

Tips for First Time Filmmakers

Story

Make sure you work out your idea first. A good story has a beginning, middle and end. Even though with documentaries you don't necessarily know what the specific outcome will be, you still need to have an idea of the issue you are trying to portray before you start filming, to make sure you can make an interesting story with the footage you get.

Sound

Sound is extremely difficult to capture well. The microphone on your camera is not designed for professional quality sound. You can hire an external microphone that plugs into your camera, but if you're new to filmmaking, this can be difficult to manage. When interviewing, if you can set a microphone up on a stand as close to the person speaking without the microphone being seen on the screen, you should get better sound than using your camera microphone.

Lighting

Cameras are very sensitive to light. Make sure you sit your subject somewhere bright. An inexpensive way to do this is filming outside during the day. If you are indoors, make sure the room is bright and lights are on. There's no need to hire expensive lighting equipment, you can make do with ceiling lights or lamps.

General Tips

Your camera should have an instruction manual that explains how to set your camera to widescreen, whether it records on DVD, miniDV or hard drive, plugging in an external microphone and tips for capturing good quality pictures. If you have lost your instruction manual, there are great forums online. Just type the make and model of your camera into a search engine and you'll come up with an abundance of tips and advice.