



FILMING WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS & STEPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Author: Philipp Kaindl - philipp@ourcommonfuture.org

Description

With online video platforms and social media, video has become an essential form of communication and one that everyone uses. We watch videos on a daily basis, but we also film - ourselves and others - to communicate, to promote or to inform others. Most of this content is filmed with the one device that we carry with us all the time - our smartphones. The quality of videos filmed with smartphones can rival that of professional cameras... if one knows how to use them, how to press the right buttons and maybe use additional apps and equipment. In this workshop, we will learn some filmmaking basics and look at how to get the most out of your smartphone videos.

OBJECTIVES

- learn how to frame a good picture
- learn filmmaking basics
- learn how to best use your own smartphone for filming
- find out what tools can improve your smartphone filming

Tools and Equipment:

The participants should bring their (fully charged) smartphones. If additional equipment can be organised, the following is useful:

- camera tripod with holder for smartphone
- smartphone compatible lav mics, such as eg. Rode Wireless Go 2
- (optional: lights for interview situation)

Duration:

Depending on the amount of discussion and exercise, 2-3 hours is optimal. The workshop could be expanded to include lighting and editing.



Co-funded by
the European Union



democracyrally.eu

FILMING WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS & STEPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Author: Philipp Kaindl - philipp@ourcommonfuture.org

Tutor:

This workshop assumes that the tutor knows cinematography and filmmaking, both creatively and technically. The “Suggested Instructions” are based on the workshop held in Luxembourg in June 2022 and can be adapted as needed.

Participants:

The workshop is geared towards almost everyone, starting at the age of 14. Optimal group size is 6-12 people.

Required Equipment for the Tutor:

A smartphone, a computer that allows screen sharing the smartphone's screen and a projector to show the participants. (this workshop was done in Luxembourg 2022 with an iPhone 13 mini and a MacBook Pro).

Required Equipment for the Participants:

The participants should bring their (fully charged) smartphones with some available memory space. (Limited memory and quickly draining batteries are among the biggest disadvantages of filming with smartphones).



Co-funded by
the European Union



democracyrally.eu

FILMING WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS & STEPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Part 1: What is a Good Picture?

- In the space where you are, let the participants team up in twos and take photos of each other. The goal is for them to find the best position, framing and natural lighting of the other person, as if they were filming them for an interview.
(Clarify in advance, if they should hold the smartphone vertically or horizontally. For this workshop, I recommend the “cinematic” horizontal framing with 16:9 aspect ratio. On many phones, this can also be set for photos - if not, participants can use the video mode and take a screenshot for this exercise).
- Have the participants share what they think is the best photo with you. Together, look at all the photos and discuss with the group which ones they think are the best. Then, try to find out what makes the best pictures better than the others.
 - discuss framing (rule of thirds, head space, eyeline, etc.), lighting, distance to background, perspective and angle, mixing of color temperature, etc.
 - mention that in a video interview (as opposed to a photo) additional factors come into play, such as sound (echo, background noise), changes and distractions in the background, movement of the subject him/herself, etc.

Part 2: Why not Use Automatic for Everything?

- Once you get the framing right, all you need is to press record, right? Discuss why that sometimes might not be the case
 - Show participants some of the most common problems of the auto-mode (either live or with a pre-recorded video)
 - white balance :how the color of the light changes in locations with different color temperature (eg. on the edge of natural (window) light and artificial (tungsten) light)
 - somebody comes into the frame and “steals” the focus
 - backlight too strong
 - camera pushes brightness to hard in low light situations
- Show what can be set manually in video mode on most smartphones
 - eg. on iPhone: tap and drag to adjust lighting, tap and hold to fix focus, etc.



Co-funded by
the European Union



FILMING WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS & STEPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Part 3: Filmmaking Basics

- Once you go into the camera / video settings on your smartphone, there are many more things you can adjust. What are they and when do you want to change them or use one over the other?
 - it depends on what you want to do with the video afterwards...
 - on which platforms will it be shown: has an impact on aspect ratio
 - will you want to slow it down later: impacts frame rate setting
 - how much space you have on your phone or how much you want to work on it in post-production and color correction / grading
 - impacts resolution and codec settings
- Discuss professional camera settings that might be available on some phones: aperture, shutter speed, white balance, ISO, etc. - all of these can be accessed by installing a dedicated filming app (see Part 4)
- Discuss depth of field and why this is hard to achieve on a smartphone... unless:
- What is Cinematic Mode?
 - Many smartphones have it or will have it in the future (iPhone starting from 13), at the moment it is still a bit experimental (wouldn't use it for a professional shoot).
 - uses AI to create shallow depth of field
 - focus tracking and focus shifting (on iPhone 13 tap for focus, double tap for focus tracking, tap hold for focus lock)
 - can be adjusted and changed AFTER filming on your phone
 - problem: still not perfect, makes errors identifying (the edges of) faces, especially with people wearing glasses
 - limits video settings (eg. on iPhone 13 mini to HD 30 fps)





FILMING WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS & STEPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Part 4: Should I use a Third-Party App (for Filming)?

- Advantages / Disadvantages of third-party apps:
 - Advantage: Access to professional camera settings (as described in Part 3)
 - Disadvantages:
 - Overrides the camera's AI - which is getting ever better
 - AI usually sets the brightness and colors differently for different parts of the image to create a kind of HDR image (can recognise faces, sky, background, etc.). This cannot be achieved with manual settings (they always apply to the entire frame)
 - AI can achieve smoother image stabilisation - might be disabled by third-party app or work less well
 - Bottom line: it's good to have a third-party app installed if the built-in video mode (and AI) are not doing what you want... but in many cases, the AI (with some manual adjustment such as tapping on the focus (see part 2)) will get you the best results.
 - Example of an App for Android and iPhone: Filmic Pro
 - biggest advantage (in my opinion): allows locking of white balance
 - can lock exposure and focus separately
 - can record with higher bit rate (Filmic Quality, Filmic Extreme modes): may have more options in color correction
 - offers additional professional filmmaking tools, such as False Color for checking exposure or a (digital) zoom handle





democracyrally.eu

FILMING WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS & STEPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Part 5: Sound

- Smartphones capture great video... but what about sound? It depends on the video you want to shoot, but if you want good sound (eg. for an interview) you will need additional gear
- Discuss mic options
 - booming with directional microphone
 - wireless lav mics (such as Rode Go II)
 - standalone sound recorder (such as Zoom H6)
- Recording the sound directly on smartphone or with an external device?
 - Advantage of recording in smartphone
 - video and sound are already synced
 - Disadvantages of recording on smartphone
 - very few options for adjusting the level (but you might have these options on the mic, eg. the settings and app for the Rode Go II)
 - might not be possible to monitor the sound with (bluetooth) headphones or the sound might be delayed
- sound should always be monitored (ie. listened to) while recording to notice when, for example
 - background noises are louder in microphone than they appear naturally
 - a piece of clothing scratches on a lav mic
 - the cable of a boom mic is hitting the boom pole, etc.
- Aside from the gear, pick your interview locations keeping sound in mind:
 - avoid background noises
 - avoid wind



Co-funded by
the European Union



democracyrally.eu

FILMING WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS & STEPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Part 6: Grip

- Filming is photography in motion. Most smartphones already have great image stabilization and AI corrects for smooth motion. Still, some gear may be useful (discuss each)
 - tripod
 - smartphone cage; aside from a more comfortable hold of your smartphone, this can also be useful for attaching eg.
 - the receiver of your wireless lav mic
 - a light panel
 - a power bank (smartphone batteries tend to drain fast when filming)
 - gimbal

Part 7: Filming a Mini Interview

- Given all the things they've learned, ask the participants to pair up again as in part 1 and let them film a 15 second interview of each other.
- Watch all the videos and discuss together. What have they learned? Has the framing improved? Which new problems (or solutions) did they find?



Co-funded by
the European Union



democracyrally.eu

FILMING WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS & STEPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

Optional / Additional

If there is more time and depending on the resources, you could extend the workshop with one more of the following.

Lighting

Learn about what lights there are and set up lights for an interview situation

Two-Camera Setup

When would you use two cameras for an interview? How would you set them up?

Editing

Look at what apps might be useful for editing (eg. VN by <https://www.vlognow.me/> (there's a free version that works on Android and iOS and also on Mac and PC).

Beyond that, editing techniques and practice could be an entire new workshop.



Co-funded by
the European Union