We've all heard that every picture tells a story and every film or video tells one too. But often the most unbelievable and fantastical story is the one that you don't see on-screen; the story of how the video came about the days; months or years of sweat, blood and tears that go hand in hand with the idea of putting together a video.

You've seen the 'behind the scenes' documentaries about big feature films, but you'd be wrong if you thought that your own smaller scale productions would be free of such backstage dramas. Producing a video of whatever length is a *big* challenge, but one you'll rise to with some planning, foresight, plenty of scribbling and of course, a little help from this chapter!

We saw a brief outline of the whole process in **Chapter 1**, and we'll go into a little more necessary detail later on, so you already know what part your forthcoming new skills in Premiere have in the grand scheme. But what if you're not just going to be editing this 24-frame masterpiece? What if you're being asked to plan and shoot it or what if you're not being asked, but just *want* to? Well, this chapter is designed to show you the rest of the process, empowering you to shoot the vid as well as edit it, and explaining how to make your life a little easier through sound production practices early on.

The Editor's Role

Depending on your circumstances, there are a number of positions you might find yourself in as a newly skilled video editor.

You might be intending to:

■ Get hired as a freelance editor, brought in at the final stages of the production to put the piece together. Your involvement in the earlier stages of conception and production might be very limited, but your skills might add a final veneer to a polished project.

- ■ Work as part of a production team from the outset, mainly involved in editing but with input in the earlier stages. You might work as an editor within a production company, or you might just work with a regular group of colleagues or friends to produce a video.

- ■ Go it pretty much alone. You won't be the only person working on the video – that would be tough – but you could still be the director, producer and maybe even the cameraman all rolled into one!

As far as reading and benefiting from this chapter goes, the same applies whichever category you fall into, you'll just be approaching the issues covered here from a slightly different angle, and whether you're shooting the video yourself or getting someone else to do it, you'll need to understand these issues equally to make sure that the footage you find yourself working with is the best it possibly can be.

> *Remember, it doesn't matter how good your editing skills become by the end of this book, you'll still need great footage to work with. An editor is often only as good as his material and any editor worth his fee knows that without the right amount, type and quality of footage, you're editing blind!*

Let's have a brief look at the two main categories your editing will fall into: **editor-for-hire** and **one-man-show**.

The Editor as Post-Production Producer

In many production situations, the editor is in effect the post-production producer, overseeing this particular stage of the process. Yes, the director or producer may still be there supervising you, but you're on your home territory here and will have a great deal of control over the content of this stage both technical and creative.

The director may look to you to fix problems, improve sound (see **Chapter 8**) or design and apply visual effects (**Chapter 10**). As editor, you come into your own here, and although you fall into the first category above, you're a major force in the post-production stage.

It's important that at this early stage of your editing career you realise that whatever your overall role in the team, you form a huge part of the finished product, and wield an enormous amount of creative control, even if it's just in the latter stage of the video.

Maybe working as an editor might also encourage you to do your own thing at weekends, promoting yourself to director on your very own independent project.

The Editor as Director

If this video is going to be your baby, you'll want to know a lot more about how to plan and produce your video, so pay extra attention to the rest of this chapter. With Premiere you can easily and quickly edit your own desktop movies, and later, I'll show you the shortcuts to conceiving and creating your scenes for the edit.
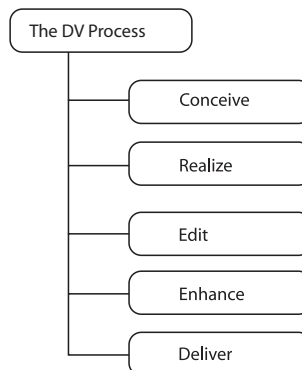
If you fall into this category, then all creative control is yours, but so is the responsibility to turn your idea into a viable production, and you could say that once you're sitting in front of your computer with Premiere open, most of the work will be done!

For the rest of this chapter, I'll assume that you either plan to perform most of the main roles yourself or guide others and take a supervising role. For those of you who know a little about the production side already, you'll see how a little forethought for the edit can save you hours or days in editing time once the footage comes in.

You also might want some footage to work on throughout the book, so this is the best place to dream up an idea for a vid that you can work on for the next 450 pages. I'll be reminding you at every stage to take each piece of advice in this chapter and apply it to your own productions.

The Path to the Edit Suite

In **Chapter 1** we saw just how diverse the production process in full can be – from initial conception through to delivery of a coherent video, it can turn out to be an intensely long and drawn-out journey. The planning and execution of the many different phases we saw listed in the previous chapter can dictate how rough or smooth your days or weeks in the edit suite will be, and only a firm understanding of how it all comes together can save you from the gremlins and surprises that can turn a three-day edit into a fortnight of mayhem.

```
The DV Process
    ├── Conceive
    ├── Realize
    ├── Edit
    ├── Enhance
    └── Deliver
```

Work through the rest of this chapter as if you're planning and preparing for a production of your own, even if you don't need footage for the book, and you'll begin to understand how the footage arrives in the edit suite. Once you start thinking how your director or cameraman is thinking, those

insights will serve you well when managing the final stage of the production process, and ensuring that your few days alone in the dark are a walk in the park.

Contextualizing Your Video

We established earlier that every video tells a story, and we all know that every story needs a beginning. Well, this is it, this is where your video project, whatever kind it is, takes its first breath.

If you're producing a video, you'll need to start by asking yourself two key questions:

- **Who** am I producing for?

- **What** kind of video am I producing?

> *You might think that "what kind of video am I producing?" would be the first question, but as you'll discover, video production (beyond those produced for your own amusement) is a highly audience-driven process. Once you know* **who** *it's for, everything else comes more naturally.*

Who Am I Producing For?

This is your first question. Who will be watching this video? Who asked you to make it? This often defines what kind of video you are producing, and usually defines how you produce it. Think about your audience and you have the key to making a great vid.

Certain audiences carry certain expectations. If you're producing a video for a company, for example, you'll need to gather background information about what the company does and who their audience is, because when you start producing a video for them, and when you start using your skills to tell their stories, *their* audience becomes *your* audience.

Be aware of the sensibilities of your audience and/or client and do your research. It'll save you time in the long run. Draw the line from an early stage between your creative powers and those dictated by your audience; be clear from the outset where you stand and how much scope you have.

In the edit, these factors will play a huge role. The same constraints and audience requirements that shape the conceptual stage and the shoot will impact on how you edit the piece together.

> *As an editor you can never have too much information. At whatever stage you're brought into a production, gather as much info as you can about the goals and about the audience of the production. The responsibility to fulfil those goals will often be largely down to you, even in a production where you've had limited pre-edit involvement.*

Once you have it in your mind who your vid is for, you need to give some thought to the shape your production will take. Very often, this too is dictated by the client or the intended audience, but often, such as the case of corporate videos, you might have scope to get across a certain message, with the exact delivery and nature of the video at your own discretion.

What Am I Producing?

OK, you've invested in Premiere, and maybe some camera equipment, and you're looking to DVision from friends of ED to teach you the ins and outs of the software. You must be quite serious about video, and this is a major step in your video career.

Throughout this career, you'll work on a variety of video projects, so now's the time to get familiar with the scope and the limitations of each.

Whether someone's said to you, "Hey, wanna edit my vid?" or you've thought to yourself, "Hey, I've got a great idea for a vid!", you'll want to know just how different each genre is, and how crucial it is to be familiar with these differences before you go any further.

If this is your baby project, you've got to test feasibility at this stage. It's no use writing a script with three dozen characters on a zero budget if you don't have that many actor-wannabe friends! And if you've been asked to produce by a client, you don't want to promise what you can't possibly deliver.

Video productions usually fall into one of the following categories:

- Instructional video

- Promotional video

- Documentary (aka Factual)

- Drama

These types overlap and contain many sub-types, so let's get a little more familiar with each in turn.

> *Later in the chapter, we'll look at the more practical aspects of shooting in various circumstances, including an in-depth look at filming interviews.*

Video to Teach

I won't dwell on this it's probably the least common of the types described. From an editor's point-of-view, this is not a type that'll cause you much in the way of problems. This type of production will be aiming to teach and instruct, usually of short duration, usually to the point and straightforward to produce, shoot and edit.

You have a pre-supplied narrative dictated by the process you are instructing on, and so your editing options are limited. Similarly, during production, you'll be mainly filming "things going on" without a huge degree of creative input. However, this only means that the conceptual stage of production is even more important.

You'll be looking to think about visual aids and graphics, possibly to be composed in Premiere, to spice up the production, and because you're dealing with reality, like two of the other categories listed, you'll have to pay special attention to the organisation. From an early stage, think about *who* you'll be filming, *what* they'll be doing, and what constraints these place on your shooting and editing.

Instructional Video – Suggested Components

- Demonstrations / Tutorials

- Graphics and text illustrations

- Narration

Video to Promote

As a video editor, you'll probably find a lot of your time is spent on material that promotes in one way or another. You could be promoting a cola company, your friend's band, or your own skills by way of a showreel. Either way, producing promotional video is very tricky, involving in-depth pre-planning and knowledge of your subject.

> *Promotional video, corporate or non-commercial, is about message delivery more than it is about message presentation.*

When taking on or devising a promotional project, in addition to the target audience, you'll need to think about:

- What the core message is

- What you need to show to get that message across

- How best to show it

And also...

- How much live footage will you need?

- How to stage material "as live" so you can exert greater control over it

Now, you might be the thinking the last one's a little sneaky, but I can guarantee you, practically every promotional video will take liberties with actuality. It's not sneaky, it's vital, and often it will simply mean recreating something that would otherwise be impossible or difficult to film.

From an editor's perspective, promotional video is always difficult to cut together, because you will need to rely heavily on editing techniques to best get that message across. In effect, just like with an advertisement on TV, you're selling something – a company, a person or just an idea – and before you start arranging shooting dates, you'll have to think ahead to what you'll need to achieve that.

Promotional Video – Suggested Elements

- Live shots of subject

- Dramatised shots

- Graphics

- Considerable effects shots

- Narrative

- Music

> *For these last two types of video, you're likely to be working for a client and from a document known as a* **Brief**. *This will outline the objectives of the project, and in order to earn your fee from this project, you'll need to stick to that mandate. Sometimes, you'll prepare this brief yourself and pitch it to your client, other times, you will be provided with this. When working with a client you might be expected to pitch a few ideas for their approval, and the success of this presentation might be the difference between you getting the contract or losing it to another producer.*

Documenting with Video

Video documentary is one of the most widespread kinds (heck, there's even two Oscar categories for it!) and in your career as a video editor or producer you'll probably have to put together a documentary or two.

Documentary is less about creating and more about **capturing**. You're still painting a picture on video but reality provides the palette. As an editor, you'll need to make sure that you have enough footage to tell the story you've set out to tell. How you arrange that footage in Premiere is hugely important; you can sway your audience one way or another just by organising your clips differently. Usually, you also have to balance the storytelling with **objectivity**.

Your subject might be a person, a place, or a general theme. Your angle is also up to you, but subjective documentaries need to be backed with plenty of research and hard facts to maintain credibility.

> *We'll look at conceiving a short documentary in more detail in our case study in the next section.*

Documentary – Suggested Elements

- Testimonies/interviews

- Narration

- Occasional music

- Stills/photographs

- Illustrative footage

- Occasional effects shots

Dramatized Video

This is maybe the section you've been most looking forward to. The majority of videographers relish the chance to do drama of some sort – their own scaled-down feature film – and if as an editor you start having ideas about your own productions, then this is probably how they'll take shape. Drama is the sexiest and most exciting video genre to work in, but it is undoubtedly the one most fraught with pitfalls and obstacles.

The world is a big and complex place, and much as it's difficult to *capture* the world in a video documentary, it's even harder to *recreate* that world in fiction. You need people and places and words for them to say you have to do it all. The drama is a blank canvas, and every second of the time spent planning, organising and worrying over a drama production is worth it once you've painted your own little piece of imagined reality on the little or big screen!

Video drama throws away the rules you have to work with in the other genres and introduces a few of its own, mostly relating to resources. Can you afford actors, can you customise sets and locations, or do you have to work within the constraints of a next-to-zero budget?

Drama – Suggested Elements

- The sky's the limit it's up to you! You'll probably need actors, more cameras and crew, and a script this time (maybe even some music) but it all depends on the scope of your story!

Conceive Your Project

A big part of shooting and editing a drama comes from the script, and we'll be going through this in more detail in the next section. Firstly, though, it's about time I gave you something to do!

OK, blah blah blah with the theory; let's get you thinking about a project you can work on for the remainder of the book. I'm going to have to make a few assumptions, so let's say the most viable projects here for you are either documentary or drama. For the purposes of a consistent case study, let's go for a short drama. It'll give you all the scope in the world and it needn't be very complicated.

1. Start by having an idea.

   What do you mean, it's not that simple? Everything has to come from somewhere; sure you can wait for the flash of inspiration, but why not spark up that flash yourself?

   Here's some starting points:

   - Think of your last scene. Imagine a really cool ending. OK, at this stage maybe it's a mish-mash of bits of other films you've seen, but once you've worked out who's in that scene and why they got there, you have the basis of your own little picture, and by the time you get to scripting the end, you'll have changed it to something more original anyway.

   - Flick through your address book, and pick a name. This is your main character. What does he or she do? Why is he or she interesting? This may form the basis of your plot!

   - Think of a place or a landmark and build a scene around it, then work your story backwards or forwards from that. Keep it small but interesting for the time being.

   - Think of an unusual situation for an opening scene. Anything will do; what would get your interest if you were a viewer? Think of a hook! A sci-fi story I once wrote began with an image of a Rover 75 car racing through the streets of Victorian London; maybe not a viable low-budget video but you get the idea. Think of something to confuse or intrigue the viewer to begin with. It'll draw them into the story and it'll set your imagination racing onto page two of your script.

2. Next step; write it down. Typing up a document in Word outlining your idea simply isn't fashionable. Write it on a bus ticket or on a scrap of paper, that's much more creative.

3. That's it for now! OK, so that wasn't a huge exercise, but if you now have an early idea of what your video is going to be about, then you're well on your way.

> *Conceiving a documentary is a little different to drama, so let's sit down and open our notebooks for the first of several mini-masterclasses.*

Mini-Masterclass – Preparing a Treatment

Whereas the drama begins with an idea and a plot, a documentary has the idea and then a **treatment**. This is a short one or two page document outlining the subject matter and the source materials for the production. This short section will give you all the information you need to prepare one in a flash.

- The treatment should only be written after some research. You'll know what your video is about and you'll have already thought about what it would contain. The treatment is made up of the following elements.

- **Program Information** – the title and duration of your project.

- **Focus** – this encapsulates the theme of your documentary in one sentence. Narrow everything down until you have one definitive line to describe the programme you are going to make. Examples might be "An examination of the psychology of cats" or "A retrospective of the career of actor Paul Eddington". Your video will need a solidly grounded focus if it is to stand out.

- **Audience** – define and describe who you are aiming the documentary at. If it's easier, try to think about where it would fit into the TV schedules; is it primetime, is it late-night, is it mainstream or niche? Use a few sentences.

- **Resumé** – the real meat of your documentary. Describe in 10-20 lines what the video is about. To carry on our examples, describe what's so interesting about cat psychology or who Paul Eddington played during his career.

- **Sources** – where are you going to get material from? This might be the findings of a new report on cat thought processes, or diaries and letters from the family of Paul Eddington. Anywhere you might gather information from people to interview, records, archive footage, and so on...

■ **Suggested Elements** – finally, this is where you list the central components of your video. These might include a presenter or narrator, interviews, reconstructions, or film clips, and these form the creative basis for telling your factual story.

Once completed, you can present your documentary treatment to TV companies for commissioning or if you plan to produce it yourself, it will form the basis for a storyboard and shot list in the next section.

> *We've put together a production pack (downloadable from our web site) to take away some of the tedium from your planning process; you'll find some templates and printable documents commonly used in the pre-production stages of professional video, from storyboard sheets which you can print out and use, to an empty treatment template you can fill in.*

From Script (to Storyboard) to Screen

We're now officially into the proper pre-production stage. You're definitely producing a video in a set genre, you just need to figure out how! Ultimately, it's here that you determine the shape your video is going to take, and how many of your original creative ideas will be eaten up by harsh shooting realities.

As a video producer, your greatest skill has to be balancing **idealism** with **pragmatism** – what you really want to do balanced with what you can realistically achieve. In pre-production you'll start asking the questions that help you perform that balancing act later on!

We've covered the framework in which you'll be making your video, and the options you have, whether chosen or imposed by a client or other producer, let's start developing the project idea you scribbled down in the last section (what do you mean, you've lost it?).

Writing a Script

All dramas need to start with a script, in the same way that other types of videos follow a treatment or a brief. If you're writing this yourself, you've got a great opportunity to think ahead and save yourself some time later on down the line.

Once the idea is there ("diminutive cop joins circus to infiltrate crime ring" or "girl wakes up to find she has amnesia and can't remember how she got it") you need to flesh it out. We're beyond the realms of bus tickets and scraps of paper here, you'll need much more structure for your script.

However you write this little masterpiece, there are some ingredients you'll need, and they're fairly obvious:

- Plot

- Characters

- Narrative (beginning, middle and end, not necessarily in that order though!)

And tying it all together...

> *With a great story you can enthrall your audience every bit as much as the latest Hollywood blockbuster. Stories are what drive movies, and video dramas too; good watchable characters, a good plot and some humour, and your viewers will never notice that the picture quality's a bit grainy and that the cast are all members of your family!*

- Motivations – the driving forces which carry your characters or the situations they find themselves in, forward towards the conclusion of the story.

The path from start to finish is up to you. Many editors-turned-director naturally like to play with flow and narrative, using editing skills in the script to jumble events and build up complex sequences and interwoven story strands.

Put yourself in the viewer/reader's place; what's happening in this story to make it interesting, what's keeping you hooked? If your friends weren't your friends, would they still be interested in seeing your video? Don't worry, your project doesn't always have to be a life-changing cinematic experience, but always keep the viewer in mind – keep them glued to the edge of their seats.

> *Remember that it's not just wholesale dramas that have scripts. Documentaries and promotional videos might all have reconstructed or dramatised elements. All the following tips apply whatever kind of vid your scripted scenes are for.*

Your plot and your characters make your script come to life, so once you have a few people in the story and a few scenes, you can start writing it down. With that in mind, let's get straight back into your own project, and carry it forward a little more.

Fleshing Out Your Idea

You have your idea, but you now need to turn it into a great but workable script.

1. A script generally has three main components:

- Dialog

- Stage directions

- Technical instructions

The first one is obvious. The stage directions are instructions to your cast; movements, expressions, anything. The technical instructions tell the filmmakers what's going on; they might refer to locations of scenes, some background music, or sound effects.

2. Time to plan out your first scene. Even if you haven't totally finalized your story, drafting a first (or even last) scene could give you the flash of inspiration you're waiting on.

3. Open up a new text document in your preferred word processor or text editor and follow the layout of the diagram.

Now, let's pencil in the scene you have in mind.

4. Start with the scene number or some kind of identifier – for example, a pre-title sequence. You'll need to refer to scenes somehow in the shooting and editing stages, and maybe also include the approximate length.

```
SCENE 1 – PRE-TITLE SEQUENCE – APPROX. 1 MIN
```

5. Start off with the **location** and the **time of day**. You will also need to note any other major scene factors here. For example, are the characters going to be talking about the awful weather? In that case, it had better be cloudy or rainy!

> *You should also note whether it's indoors (INT.) or outdoors (EXT.)*

```
EXT. NIGHT. SATURDAY NIGHT ON BUSY CITY STREET
```

6. Is there any **music** or **sound**?

```
AMBIENT BACKGROUND NOISE OF NIGHTCLUBS AND DISCOS SPILLING ONTO
THE STREETS. ECHOES OF DANCE MUSIC.
```

7. Where is your camera; what's it looking at?

```
TRACKING SHOT TWO GIRLS WALKING ALONG STREET TOWARDS CAMERA
```

8. Now, after establishing what the camera is watching, establish what is happening. We now lapse into **stage directions**, which we'll keep in lower case (with character names in CAPS).

```
Two girls, PAMELA and JULIA have just left a disco and are laugh-
ing and giggling. As they get closer to the camera, a third girl -
CHANTAL - comes into view from the right, out of breath. PAMELA
and JULIA clearly know her.
```

> *Also remember to include any important facts about your cast, just as you would if you were writing a short story or novel. But before you write "PAMELA is wearing jeans", ask yourself if it actually matters? If there's no relevance to what the characters are wearing then you don't need to worry about it for the moment, but if the video is called "Pamela's Jeans" then you might want to establish them early on!*

9. Next, your **dialog**. Dialog's tricky, in that very few people generally ever write in a manner that people would speak. Try it, and what you'll have will be virtually unreadable. Rather, plenty of practice and rehearsing will allow your cast to naturalize any dialog you give them.

```
JULIA:              Chantal, what's wrong?

CHANTAL:    You'll never guess who I just saw!
```

And so on…

10. Other optional things to include in your scripted scenes:

- Captions
- Effects
- Transitions

These are all things handled in Premiere, but as an editor/producer you'll know to plan them as far in advance as possible. For example, if you plan on a title fading up over the last few seconds of that piece of dialog, you'll need to ensure that your cast don't stop performing after the last word.

As you'll see when we cover shooting in more detail, you need to think about the edit at every stage, to make sure you get yourself enough footage, of the right quality, to do your job in Premiere.

11. OK, I'll leave you to get working on your script. It might be one scene or a feature-length drama, but whatever it is, think carefully about these last few pointers:

- For a first drama, generally keep it short. A page of script usually works out to about a minute on-screen, so keep your first script under ten if you can. The experience you gain while seeing this one through to a polished final production will serve you well when you turn your attention to 90 – or – 120 page monsters!

- What is this whole script going to require, in terms of people, money, locations, effects and so on? Can it be done?

- What resources do you have? Back to the old question of size-of-cast vs number-of-willing-friends.

- Be adventurous; it really is true that the sky's the limit, but scout out adventurous locations (see later) before making them an inseparable part of your script.

- Think in pictures. We're about to look at storyboarding, which is essential whether you're working on your own script or producing someone else's. But if you're writing your own, it pays to think visually. If from the start, your words on the page accompany images in your head, then you've got a headstart on the whole production process.

> *Above all, remember that you shouldn't rely on Premiere for editing out unwanted material from your video. If there are scenes you're not going to use, best to decide that at the script stage, then you don't need to go to the bother or expense of shooting. Don't edit your* ***script*** *in Premiere!*

Thinking in pictures is great, but planning in pictures is essential, so let's have a look at the filmmaker and videographer's greatest planning tool – the **storyboard**.

Storyboarding Your Video

Storyboarding is an essential creative tool, the stepping-stone between those words on the page and the screen; a trigger for ideas and a place to store them. It's also an essential planning tool.

Much as you can build shooting instructions and details into your script, the storyboard animates those ideas for you and gives you a visual frame of reference.

Whether or not you're a good artist, the storyboard is equally useful. It's not about how well you can draw, it's about what you convey, and there's no rule that says your storyboards need to be understandable by everyone. As long as you know what you're getting at, then you've hit the mark.

> *Many modern feature films now use* **animatics** *to plan out and visualize complex scenes; these are short animations, often quickly computer-generated, which also show pace in addition to movement and camera angles.*
>
> *Something else you might want to think about is a* **sketchbook** *where you can jot down ideas and suggestions for shots, angles, scenes … anything you like. It could be that a hastily drawn shot in your sketchbook could form the beginnings of your next big script!*

You could approach a storyboard in one of two ways:

- Storyboard everything, practically shot by shot – big feature films do this, but when single shots can take weeks to get and thousands of dollars to shoot, you kind of need this level of planning.

- Storyboard only the key scenes – this is your path for the time being, unless you're planning an expensive or particularly complex video. Scenes best for storyboarding in this way are those which involve a very special location (where rehearsals and reshoots might be limited by time), action scenes that will false-start unless planned properly, title sequences, or any other scene which involves choreography (and I don't just mean dancing!)

Take this end shot from my first drama.

Revolutionary Premiere 6

Now, although a kiss isn't something you can storyboard to death, without it getting icky, that shot was only the last stage of a very mobile sequence.

- **Stage 1**: Camera facing straight along bridge – Lisa and Eldon hugging

- **Stage 2**: Lisa and Eldon part, still holding hands

- **Stage 3**: Camera gently approaches and swings round Lisa's shoulder

■   **Stage 4**: They close again for the final kiss, which you see above

The scene was shot in a large park in Glasgow, and we were at the mercy of the weather and the general public. If we didn't know exactly what we wanted before we got there, we could never have achieved what we had to shoot in those few minutes that we managed to clear the bridge for the long shot.

Later, we'll be covering how to scout out your locations, and in some instances this will need to come before the storyboard, depending on the kind of things you hope to shoot. You'll be using storyboards often to plan an exact framing of an exact shot, and sometimes you'll find that all you have to do is follow the storyboard and set the camera rolling.

This is the final shot from the same film, where the characters walk over the horizon. Once there was a storyboard, it really was as simple as telling Nicola and Andy (my lovely actors) to walk and pressing REC on the camera. That sequence pretty much shot itself as a result of a little scouting and forward planning.

The last thing you'd want to feel, though, is constrained by a storyboard. It's only a guide and you're allowed to change your mind. It's there to encourage you to think your production out in pictures and to save you time on the day. In one video I worked on, the most finely planned

storyboarded sequence was binned in the edit suite, because it looked rubbish when we put it together! The storyboard is your friend, but don't let it boss you around. Take an eraser and some blank storyboard sheets with you on the shoot and improvize if you need to!

What to Include in a Storyboard

The level of detail you include on a story is up to you. We've provided a blank storyboard sheet for you in the downloadable production pack, but you can just use this as a guide if you want something with more detail. Some storyboards have boxes where you can record video and audio elements needed for each shot – this is often a great idea!

The basic elements are:

- **Framing** – where is the camera? You should be experimenting with shots when you scout out your locations (see later) so unless things change on the day, the position of your camera in the storyboard is how it'll be on film.

- **Placing of characters** – where are your cast, where are they looking, what are they doing? Check your script, but give them scope to improvise on set. If they move, draw some arrows.

> *Don't let your storyboards get too static; remember you're producing a live action piece of work. This isn't still life or a photography exhibit. Bring your pictures to life; make them show action, motion and transition.*

- **Environmental factors** – what else is there in shot that you need? Is it a bright or dark shot? If it's outdoors, are there any 'actors' in the environment; clouds, trees, buildings? In this next shot, we specifically wanted the building in the background – a later sequence is set there – and we wanted a grim mood. Translated into reality on the day of the shoot, we balanced the shot of the building with the clouds provided courtesy of Mother Nature to achieve a great effect.

> *If you're banking on uncontrollable forces, like the weather, or if you have a wishlist in that area, show them on your storyboard – record everything you need, want or hope for, then on the day of the shoot you can be more focused on how to achieve it all.*

- ◼ **Camera motion** – you've seen from our example how important it was to plan and choreograph camera actions. Usually, you do this with arrows, as we did earlier. It's especially important to plan where the viewer's "eye" will be going because if you're moving the camera around, you'll need to keep crew, microphones, lights and other cameras out of shot.

The more of your video that you plan out like this, whether on paper or even partly in your head, the greater the sense you'll have of the look, feel, style and flow of the final video. If you've thought your whole picture through, you might be thinking, "If I can only get exactly what's in my head onto the screen, it'll be great." If that's the case you're on the right track, and whatever the shooting problems and unforeseen traumas, if you stick to your ideals, and back them up with resolute planning, you'll get there!

Storyboarding for Documentary

You might be thinking that storyboarding is exclusively a dramatic necessity. Well, you'd be wrong. Most documentaries are (or could benefit from being) storyboarded. In the same way that you set out to produce scenes and shoot footage for drama, so you do with documentary. We've seen how to produce a treatment, and set out our suggested elements and sources. Well, you'll want to plan out how you're going to get them.

As well as interviews and testimonies, you'll have background shots, footage of whatever your subject is, and you'll need to storyboard what material you want to get.

Assisting you and reinforcing the storyboard in a documentary production is a **shot list**. This is exactly what it says it is – a list of shots you want to get. On occasions when it doesn't really matter how you shoot your subject (the angle, the camera movement and so on), a shot list features all the shots you hope to get when you go filming.

Because you're documenting reality, in many ways you need a better idea of your intentions, because your chances for reshoots might be limited. As with drama, the best way to make the most of your shooting time is to plan it to death and save yourself a lot of time and money.

If you work from a storyboard and shot list together, you can quite easily reconcile these to keep a record of all the footage you've shot; this can be crucial if you end up with a dozen tapes full of material.

Drafting a Storyboard

Let's get back to your own project, which you can hopefully work on throughout the book. Whether your video has one scene or twenty, you'll want to draw some pretty pictures.

1. Decide whether you want to storyboard the whole video or just the key scenes. If you have mainly static shots, you might want to leave them off the storyboard, but if there are complex sequences of any kind, even just with a few actors at once or with a moving camera, get them on paper!

2. Print off and photocopy the blank storyboard sheet provided in the production pack, and pick your first storyboarded scene. It's usually best to always storyboard the first scene, as it's normally pretty important to the overall vid.

3. Make sure your pictures include all the elements that each shot *needs* – it's no good having a blank background if the shot needs to take place in a certain place.

4. Gather as much information as you can about your prospective locations – if you'd rather, leave certain storyboards until we cover locations and scouting in the next section.

5. Once you've done a few frames on the storyboard, you'll begin to get a sense of how your vid, however simple or complex, will look on screen, even if the cast are only matchstick characters at the moment.

Often running concurrently with the development of your storyboard are the remaining pre-production elements of casting, finding crew, getting equipment, and managing choice of locations. Once you've decided on all these things, maybe you can add some more colour to your storyboard!

Turning Your Fiction Into Reality

Hopefully you've been shamelessly ambitious and idealistic in your script ideas and your early storyboards, but you've probably also been keeping a pragmatic eye on what's feasible for your production.

Although it's no use thinking, "Oh well, I only know one actor friend so I can only make my video a monolog." The time is now upon you to start putting faces to parts and filling in those blank backgrounds in your storyboard with real locations.

Whatever genre you're producing for, you'll need to take these steps to make it happen:

- Nail down where you need to film, how to get there, and how to customize the location for your shooting.

- Pinpoint who you need to film and when, and think about how to organise your cast and crew's time.

- Figure out what equipment you need to physically pull off the shoot. Aim high, and you should hopefully always get the bare minimum.

Finding the Money

You'll be saddened but not surprised to hear there's no sure and fast way to get finance for your video. If you're working *for* someone there may be a budget, but if you're producing on your own, it's a little more tricky.

Producing on a zero budget is done so often that you shouldn't be disheartened, but if you can find money from somewhere, then the production will be the better for it. For a short video that you might be entering into competition, for example, sponsors are often the best way. The winner of the BAFTA for best short film two years ago was one such production; backing from a raft of small sponsors gave the production team the money they needed for cameras and the like, but you're never going to have enough.

The money issue reinforces just how important it is not to waste shooting time. If you're hiring equipment by the day, you'd better not. Get there, get your shots, as dictated by the script, storyboard and shot list, and get the equipment back.

As a video producer, even more so than as an editor, you'll also find your life heavily constrained by time; yours and other people's. That said, you'll be surprised just how cooperative people will be, and how responsive they can be to the camera. That piece of equipment can be your ticket to a host of freebies, so be ambitious and be audacious and you'll be amazed what you can get for free

Finding the People

The next obstacle you have is finding the people. If you're working as part of a production company, you'll more than likely have colleagues to work on camera/lights/sound, but if you're freelancing or working on your own project, you'll need a crew – and in the case of drama, you'll need a cast.

Take the time to sit down and figure out *who* you'll need to carry the production through. In many ways, the cast is the easy part; at least you know how many people you need. The crew can be a deceptively large contingent. It all depends on the scale of your production, and often can be as much about sheer manpower than skills. Even if you are trained to use camera, sound and lighting equipment, you can't hold a big microphone and the camera at the same time. And what if you need more than one camera?

This is often where friends come in, but beware not to fray good relationships by putting your friends under too much pressure. If you have the resources, you might be able to hire other freelancers, or you might have the resources to hire actors. It's often mutually beneficial to all parties to work on a decent video project. For budding or training actors, it's a notch on their acting belt, for technical crew (maybe also training), it's something else on their showreel.

A small checklist of likely people would include:

- Cast

- Cameraman (unless it's you!)

- Soundman

- Lighting Technician

- Production Assistants – to help out with equipment/organisation

You probably want a driver amongst those – getting equipment around the place can be an unexpected production pain! But where are you going? That's next on the list…

Finding the Places

Many producers and videographers underestimate the need for good (if not great) locations in any picture. At the very least they need to be accommodating and suitable for your purposes, but with a little effort, you can end up shooting in some great places.

If you're working on a documentary or promo vid, these are kind of decided for you, but if you're making drama, they fall into the scope of your script, and it's another great asset of the old storyboard – it gets you thinking about setting and locale!

Whatever your genre, you need to get permission and cooperation to use most locations (unless you happen to own large amounts of property). Again, you'd be surprised how helpful people can be, but don't take advantage. If you need to film on private property, contact the owner of the property or location well in advance and discuss the project; it's generally best not to just turn up. You'll usually find that people will be quite responsive to a request to film, and usually go out of their way to assist. If there's anything else you need, let them know.

Filming in public places is usually a bit trickier. Always try to find a quiet spot to film; try to pick a quiet time, or have some members of the production team politely ask passers-by to wait a few moments till the shot is finished.

This video was shot in the busiest park in Glasgow, but in the script it was supposed to be empty. A little patience and a spare production member on hand to deal with the public, and we pulled off quite a deception.

At all times, bear in mind the following:

- Always speak to whoever's in charge

- If it's a public facility (like a swimming pool) you may be asked to sign that you take responsibility for the shoot

- Remind whoever you speak to that their assistance is appreciated

- Don't overstay your welcome

- Don't make things awkward or difficult – remember, life goes on for others whether you're filming or not

- Pay attention to safety at all times;

- Lastly, thank them in the credits!

Mini-Masterclass – Reconnaissance

Scouting your locations can make or break your production. You don't want to carry £5000 worth of equipment to location ten miles away only to find they don't have power sockets for your lights and there are no windows!

Here's what you need to know:

- Visit your location well in advance, especially if a large part of the production relies on it. If, for example, you're doing a documentary about a library, then as well as getting permission to film there, make sure it's practical!

- The last thing you want are any surprises, so think about this scouting mission as if it were the actual shoot; if possible, take some of the equipment with you – if that's not practical, make a list of what conditions you'll need to pull off the shoot (sound, lighting, backdrops and so on).

- If it's not possible to take along your production camera with you, try to take some kind of camera – a camcorder or even a still camera – to get some shots of the area, as much for reference back home as for testing purposes.

- Pay particular attention to lighting conditions. What are the natural lights like? How many windows are there? Grab a member of the production team, or a random person in the vicinity, and place them in some likely areas, checking how the camera picks them up.

- Also pay attention to background noise and sound conditions. If there's too much noise, ask around to see what can be done about it. Is there music in the background of your location – can it be turned off? Do some sound-recording tests with your microphones, if you have them with you.

- When you get back with the test footage, you'll want to be able to see how your subject (which on the day may be your actor) appears *and* sounds. If the results are bad, you may have to think about a new location, or about returning to tweak the conditions as much as circumstances permit.

- Wherever you're planning to film, *what*ever you're planning to film, make a quick map of the room or immediate area. Sit your lights on that map, and place your cameras. Test different arrangements. Lighting conditions and even furniture will often dictate where your equipment can go, depending on how portable it all is. Position all your cameras on the map, and try out angles. If you're planning some moving cameras, work out a motion path. Where can your cameraman move? Will he cast shadows? Will he trip over and break your (or worse, someone else's) camera?

> *In this example, when we were filming in a potentially very awkward situation for a documentary about a pub quizmaster, we made a map of where our lights, camera and microphones would go, and also planned out where quiz participants (and also the furniture) would be.*

- It's so important I'll mention it twice – make sure there's adequate power sockets for your equipment. If there aren't, you need to know *now* so you can stock up on batteries and go to plan B.

- Think *safety* above all. You'll be using cameras, maybe power cables for lights, tripods and other accident-prone pieces of hardware. Keep anyone who's not in the production out of harm's way, and be sure to inform any local first-aiders that you're there.

- Lastly, if you haven't fully decided on exactly where in your location to shoot, this reconnaissance is vital for scouting out possible parts of the building/street/whatever to use. Look for nice backdrops and well-lit spaces; you'd be surprised at the great video locations hidden away in the most unlikely of places!

After the reconnaissance or scout, you might be getting a better idea of the look of your video. Suddenly, your vid looks that little bit more *real*. But there's one more thing to think about...

Finding the Equipment

This is largely down to what kind of project and your current set-up. But give some thought to the kind of things you'll need for the task at hand.

How many cameras will you need? For a drama, you'll need more than one for it to be convincing – it's the multi-angles and reverse shots that will make your drama come to life. For documentary or any other type, you can get away with just the one, although you'll still require a varied amount of shots to make it interesting. A common practice is to take along a smaller, maybe lower quality camcorder to shoot cutaway shots and background footage. Often, such shots are treated (maybe slowed down or reduced to black-and-white) for effect, so the slightly poorer quality of the footage won't matter.

Depending on your locations you might need some kind of lighting equipment, but this doesn't necessarily need to be heavy (although the high-end stuff certainly is!). Portable hand-held lamps or the kind that can sit on top of your camera might be enough to light a single subject. The same goes for sound, and we'll be covering the different types in the sound section shortly, but the most important thing is to make sure you use it wisely, and practice with what you have to get the best results.

The great thing about DV is that it's making the whole video process a lot easier to break into, and for the price of a DV camera and Premiere you can really make waves in video. If you want or need more high-end equipment, you don't have to buy it. You can rent it economically, or join a local film club and benefit from special hiring rates. If you're a student in the field, you could always ask to borrow equipment from your college or university – they'll usually be very helpful (hey, that's what I used to do!).

*Remember, the less equipment you can afford, or carry, the more creative you need to be with what your surroundings and locations naturally provide, and the craftier you need to be with your application. Don't ever feel constrained by your equipment or lack of it – if you only have a tiny camera and nothing else, some ingenuity and the delights of Premiere can still help you make a mini-masterpiece. Think **big**, aim **high**, and remember that begging and borrowing can get you anywhere!*

Getting Your Shoot Together

Let's think about your own video project for a moment and apply what we've seen to the vid you might be preparing for the rest of the book.

1. Jot down what you'll need to carry your video off. Think about money, people, locations and equipment. What do you have immediate access to? Who could you rope in to help you?

2. Start taking steps to bring it all together. Contact your crew and consider your cast. For this little project, you'll probably be looking at friends, but if not, put the word round local drama schools that you'd like to shoot a film.

3. Decide on your locations and scout them out. Bear in mind all the things we've discussed – stay focused on the reality, be practical, and visit *all* your locations to test out footage, to practice and to assess suitability.

4. OK, we've spent aeons planning this thing, but it'll serve you well on the day. Time to gather all that stuff together. Looking at your polished storyboard, your shot lists, your roster of cast and crew, focus on what *needs* to be achieved on the day. Get your equipment ready, check your batteries, make sure you have enough tapes (these are common pitfalls!) and ensure you have transport to and from the location. Make contingency plans for bad weather – take along some protection for the equipment and some umbrellas just in case. Find somewhere you and the rest of the team can have lunch, all this kind of thing – last minute stuff we always forget!

Enough talk, time to start shooting! But do make sure you test *all* the gear before leaving home!

Shoot the Video!

There are three areas you'll need some knowledge of if you're going to shoot your own video, even if you actually intend someone else to be physically holding the gear. These are camera, lighting and sound – you guessed those, right?

At all times, aim for the perfect shoot, and you'll always get, at the very least, what you came for. The best general shooting-day tip I can give you is to manage your time properly. If you have five minutes of footage to get in one particular place, it will *not* just take five minutes to get! You have to arrive there, set up, check out the equipment, put the batteries in, angle the lights, warm up your actors or interviewee … the list is endless.

The great thing is, the amount of planning you've put into the thing will start paying off here, because you'll have a much better idea of what needs doing and how long it'll take. Extra shooting days can be a pain though, and expensive if you're hiring people or equipment, so make the absolute most of what you have and get on with shooting some great material.

If there's drama happening on this shoot, then you need to think about spending quality time with your cast in the role of director. There will also undoubtedly be lots of retakes. You probably can't afford to be there all day getting that perfect single take, but again, do balance your ideals with reality and get the best take you can without sacrificing the quality of the rest of your scenes.

However much you've planned, there will be some surprises, good and bad. Be prepared to improvize and make the best of what you're presented with. If the weather's bad, are there back-up scenes you can shoot indoors instead? You might even want to storyboard a few versions of key scenes if they rely heavily on the uncontrollable.

React to the unexpected and think on the fly. In the scene illustrated here, we had been filming a character scene with our angel character – Lisa – indoors, and when we left, we noticed a huge stone angel atop the building across the street!! Needless to say we concocted a short scene to make the most of that!

Getting the Most from the Camera

The camera itself is your ticket to great-looking material in Premiere. As you know, once the footage is there on your desktop, you have a huge amount of control over it, but carefully and skilfully shot material is essential if you want a polished video. The editor is powerless to 'invent' a great shot that was never filmed, or fill in the gaps when the provided footage doesn't quite fit together or gel.

Tip number one – *get enough stuff*! On a basic scale, this means shoot some extra at the start and end of each scene; don't just turn the camera off when the last line is spoken – what if you want to fade out and need a few seconds more? To a wider extent this means making sure you get enough background footage, illustrative shots and establishing shots. These should form part of your storyboard or shot list, but as a rule, when you shoot somewhere, grab a few minutes of general footage of the surrounding area – if it's a building, get an exterior shot to establish where your characters are. As an editor, you'll need these shots to build a flowing and coherent piece in Premiere.

Practice with the camera and get used to the **focusing**; you'll want all your shots to be properly focused. If you're shooting an interviewee or actor, try zooming in on the eyes, and focusing there, then pulling back. This should ensure that the whole figure is properly focused before recording begins.

Before you start shooting, zoom in on the closest part of your subject you expect to film, usually the eyes - then focus the camera.

Now zoom out and from now on, no matter how much you zoom in and out during shooting, your focus will stay accurate!

If your camera has a feature known as white balance, this is a great tool for improving the color of your footage – something many ignore. The white balance feature involves demonstrating to the camera what "white" looks like in the conditions you're in; from there it extrapolates what other colours should look like! Ordinarily you'll need something white to calibrate it, so keep some white paper or card with your camera.

Following your storyboard, choose the right kind of camera angle and handling for the shot you want. If you want a rugged look to the vid, you might go for handheld throughout, but for documentary this would generally be unusual, so keep a tripod at the ready. Be prepared to engage with your scene if the action dictates it, but *have someone spot you* to make sure you don't trip or fall when your eyes are on the viewfinder!

The key to good camerawork is **framing** – put simply, how you frame the action in your viewfinder, and how the camera sees your scene.

Mini-Masterclass – Framing

The basics of capturing the action with your camera, however big or small:

- Arrange the action within your shot. In conjunction with your storyboarding efforts, place your cast and your scenery in shot the way you would brush them into a painting. Composing the scenes and arranging the 'actors', whether living or not, is one of the keys to getting a good shot!

- Give your subjects headroom and keep them central unless the scene dictates otherwise.

- If there's any extra information your shot needs to convey, pointers as to a location for example, frame the shot appropriately to include all the viewer needs to see.

■ Think about how your scene needs to be viewed – how close should you be, from what angle. Do we want the camera to appear to be 'watching' the characters or just plainly recording events?

■ Use the right distance of shot for the right occasion. Zoom in to capture an emotion, or keep your distance to observe objectively.

The next mini-masterclass on interviews also includes some more documentary-specific framing tips.

Mini-Masterclass – Shooting Interviews

Interviews will form an integral part of your video career in almost every genre except drama. Here's the core information to help you get that perfect interview:

- Prepare your questions well in advance and if it's a pre-arranged interview you're shooting (as opposed to interviews on the street), send a copy to your interviewee.

- You'll need to get the answers you want, so be sure to word each question so that the interviewee needs to give more than just a yes or no answer. For example, instead of "do you like cats?", ask "what is it you like about cats?". The phrasing of your question will determine how much information a potentially shy interviewee will give you.

- Once you're with your interview candidate, be sure to warm them up, and make them feel at ease with the situation – they might well be nervous.

- Decide where to place the interview and set up your camera (almost certainly on a tripod) accordingly. Perhaps get some footage of the interviewee arriving at the location or other material to intersperse with the talking.

- Before or after the interview, get some reverse angle shots of the interviewer – they're a bit tacky but almost everyone uses these at some point. Get the shots anyway in case you need to cutaway material in the edit.

- When framing your subject, give him or her "looking room"; that is, a little extra space on the side they're facing. Allow space for hands and zoom back if they need to show anything to camera.

- Also, take any opportunities that arise, to think ahead to the editing and compositing of your video. In this next shot, myself and my co-producer thought our interviewee's monitor might be a good place for a superimposed graphic, so we specially line it up to be pretty much square to camera.

- You might find the need at some point in your video career to collect and edit vox pops (shortened from the Latin *vox populi* – 'voice of the people') – these are short sharp interviews collected from the general public – you must have seen them. They require a few special preparations.

- From an editing perspective, if these are going to be cut together, you'll want the "looking room" and the interview angle to alternate sides, like so:
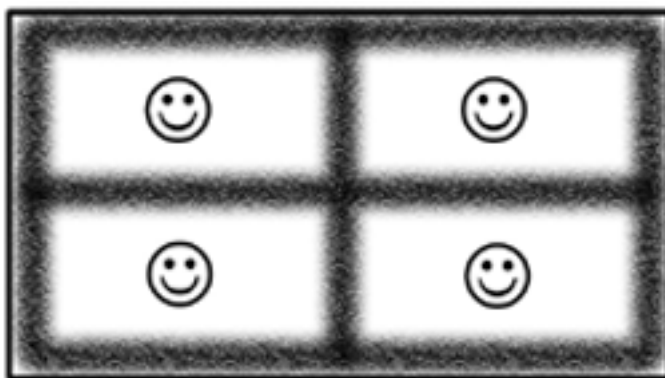
Sound Recording

Generally, you'll be using one or more of a number of microphone types. The normal, **hand-held** reporter-type microphone is usually used for interviews only, and will have no viable place in your drama. Nor will the more intimate **tie-pin** or **lapel** mic, but these are great for recording voices during interviews. The most likely candidates for any drama shooting are the **rifle** mic – a long, thin, highly directional mic – and the **boom** mic, the big fluffy one on a 'boom' fishpole that you've undoubtedly seen hanging around film sets.

Whether it's one of these, or just the microphone on the camera itself, you need to be aware of just how essential sound is to any production. Sound is probably the most neglected aspect of the shoot but it's absolutely crucial in any scene. Poor sound distorts the message of your video and pollutes any emotion you hope to create in your audience. It's no more preferable to having an extremely fuzzy picture. The same attention you pay to framing and recording the *video* of your vid needs to be paid to the *audio*.

I've got two main pieces of advice for the sound on your shoot – keep the microphone (whatever kind it is) as close as possible to your subject, and test to death before the actually shoot. If you've scouted your locations well enough, you'll probably have honed your sound conditions as close to perfection as you can, and if you haven't then you really should!

Placing really is the key. If you're in an enclosed space you should avoid placing the mic near corners, walls or on the centre horizontal and vertical lines of the room. Where's left, you're thinking? Well, to keep your microphone smiling, it's best to keep to one of the four quadrants you see in the diagram:

Above all, keep it as close to your actor/speaker as possible, and know the range of your mic. If it's too far away, all you'll hear is a hiss!

If you're outside, background noise is your worst enemy. Try to minimise it as much as possible through tact and polite requests, but you can also minimise its *effect* by narrowing the pick-up range of your mic so it won't pick up much more than your subject.

> *Whenever you shoot a scene,* **always** *record a buzz track – a track of background noise – which you can then use later in the edit to overlay on top of scenes, transitions or establishing shots.*

Be reactive, and get your subjects to speak up if there's excessive environmental noise. Make sure, however, when you're recording your sound, that you've got a pair of headphones on and you're listening to what you're getting. There's nothing worse than getting back and discovering that your beautifully framed visual masterpiece has an inaudible soundtrack!

Lighting Your Video

Like sound, your lighting set-up is as complex or basic as you want it to be. And like sound, good or bad lighting really can make or break your video. Taking care of the obvious first, you won't need much in the way of lighting if you're shooting outside in daylight, but if you're indoors or outside at night, there are some issues to consider.

> *Don't forget the tips featured in the special interviews masterclass earlier in the chapter!*

The all-important thing is that your *subject* is lit well enough. Although good general lighting is always a boon, on a limited scale or budget, focus your lights on what the viewer will be looking at; if your centre of attention is lit to perfection, shades of light and dark in the surroundings won't be noticed quite so much.

Take for example these shots from a video I produced with some colleagues about a pub quizmaster. The nocturnal setting was a nightmare to shoot in, but we emphasised two factors lighting our entertainer, and lighting the table of participants.
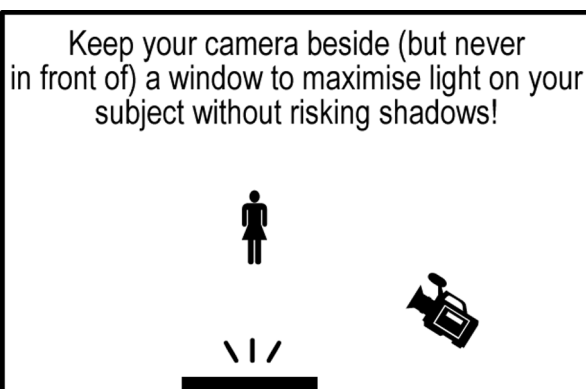
Of course, we didn't light up every competing table in that quiz – only the one we had planned to film, and we had asked the quizzers earlier in the evening if that was OK. So we set up lights around them, as per our floor plan drawn during the scout.
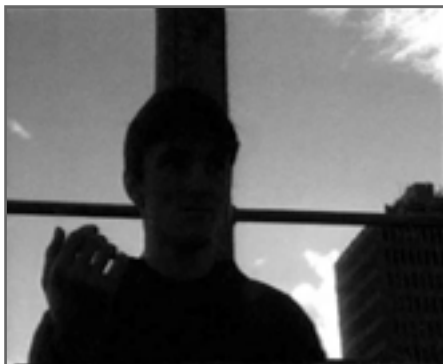

If it's drama you're lighting, be careful though if people are moving around. It looks pretty bad to have people moving in and out of the light, so keep a wider area covered if possible or follow the subject with the light as accurately as you can.

If you have the resources to set up large-scale lights, position them to fill the scene, and keep them out of sight this doesn't just mean physically out of shot; reflections of large bright lights can bounce off spectacles, windows and the like. Keep your artificial lighting *invisible*.

Of course, if possible, use natural light from windows to light your subject or your scene. Have the subject facing the light and if possible keep the camera (and your crew) at an angle to it you don't want to be causing any awkward shadows! See the diagram below for a typical set-up:

Keep your camera beside (but never in front of) a window to maximise light on your subject without risking shadows!
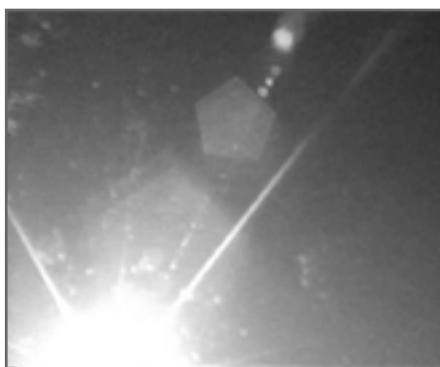
Just as I've advised you about getting constrained by other factors, don't feel too put-upon by the demands of lighting. Adequate lighting is when your scene and your subject are lit appropriately and just enough for the action to be clear, but exceptional lighting comes from your own applications. Don't be afraid to flaunt any of the rules for effect; they are there to be broken if the scene demands it. Take this shot for example:

If you can make him out, this is the character Eldon from my earlier video. Following on from the dark clouds of the shot I showed you before, he has now been deliberately placed against the light (causing him to be in near-complete silhouette). Also deliberately silhouetted, the junction of a lamppost and railing behind him divide the shot into four and illustrate the indecision and choices of the next few scenes, involving the also-shadowy building still in shot behind him.

Play around with light and see what you can get. Once you've mastered the basic lighting of your shots, you can start getting more adventurous. A pan (horizontal camera movement) across the sky in this next shot produced a highly animated and visually striking series of flares.

OK, you're on your way to a great shoot, but technical aspects aside there are a few more things to focus on before setting off with your cameras, and these are the basis of two final mini masterclasses...

Mini-Masterclass – Managing Footage

On the shoot and leading up to the edit, you need to keep track of what you shoot and where it is, or your life as an editor will be hell! Here's the information you need:

- In the same way as you make a list of the shots you plan on getting when you head out to shoot, make a list of what you *actually* get when you return. Your footage is your most valuable asset, so don't let the best shot in the world get forgotten about at the end of tape no.14b. Make this list of shots on the day; note them down as you shoot them! Tick each shot off the shot list or storyboard and mark it down on the tape log, that way nothing will ever go missing!

- Keep this list of shots achieved alongside the tape itself, and clearly mark the tape, e.g.:

  `TAPE 3 – DAY TWO – KELVINGROVE PARK – SCENES 6, 12 & 13`

- If you're working on DV tapes, you might be planning on digitizing your footage as you shoot it (see **Chapter 4**). However, I'd also recommended keeping your tapes as a back-up, and make sure you pay equal attention to organizing your material on your hard drive.

- Spend serious time checking back over what you've filmed. Watch it all! Check that the sound is OK, that the shots are well-composed and that the scenes are as you desired them. You're bound to find some things that aren't ideal, and you'll have to assess whether or not you need to re-shoot any of your material. If not, you should start thinking ahead to how you can maybe use Premiere to sharpen up any flagging footage.

Mini-Masterclass – Continuity

Boy, is this a pain! Most prevalent in video drama, continuity will strive to find new and undiscovered ways to mess up your video, no matter how much you try to foil it. No-one, not even the best, are immune to this nasty c-word, so here are the facts you need to know:

- Your **buzz track** is a great weapon against continuity glitches. In the edit, you'll be able to use this continuous track of background noise to smooth over bad cuts and jumps in the soundtrack, adding a seamlessness to the polished production.

- But not even a buzz track can solve some sound mistakes. Music is a particularly troublesome one. I once shot various individual dialog scenes which I was planning to cut together, until I realised Billy Ray Cyrus' *Achy Breaky Heart* had been playing in the background all along – after the edit, the song would have been jumping around all over the place!

- A basic one, but often the last thing on your mind when you're booking up people for a shoot – if you're filming consecutive scenes on different days, make sure your cast are wearing the same clothes. You might want to mark up in your cast members' scripts what they need to wear and when. And in a similar vein (and this did happen to me once) try to make sure your lead actor doesn't go get a haircut between shooting days!

- Now onto some of the more sneaky continuity gremlins. Cigarettes and glasses of orange juice are the classics; the cigarette whose length varies from shot to shot and the orange juice whose fill level does likewise. Keep track of every last thing on set. If your cast pop out for lunch, see to it that they don't acquire a mustard stain on their shirt that they didn't have before.

- If you have the luxury of any production assistants, you might want to ask him or her to keep track of such things for you – as the director/producer you might have a lot more on your mind.

- Shoots that span over a few days or even longer, would benefit from a few timely photographs of cast and locations, for continuity purposes. That way, you can easily match the situation to exactly how you left it a few days back when the shoot continues.

Continuity problems have the potential to make your life a misery when you start piecing together your final video in Premiere, so keep a watchful eye out for anything out of place.

Shooting Your Project

What do you mean you haven't shot your video by now? You're not waiting for me to give the go-ahead, are you? Get on out there and capture the material you'll need to bring into Premiere.

1. Take all that you've planned, and all that I've taught you and add a little bit of on-the-day improvization and inspiration and you'll garner yourself some first-class footage.

2. When you get back with the footage, watch everything over carefully, and make sure that by this stage you've logged every shot and marked every tape.

3. If necessary, go out shooting again and again until you get all the material you need, and a little bit extra just in case.

4. You're now pretty much ready to import your material into Premiere in the coming chapters!

Conclusion

You've now seen the ins and outs of the pre-production and production stages and how a little effort in these can save you some time in the edit suite. And if your video's going to be a one-man (or woman) show, I've hopefully given you some pointers as to how to conceive, plan and shoot some Grade A material that Premiere will just love you for.

There's nothing left to say except get out there and shoot as much material as the days allow, because in the next 450 pages, as you learn Premiere from start to finish, you'll be glad of all the practice you can get, and you'll see the greatness that good footage and good editing combined can produce.

Whatever your genre, or however you plan to use Premiere, it's a tool towards telling stories and you've now learned how to first paint the scenes of those stories onto the screen. Whether you're capturing fact, fiction or just *life*, you're only limited by your imagination and your audacity.