

Digital Storytelling – How to Film Your Stories

There are lots of rules and expectations to consider when producing a ‘professional’ video. These are important to the filmmakers, audiences, and particularly the people paying for the videos.

The beauty of Digital Storytelling is that all of those rules and expectations can be dispensed with. Forgotten.

Your story, however you want it to be recorded and told, is, and will always be your creation. You have the freedom to break from what is expected, to experiment, and to produce something that you really want.

The key when using any unfamiliar piece of equipment is spending time playing with it. Get used to the feel, the functions and the limitations of it. Let the technology record your story, rather than have it dictate your approach.

We will focus on Digital Cameras, specifically Camcorders for this guide, and show just some of the techniques that will help you on your way to creating your own Digital Story:

This is the camera we will be looking at:

Canon HV20

It is a great example of the kind of technology available to buy (cheaply), hire or even borrow from a local library or school.



This camera is small, hand-held and very easy to use.

It has a built-in microphone for recording sound and can record video in High Definition if required.



This camera records onto DV Tape, which is very similar in operation to old VHS tapes. They can hold 60 minutes of video in Standard Play and up to 90 in Long Play.

You can record, then rewind and watch the footage back on the camera. The tapes can also be re-used if needed.

DV Tapes are widely available to buy, even from supermarkets, and are priced at between £2 and £4.



The DV Tape loads into the camera much like a Video Cassette slides into a VHS player.

You can also record onto SD cards, much like the ones in modern mobile phones and digital stills cameras.

Here is a close up picture of some of the controls and functions of this camera:

On top there is a dial switch allowing you to choose between recording video (Camera), OFF, and watching video back (Play).

The red RECORD button starts and stops recording with a simple push.

There is a Menu button (FUNC.) and Joystick to change settings for more advanced users.





With the adjustable Velcro strap, you can keep the camera steadily and safely in your grasp.

All of the main controls are in reach of your right thumb and index finger.

With your left hand, you can open the video screen and then hold the base of the camera to keep it even steadier.



Perhaps the best function on this camera is the AUTO setting shown here as a flick of a switch:

This allows the camera to change most of the tricky settings for you.

With AUTO selected the camera will adjust the FOCUS and the IRIS of the lens so your image will always be sharp.

The more a camera can do for you, the more you can concentrate on recording your story.



With many of the functions set to automatic, it becomes far easier to get comfortable with the technology, allowing for some great videos to be created.

Among the best manual functions to be experimented with is the ZOOM. This feature can give your video some great movement and direction. Do have a real play with this particular gadget.

Once you have grown used to the camera, and become comfortable with what it can do for you, it's time to get out there and record your story.

The video footage you will record will require transferring from your DV Tape onto a computer for editing. Here, during the editing process, you will be able to assemble your finished video.



Mini-USB to USB Cable

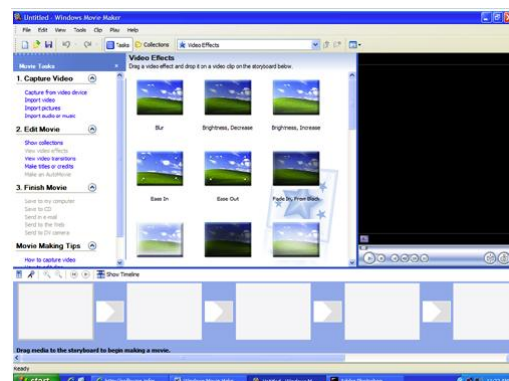
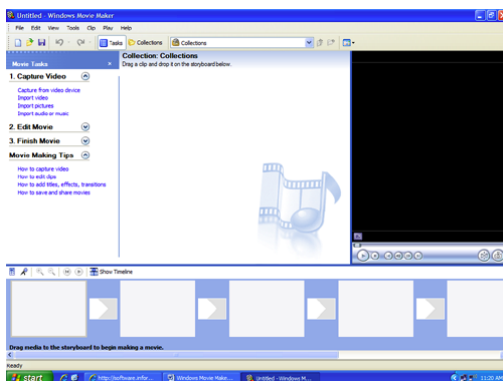


Mini-USB Port on Camera

Each camera will come with its own cable in order to upload video onto a computer. This cable is usually a 'Mini-USB to USB'. This technical jargon simply relates to the connectors on the ends of the cable. This standard form of cable is usually sold with Digital Stills Cameras and Mobile Phones. The Mini-USB Port shown here is where you would connect the cable to the camera.

When the camera is connected to the computer, the chosen EDITING software will describe the process of uploading (or 'capturing') the video you have recorded. The on-screen instructions that run with many of these software packages should help you transfer the video successfully.

The most common, most widely available EDIT software is Windows Movie Maker, which is a free programme attached to Windows PCs.



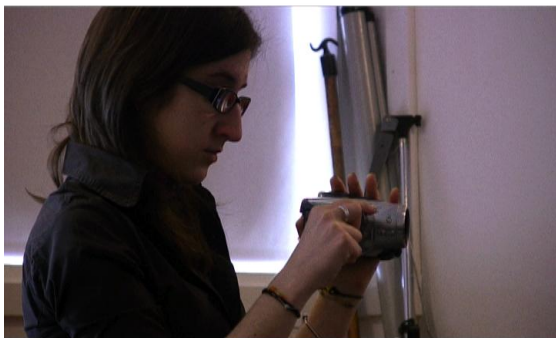
There are on-line guides, forums, and also the 'Help' function of the programme itself, which will assist you in editing your Digital Story.

For a step-by-step online guide to Windows Movie Maker, use the following Internet address:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/default.msp>



Here are just a few images taken from the most recent Digital Storytelling Workshop, which offered participants the experience of using video cameras for the very first time:



This guide can be translated to other forms of digital recording media too. Video is after all moving pictures with accompanying sound.

Perhaps try talking in front of a webcam with a microphone. All you would need here is a computer or laptop, a webcam to record the images and a microphone to record the sound.

Simplifying this, you could record audio (sound) for your story onto a Dictaphone and perhaps take some still photographs to add the desired imagery. You could even design some artwork for a very personal touch.

If you are keen to use modes of technology that are possibly more familiar to you, then perhaps try using a mobile phone. Most of the mobile phones available now (and in the last 5 years or so) have video cameras built in. They are often just a smaller, slightly less complicated versions of camcorders. The picture and sound quality should be of a good enough standard that your story can be recorded in all it's unique glory.