, although it's important to ensure that it's a quiet location – no building works outside the window or orchestra practice next door!

The more formal interviews will take the crew some time to set up – getting the lighting and sound equipment ready for the best quality recording.

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# filming: cutaways

The third type of filming that has to be scheduled and organised is the filming of cutaways (GVs/general views/wallpaper).

**Cutaways can be essential to the programme** – they're often used to open or close the video or to link together the main content (transitions).

Cutaways can literally be anything – **it's all up to the imagination** of the production team – so long as they're relevant to, or add to, the teaching points being made.

They can be events in themselves (such as children playing), completely abstract (shapes and colours cast by the sun), or somewhere between the two (feet kicking a ball, hands playing with wooden bricks, bicycle wheels turning).

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# editing

Editing can be the most exciting part of video making, when the video that you've been working on finally and slowly becomes tangible.

**The editor/director will edit the rushes** (the camera tapes), usually on a computer, selecting the most effective shots and arranging them in meaningful sequences, **to tell the story** as best they can.

Additional sounds, graphics, and animations might also be included.

Once the first edit (cut) is complete, you will have an opportunity to view the video and, most importantly, to discuss it. The editor/director will then go away to implement the changes that you've discussed and agreed, before returning to show you a new version – again for your comments and input.

**This organic process will continue as long as necessary**, deadlines permitting, until both you and the production team are happy that you have the most effective video possible.

# editing: sound

During the edit, **the editor will often juxtapose additional sounds** with the picture – for example, whilst we watch classroom activities, we might also hear an interview. The voice provides a commentary (voice over/VO) that reinforces or extends the key teaching points.

Commentary edited from interviews recorded on location (real people talking about their experiences) is probably the most powerful. Commentary recorded in a studio to match the edit can seem more ‘preachy’ and is perhaps best kept to providing introductions or links between sequences.

**For audiences who don’t speak English**, a transcript of the video can be translated and recorded for adding to the sound track.

**Music** can be taken from library CDs, for which an MCPS licence fee is payable, or written especially for the production. Although composed music can be more costly, it matches the edit and can more effectively support the video.

# editing: graphics

Most videos include graphics of one type or another, either simple captions, still graphics or animations:

- **Captions** (opening titles, names of participants, subtitles, end credits) are often designed by the editor on the computer used in the edit
- **Still graphics** (logos, diagrams, still photographs, design elements) might be scanned in from originals or designed specifically for the video by a graphic designer. Although **designs that work well in print often don't work on television screens**, the designer can ensure that the video's design complements any printed material that it accompanies.
- **Animations** range from children's cartoon style to photo-realism. Whilst they can be reasonably costly to produce, they can be extremely effective. Sometimes they are the only way to get a particular message across.

# editing: finishing

During the editing, the technical quality of the video might have been inconsistent and some elements might have been missing: one picture might have been brighter than the next, temporary sounds might have been used.

Once the final cut has been agreed, but before the video can be delivered, the **picture and audio have to be 'finished'**. Finishing the video includes:

- adding final **graphics** and animations
- agreeing and adding final **captions**
- optimising the **technical quality** of the pictures
- recording and adding the final commentary (**voice over/VO**)
- adding the final **music and sound effects**
- optimising the technical quality of the audio (the final **dub**)

# delivery: VHS & DVD

While videos are still often duplicated onto **VHS** tape, they are increasingly being delivered on **DVD Video** or on **DVD ROM** (or via the internet). Please see the **chalknote: DVD Video compared with DVD Rom**.

**VHS**: the easiest and cheapest method, but lower quality than DVD. VHS tapes are also usually viewed from beginning to end, as one linear piece.

**DVD VIDEOS** are played on DVD players (and sometimes on computers). They offer high quality video, which can be arranged in a number of separate clips, allowing the audience to be in control of which parts of the video they see (filming might have to be amended accordingly). DVD Video also has to be encoded (converted to DVD format) and authored (designed and programmed), which has to be included in the budget.

**DVD ROMs** are designed for using on a computer – perhaps to hold the video for a PowerPoint presentation. Same high quality as DVD Videos.

# delivery: and finally...

Many educational videos form part of a larger resource.

Either they're produced to accompany pre-existing materials; or additional materials (such as **a resource pack of extension activities**) are written, designed and printed **to develop the teaching points made in the video**.

The **packaging** of the final VHS or DVD can range from a simple white cardboard sleeve (perhaps for when the video is to be shared with colleagues) to high quality designed covers and labels (for when the video will have a wider audience) to give it a professional impact.

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# the production team

Thanks to today's digital equipment, making a video doesn't need a large production team. A producer works with a director and a crew (usually only a camera operator, sometimes with an assistant, and a sound recordist).

The **producer** is responsible for ensuring that the video is made (on budget and on time) and that it achieves the project's aims. They look after the planning and the schedules, and book the crew and equipment.

The **director** is responsible for working with the crew to actually make the video. They decide the best way to use the camera, sound and editing to communicate most effectively the key teaching points.

It's also essential to recognise that **your video can't be made effectively without your close involvement**. You have the specialist knowledge of the teaching points that need to be communicated.

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# chalk

Chalk specialises in working with people in education.

We produce videos, develop web sites and design interactive CD ROMs – helping nurseries, schools, education authorities and charities to reach a wider audience, extending their ideas and suggesting new approaches.

Chalk is a partnership that brings together (according to the needs of each project) the best people and production techniques – we have developed some unique production techniques especially for working with children and teachers that have proved to be particularly effective.

This highly flexible approach enables us to achieve the highest possible quality, to be sensitive to the special demands of working with children, and to produce engaging, credible, and extremely effective educational video resources that more than meet their aims.

For more information, please visit [www.chalk.org.uk](http://www.chalk.org.uk) or call 0845 331 6164.