

Creating a Successful Video Pitch

a 1 hour crash course in filmmaking fundamentals

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My background

- Current Multimedia Designer & Video Director for the Robotics Institute @ Carnegie Mellon University
- Teaching “Intro to Multimedia Design” at CMU where students create explainer videos and video essays
- Taught filmmaking courses for 14 years, prior design agency & corporate client experience
- NYU TSOA Film & TV Grad



\$20,000



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<https://www.cmu.edu/swartz-center-for-entrepreneurship/events/mcginnis-venture-competition/>

Key Takeaways

- Write something fresh. Avoid cliché or overdone concepts. Get to the point. Attempt to work the points of a pitch into a **story**.
- Stabilize your camera, movement should **guide** attention of the viewer
- Audio that is clear, well recorded and precisely delivered is **critical**
- Be creative with the tools you have and reflect a theme and style inspired by your product/service
- **Visualize** as much of the problem, solution & market as possible

Pitch 101

- Hook / Tagline
- Problem
- Solution, how it works
- Market, Business model
- Unique value proposition
- Current work, vision for growth
- Team

Use direct, intentional language.

Craft a **script** covering all of these points that tells a **story**.

Script

- Write, read out loud, record it, listen to it, rewrite, repeat
- Write a multi-column audiovisual script
- Precise, efficient, clear message
- Appeal to the mind and heart of audience
- The pace, rhythm and other information will dictate word cap
- 150 words per minute is a good starting point
- <https://wistia.com/learn/production/wistias-scripting-tips>

3 column script + storyboard

Script

Title: Project Title
Client: Client name(s)

Time	Visual	Audio
0:00 0:02	Descriptions of imagery, image/camera movement, style of animated of type over time.	Narrator: Music: <u>SoundFX:</u>
0:05	Includes type that is seen, but not spoken.	
0:10		
0:20		
0:30		

Visuals and audio over time in text

TITLE.....
DATE.....
PAGE.....OF.....

Sketches: Shot size, visual details

Connect with your viewer

McGinnis Competition Website: You should pretend you are pitching to real investors and include all pertinent information.

- The video should emulate an in-person pitch and members of the team should be visible.
- *Not* a screen captured slideset and disembodied voice

filmmaking is

creative/technical

writing
visual design
sketching
planning

composition
direction of camera
direction of subjects
control camera movement

cinematography
knowledge of camera lenses
control depth of field
creative use of natural light
technical control of artificial light

film language

team mangement
task delegation

audio recording
narration vs live
synchronizing audio
audio editing
audio mixing

image control
saturation
white balance
color temperature

editing
transitions
screen direction

title design
graphic production
motion graphics
animation
compositing

video frame rates
video frame sizes
knowledge of codecs
rendering strategy

writing

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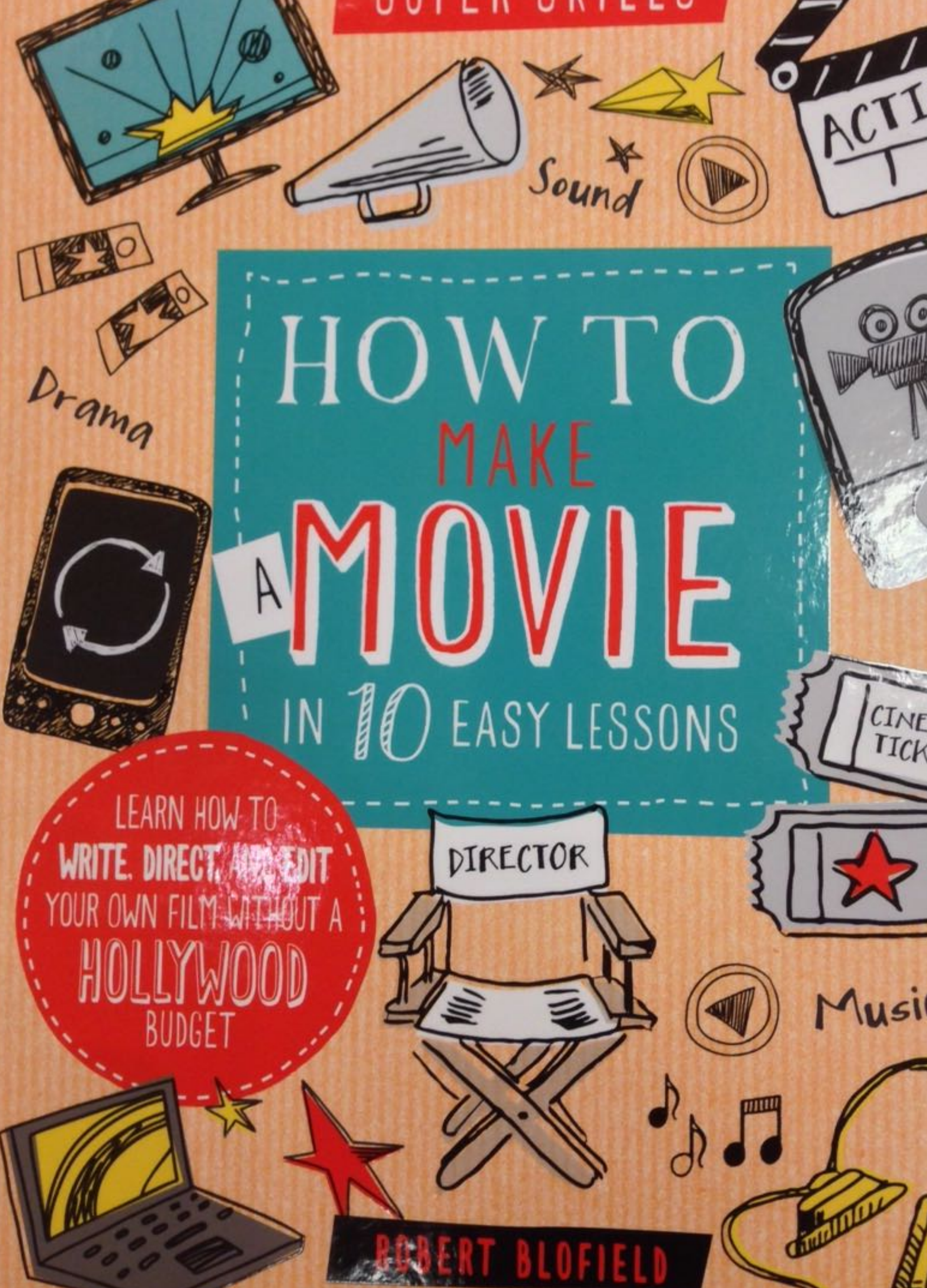
video frame sizes

knowledge of codecs

rendering strategy

Conceptualize, Sketch
Pre-Production
Production
Post-Production

Brainstorm, Clarify Message
Write, Plan & Schedule
Make & Gather Media
Edit and Mix the Media



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

SUPER SKILL 1: FIND INSPIRATION

SUPER SKILL 2: TURN YOUR IDEA INTO A SCRIPT

SUPER SKILL 3: VISUALIZE EVERY SHOT

SUPER SKILL 4: PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!

SUPER SKILL 5: CAMERA WORK

SUPER SKILL 6: LIGHTING AND SOUND

SUPER SKILL 7: BE A CONFIDENT DIRECTOR

SUPER SKILL 8: EDITING YOUR FILM

SUPER SKILL 9: SHOW OFF YOUR FILM

SUPER SKILL 10: KEEP ON FILMING!

GLOSSARY

INDEX

**“Does the team
demonstrate confident,
effective storytelling?”**

Confident, Effective Storytelling

- clear, vivid communication
- Relaxed body language
- production value: clean audio, sharp focus
- original, creative, compelling
- fascinating to watch, connects with audience

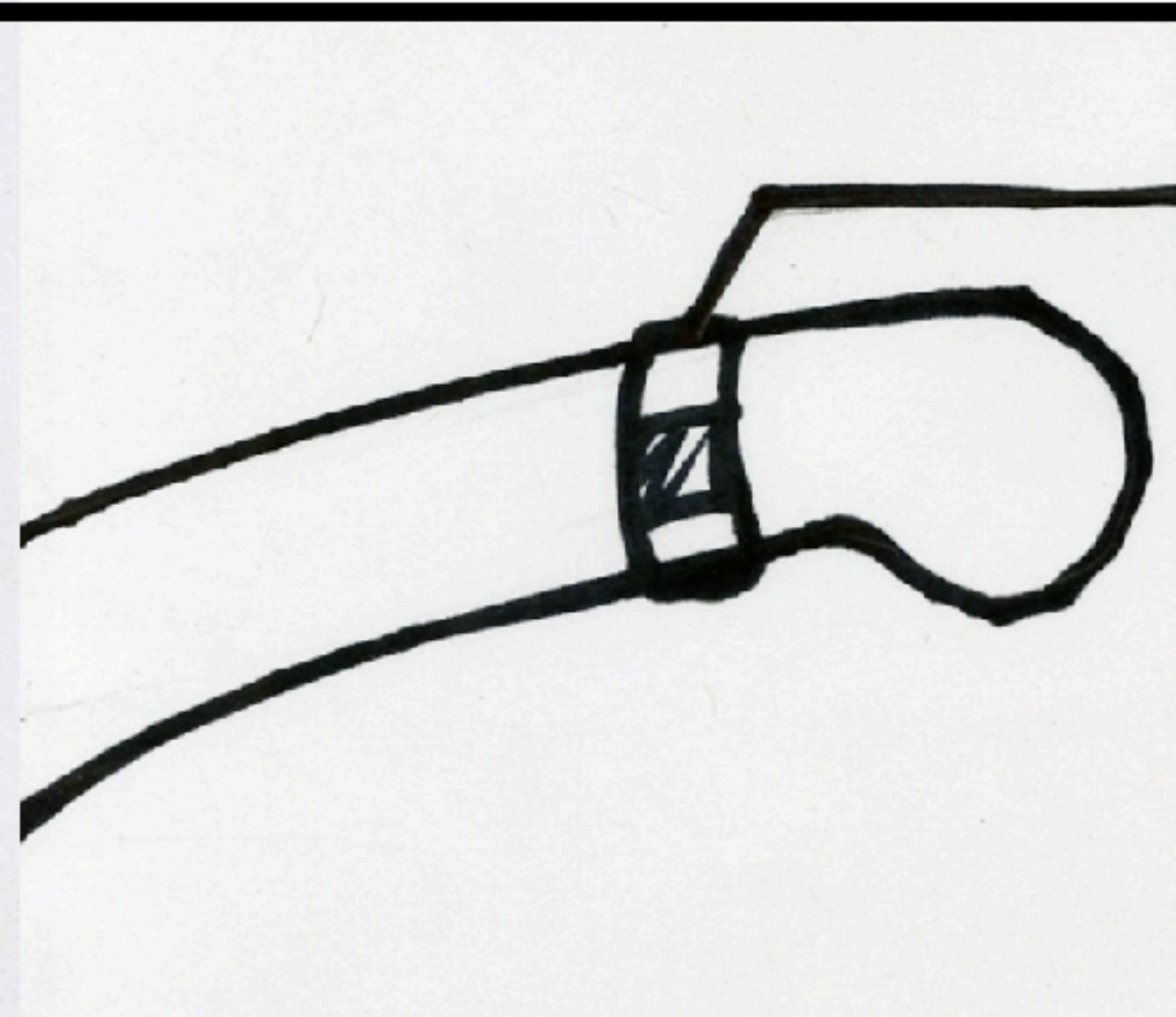
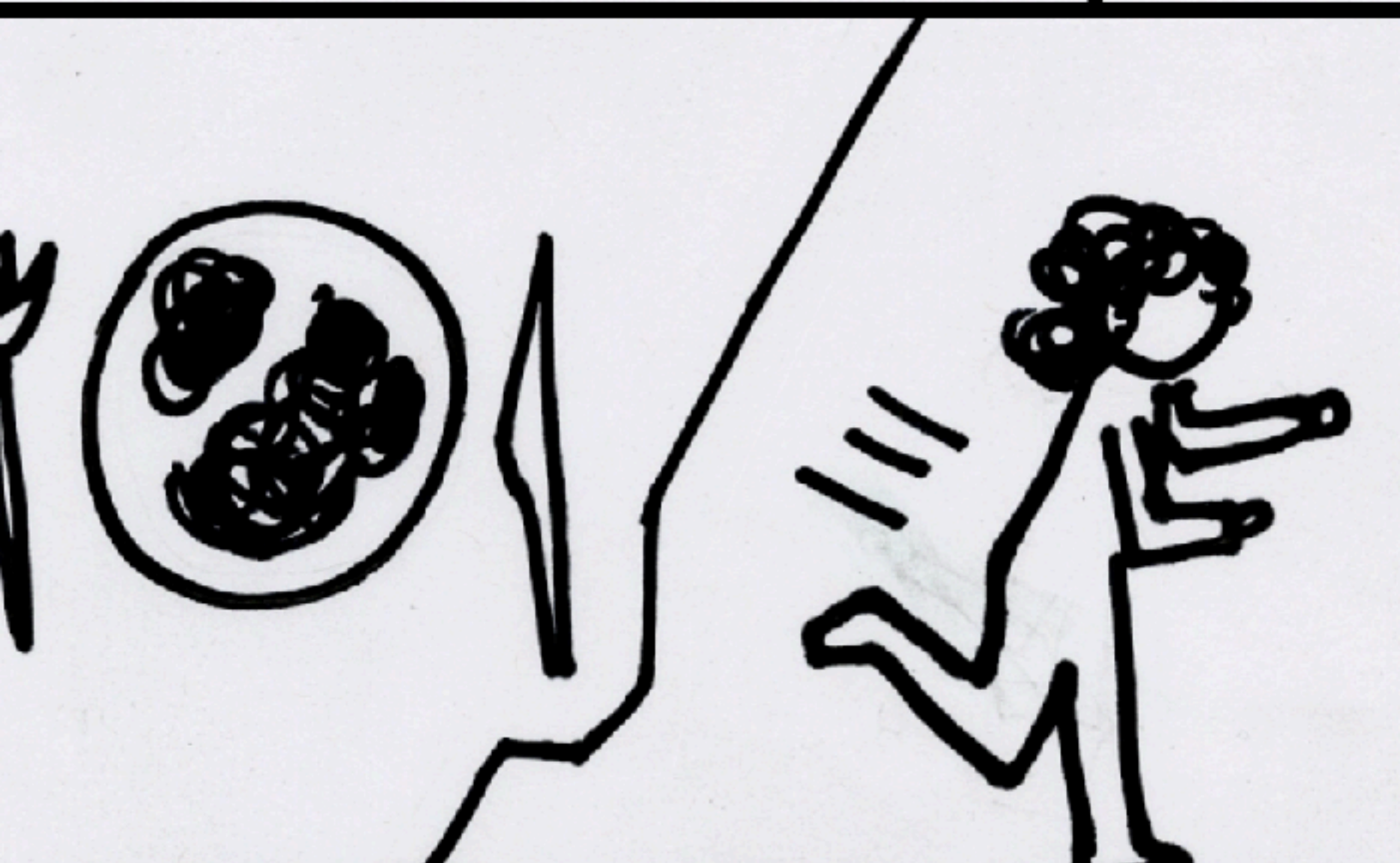
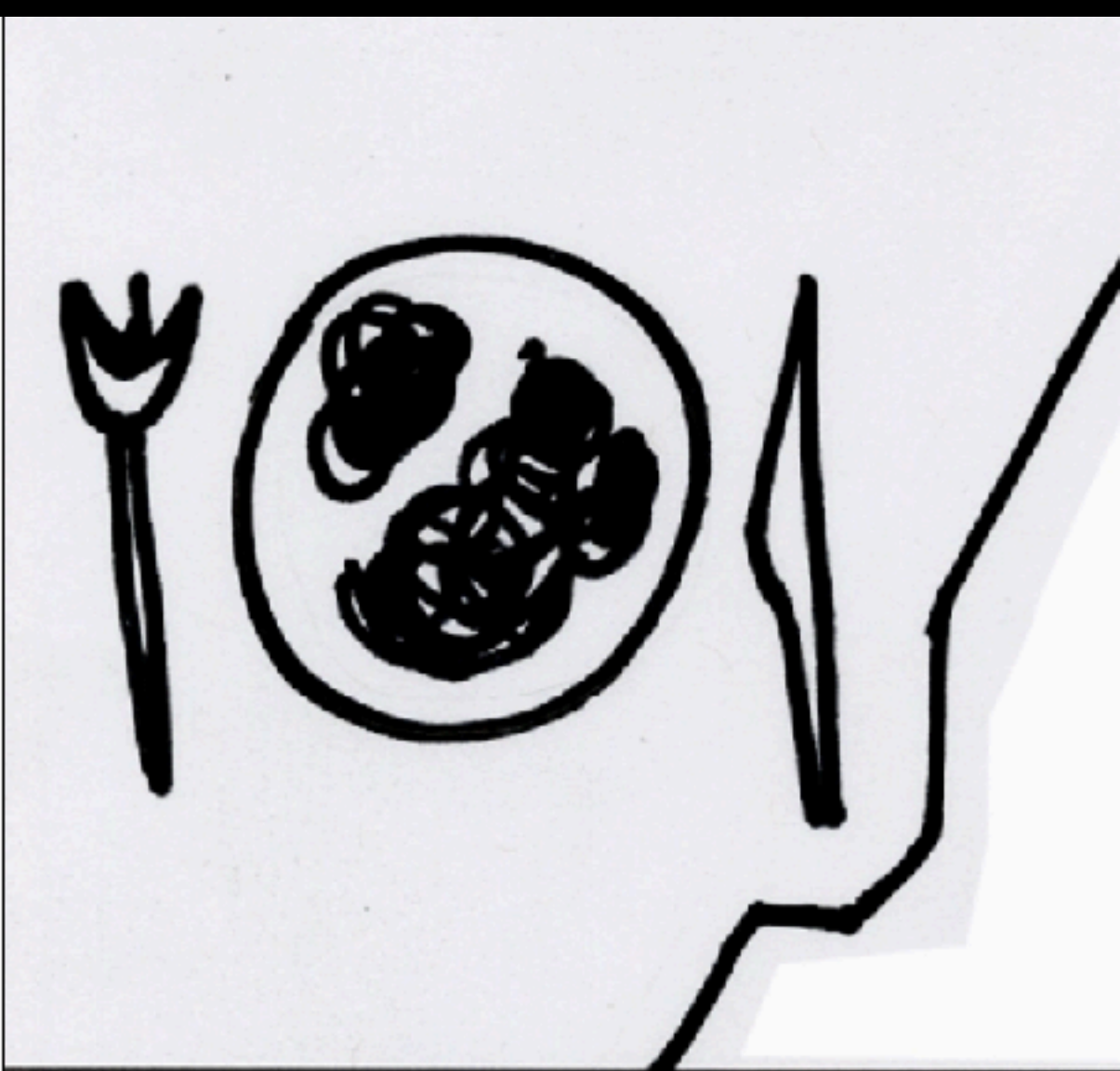
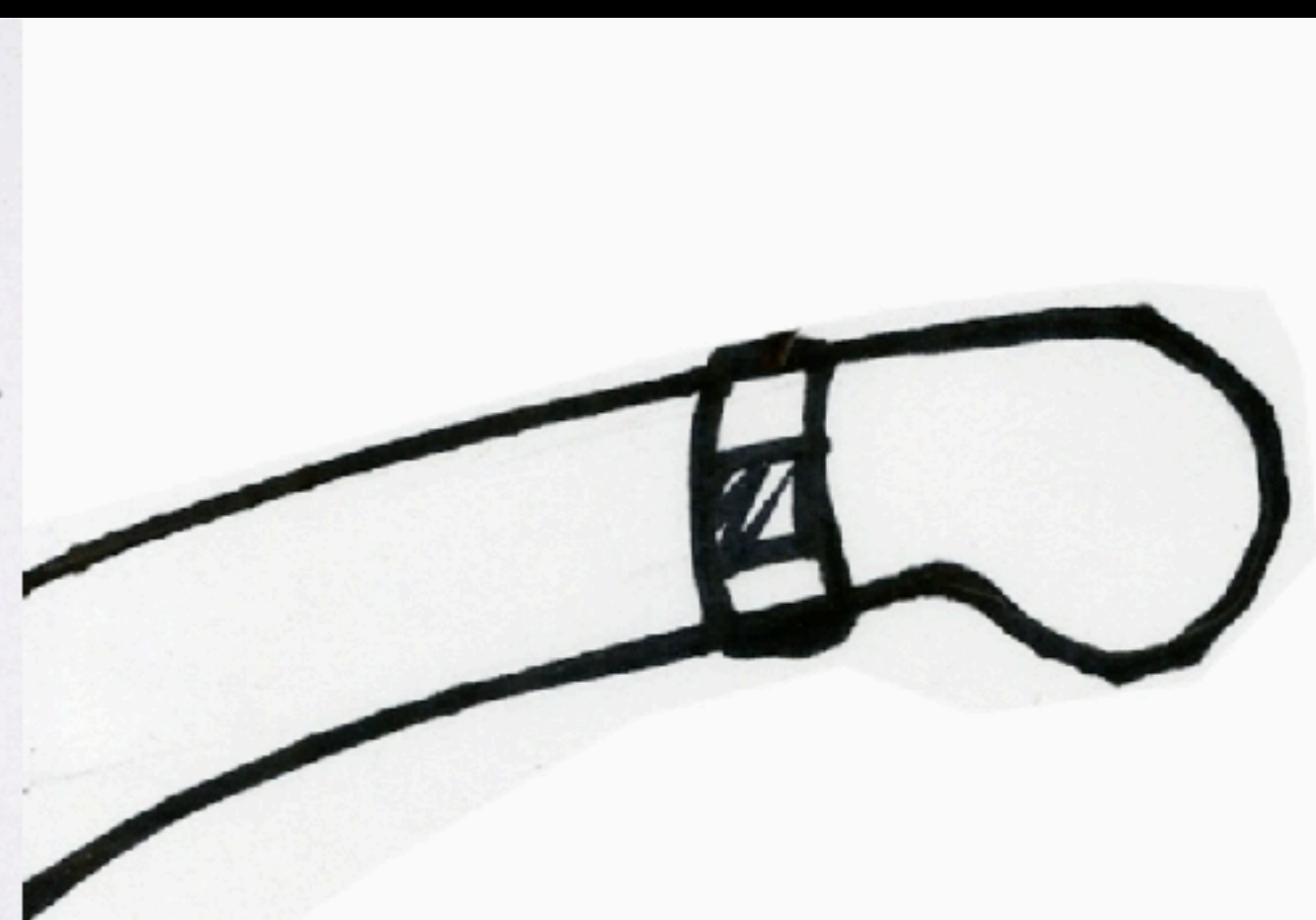
Never too early to brand

- What style fits the personality of your team? Your idea?
- Be creative, unique and honest.
- Avoid gimmicks.
- Your video shouldn't look and sound too much like someone else's.
- Avoid templates unless you truly customize it.

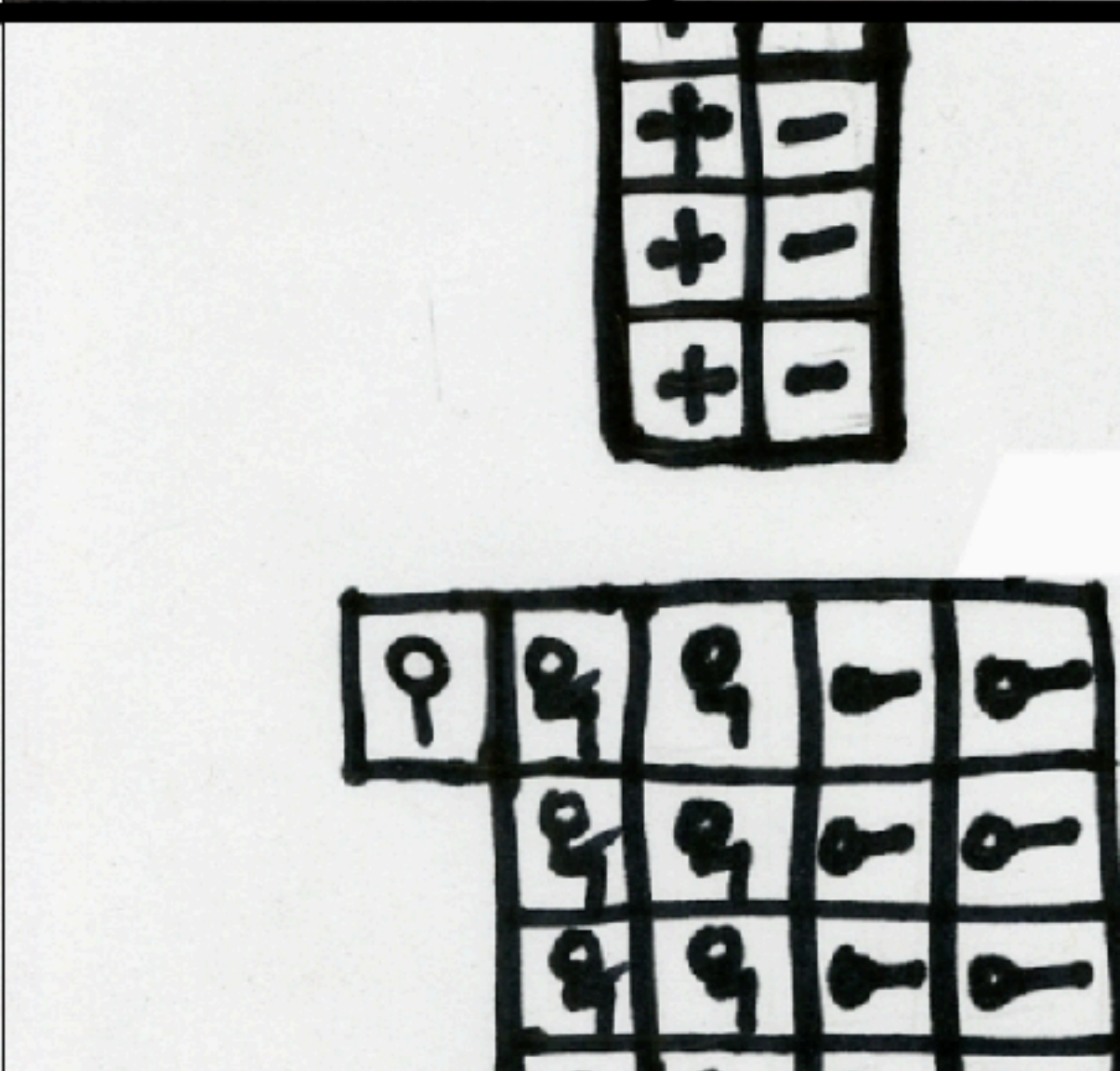
Visualize

- Simple storyboard sketches can be great planning tools
- Take advantage of the moving, visual medium
- Will you shoot video? Use photos creatively? Hand drawn or vector drawings? Stop motion?
- Animation? Motion graphics? Dynamic typography? A composite of all of these elements?
- Where will viewer see person speaking and when will they see supporting imagery and video (aka b roll)?

- How to visualize the key points of problem, solution, market...?
- Visual metaphor or theme to tap into?
- Record *scratch track*, aka *animatic* (basically an quickly made video that uses rough sketches over time to prove the script works to the ear but also flows well - see next slide)



very
rested=
> 30 active
minutes
< heart
rate...
~~~~~



Record a version of your script and synchronize sketches from your storyboard before shooting the real material. This upfront pre-vis planning can bring the project into focus.



# film language 101

if you plan to dramatize



# It's all about control.

- framing of shot, movement of camera
- proximity of microphone, placement of camera
- lighting, placement of subject
- camera: focus, exposure, white balance, depth of field
- level of microphone to record audio
- location cleanup, arrangement, clothing and prop color

# Shot Sizes and Continuity

- Set the scene with wide establishing shots, remember to capture close-up details.
- Maintaining screen direction is important
- Upcoming images courtesy of “Shot by Shot: A Practical Guide to Filmmaking” by Cantine, Lewis and Howard

Extreme Long Shot (ELS)



Long Shot (LS)



Medium Shot (MS)



Vary the size of  
your shots

Medium Close-Up (MCU)

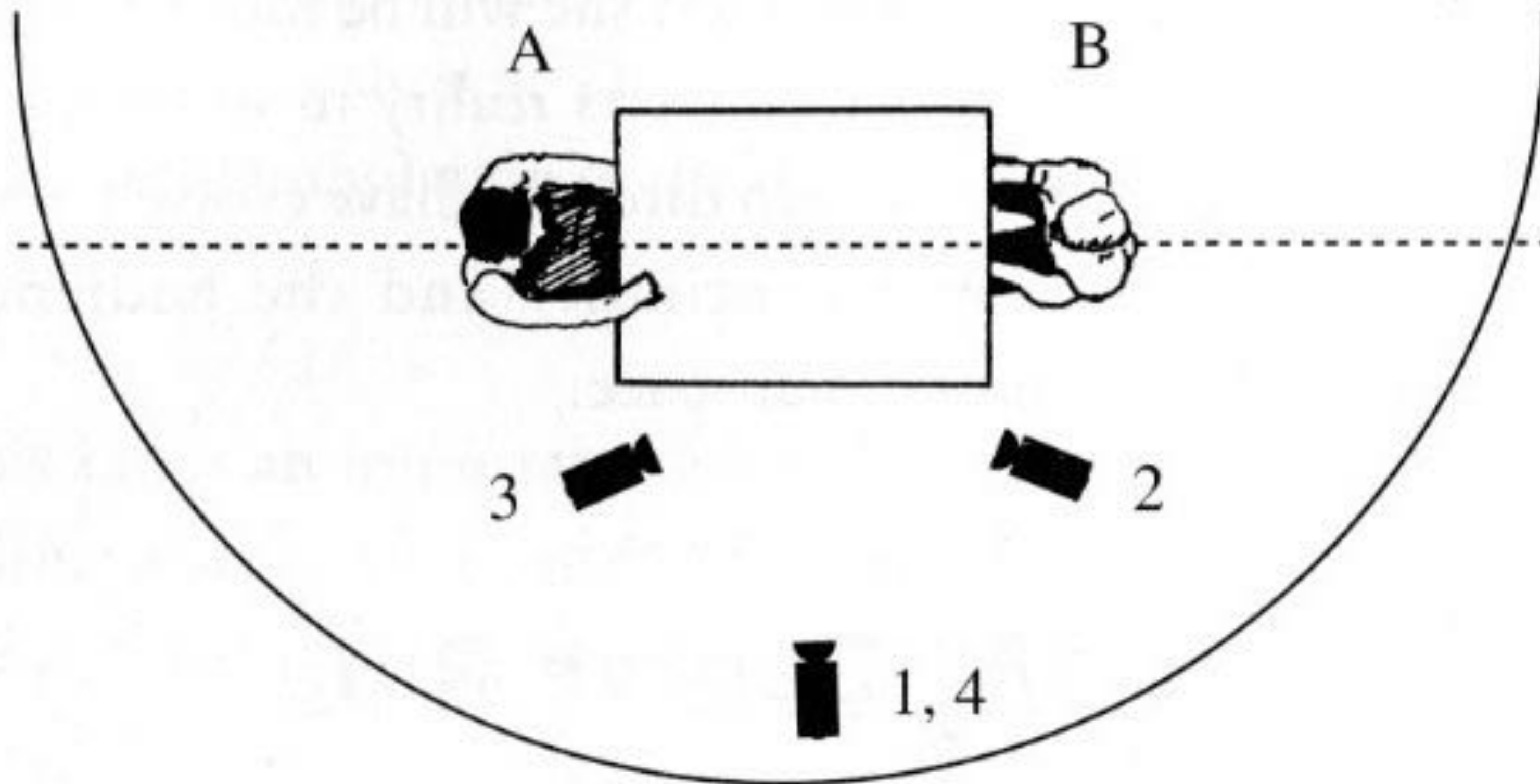


Close-Up (CU)



Extreme Close-Up (ECU)

## 180 degree rule



**Usually action is shot from one side of an imaginary line.**

*An overhead view showing the 180-degree line and three camera positions for a sequence of four shots. The numbers indicate the order of the shots in the edited sequence.*



# 4th wall

- Team should likely address the camera directly
- Any people featured in dramatization of concept should avoid looking into or addressing the camera







**Jean Nolte**  
Acura Product Specialist



Rule of Thirds  
a basic composition guide



# Rule of Thirds vs. Symmetry: Composition

- Rule of Thirds / Grid Guide : <https://vimeo.com/1461280>
- Centered/Symmetrical : Wes Anderson  
<https://vimeo.com/89302848>
- You gotta know the rules before you can break them properly



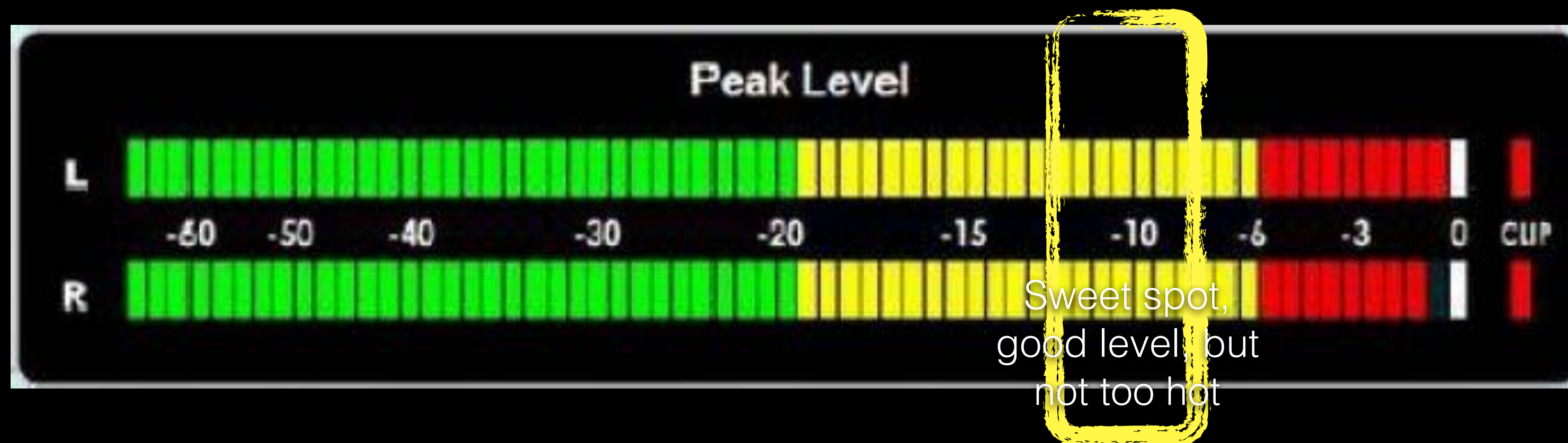
**clean, clear audio**

# Recording Audio

- Use a mic close to the person speaking
- Record in a quiet environment without echo
- Use carpet, rugs, clothing to reduce echo

# Watch your levels...

- Use the VU meter to ensure the audio being recorded is not too quiet or too loud
- Digital audio VU meters use -12 dB as a “sweet spot”
- This idea of audio level is possibly more helpful to grasp when mixing audio in your video editor to smooth out and make all sound a consistent volume











# ZOOM H4N PRO

4-Tracks, Unlimited Creativity.





# Smart Phone Tricks

- How to get best narration track from an iPhone
- Using a double system with 2 iPhones, or iPhone as boom mic see the Wistia video below. Or sit a Zoom recorder just out of frame.
- Wistia: <http://wistia.com/library/shooting-video-with-an-iphone>
- Sorry for the iPhone bias in this slide set. I know there are good resources on getting the most from your Samsung Galaxy, etc.



lighting

# Lighting Properties to Control

- Intensity    Dark ----- **Bright**
- Hard    ----- **Soft**
- Contrast    High ----- **Low**
- Shadows and Highlights
- Directions and Angles, Number of Sources
- Color (use the same bulb type, white balance)
- Low Key    ----- **High Key**





1:1



2:1



4:1



8:1



1.5:1





High Key, exterior with bounce fill

**Jean Nolte**  
Acura Product Specialist





Low Key, interior with less  
fill for dramatization







But, as you saw from Wistia demos, only balanced frontal illumination with a background light behind subject works for *their* style.

**Standard 3-point lighting set up.**  
**Lights from left to right:**  
**Background light with projection lens and gobo.**  
**Fill light with mini soft box.**  
**Back light (against back wall).**  
**Key light with soft box.**



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ELECTRONICS › ACCESSORIES

# The Best Tripod for iPhones and Other Smartphones

By [Erin Lodi](#) and [Signe Brewster](#) Updated June 29, 2021





# What if I don't have a light kit?

- Some room walls reflect light to soften it and fill in shadows
- Use common sense approach to natural light: **face** window, not backlit in front of it.
- What natural backgrounds can you work with?
- What are your brightest rooms?
- Wistia: <http://wistia.com/library/choosing-a-background>

# Assemble



# Video Editing Software Universal Interface Guide

- Import video, photo and audio files : Media Bin
- Cut, expand, contract media clips: Timeline Window
- Synchronize voice, sound effects, mix : Timeline Window
- Virtual razor blade, tape, overlap : Transition Panel
- Choose “in” and “out” points : Source Player (near Media Bin)

# Control Audience Focus with Editing

- editing: visual flow and rhythm
- transitions have meaning
- Remove or avoid distractions
- Audience is hearing, seeing, reading, thinking... all at once.

**Guide that experience.**





# Music and Voice Mixing

- Choose carefully. Does music support tone and message?
- Don't choose distracting music!
- Music should be dropped in volume in your editing software. Do not drown out narration or other voices.
- In technical terms, I typically reduce music by -8 dB or more while often boosting spoken audio by +1 or +2dB

# Screen capture and graphics

- ScreenFlow is my preferred screen capture software. It can capture from multiple cameras, screen and audio sources and doubles as intuitive video editing software.
- Consider using your slide graphics in the video editor as title cards or as animated moments
- Pitch decks in general should have minimal text and even more so when used in a video



# Output Video for Upload

- Outputting your final video using H.264 or H.265 codec set to high bitrate such as 10Mbps and AAC audio or MP3 audio set to 128kbps or higher are great options.
- Videos that Zoom automatically makes are **very** compressed and sacrifice a good deal of quality

# Resources

- iMovie on the Mac still sets the bar for a quality tool at a low price.
  - even an old Mac will have more than enough power to make a 1080p video
- <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/imovie-10-1-16-essential-training/create-videos-people-actually-want-to-watch?autoAdvance=true&autoSkip=false&autoplay=true&resume=true&u=42257553>
- <http://wistia.com/library> (DIY lighting, DSLR workshop, direction tips)
- ScreenFlow (Mac) <\$100 video editing software  
<http://www.telestream.net/screenflow/overview.htm>
- Camtasia (Windows & Mac) <\$100 video editing software  
<https://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html>
- Adobe Premiere Elements (Windows & Mac) <\$100 video editing software, but use CMU campus labs for free!  
<http://www.adobe.com/products/premiere-elements.html>
- Wistia Learning Center (tagged “DIY”):  
<https://wistia.com/learn?page=1&tag=diy-video>



Thanks!

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Thanks!