

DIRECTING TIPS

Being the director means:

- having an overview of the entire project from beginning to end
- steering the project through every stage
- taking control and responsibility that the best possible video is made

What does a director do?

- The director is the leader of the project and is responsible for delivering the finished video.
- Their role spreads across the conception of the project in pre-production, to the shoot itself and lastly, post-production.
- Regardless of how a director becomes involved in a project, whether they are hired in separately or you are taking on the role within your own video project, the director is expected to both creatively shape and guide the project as well as make decisions about logistics (e.g. the location, the time of the shoot) and all technical aspects.
- They are expected to be prepared (research questions, have familiarity with the location) but also be flexible towards unexpected issues that may arise and be able to think on their feet to respond with creative solutions.
- Directing is all about having a vision for what the video is going to be and maintaining that vision throughout every stage of the process. And being able to steer the project to that end.

Communication skills:

- At every stage during the production of a video the director is required to give clear instructions regarding what needs to happen when and where.
- It might sound like you are giving a lot of orders but when scheduling is tight (especially on the shoot day) specific and straightforward direction is necessary to keep things running efficiently. Orders don't have to be given in a severe tone, focus on being specific with the information (exact time, exact camera angle).
- Putting an instruction into a question is a good way to make the direction feel more collaborative and less like an order, as well as using the word 'we': e.g. - *'Could we try it this way....and see what that looks/sounds like'*, *'Can we do one take where you're standing over here'* etc.
- It's the director's responsibility to ask contributors to repeat an answer or run through something more than once.

- Contributors and crew expect the director to have the most clear and fundamental of understanding of the film and so will look to the director for guidance. Don't be afraid to take control.
- While it's important to lead, it's also important to listen, as film is a collaborative medium. If you feel your contributor is having trouble with a certain question, don't be afraid to move on (you might be able to come back to it later). If you are unsure about a camera angle, ask someone else's opinion. Empathy and sensitivity are also important communication skills.

Pre-Production:

- The director will take the brief for the video project and translate that into a treatment. They will develop the idea so that it tells a story and includes a contributor(s) as well as beautiful and engaging footage.
- From the treatment, they will script out what needs to be said in the video.
- They will also be mindful of any limitations regarding budget or technical issues.
- Some directors will source the contributors, crew and locations to shoot in
- They will research and prepare the content of the video:
 - A. the interview
 - B. b-roll
 - C. any other material that will be appropriate (e.g. archive photos, music).
- Directors will brief everyone (crew, contributors) before the shoot and make sure everyone is informed about the type of video being made, and the important content to capture.

The Shoot Day:

- On the day of the shoot, it's important to be prepared but also reactive.
- The director will have all of the research and information regarding the location and the shoot written on their schedule, their interview questions and the shot-list.
- There may be some unexpected issues that arise (e.g. the weather is bad, and you have to change your location) so being adaptable is important. If faced with a problem, take a moment to think about a solution, and work towards it.

The Interview:

- Being the director and the leader of the project sometimes requires pushing people (gently) further to be their best e.g. asking a contributor to answer the question again (in a shorter soundbite) or asking the location staff (e.g. cafe) to close a window so the noise is minimised.
- It's okay and important to ask for certain adjustments which will ultimately make the film better.
- The director is the 'parent' of the film so must protect it and nurture it to be the best it can be.
- Lead with your own style and tone.

- Remember that fixing things on set (while you're shooting) will make your life easier in the edit so don't be afraid to ask for more.
- When working with people who are going to appear on camera it's important to help them feel comfortable. Small talk is a good way to warm people up. Allow them to ask questions and make sure they are comfortable with the rundown of the day/questions.
- If you are directing yourself, feel free to practice speaking as much as possible. Or ask a friend to stand-in as the interviewer so you have someone to make eye contact with (unless you're doing a 'selfie'-style video).
- If too many unexpected issues and problems arise, or the obstacles are too much and there is an opportunity to postpone the shoot without losing out financially, feel empowered to make that decision, too.
- After a long day of shooting remember to thank everyone for their work and help with packing everything away at the location.

Post-production:

- The same communication skills are important at this stage of the process, when briefing the editor.
- The director will explain the objective of the film, using the treatment and script, and also relay how the shoot went, and what was captured on the day
- Together the director and editor will make a plan for how to assemble the film and a timeline for when they expect to finish.
- The director can be very hands-on at the editing stage, regularly watching rough cuts of the video, giving the editor notes and feedback on every area, and gradually shaping and finessing the video into its final form.
- If you are editing the film yourself:
 - a) Write out a new treatment which incorporates how the interview and shoot went on the day and includes any other useful material that was said or filmed (that may not have been in the original treatment/shot-list).
 - b) Draft the structure.
 - c) Categorise the clips into 'intro' 'mid-section', 'outro' and begin to assemble the film.
 - d) Ask someone else to watch the film as you begin to shape it, to give feedback and make sure the film is making sense and contains all of the important information.

Ways to feel empowered as a director:

- Preparation: research, writing up a plan/treatment, visiting location.
- Considering any issues that might arise and having a back-up plan.

- Being flexible and reactive on the day. If you have to make adjustments, it's okay for unforeseen issues to occur!
- Having passion and enthusiasm for the project.
- Being ambitious, understanding it's okay to ask people for more, if it will make the film better (the worst they can say is no!)