

# SHOOT LIKE A PRO: HOW TO RECORD QUALITY VIDEOS USING YOUR MOBILE DEVICE

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## WHY USE A MOBILE DEVICE FOR VIDEO?

*The best camera is the one that's with you.™*

~Chase Jarvis

Your photos and videos are not about the gear used to shoot them. They are about the stories and special moments of our family and friends.

Most people always have a smartphone nearby – or even in their hands – at all times.

The newest smartphones have cameras that rival DSLRs. Some even have *better* video cameras than DSLRs.

Many apps are available to extend the functionality of your mobile device's camera and offer manual tools that are similar to a DSLR.

You don't need to lug around a large video camera just in case an unexpected opportunity presents itself. You can capture quality video quickly and easily with a mobile device.

## VIDEO RECORDING BASICS

### **Resolution**

- Used to describe the quality or “definition” of a video.
- Refers to the number of horizontal lines a video has from top to bottom.
- More lines = higher resolution.
- Typical video resolutions are 360p, 480p, 720p, 1080p and 4K (“Ultra HD”).
- “High Definition” or “HD” is achieved at 720p or higher.
- Smaller resolutions create smaller files. These videos may be blurry on larger screens.
- Higher resolutions provide better visuals and can be viewed on larger screens.
- Higher resolution videos take up more space on your device, so check for storage availability before filming.
- Be sure to choose the appropriate resolution for your project.

## Frame Rate

- This is the number of frames per second (fps), which means how many consecutive images are displayed per second.
- Example: “30 fps” means 30 consecutive images appear per second of video.
- Frame rate standards:
  - Use 24 fps (U.S.) for the “film quality” look.
  - Use 30 fps (U.S. NTSC standard) for the “TV show” look.
  - Use 25 fps in countries that use the PAL standard.
- For smooth slow motion shots, use 120 fps or higher, depending on desired quality.
- Some of the newer mobile devices support a video recording mode of up to 4K at 60 fps, which outperforms many DSLRs.
- Higher fps means less blurring; however, can be more difficult for the brain to process. Example: the movie “The Hobbit” played in some theaters at 48 fps, which is twice the “normal” frame rate. This reduced blurring, but caused some viewers to find the movie difficult to watch.

## Lighting

- Cameras need light in order to produce a quality image.
- Too little light can cause noisy (grainy) images and a loss of detail.
- Proper lighting is even more important for mobile device cameras because they have smaller image sensors and lenses.
- Natural light (sunlight) is best, whenever possible.
- Three-point lighting: a main light, a fill light, and an accent light.
- Consider the color temperature (see White Balance, below) for the best look.
- Watch for glare on your subject (i.e., glasses) or reflecting on background objects.

## White Balance

- This is the color or “temperature” of the light.
- Light that is too warm (orange) or too cool (blue) can look unnatural.
- White balance *balances* the color temperature by adding the opposite color to the image in an attempt to bring the color temperature back to neutral.
- Instead of whites appearing blue or orange, they should appear white after correctly white balancing an image.
- White balance can be modified in-camera by using an app for your device.

## Focus / Depth of Field

- Depth of field refers to the area of your scene that is in focus.
- Shortening the depth of field will help you create an image where the subject stands out more sharply – and will be more in focus – than the background or foreground.
- Using a shallow depth of field will give a professional, cinematic feel to your videos.
- Some smartphones, such as the iPhone 7 to X (but not XR) come with “dual lens” cameras which can simulate depth of field.
- Getting close to your subject may let you achieve shallow depth of field on older devices.

## Stay Steady

- Shaky images are unpleasant to watch.
- Many mobile devices come with image stabilization. Make sure this feature is turned on.
- Consider investing in a tripod or gimbal to stabilize your device.

## **Audio / Sound**

- Bad audio will turn a great video into a terrible video.
- Whenever possible, try to record in a quiet place with little ambient noise.
- For the best sound quality, the mic needs to be close to the subject being recorded.
- If your subject is too far away from your device, consider adding a lavalier/lapel mic or a boom mic for better audio quality.
- If you plan to edit your video afterwards, you could use a separate audio recording device or a second mobile device placed closer to the subject.

## **Before You Record**

- Does your device have enough storage space for your video recording? You may need to delete unnecessary photos, videos, and apps to increase available space.
- Make sure your battery is fully charged. Consider carrying a portable charger.
- Unless your video is being made specifically for posting on certain social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram), you should shoot horizontally, not vertically.

## **TIPS FOR SHOOTING AN INTERVIEW**

- ✓ Check your background – look for clutter or distracting objects that should be removed. Avoid backgrounds that are moving or are too busy. Watch for background items that appear to be poking out of your subject's head.
- ✓ Place the camera at eye level of your subject. If the interviewer is off-camera, place the camera near the interviewer's face. The interviewer's eyes should be at the same level as the camera. He/she may need to slouch or stand up to be at the correct level.
- ✓ Whenever possible, try to shoot your subject's face straight on, not in profile. You want to be able to see both of the subject's eyes in the shot.
- ✓ Leave enough "headroom" or space between the top of your subject's head and the top of your recording frame. Not enough headroom cuts off heads. Too much headroom makes your subject look like he/she is in a hole. This varies by camera so you may need to experiment; sometimes what you see in the viewfinder is not what is being recorded.
- ✓ Get as close to your subject as is comfortable. Remember: a tighter shot will give you better video quality. Plus, you want to see your loved one's face.

## **SUGGESTED APPS FOR VIDEO RECORDING**

*Prices and availability current at time of writing*

### **FILMiC Pro**

<https://www.filmicpro.com>

Available for iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, and Android

\$14.99 (offers in-app purchases for additional controls)

Optional remote control app available for \$9.99 or bundled for \$19.99

**Moment – Pro Camera**

<https://www.shopmoment.com/moment-pro-camera-app>

Available for iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, and Android

Free

Optional in-app purchase of \$3.99 for access to all manual controls

**MoviePro Video Recorder**

<https://profilmmakerapps.com/app/moviepro>

Available for iPhone and iPad only

\$5.99

Optional remote control app available for \$4.99 or bundled for \$8.99

**ProShot**

<http://www.riseupgames.com/proshot>

Available for iPhone, iPad, Android, and Windows

\$4.99 (offers in-app purchases)

**Kinomatic – Pro Video Camera**

<https://www.kinomatic.co>

iPhone only

\$3.99

**ProMovie Recorder +**

<http://promovieapp.com>

iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch

\$2.99

Free version adds a watermark to videos

**Clips**

<https://www.apple.com/clips>

iPhone and iPad only

Free

**Manual Camera Pro: DSLR Camera HD Professional**

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pixelatte.dslr.manual.camera.pro&hl=en>

Android only

\$3.99

“Lite” version available to try for free

**Open Camera**

<http://opencamera.org.uk>

Android only

Free

**Footej Camera**

<http://footej.camera>

Android only

Free (offers in-app purchase for “premium” features)