

Video Creation 101

2020 | North Country Trail Association

These days, most smartphones can film excellent quality video suitable for posting on social media platforms, YouTube, or websites. This document contains simple guidance to filming video using a smartphone, as well as some editing tips and eventually posting the video online.

Preparation

- **Write your entire script beforehand.** This means both text for speaking parts, and the content and order of your shots. This process gets the vision of the video out of your head and onto paper, providing yourself better direction for the entire process. See *Sharing* for suggestions on overall video length.
- **Text.** Keep it short, simple and flexible, so you don't feel awkward reading off a piece of paper, repeating something verbatim. Practice a few times until it feels natural.
- **Order of shots.** If your video will have more than one scene, it's easiest to piece together a final video (especially if your video editing options or skills are limited) if you film your shots in order. Write out the order of your shots for reference then film them in chronological order.
- **Equipment.** Use a smartphone or tablet, as long as they have a microphone and camera. If you're filming outdoors somewhere, for a steady shot, consider bringing along a camp chair to prop the filming device on, or a bungee cord to strap the filming device to a tree. A selfie stick for a smartphone works, too. Make sure the filming device is fully charged, as capturing video can drain a battery quickly.

Filming

- **Location.** Consider the context of your video when choosing a filming location, but if you're speaking in the video, always choose a quiet place with minimal risk of background noises like excessive wind, road, forest or neighborhood sounds. If indoors, a smaller, well lit room (not a large, echo-producing one) usually works well.
- **Staging.** Always set up the filming device horizontally (in "landscape mode"). Upright or "portrait mode" works, but videos are meant to be viewed on a wider screen - think of a television or computer screen. Then place the device somewhere stable for filming. If someone else holds it for you or you hold it yourself, you risk a shakier video. (Because of the high quality of smartphone and tablet cameras these days, even the steadiest hands will shake and shift the video more than you think.) Turn the camera to "selfie mode" (if using a phone) then hit record.
- **Your position.** Sit or stand within only 2-3 feet of the camera. Adjust your position or the camera's so you're totally in the frame. If sitting, don't zoom into only your face - get your chest and shoulders in the shot, and leave some room above your head. You can sit off to the side or dead center. Position yourself to avoid shadows on your face (e.g. don't film while wearing a ballcap outside at noon on a sunny day).
- **Volume.** Speak to the camera, not the screen/watching yourself, like you're speaking to a friend. No need to shout, but speak as clearly as possible.

- **Review.** When you finish speaking or filming, let the camera roll for another few seconds so the ending isn't too abrupt. You can always cut out any extra bits of the video.

Editing

- **Software.** Video editing software can range from simpler and user-friendly (e.g. iMovie) to quite complex (e.g. Adobe Premiere Pro). If you are comfortable using an editing program, excellent. These programs can offer features like audio adjustment, transitions between shots (e.g. fade to black) and even captions. There are also many free and user-friendly options online, and a quick Google search will lead you to some possibilities.
- **One shot option.** If your comfort level with video editing is low, your best bet is to keep your video as simple as possible: One shot/scene that will only produce one video clip/file. Only one shot means you don't have to piece multiple video files together. It might take you multiple attempts to perfect the shot (speaking parts usually need to be redone a few times) but this is the most straightforward approach.

Sharing

- **Storage and video hosting platform.** When your video is finished, consider creating a free YouTube account (perhaps for your Chapter) and upload your video there. It will then be stored in a secure location for future access, and YouTube will produce a URL for easier sharing (instead of needing to attach a video file to emails, etc.). The video uploading process is fairly straightforward and YouTube will offer a number of security/access options for your video: Would you like it to be 100% public and searchable? Would you like people to only be able to view it if they have a link to it? Would you like it to be private (simply for storage and not for sharing)? All of these options are available and they can be changed for any of your videos at any time.
- **Social media.** Videos on social media should be brief and to the point. As social media users scroll through news feeds, they typically won't take the time to watch a video that's longer than one minute. Also, platforms like Instagram may limit the video length anyways. The most effective videos for social media consumption are only about 30 seconds long.
- **Web or other presentations.** If your video will be viewed on platforms other than social media, such as a website or at a presentation, length can certainly exceed one minute. However, consider your audience, the content of the video, and that longer videos may require editing.
- **Email.** If you would like your video to be featured in an email communication such as a newsletter, all the better to have the video uploaded to YouTube first. Again, that URL makes sharing much easier - a video file attached to an email may have trouble arriving at your recipients' inboxes. Marketing email platforms like Mailchimp offer video blocks that don't embed the video within the email, but still allow easy access. (See the example from the NCTA May 2020 Blue Blaze Bulletin below. It is clearly a video, a caption is offered, but a click to that red play button will open a new browser window, directly to YouTube where your video lives.)

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



We're excited that our partners at REI and the National Park Foundation invited us to join a growing coalition of outdoor industry leaders, nonprofits, and government agencies across the national in the **#RecreateResponsibly Coalition**. We have six very basic principles to help us make it safely through the coming months, protect each other against COVID-19, and to make sure our public lands stay clean and safe. Please go to recreateresponsibly.org to learn more!