



# Production Tips

Goodness Reigns: Share the Story

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## Start Here!

1. First, "be not afraid!" ... to make a movie! Thank you for your desire to become an explorer and digital witness for your faith.
2. This guide is one of what can be many tools to help you on your journey—just Google "filmmaking" and see!
3. Try not to feel overwhelmed with the process. If you are new to filmmaking, bite off a project you can do simply. Interview your parish priest or a relative who is a dedicated volunteer. Script a dramatic recounting of a saint's life. Take a hike outside and share on church teachings about the environment or document a baby's baptism.
4. Ignite your passion or curiosity, grab a friend and participate! You are the church today and the world needs you and your faith!



*A Note Regarding Filmmaking Equipment: If you don't own some of the suggested equipment, ask around or look online for information on makeshift solutions. (See p.7)*

## Equipment Needs:

Camera (w/ extra charged battery)  
 Script & Schedule  
 Tripod  
 Lights/ External Mics (Do the best with what you can find)  
 Binder with script, storyboard & shot log sheets  
 Video-editing software (Computers often come equipped)  
 Duck tape (when all else fails!), food ... a prayer!

## Crew:

Writer(s)-Creates script  
Director-Has vision, calls for action, oversees all  
Asst. Director-The organizer, manages details, actors, **CONTINUITY**  
Dir. of Photography-Runs camera, keeps log  
Sound recorder-Ensures actors are heard; Addresses sound concerns; positions external mics; records ambient noise and sound effects  
Editor-puts shots together on computer  
Actors/Personalities-on-camera participants  
Set Designer-Creates scene; helps w/ continuity  
*\* Don't stress if people must assume multiple roles. Just be organized and clear on who is responsible for what!*

## How to Begin

*The first and most important step is **pre-production**. Don't neglect this! Without proper preparation a simple one-day shoot can turn into a weeklong struggle.*

1. **Decide upon which category** you will make your short film. The choices are...
  - \* **Church history** (Bible story or saints' lives, too)
  - \* **Sacraments of the church**
  - \* **Church teachings** (The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a place to look)
  - \* **Present-day missionary spirit of an individual or ministry**
2. **Brainstorm ideas** to pursue then select.
3. **DOCUMENTARY or DRAMA?** You decide. (p. 4, 9)
4. **Research and write a script.** (p. 3, 10)
5. **Assemble the crew** and assign responsibilities.
6. **Evaluate the equipment** you have and determine how to meet any outstanding equipment needs.
7. **Determine the location(s) for your film.**
8. **Plan your shooting schedule.** (p. 5)
9. **Create a STORY BOARD** (p. 5, 11).
10. **Find a reference book you like!** There are many. I came upon *The Guerilla Film Makers Pocketbook* by Chris Jones, Andrew Zinnes & Genevieve Jolliffe.

## Definitions:

**Documentary:** Documentaries have a purpose, viewpoint and approach, and evolve into either a scripted or spontaneous film. They are limited to facts and everyday living.

**Drama:** A situation or events told by way of a play.

**Continuity:** Avoiding discrepancies from shot to shot in a film, allowing the various scenes to be shot out of order.

### A DOCUMENTARY OR DRAMA?

There are different approaches you may take when creating your film. **Some may choose to retell a story or use a story to teach or make a point.**

Others may craft a documentary that includes interviews with people knowledgeable of the chosen topic along with either re-enactments of scenes or footage of a person or people doing something that illustrates the topic of your film.

A documentary is fiction filmmaking backwards, according to *The Guerilla Film Maker's Pocketbook*. "You make pictures and then create the story in the edit room as opposed to following a script and making the pictures afterwards." That said, docs can be storyboarded and scripted to a certain degree.

VIDEO	AUDIO
BLACK AND WHITE- HAND COMES OUT TO POSITION LIGHT	(JAZZY DETECTIVE MUSIC PLAYS.)
LADY COWERS IN CORNER CLUTCHING PURSE	
MAN IN SUIT (MS ZOOM TO CU)	<b>MAN:</b> YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DID, LADY.
LADY (CU)	<b>LADY:</b> WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
MAN (CU)	<b>MAN:</b> DON'T TRY TO TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF IT--I'VE SEEN YOUR KIND BEFORE.
LADY (CU)	<b>LADY:</b> BUT I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!
MAN (ECU)	<b>MAN:</b> YOU, WITH YOUR DOLLED-UP HAIR AND PAIR OF INNOCENT LOOKING EYES. THE TRUTH IS AS OBVIOUS AS THE NOSE ON THE END OF YOUR FACE!

## Scriptwriting 101

1. With your topic in mind, decide on your main character and supporting characters.
2. Establish the wants (external outcome) and needs (internal desires/development) of your main character, which must be conveyed to the audience. This goes for docs, too!
3. Establish these needs/wants quickly at the script's beginning and understand how your story will flow to fulfill them in the end.
4. Begin with a mantra of: SHOW, DON'T TELL! in your writing. Keep out phrases like "He feels nervous." Instead, SHOW emotion through action: "He sweats."
5. Get to the action first.
6. Keep dialogue to three lines or less each time a character speaks. Use short sentences. Again, say the most with the least words!
7. Use metaphors for color and avoid repeating words.
8. Try cutting out entire sentences and see if it still works.
9. Read your script out loud. Have a group of people read it out loud.
10. Ask these people if they can identify the needs/wants of the story/character and if they think these are accomplished in the end. (Some of these tips come from Michael Feit Dougan, co-author of *Developing Digital Short Films*, and *The Guerilla Film Makers Pocketbook*.)

"Most of what I read is over-written. ...

Choose a great subject, something about which you are passionate. Write from the heart, then re-edit and re-edit... "

*Advice to Beginning Scriptwriters from writer Chris Jones in The Guerilla Film Makers Pocketbook: The Ultimate Guide to Digital Film Making!*

## How to Simplify a Project

1. Tell the story in one or two locations, preferably places you can go for free.
2. Avoid overwriting dialogue .Think: "Say the most with the least" and EDIT/REWRITE!
3. Keep characters to a minimum, if possible.
4. Write something that can be shot outside and during the day, which creates less need for additional lighting.
5. Set the story in the present so there is no need for period costumes.
6. Avoid complex visual effects.
7. Avoid snow, rain and even exterior night if possible. (These conditions can take four times longer to shoot.)

(These tips are adapted from The Guerilla Film Makers Pocketbook, p. 36)

### THE THREE-ACT STRUCTURE

*Whether you're planning a doc or drama, don't forget to organize action using the basic three-act structure!*

**Act 1: The set up** (Include the location, style, characters, needs/wants, catalyst, central question, main action beats)

**First Turning Point: Development** (Include an unexpected twist, new details; propels into Act 2)

**Act 2: Main Storyline** (The journey, the quest, the focus of the story)

**Second Turning Point:** Raises the stakes, propels viewer into a dramatic climax, speeds the pace

**Act 3:** Resolution, ties up loose threads

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## Production: Conducting an Interview

***Needed: Thorough Research, Good Listening Skills & a Notebook!***

1. Do your homework and prepare questions beforehand, starting with easier questions first, and tougher questions at the end.
2. If possible, send questions beforehand and tell the subject your film's purpose.
3. Focus the interview on the subject and not on you! Don't show off your knowledge. Oftentimes you must actually "play dumb" and ask questions to which you know the answers. That is necessary in order to have the subject's response on tape for editing.
4. Stay away from simple "yes-no" questions. Ask open-ended questions beginning with words like "why-how-what".
5. Listen well and ask follow-up questions. It shows you're listening and digesting the material.
6. Let silence hang, as the subject may expand on the topic and offer more depth to a previous question.
7. Always take notes. It sends the signal that you find what is being said interesting and you can jot down questions prompted by his/her response.
8. Always thank the subject for sharing his/her time.

### Final Tips:

1. Be able to articulate your story in a sentence to remain clear about what you want your film to tell throughout the process.
2. Make the film on paper first then shoot it.
3. Have your must-do list, which should include getting release forms signed by participants. (Download the form at <http://www.goodnessreigns.com/contest-rules.php>.)

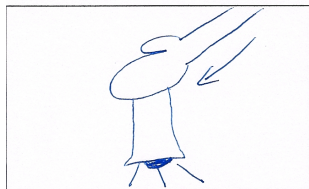
## Documentary Story Basics

1. Start with a "burning question"- why is something happening, or not happening, and establish the need and want.
2. Know your niche audience, in this case, young adults, and write for them.
3. Do your research so that your interview questions get to the heart of a story or issue. Don't shy away from tough questions if they pertain to your story and move it forward.
4. Do not abandon the three-act story structure (set-up, conflict, resolution) and character development.
5. Pull in experts to back up your facts. It lends credibility to your work.
6. When and where appropriate, address opposing sides of your issue. These can be people, institutions or forces, but be careful not to create controversy for controversy's sake! Be fair and accurate.
7. Show growth of the person/group being documented, making sure they are honest, open and will give you the information needed for an accurate story.
8. Know your subject well beforehand, interview, document and then create your piece in the edit room.
9. Ask the camera team to think like editors, getting establishing shots, close up cutaways, reverse reactions. Shoot to edit. (See p. 8)
10. Shoot B-roll (alternate footage that relates to what is being said, use particularly during interviews.)
11. Beware of overshooting! You'll be glad you did when editing!

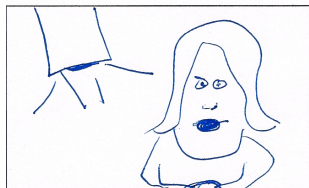
(Adapted from *The Guerrilla Film Makers PocketBook*.)



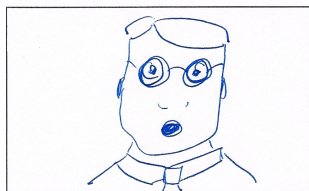
STORY BOARD FOR "I Confess" PAGE 1



Hand comes out and places light. All shot in black and white. Jazzy detective music plays.



Light shines down upon woman clutching her purse.



Man sharply addresses woman. "You know what you did, Lady."



"What are you talking about?"  
Clutching purse; shaking

## Storyboarding

A storyboard is a map showing scenes, action and dialogue that move you through your film project. Doing the initial brainstorming for a story board will clear your way through decision you might have become stuck on during production. Here are a few approaches.

1. Use the blank storyboard sheet in this document, poster board or, if you're working with a group, having access to a dry-erase board will be best. When using a dry erase board, grab sticky-notes to draw the scene, writing in the action and dialogue underneath. This way you can easily change the order of action/dialogue as the group brainstorms.
2. Making a storyboard saves time during production and ALSO when editing, as you have already plotted your way through the drama or doc you filmed.
3. Here's a great link on story boarding from Indy Mogul.  
<http://video.answers.com/4-minute-film-school-storyboarding-19141603>

A **story board/production board** helps to layout the scenes, the actors in them and the types of shots you will need to put the final film together. For variety, mix up medium, long and close up shots onto one timeline. (See p. 8)

A **shooting schedule** makes the filming process run efficiently. People know when and where to report.

## Pre-Production

### To-Do List

1. Gather your crew: At minimum you'll need a director, camera person, actors/people to interview.
2. Develop a **STORY BOARD**.
3. Plan the **SHOOTING SCHEDULE**. This will ensure that filming moves efficiently.
4. Hand out copies of the script.
5. Gather any props or costumes.
6. Decide on any set design needs.
7. Contact subjects to interview if making a documentary and include the interview in the shooting schedule.
8. Charge/Buy extra batteries.
9. Don't forget food if your shoots will be over a period of hours.

### CREATING THE SHOOTING SCHEDULE

1. Using your script, write the location of each scene/actors needed on an index card and place each card by location in separate piles.
2. Info to include—scene number, location, day or night, (interior can be blacked out to make night., weather conditions, special props, actors!
3. Put locations together.
4. Decide which actors are needed for shooting at each location and when they should arrive. \*Note: It is best to start with the group shots first so that individual actors may leave as they are finished.
5. Arrange for interviews with individuals and include that in the final schedule.
6. Type up the shooting schedule and pass it out to everyone involved.



## Take a Look: Sample Films

One of the best ways to learn is from each other. While the following films are by people well beyond the beginner's stage to say the least, you can see how some of the elements touched on in this guide are applied. Enjoy!

*[Special thanks to Greg and Jennifer Willits whose short films for "That Catholic Show" illustrated to me how learning about our faith can be entertaining and meaty at the same time. Also, kudos go to the gang at Outside da Box, who also provide a much needed service to our church community today through their production efforts.]*

**Example of Church History: "Night of the Living Catechism"**

<http://www.rosaryarmy.com/thatcatholicshow/?p=10>

**Example of Sacraments of the Church: "I Confess"**

<http://www.rosaryarmy.com/thatcatholicshow/?p=20>

**Example of Church Teachings: "Charity and Mercy"**

<http://www.rosaryarmy.com/thatcatholicshow/?p=12>

**Example of Missionary Spirit: "Meet Fr. Christopher"**

[http://www.outsidedabox.com/videos-single.php?video\\_ref=69](http://www.outsidedabox.com/videos-single.php?video_ref=69)

A **master shot** is a film recording of an entire dramatized scene, from start to finish, from an angle that keeps all the players in view.

## Production

Now that you have a schedule, crew and script, it's time to get to work!

There are three basic elements to production: lighting, sound and cinematography. First, though, let's look at directing and acting.

### DIRECTING TIPS

*This is the hardest job and should go to a motivated person.*

1. Try not to do more than you can by yourself. Delegate!
2. Deal with problems fast.
3. Accentuate the positive about people and during trying circumstances.
4. Make sure you always have an **ESTABLISHING SHOT** (p. 8).
5. Make sure you have enough **COVERAGE** (p.8) to ensure you have enough clips to cover every scene in the script.
6. First, always grab the **MASTER SHOT**.
7. Don't forget the **180 RULE**, which creates continuity between shots.
8. Respect the **LINE OF ACTION**, as it creates continuity for viewers.
9. When all else fails, pray "Come Holy Spirit!", take a deep breath and smile because you're lovin' it!

### ACTING TIPS

1. Never look at the camera as it breaks the **FOURTH WALL**. (Google it!)
2. Unless you're going for slapstick comedy, don't over act. It can come across as cheesy and fake. Unlike acting on stage, the camera will grab subtle gestures.



## Production-Sound

You may have the perfect script and crew but poor sound quality will lessen the impact of everything else. Here are some tips for creating the best sound environment:

1. **Choose your location wisely.** Unless the noise of a busy street is helping to set the mood for your story, stay away from sound busters like air conditioners, airports or any other location that has background noise difficult to overcome. Anything that can and will make a noise will be picked up on your video.
2. **Use a boom mic or any kind of external mic and place it as close to your actor(s) as possible.** This often becomes a creative problem-solving task for the sound recorder who should always have duck tape on hand.
3. **Placement of the Boom Mic** — The boom mic, placed overhead, should be as close to your actor as possible but never dipping into the picture. Don't put the boom too far from the subject as it results in echoes.

### No boom mic, fancy lighting?

#### STRATEGIES FOR MAKESHIFT GEAR

So you don't have the fancy equipment? There are many websites with details on DIY and homemade approaches. Check out these sites:

<http://www.indymogul.com/>  
<http://www.outsidedabox.com/productiontips.php>  
<http://www.selfreliantfilm.com/>  
<http://listenup.org/index.php>.

1. No boom? Check out this \$15 remedy at [http://www.indymogul.com/episode/imwe\\_20070727](http://www.indymogul.com/episode/imwe_20070727)
2. Grab a black umbrella to help control lighting or buy a paper globe light at Pier One and use a black towel to also direct lighting.
3. You can find some sound effects online for purchasing or for free.

#### TIPS ON USING MUSIC

1. Don't overuse music in your movie.
2. Do not mix music too loudly in the soundtrack.
3. Make sure the choice of music matches what is taking place on screen and does not detract from it in any way.
4. Make sure all music rights are cleared. Be prepared to write the owners and wait weeks for a response. Here's a site, among others, where you can find free music: <http://spinxpress.com/>. Better yet—have a talented friend?!

## Production-Lights

**Lighting:** When lighting a scene, remember 3-point lighting to create a smooth picture. They are the fill, key and backlights. The Fill and Key lights are positioned in front of actors. The backlight goes behind the actor. Having all three contributes to a nice 3-D look on video.

**Placement of Lights**—Remember the 45/45-Degree Rule. The key and fill lights should be placed 45 degrees in front of actors; the backlight should be placed behind and pointed down to about 45 degrees to actors.





TITLE "I Confess" SHOT LOG DATE 10-1-10 PAGE 1

SCENE	SHOT	F-STOP	ENDING TIME	COMMENTS
	2 (MS)		:27	Best take
2	1 (ES)		1:12	Master Shot - <sup>man in suit</sup> woman in chair w/purse
	2 (CU)		1:20	no good - best to go to MS
	3 (MS)		1:45	Great!
3	1 (ES)		2:23	Man in suit questioning lady
	2 (CU)		2:54	OK
	3 (MS)		3:21	Great!

## Cinematography Tips

It's time to get the camera rolling!

1. When shooting from one spot, always use a tripod to create steady images that are in focus and **IN FRAME**.
2. Set the proper exposure for each scene. Under exposed—the video will look too dark and not clear. Over exposed—video appears washed out.
3. Leave adequate head room above people in the frame.
4. Make sure the camera is in focus before each take.
5. As you capture your footage use a **SHOT LOG** to write down script page, scene, type of shot (medium shot MS, close up CU, extreme close up ECU; see diagram) and the **TAKE** number, as well as the ending timecode shown on the video camera. In the comment area you can mark successful takes or give other info.
6. After a shooting session, create computer folders for each scene from which you will draw from in putting together your ROUGH CUT. A rough cut is the placement of all of your many shots together on one timeline before the final editing of sound and other adjustments take place.

Here's a link to a good explanation of camera shots and function:

<http://production.4filmmaking.com/cinematography1.html>

**Shot Log**—Sheets compiled in a notebook that list important information--such as script scene and comments-- from each take.

**Take**—Video captured each time camera's turned on until it's turned off.

**Master Shot**—A shot wide enough to establish location for each scene.

**Establishing Shot**-- establishes the context for a scene by showing the relationship between its important people/objects. Usually a long shot.

**Cutaways**— the interruption of a continuously filmed action by inserting a view of something else. Often followed by a cut back to the first shot.

**Insert Shorts**-- a shot of part of a scene as filmed from a different angle/.

**B-roll**-- supplemental or alternate footage intercut with the main shot in an interview or documentary.

## Production: Camera Work

### COVERAGE TIPS

1. Always shoot a **MASTER SHOT** of each scene. This establishes location and always gives you something to cut back to.
2. Shoot **SINGLES** (either medium wide or close up) of the actors in the scene. This way you can edit their performance to improve dramatic impact.
3. Get as many **CUTAWAYS** and **INSERT SHOTS** as possible, which will help tell a story/give the editor options.
4. Even if you are happy with your first take, always do a second for safety.
5. At a new location, get an **ESTABLISHING SHOT**.
6. Never **CROSS THE LINE OF ACTION**. Doing so will make the actors seem to flip flop location on the screen, and confuses your audience.
7. To reduce relighting time, always get all your shots on one object or actor (master, medium shot, close up) at the same time.
8. If part of a take is good, but the rest is bad, you can pick up from just before the mistake and continue through the end.
9. Learn to work within your schedule—extra takes could mean longer shoots.

**MS** **CU** **ECU**





## Production: Editing

*With editing, organization is key!*

1. Using your shot log and story board at hand and your video, begin piecing together your rough cut. It's easiest to create one single sequence, not necessarily in chronological order.
2. Order the scenes the same way as the screenplay had planned.
3. Don't worry about your first assembly being long, badly paced or tonally off. These will be fixed in the next passes.
4. Re-edit, reorder. Do this until you truly have the best edit of the film.
5. Once you've edited the pictures, lock the scenes.
6. When cutting dialogue, a natural place to cut to another character is on punctuation. There is a natural pause in delivery.
7. If a scene is playing well, don't cut for the sake of it.
8. Only use scenes that advance your story.
9. If you're not sure about including a scene, cut it out. Do you miss it?
10. Take breaks to refresh.
11. Once the scenes are edited, place them all together into your rough cut. Now detailed editing begins!
12. Don't use any music or images that are copyrighted unless you have permission.
13. Look through each scene and fix the audio as needed.
14. Now you can export your finished film and mail or send it electronically. (Check website

### Mail to:

Goodness Reigns: Share the Story Contest  
c/o Outside da Box  
P.O. Box 3862  
St. Charles, IL 60174

### Or for FedEx, UPS or other service:

Goodness Reigns: Share the Story Contest  
c/o/ Outside da Box  
2005 Cambridge Dr.  
St. Charles, IL 60174

## Production: Editing A Documentary

1. You will shoot much more film for a documentary than a drama so be organized. Label and log everything, giving a clear description of what took place during each (and every separate) time you turned the camera on and off.
2. You started the process with a clear vision of the story you wanted to tell. Now reflect on all of the footage to understand how any discoveries/incidents may have shifted elements in your story. Make appropriate changes in your story board so you have a map to guide the editing process.
3. Make sure the film has a beginning, middle and an end, and that each scene moves the story forward..
4. Stay on one operating system and back up your project regularly.
5. Pre-edit material to weed out useless material.
6. To make interviews more interesting, use B-roll (supplemental or alternate footage intercut with the main shot in an interview or documentary).

### Submission Details

1. When submitting your finished film, be sure to send along media release forms downloaded from the Goodness Reigns website at <http://www.goodnessreigns.com/contest-rules.php>.
2. Review submission guidelines found at the site above. For any questions on appropriate file format, call toll free (866-456-6936) or email [info@outsidedabox.com](mailto:info@outsidedabox.com).

**TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PAGE** \_\_\_\_\_

**VIDEO**

**AUDIO**