

“Movies are arguably the most influential, important medium in the world. Because women are now making movies, then women’s ideas, philosophy, point of view will seep into our culture. And that’s never happened in history. We can’t even see the impact of that yet.”

—Laura Ziskin,
American film writer
and producer



Digital Movie Maker

A movie doesn't just tell a story, it shows a story. If you could show the whole world a story, how would it look? Bright and cheery? Fast-paced and full of changes in scene? With what visual would it start and end? You've probably spent countless hours watching movies—now's your chance to show others how you want them to see the world.

Steps

1. Learn digital video basics
2. Film. Then film some more....
3. Pick the perfect subject
4. Action!
5. Edit and premiere your movie

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to create a digital movie.

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

TIP BEFORE TAKEOFF

If you don't own a digital video camera, you might borrow one from a friend, family member, or your school. Many digital cameras, smartphones, and even MP3 players have video cameras that you could use.

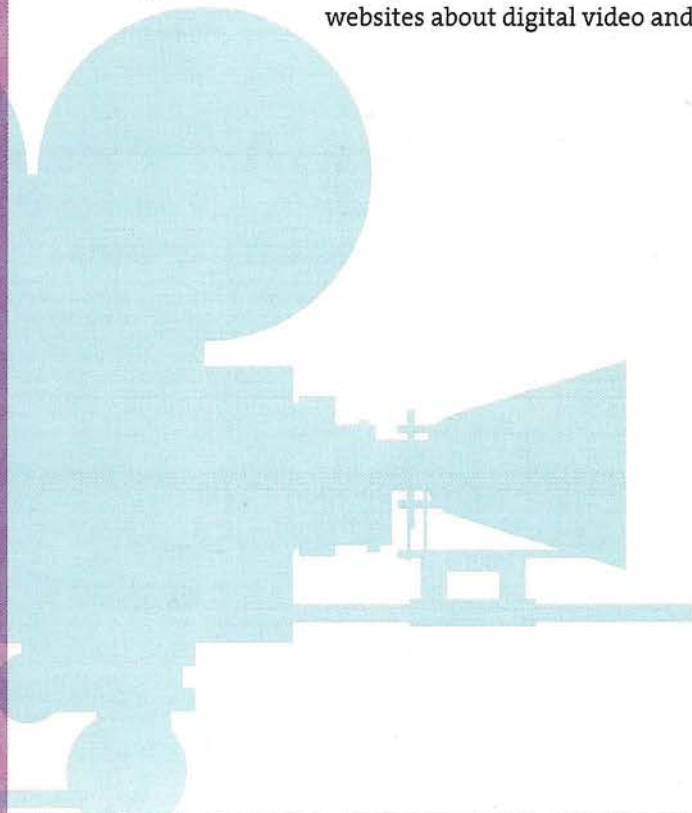
STEP

1 Learn digital video basics

There's so much more to filming than just pointing and shooting. You don't need to know as much as a pro does, but it's important to "frame" what you're looking at and keep your camera steady so your shots are nice and smooth.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Connect with a local expert to learn filming basics.** Maybe it's someone at your local news station. Or perhaps a digital arts teacher at a nearby high school or community college. You might invite them to give a presentation at your next Girl Scout meeting.
OR
- Take a class.** Contact a local community college, arts center, or camera shop and see if they offer any beginners video classes.
OR
- Teach yourself!** There are plenty of great books and websites dedicated to digital video cameras. Spend at least two hours reading books or visiting websites about digital video and moviemaking.





SHOT SELECTIONS

Next time you watch a movie or TV show, take notes on the different kinds of shooting techniques used. Rarely will a director keep the camera in one place. Instead, they will film from different angles and distances to keep things exciting and fresh. These are some of the most popular shot selections.

Wide shot: An overall view of a scene. If you were filming a soccer game, for example, a wide shot would take in the whole field and stands around it.

Establishing shot: A shot or shots that set up your story. At a soccer game, this could be the opposing team getting off the bus or both teams stretching before the game starts.



Cutaway shot: A cutaway is used to transition between other shots or reveal something not shown in the original shot. For example, you could shoot the scoreboard changing after a player scores a goal.



Tracking shot: The camera follows along with a moving subject while keeping a consistent distance. At the soccer game, this could include running down the sideline while filming a player running down the field.

Close-up: This shot brings you in close to your subject. At a soccer game, this could include a shot of the coach's face as they prepare the team to play.

STEP 2 Film. Then film some more...

Now that you know your way around a video camera, there's only one important piece between you and your digital movie: practice, practice, and more practice! Don't worry about the final product in this step—that comes later. Instead, experiment with different shots, angles, and camera options.

CHOICES - DO ONE:


- Film a sporting event.** Take your video camera to a sporting event. Capture the drama from plenty of different angles. And don't just focus on the athletes—some of your best takes might be cheering fans or players on the sidelines.
- OR**
- Film a celebration.** What about a wedding, a birthday party, or a family holiday? To best capture the moment, take time to film one-on-one interviews with guests. Shoot these interviews from various angles and in different light to see what works best.
- OR**
- Film a day in your life.** Whether you're on vacation or just hanging out in your neighborhood, capture a full day on film. Don't actually film the entire day, but pick and choose interesting people, places, and things to shoot. Adjust your technique and camera as it grows lighter and darker throughout the day.

Storyboards and Shot List


Shooting your movie without a plan is like walking through a new city without a map—you're going to get lost and waste time. That's where your storyboard and shot list come into play.

A **storyboard** is a visual outline of your movie: Think of it as a comic book that summarizes each scene of your movie in order. A **shot list** is exactly what it sounds like: a list of each shot you need to finish your storyboard. As you film each shot, cross it off the list. That way, you can be sure you don't forget any key shots once your long day behind the camera is over.


Scene # 6




wide shot, night scene, car drives slowly down a city street



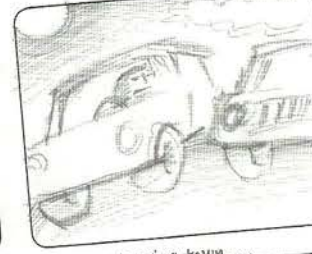
close-up of driver




tracking shot of car on the busy street



establishing shot showing driver and driver's viewpoint



show car leaving town...



... final shot of car on mountain road, heading away from the city

STEP 3 Pick the perfect subject

Now it's time to pick the subject for your five-minute movie. Maybe you want to focus on something in real life and make a documentary-style movie. Or, if you love making people laugh, maybe you'll want to create a comedy.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

- Share a scene from a book in the public domain.** Search your favorite books for a scene that would make a great short movie. Try to keep it simple—you probably don't want a scene with lots of people or wild special effects (unless you want to coordinate all the actors or try your hand at special effects!).

FOR MORE FUN: Contact a new author and see if you can help their publicity campaign by making a book trailer. The Children's Book Council or your librarian may be able to help you get in touch with authors in your area. Find examples of book trailers online.

OR

- Share a cause.** If you volunteer somewhere, ask if they could use a short movie to help their cause. You could focus on a volunteer, or tell the story of someone who has received help. Your movie might even be used to help others get involved with the organization.

OR

- Share a family story.** Every family has stories they love to tell and retell. Pick your favorite tale and re-create it on film. You might cast actual family members so they can enjoy reliving a happy experience!



Books in the Public Domain

If you want to adapt a scene from a book for your digital movie, make sure the book is in the public domain. "Public domain" works are not under copyright. Copyright protects the creative property of authors and artists, which means you can't re-create it without the author's or publisher's express permission. Your librarian or English teacher can help you find such books. The Project Gutenberg website is also a great resource.

More to Explore

Shoot your screenplay! If you've earned your Screenwriter badge, you have a script ready for the camera. You can film it to earn this badge—or you can use your skills to write another script (or film a friend's script).

STEP 4 Action!

Now it's time to put everything together and start filming. Pack your equipment, and check that everyone involved knows when and where you're filming. Choose one of these to turn your hard work into a five-minute movie.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- Work solo.** Keep it simple and use a basic camera to capture your subject.
OR
- Work with friends.** It can be helpful to have others to set up shots and divide up the work.
OR
- Work with a mentor.** If you're planning on using some advanced techniques, an experienced filmmaker can help you take your movie to the next level.

Careers to Explore

- Camera operator
- Travel blogger
- Makeup artist
- Wedding/special events videographer
- Animator
- Web entrepreneur
- Cinematographer
- Film professor
- Film critic
- Film director or producer
- Film editor
- Newscaster
- Photographer
- Screenwriter
- Sound editor
- Special effects technician
- TV show director or producer

TIP: If you're filming in a public place, you may need to get permission in advance—and if there are any people in the area who end up in your shots, you may also need their permission to include them in your film.

STEP

5 Edit and premiere your movie



Pulling together your movie can be as simple as clicking and dragging your film clips with a basic digital editing program. From there, choose at least one advanced feature to add to your finished product. Then show your movie to an audience!

CHOICES - DO ONE:

- Add a sound track.** Rare is the movie or even TV show that doesn't include music in the background. Add music to your movie for extra suspense or drama.
OR
- Add a title and credits.** Most digital-movie editing programs will let you add a title screen, as well as credits at the start and end of your movie. This will allow you to give thanks to anyone who helped you.
OR
- Add transitions.** Also called a "wipe," a transition is a neat effect that can smooth your cuts from one scene to the next.

A graphic illustration of a red carpet premiere. A red carpet leads from the bottom towards a bright spotlight on a stage. The carpet is flanked by gold stanchions connected by red ropes. The background is a light blue sky with a white starburst effect behind the spotlight.

Premiere your movie!

You've completed your movie. Now it's time to celebrate! You could host a private screening for a few close friends. Or, ask a small group for comments so you can tweak your movie before a premiere for a larger group.

In either case, get feedback on what the audience loves about your movie (and keep notes on constructive ideas for your next movie masterpiece). It might also be fun to have plenty of popcorn or a red carpet for the stars....

