Top Ten Tips For Better Video Projects

Tell a story.
Movie making is all about telling stories. Use a storyboard to plan out a shoot BEFORE you go on location and start shooting. This initial planning time will make time spent on location more productive and less frustrating for everyone.

Be patient and practice.
We have all seen hundreds of movies and have an idea of what it takes to make a movie. Your first few movies will be a time of learning. Watch movies and TV shows with a critical eye and notice the camera shots and transitions. Do not get too ambitious, start small and build upon your successes. There is a reason that Hollywood movies have hundreds of people on staff with specialty areas like acting, cameras, lighting, sound, set design, wardrobe, makeup, scripts, music, and special effects. **Start small, build upon your success.**

Make a script.
There is a reason all movies have scripts. Scripts not only help the talent know what to say and do but are also used to guide camera shots. Plan ahead of time what kind of shots are necessary for you to tell your story.

Divide and conquer.
Depending upon the number of people involved in the project assign tasks to each member. Make sure everyone knows their responsibility and that everyone obeys intellectual property laws.

Organize and plan your shots.
Use a clap board to identify your scenes so that they can easily be identified when you are editing. This could simply be a sheet of paper held in front of the camera with the scene and take number - Scene 1 Take 1. Remember the more you shoot the more time it will take you in the edit room to go through the footage. Get all the scenes you need but avoid unnecessary shots. Make notes along the way as to what shots are the best.

Use a tripod!
I know it is one more piece of equipment to lug around but avoiding the "shakes" is well worth the effort. You would be surprised by the number of individuals who think they can skip the use of a tripod and end up disappointed with the final product.

Use an external microphone.
If possible use a microphone when recording (higher-end equipment). The closer a microphone is to the sound source the better sound you will have. If you do not have an external microphone try to minimize extraneous noise as much as possible. Having a good soundtrack is just as important as the video.

Be aware of lighting.
If possible provide additional lighting on location. Attention to lighting can dramatically improve your shots.

Details, details, details...
The key to a successful movie project lies in the attention to detail. Paying attention to the details takes time. Camera shots need to match the action and direction at all times. Use the rule of thirds to compose your shots. The additional time required is reflected in the final project. Be sure to LABEL and DATE all tapes.

Make your story come to life.
The edit room is where thousands of decisions are made to best tell your story. Advanced planning will make your job of editing much easier. Add titles, transitions, narration, music, and special effects to your shots but don’t go overboard.

Do your best and have fun.
3 – 2 – 1, and Action!

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**Other considerations:**

What is the purpose of the video?

Will the video be shown outside the classroom?

Be sure to follow school policies and procedures when making a video project.

Are permission slips required?

Follow copyright laws.

**Internet Resources:**

Please note that the links below represent the vendors perspective and mention only their company specific products. There are thousands of products out there and doing a bit of research will yield the information you need to make informed decisions that are best for your situation. Be sure to check with your technical support before making purchasing decisions.

Pinnacle Systems
http://www.pinnaclesys.com
Makers of Studio Version 7. A very easy and powerful digital video editing program that is affordable for Windows compatible computers.

Adobe
An excellent primer on digital video in PDF format. Good place to start, but a bit technical. There is a lot of vocabulary to learn as you start out.

Apple Learning Interchange
Good site with resources for the classroom teacher with ideas for teachers by grade level and subject.

Casblanca
http://www.draco.com
http://www.draco.com/newindex.cfm?linkID=69&showcontent=true
Has a good Classroom Resource Section. Makers of the Avio, a dedicated video editing box.

Digital Video Magazine
http://www.dv.com

Dazzle
http://www.dazzle.com
Makers of an affordable analog and digital capture devices and movie software.

Videomaker Magazine
http://www.videomaker.com

Sonic Desktop
http://www.sonicdesktop.com/
Makers of smartsound for creation of automatic soundtracks.

Crash Course in Copyright
From the University of Texas a quick primer on the issues of copyright in the digital age.