

Issues to Consider When You're Shooting

Check list before a shoot:

- Camera (fully functional)
- Batteries (all charged)
- Video tape (extra stock)
- Tripod (with mounting plate)
- Headphones (working)
- Microphone (check battery, cables)

Scout location for:

- Lighting, consider the time of day of the shoot and light sources
- If using artificial lights check for power sources
- Audio, background noise, ambient noise, interruption
- Availability of AC power/will you need additional electricity?
- Cut-aways and fill shots
- Shot list
- Is the space big enough for a crew and cast?
- Bathrooms? Kitchens?
- How is the proximity to other locations?

This last question is to try and reduce travel time, which is really important in setting your schedule and managing the production. These are the practical realities of the locations manager.

Issues to consider during the shoot:

1) White Balance

- Outdoors, sunlight and fluorescent light have a high colour temperature of 5600° Kelvin, causing objects to appear bluish.
- Indoors, candlelight and incandescent light have a low colour temperature of 3200° Kelvin, causing objects to appear reddish.

Bring a white card or paper to use for white balancing. White balance compensates for the difference in colour temperature to give a natural result on videotape. Most consumer video cameras have auto-white balance.

2) Focus

- Always use manual focus
- Depth of field is the area on the z-axis (i.e. the line from near to far) which is in focus. The two factors that affect the depth of field are:

a) The focal length or zoom lens position. The greater the focal length (or wider the shot), the larger the depth of field. Conversely, zooming in on an object (or reducing the focal length) decreases the depth of field.

b) The aperture or iris setting. A large aperture (small f-stop number) gives shorter depth of field, whereas a small aperture (large f-stop number) gives a larger depth of field.

3) Iris/Shutter Speed

- Iris settings are usually set on automatic, unless you specifically want to change the depth of field (as above). A smaller aperture or iris setting allows less light in to the camera which affects focus and picture quality.
- A higher shutter speed will prevent fast-moving objects from looking blurred, however, the higher the shutter speed the less light allowed into the camera.

4) Audio

- Always use an external microphone to reduce camera noise and gain more control over the acoustic environment.
- Always use headphones during a shoot to ensure audio quality
- The noisier the environment the closer the microphone has to be to the subject to separate the background sound.
- Always record a moment (2 to 5 minutes) of just ambient noise or room tone before or after a shoot. Ambience can be used to mask breaks in continuity during editing.
- Consider recording "sonic events" at a location (clock chimes, alarm bells, machinery, etc). They can be very effective in editing, but can also create a distracting interruption in your scene if you are not prepared.
- Audio is often the difference between amateur and professional video production.