Basic Filming Tips from Our Instructors

CALIFORNIA FILM INSTITUTE
education

Before filming:

Create a shot list
Think of different subjects, camera angles, and compositions before going out to film.

Storyboards
Draw your shots in a frame box (storyboard) to visualize your ideas… It's okay if you use stick figures. This isn't going to be hung in a museum :-)

Practice
Practice using your gear if you need to get comfortable with it. Film people and objects in your home before you go and film the real thing. This may also give you ideas!

While filming:

Make sure to have plenty of material to work with.
When shooting video, the general rule is the more material, the better. You need to make sure to have lots of B-roll, or alternate material, in order to add secondary footage to a story.

Stabilize you shot. Use a tripod.
Make your shot as steady, and still as possible… and smooth as possible when moving. Nobody really likes shaky cam, unless it's done right. Many tripods are available at retail stores for $15 to $50, and they can be a worthwhile investment. They'll make your shots steady and sure.

Hold your shot
If you hold your shot for at least seven seconds, even if it won't need to be that long, you ensure that you get plenty of usable material when you edit.

Always think about the lighting
Have well-lit surroundings, and always use daylight whenever possible. Don't be afraid to move if you're in a poorly lit situation—ask your subject to move outdoors or to a better-lit area.

Focus & Exposure
Take time to make sure your shot is in focus and exposed well. If you don't know how to do it, learn by reading the manual or asking someone. Or go in automatic mode if necessary.

Avoid overuse of pans, and zooms
You may feel like going crazy with some of your shots, but every video expert says video clips are simply better when they use static shots, or well-thought out shots.

Angles and Framing
Use different camera angles and frames that you thought up in your shot list and storyboard.