

## Setting Up the Camera

### 1) Set up the tripod with the legs fully extended

Always extend the thickest bottom extension of the legs first for the maximum stability, and then the thinnest part of the legs. Finally if you still need more height, or if you're shooting on top of a surface that the extended legs cannot fit onto, extend the vertical. This is the least stable of all the extensions.

Make sure the open space is where the camera operator will stand. This set up also provides an added protection to the camera by making the third leg be under the camera. Should someone forget the tilt lock and the camera falls forward, this leg will break its fall.

#### Things to Remember

- "Righty tighty, lefty loosey" helps to remember which way to screw leg knobs and pan/tilt locks.
- Avoid overcranking the locks or leaving them partly on while panning or tilting. This can ruin your equipment.

### 2) Practice slow pans and even tilts before putting the camera on the tripod.

### 3) Practice taking the quick release plate off and putting this on the tripod before you attach it to the camera.

This way you can really understand how the incline planes lock together. This will help you to do it quickly when you need to catch a hand held shot.

#### Things to Remember

- Put the quick release plate back on the tripod before the equipment check in - this is the most common bit of equipment to have to be replaced.
- Most quick release plates have indicator arrows to show the alignment of the camera lens. Keep a coin handy to be able to get the release plate securely tight to the bottom of the camera.

### 4) Practice putting the camera on the tripod and releasing it.

### 5) If the camera can measure if it is level, make sure that on an uneven surface, like outside or on a slanted floor, the camera is level on the tripod.

**6) Set up the AC power adapter and plug it in to the camera.**

**7) Practice sliding a battery on to the camera and releasing it.**

Things to Remember

- Raise the viewfinder so the space for the battery is clear and more accessible.
- Use the batteries only when they are far from available power sources.
- The camera should always travel in the camera case or camera bag, never around someone's neck, in their hands, or worse, attached to the tripod.

**8) Look at the difference between the viewfinder and the LCD screen.**

The pros of the viewfinder are that it burns less power; it is the only thing you can use in bright sun; and it eliminates everything but the picture out, helping to focus the camera operator on the frame being shot.

The pros of the LCD screen are that it has a bigger image; it is absolutely necessary for any hand held moving shots (so that the operator can see where s/he is walking); it makes it so that an entire group can see the image at once; and lastly the color is a lot more accurate than most monitors. It does however drain your batteries much faster and on some low quality cameras, it adds a slight buzz to your sound.

**9) Familiarize yourself with the basic buttons on the camera. Read the Instruction Manual.**

**10) Practice VCR functions.**

Things to Remember

- Whenever possible, do not playback your footage while shooting as it greatly increases the chances of drop out and glitches on their tape. It also increases the chance that you tape over your own work.

**11) Label the tape case paper**

Include all of your names, your group and the date of the project. If you have a working title for your piece put this name on the actual cassette itself as well as the spine of the case paper.

## **12) Hold the camera and open it to insert the tape.**

### Things to Remember

- Be patient and calm so that tapes do not get jammed or cameras broken.

## **13) Practice focus**

Set up a shot with a person sitting in a chair across the room. Start with a wide frame and see how it "looks" like it is in focus, until you zoom all the way in and get the sharpest FOCUS you can.

Find focus with an extreme close up of a well lit eye of a seated subject to really understand the difference.

### Things to Remember

- Your work will hopefully be projected onto a screen 1,000 times bigger than your viewfinder. Therefore sharp focus is the first key principle of directing your audience's attention.

## **14) Push the auto focus button to find focus when you are all the way zoomed in.**

This button auto focuses for that moment only.

### Things to Remember

- If you switch the camera over to auto focus you can get very sloppy footage because as the subject moves the camera will automatically rack back and forth, calling attention to itself or in even worse cases, as the subject is not centered in the frame, the trees in the background will be sharp and the person's face will be soft. The auto focus lock is for tourists!

## **15) Get the correct right white balance.**

White balance locks the color around a true white, giving the tape the range of colors that your eye perceives in the same situation. Because light has a vast range of colors in it - sunlight is more blue, incandescent light is more yellow and florescent light is more green - the DP has to decide what color palette s/he is creating with the director.

