

TIPS FOR SHOOTING HOME MOVIES

(a guide for the budding filmmaker)

Here are a few tips that might help make your final home movies much happier.

1. **BE PATIENT AND LEARN TO LOVE THE LONG SHOT.** Sometimes we are so anxious to get to another shot, we miss the one we were doing. Rule of thumb: count to TEN when you are filming something. If you really are in a hurry, count to FIVE. Life is mostly time, and the best way to show that is to let the camera sit still and roll for a while.
2. **EXPERIENCE THE EVENT THROUGH THE CAMERA.** While you are filming, you will experience sights and sounds that the camera will not capture. As the one filming, it is your task to transmit as many of these ideas as you can *through the camera*. How can you show the scent of flowers? What about a cold day?
3. **GET ESTABLISHING SHOTS.** If you are doing a home movie of a basketball game, don't forget to go outside and take a picture of the stadium, as well as a far-away shot that includes the court and stands. These help you remember *where* these things took place, in addition to what took place.
4. **RECORD THE MAIN EVENT, BUT DON'T FORGET ALL THE FABULOUS DETAILS SURROUNDING IT.** If you were at an airport filming the return of your cousin from service in a war, the instinct may be to hold the camera on him as he arrives. Consider, however, the reaction of his mother when she first sees him, or your uncle trying in vain to load film into his little camera. Is there a clock with the time nearby? Are there any interesting signs, such as the name of the airport or airline? Is the father nervously fiddling with his car keys? You will find that these peripheral moments and details deeply enrich your record of the event.
5. **KEEP THE CAMERA ZOOMED OUT.** A problem with many home movies is the shakiness, which about 9 out of 10 times is due to zooming in the camera. *Zooming in exponentially increases the shakiness!!!* If you want to get closer, walk up to the person. If you feel you have to zoom in, do it as little as possible.

HOLDING THE CAMERA

Most people with a movie camera have their favorite way to hold it while shooting. Sometimes, a particular way of holding it is preferable to another.

CLOSE TO THE FACE



The “traditional” way to shoot.

PROS: The camera sees things from **the same perspective** (or angle) that you are seeing them. If you **keep your other eye open** while shooting (a bit tricky), people will look into your face instead of into the camera, which – usually – is a good thing.



CONS: The **camera blocks a portion of your face** while you are interacting with people, who can behave a little awkwardly as a result.

WHEN TO USE: As the **staple technique**, use it when you don't think other ways will work.

Should I hold the camera with one or two hands? *Typically two hands will create a steadier shot, but may not be as comfortable. Do what feels most natural, and make sure you have a good grip on the camera.*

Should I use the hand strap? *Only if it makes things more comfortable for you. The hand strap works well for a one-handed approach, but may get in the way when using two hands.*

A lot of people like to keep their thumb over the record button the entire time they are shooting. This isn't necessary. Once you press record, hold it however is most comfortable. Just remember to stop recording when you are all done.

OUT IN FRONT OF YOU



With flip-out panels, this is probably the most common way to shoot.

PROS: You can **move and turn the camera quickly** and easily. You can get **high and low angles** (to look over someone's shoulder and see what they are doing). You can **look around** while you are filming.



CONS: **Shakier footage** (it's hard to hold that arm and hand steady for too long). The camera is very noticeable and possibly overly distracting.

WHEN TO USE: When you need **quickness and mobility**.

CRADLING THE CAMERA



Less common, but a good one!

PROS: Normally a very **steady shot**. If you look up while shooting, **people will look at you** and more easily ignore the camera. The **least tiring** method.

CONS: **Difficult to see what you are shooting**. You have to face wherever you are shooting. That is, if you want to move the camera around, you have to move yourself around. It is thus the most steady, but the **least mobile** way to shoot.



WHEN TO USE: **Shots that last a long time** and where you aren't going to want to move the camera much. When you are getting tired.