



## Tips for Creating a Video Story

by Bryan Shadden, KVIE Producer

### Overview:

Below are some steps your students can use to create a video narrative. The steps apply everything from an hour-long documentary to a 30-second short story. They're designed to help the video producer find a focus and stay with it. These are simply guidelines. There are unlimited ways to go about telling a good story, and some of the best stories come from experimenting.

### Research & story focus:

The single most important part of telling a good story is asking throughout the entire process: "What is the story all about?"

After researching the subject matter, the producer should be able to say exactly what the story will be about in one sentence. The more focused the sentence, the more focused the story. This sentence (focus) doesn't necessarily get set in stone on day one, because the stories can change. In the course of interviewing, information can be uncovered or interview subjects can take the story in much more compelling areas, but the producer should continuously ask themselves: "What is the story all about?"

Example:

*The two new ways to recycle at Sesame Elementary School vs. Being green*

### Creating an outline:

Just like an outline for a research paper, a video outline can help collect ideas. After all my interviews are completed, I copy all my best sound bites into the appropriate sections of my outline. The outline then becomes the rough draft of my story script.

Simple outline for the new ways to recycle at Sesame Elementary:

- The problem: The school generates this much waste a year. Why you should care?
- The people behind finding a solution: Profile of principal and a student leader.
- The solution: How school is now recycling milk containers and e-waste.
- What you can do: Ways to get involved.

### Researching extras that help tell the story:

- Are there archival video or photos available? (Example: school video of recycling in the 60s)
- Are there other photos available? (Example: Mr. Rogers has photos of 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Recycling Day)
- Can I create a graphic to help tell the story? (Example: An animation showing how much trash the school creates in a year)

### Finding the right subjects to interview by pre-interviewing:

- Find the best interview subjects by talking to them in advance
- Builds trust
- If you are able to pre-interview in person, it gives you a sense where you can shoot



Examples:

- Who started the recycling program? (Principal Rogers)
- Who really cares about program? (Curious George)
- Elmo will share photos...but is too nervous to talk on camera. (We'll skip him.)

### **Interview:**

There's an art to interviewing, and it's not easy. Cameras and lights almost always make people uncomfortable, and that's where the pre-interview helps. The more comfortable the interviewee is with you in advance, the better they'll sound.

Some helpful tips:

- Before you start, explain what the interview will be like: "First we'll interview then we need b-roll. It will take some time. Do you have concerns?"
- Have printed questions, but don't use them. You want to keep the exchange conversational. You can look at the printed questions at the very end to make sure you asked everything.
- Go over the ground rules: "Don't look at camera. Just talk to me. My voice won't be heard. Please rephrase the question in the answer."
- Ask questions that discourage yes or no answers.
- Use silence to your advantage.
- Use non-verbal cues to communicate during the interview (nodding, smiling, etc.)
- Remember to ask: "Is there anything I should have asked that maybe I haven't?" (You'd be surprised how many good sound bites come from that question.)

### **Getting b-roll:**

The term "b-roll" is TV jargon for the cover shots you need to correspond with the sound bites from your interview and the words you write. In the good old days of television, editing was often done with two tape decks. Your "A" deck contained the tape with your main interviews, and the "B" deck contained a tape with your cover shots, or b-roll. All the voiceover the producer writes will need b-roll (to make the black go away). You'll also need b-roll to cover any time you join separate sound bites. "Ums" and "uhs" can be taken out of a sound bite, but you'll need b-roll. And, obviously, b-roll is most useful for showing visually what the interviewee is talking about.

On the day of your shoot get your interviews first and then the cover shots you need. That way you can get specific shots of the items discussed in the interview.

Examples of b-roll in recycling story:

- Shots of people you interview doing something related to story. These help you introduce the interviewees.
- Old computers
- Kids getting milk and lunch, then containers going in trash
- Kids recycling milk containers
- E-waste program picking up old computers
- The new recycling posters Principal Rogers mentioned in interview
- Shot of the lunch lady recycling that Curious George mentioned in interview

### **Logging:**

A videotape log is a word-for-word transcription of everything that was said in your interviews. It's the producer's choice on what to log. Some only log just what they need, but it begs the question: How do you know what you need before you write your script?



A videotape log is created by physically typing the video time code of all the sound bites and b-roll from your shoots. Simple logs can be made in Word. When the interviewee starts their sentence you note the time code (0:00:00), type the words said, making time code notes sporadically throughout the transcription. Professional software (e.g., InqScribe, TEPX and HD Log) makes the process easier, but logging is still time-consuming and tedious.

Knowing the time codes is important, because in editing you'll need to know where to look for sound bites you want to include. Some people log every word of their interviews; others just log what they believe they need.

After all the interviews are shot, one of the last things I do as a producer before writing a script is to highlight all the best lines in my logs. I combine all those highlighted lines into their appropriate areas in my outline, and then I start to write the voiceover that ties everything together.

Below is a classic example of how interviews usually go. It's slightly exaggerated, but it's surprising how often people get off subject in videotaped interviews. This is also a good example of how story focus is important. Television shows almost always need to be an exact length of time, so when looking through sound bites the producer always needs to ask if the sound bite is important to the story.

Mr. Rogers Interview:

1:00:01 I started the program earlier this year because I think every student should learn about protecting the environment. By the way did I tell you how much I'm looking forward to going on summer vacation? 1:01:30 I'm going to go to the Bahamas and .....1:04:00 ..... more about vacation.....1:06:30 .....1:07:00 And next year I'm going to make the recycling program bigger and better! ..... 1:09:30 I've really got to pay respect students like Curious George who helped make the recycling program here at Sesame Elementary possible.

This could turn into a really nice statement. B-roll shots will cover the jump cuts. (Jump cuts are gaps between statements that make it incongruent.)

Final Sound on Tape (SOT): Mr. Rogers

I started the program earlier this year because I think every student should learn about protecting the environment. And next year I'm going to make the recycling program bigger and better! I've really got to pay respect students like Curious George who helped make the recycling program here at Sesame Elementary possible.

**Writing:**

Piece the best sound bites together with video and writing.

**Voiceover:**

All of the written lines in your script need to be recorded before the edit process.

**Editing:**

This is the final step of the process where computer software (iMovie, Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere, etc.) is used to assemble all the voiceover, sound bites, graphics, music, and b-roll from your script to make a complete video.