

# Creating a Successful Video Pitch

a 1 hour crash course in filmmaking fundamentals

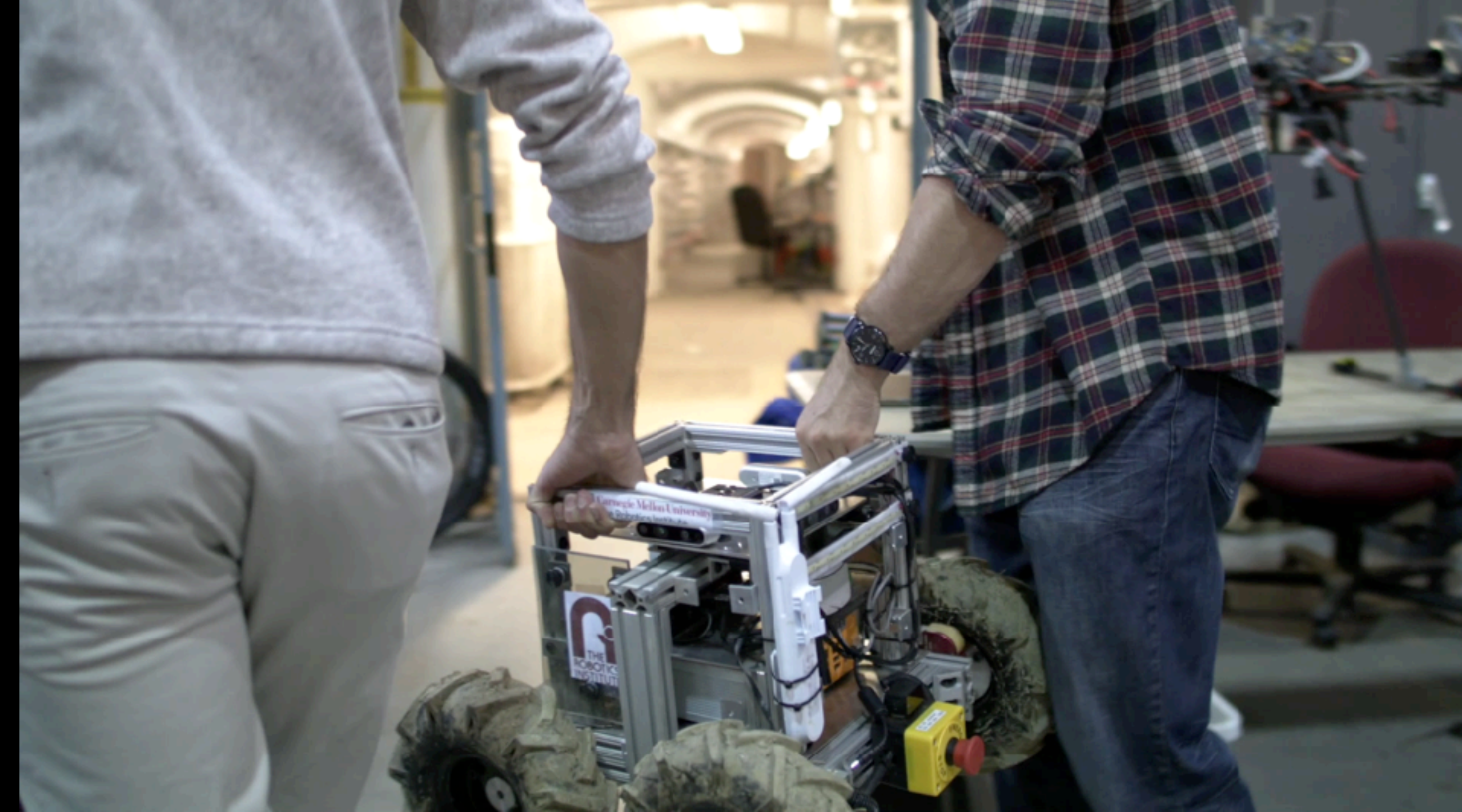
Brian Staszal, Carnegie Mellon University  
November 8, 2022

staszal@andrew.cmu.edu @stasarama



# 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 and persuasive videos
- Taught filmmaking courses for 14 years, prior design agency & corporate client experience
- NYU TSOA Film & TV Grad



\$20,000





# Swartz Center for Entrepreneurship

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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.**



# 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 only* a screen captured slideset and disembodied voice



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



# 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<br>0:02 | Descriptions of imagery, image/camera movement, style of animated of type over time. | <b>Narrator:</b><br><b>Music:</b><br><u><b>SoundFX:</b></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.....

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Sketches: Shot size, visual details



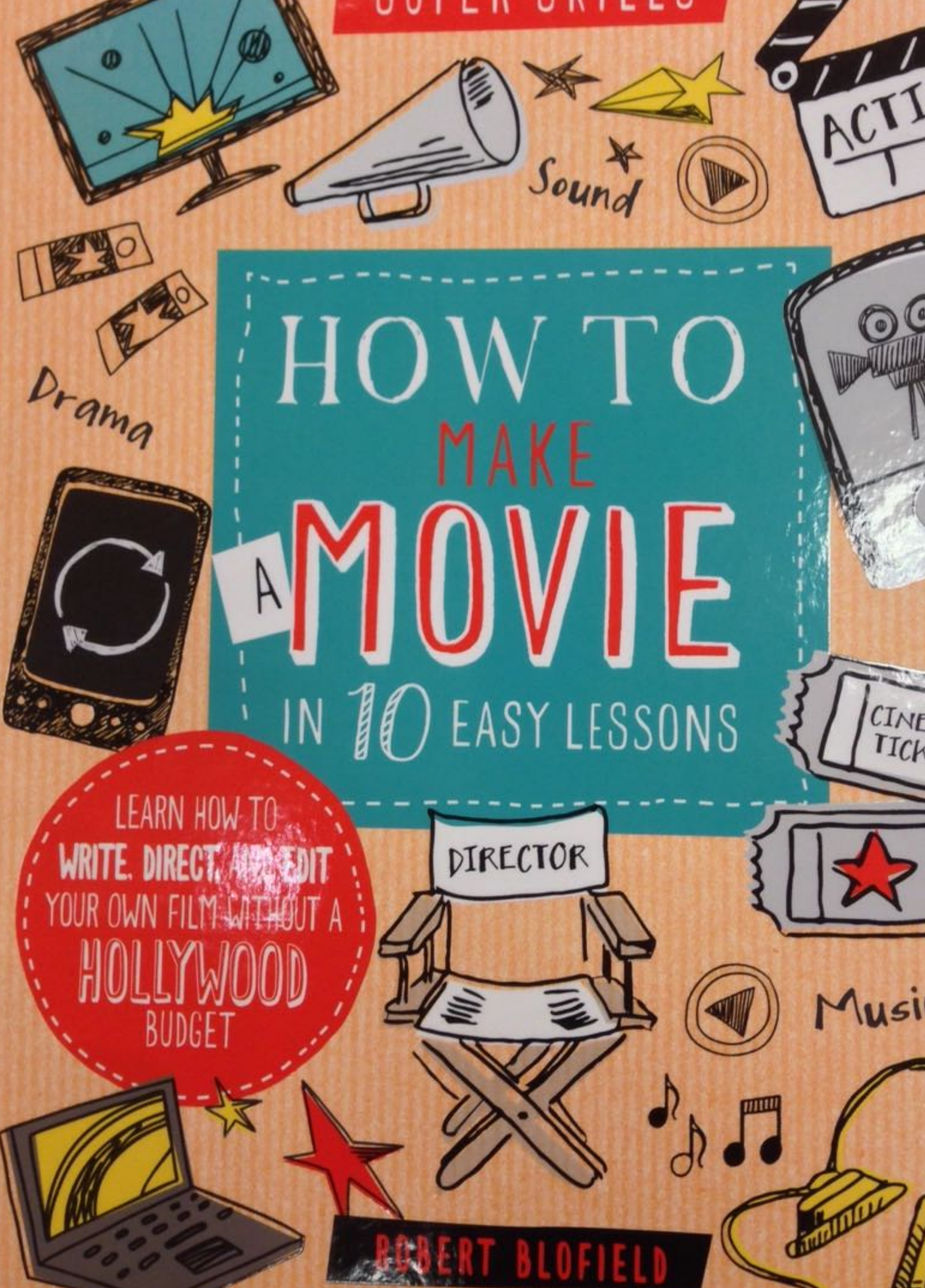
Brainstorm, Clarify Message

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

How to Make a Movie in 10 Easy Lessons  
Richard Blofield, 2015



# Visualize

- How to visualize the key points of problem, solution, market...?
- Visual metaphor or theme to tap into?
- Will you shoot video? Use photos creatively? Hand drawn or vector drawings? Stop motion? Assemble and edit zoom calls with better audio?
- 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)?

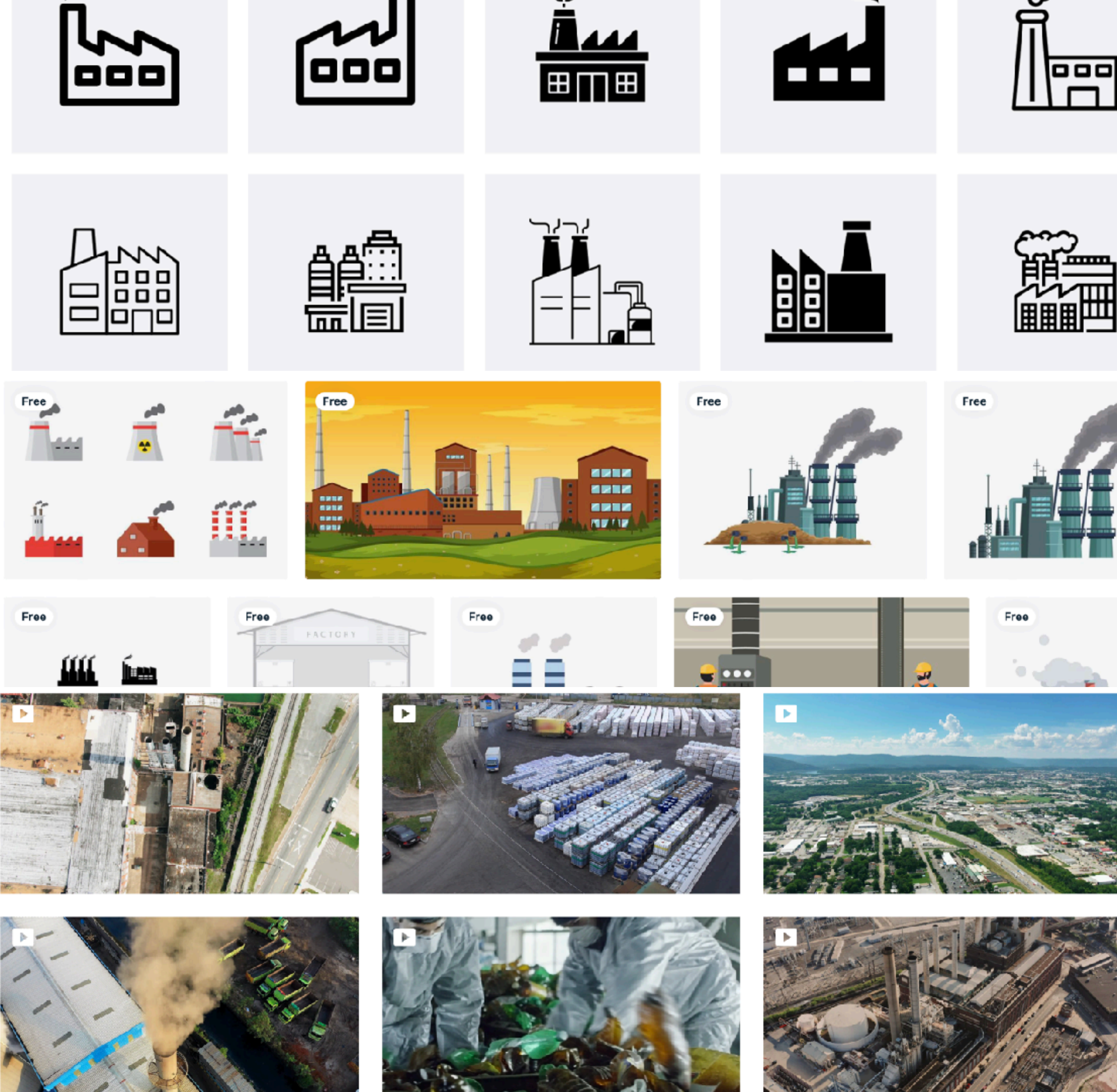


*Free* resources exist  
to jump start your  
visualization of your  
market, idea, etc.

Noun Project

Vecteezy

Pexels





# 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)

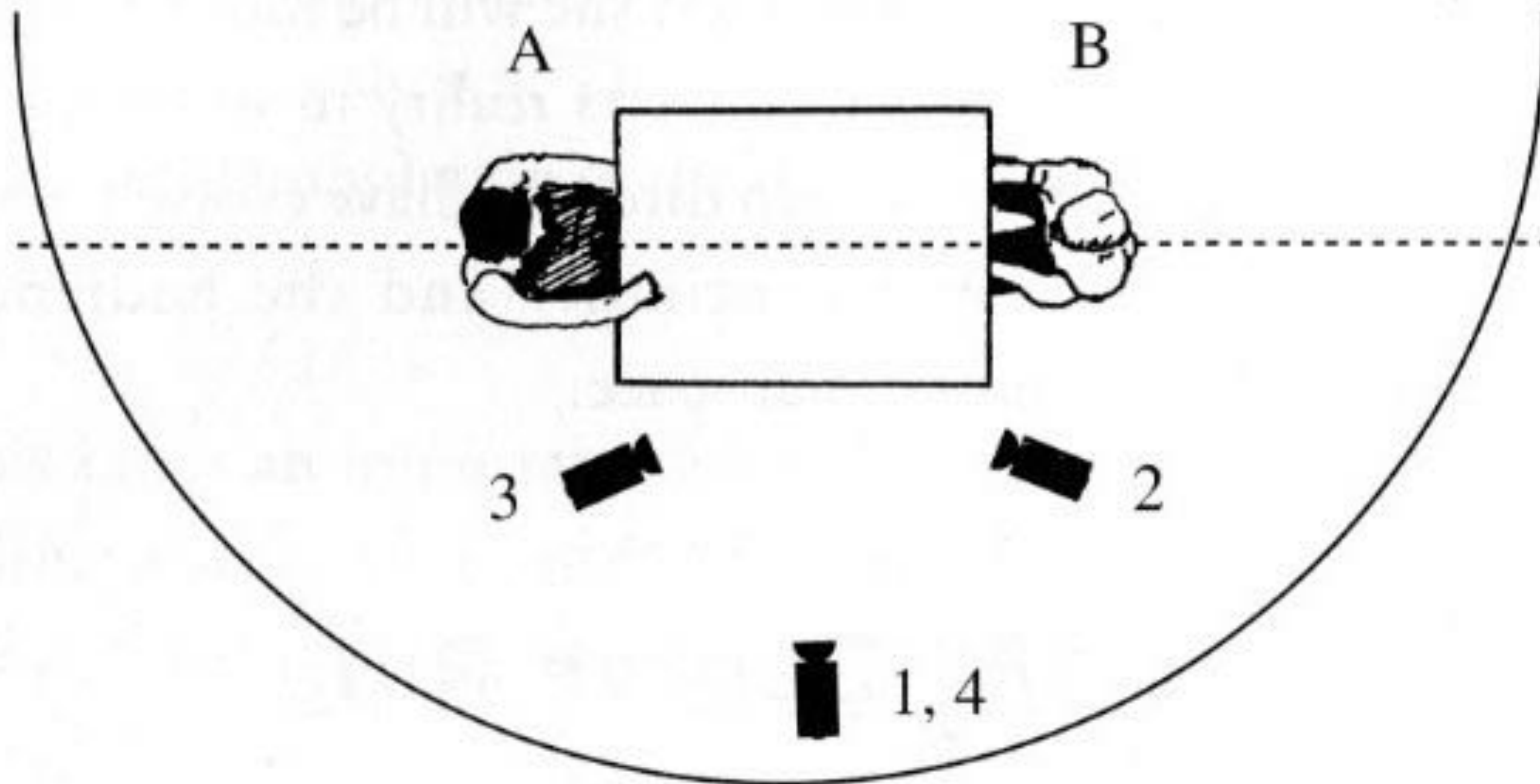


Close-Up  
(CU)

Extreme  
Close-Up



## 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, but perhaps not if all team members are being interviewed.
- Any people featured in dramatization of concept usually avoid looking into or addressing the camera







# 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**

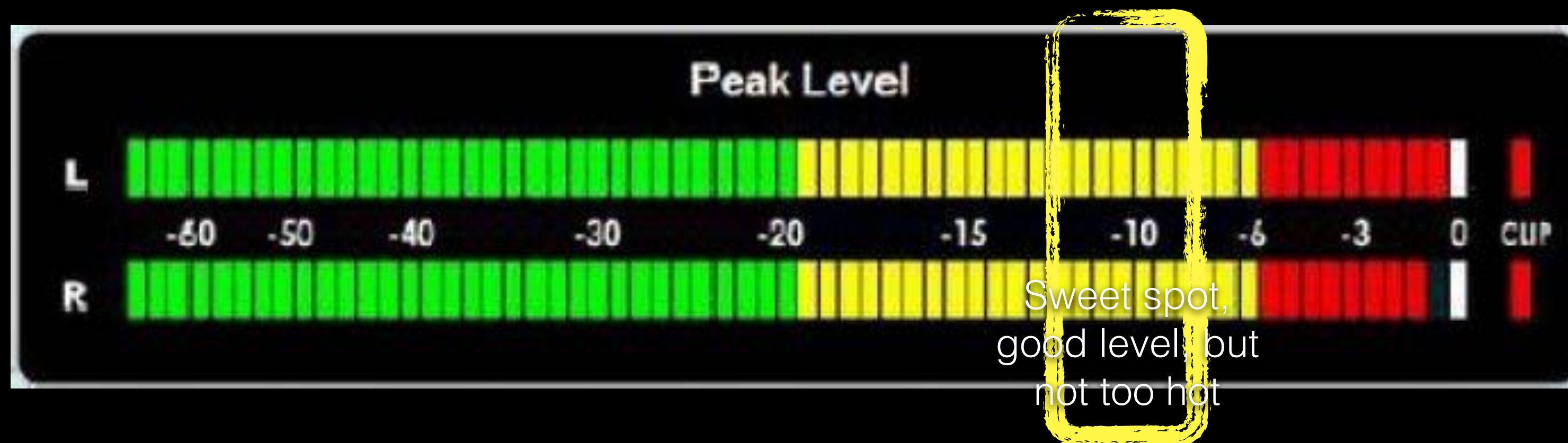


# Recording Audio

- 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 phone/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**





8:1  
low key



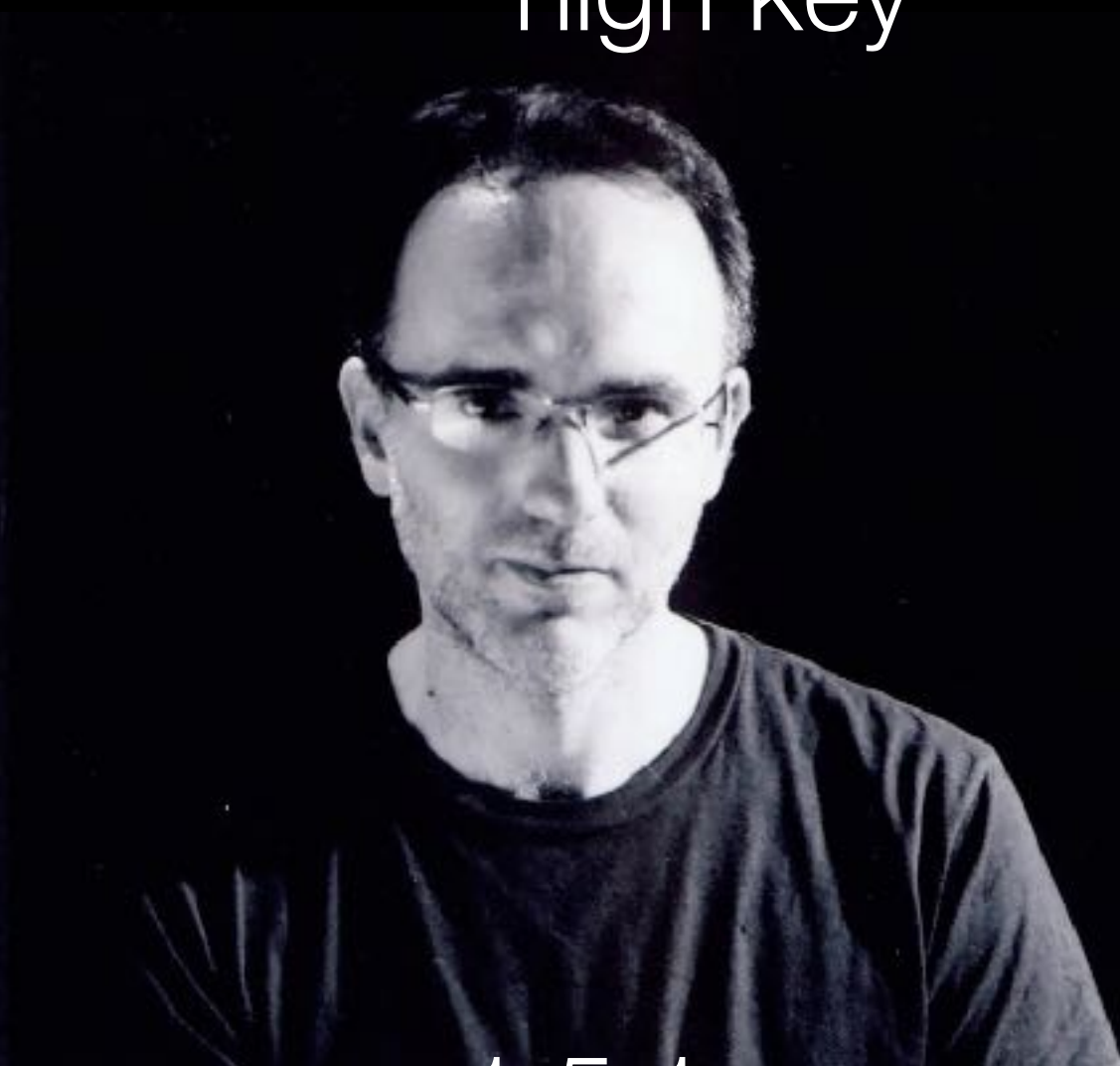
4:1



2:1



1:1  
high key

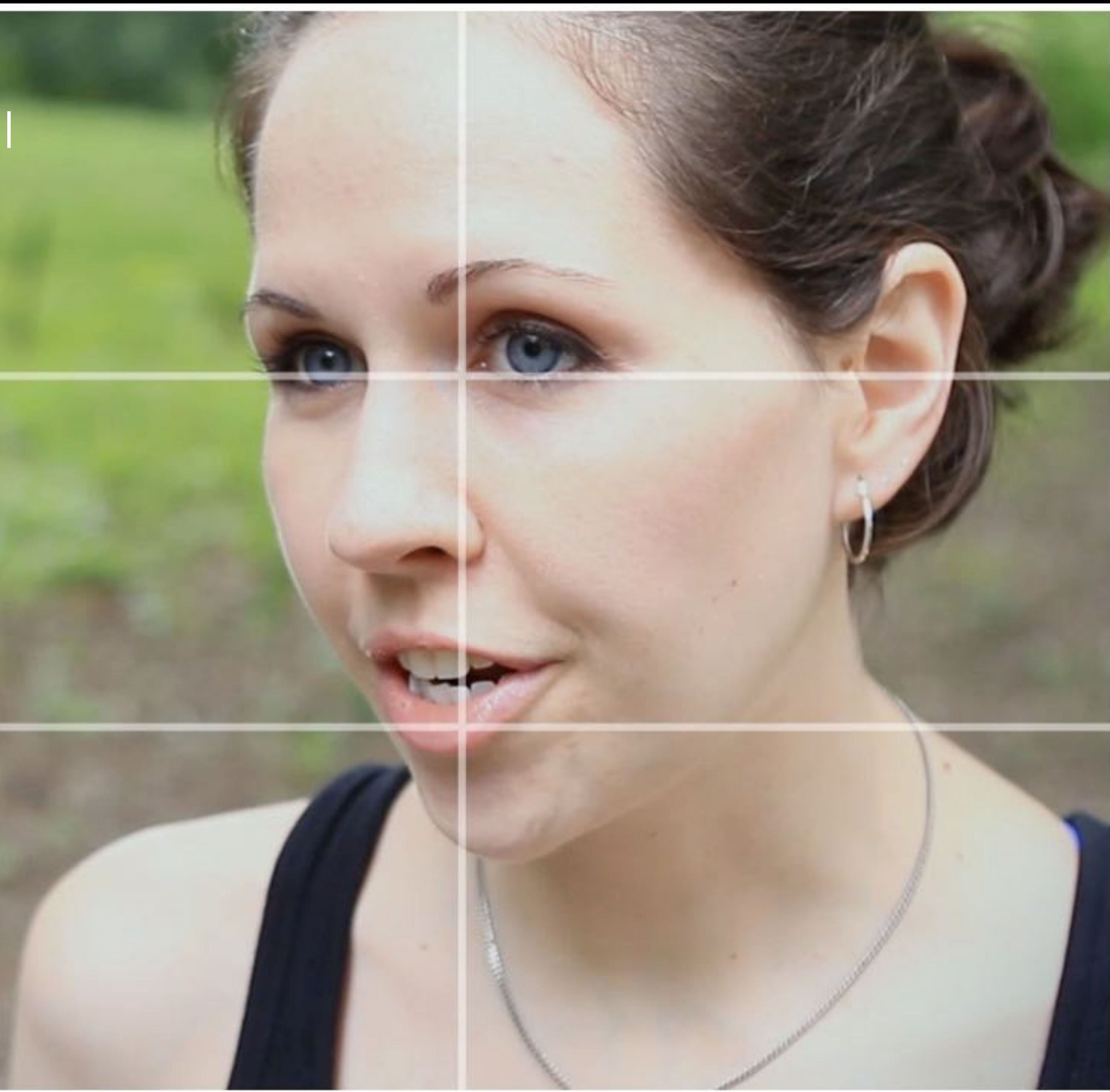


1.5:1



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.**



Glide Gear



GLIDE GEAR DST 100







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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>
- Zoom interviews from [scripps.edu](http://scripps.edu)



# 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 the 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 - consider capturing video not with Zoom if possible



# Resources

- iMovie on the Mac still sets the bar for a quality tool at a low price, but the free version of DaVinci Resolve from Blackmagicdesign is an excellent for people seeking a pro level tool
- <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 a robust screen capture tool with surprising video editing capabilities <http://www.telestream.net/screenflow/overview.htm>
- Adobe Premiere and After Effects in CMU campus labs for free
- Wistia Learning Center (tagged “DIY”): <https://wistia.com/learn?page=1&tag=diy-video>

Thanks!

- SUPER SKILL 1: FIND INSPIRATION \_ \_ \_ \_ \_
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Thanks!