

So you want to make a video?

WARNING: This sounds very simple on paper. There are many more elements in pre-production paperwork that will make your shoot even smoother, but these are the bare essentials.

Rule #1: Paperwork is useless. It only means more work.

Rule #2: Good paperwork results in faster shoots, and eliminates confusion.

Throughout this section, we will be referring to the following box as a reference to building your script.

Scene 4	INTERIOR	DEREK'S CAR	NIGHT
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Driving down a country road in his dad's SUV, Derek, the driver, is chatting with his friend, Cathy in the passenger seat. Matthew is in the back. Cathy is concerned at the speed Derek is driving at.

Master 2-shot SHOT #1

CU of Derek SHOT #2

CATHY
Derek, I really don't think you should be driving that fast. It's quite dangerous, you know.

DEREK
Chilax! I know exactly what I'm doing. Besides, it's not like I don't know how drive a car. It's quite simple, actually.

CU of Cathy SHOT #3

CU of Matthew SHOT #4

MATTHEW
Derek needs to prove that he's a capable MAN.

CATHY (laughing)
I think that's a lost cause.

Scripting

Make a script. The simplest script method is the single-column script for drama. This script contains every word of dialogue by the characters as well as a short description of what is going on. A new scene starts off at the top of the next page.

1. At the top of the page are four essentials:
Scene number
Interior/Exterior
Location
Time of Day
2. Next, a short description of the scene follows. You should include the characters that will appear in the scene, a general description of the environment, and any special effects or other details required to complete the scene.
3. The script contains all dialogue, both on and off the screen.

At this point, there is no visual direction for camera movement, type of shot, etc. We'll do that next.

Visual Elements

For the video, you need to establish how to shoot the characters. This includes an establishing shot to tell the viewer where they are, who the characters in the scene are, or other details.

Every scene starts out with a “master” shot that usually runs the entire length. Normally, this is a wide shot that captures all the action in the scene. If anything goes wrong with the other shots of the scene, you can always fall back to this master shot for backup. This is usually the first thing that is shot, so we’ll call this “Shot #1” We’ll shoot Derek and Cathy’s close-ups as shots #2 and #3 respectively.

Print out the script, and outline the length of each shot. You don’t need to do this on the computer. Just a ruler and pencil will do.

Beginning to Edit

Next, comes the job of logging the shots that you recorded on videotape. Note on the script the scene and shot numbers. These translate directly onto the log sheet like below:

Reel	Scene	Shot	Take	Time Code In	Time Code Out	Duration	Description/Notes
32	4	2	1	: :05 :46 :28	: :06 :06 :12	20 sec	Cathy warns Derek
32	4	2	2	: :06 :06 :13	: :06 :30 :04	24 sec	Cathy warns Derek (Cathy cracks up)
32	4	2	3	: :06 :30 :05	: :07 :01 :15	31 sec	Cathy warns Derek (GOOD!!!)

So in this example, we've recorded on tape #32, Scene 4, Shot 2 with 3 takes. Using the counter in the viewfinder, the cameraperson read aloud the timecode numbers. And when they stopped the camcorder, he read the numbers again. Using simple math (or a time code calculator*), we've figured out that the shot is roughly 20 seconds. However, on the 3rd take, which we think is the best take, it took 31 seconds. This duration information is good for reference, as it will give you a rough idea of how long your final video will be with some quick and easy calculations.

* The "Calculated Industries" FrameMasterII calculator is available for rent at \$15 per day with a \$300 deposit, which will be refunded upon return of the calculator in good condition. The calculator allows for frame-accurate calculations, conversion between film references, drop and non-drop frame timecode, as well as conversions between PAL and NTSC timecode.