

## A few tips to make your video look better!

Many of us are now using both Video and Zoom in a way that we possibly never expected and are getting some great results! However, as we get more used to the medium there are some things that we can be mindful of that will improve our output by making some very simple changes.

- Composition – the rule of thirds – a close up of a head in the middle of the screen can be intimidating and isn't so interesting to look at. Imagine the screen divided into thirds and position yourself a third of the way into the screen, rather than the middle.
- Pick an interesting, natural background – bookcases, garden views, kitchen units, your living room are all fine – plain walls are a bit dull!
- If you are recording on a phone use it on its side so that the final recording is landscape (for TV) and not portrait.
- Don't be afraid to sit at an angle to the camera – as you would in a group of friends.
- Don't be afraid to show a bit more of yourself, perhaps sitting in a comfortable chair. In fact, the more comfortable you are, the better you will come across.
- If you have no tripod a soft cushion with a book for support will do a great job – and give your poor helper's arms a rest!
- Good lighting can be tricky, but you can make it easy for yourself. If the light falls across your face from one side, typically from your front room or study window, you will be much darker on one side of your face. One option is to face the light directly, but that will flatten your face and not look interesting, far better to get a white sheet and drape it over a chair (out of view!) to reflect the daylight onto your darker side. (It's what the professionals do)
- If you are able to use any lights, you can soften them a little by putting greaseproof paper in front of them, but make sure that you don't create a fire hazard...
- Using notes. Don't be afraid to have any notes in front of you – it's not wrong, or distracting. What is certainly more distracting is your eyes flitting to the side of the camera where you have craftily stuck up your pieces of paper. People are much more conscious of eye movement than you might think.
- It's important that you understand where the camera lens is located on the recording device you are using. If you use your phone or a tablet there is a temptation for you to look at the centre of the screen, this can be some way from the lens. This will result in you looking past your viewer rather than at them! If it's helpful make a temporary mark (a little face perhaps!) beside the actual lens and then remember to talk to it instead.

Assuming your video will be edited...

- When you start your recording try looking down at a book, or out of the window, then give yourself five seconds before turning and looking up to the camera and talking. This will give the person doing the editing a much better chance of making a nice smooth transition into the final video, without your sudden appearance on screen.
- The same at the end of your recording. Don't say "Amen" and grab at the off button!! Try smiling and then returning to the book or window that you started with – again waiting five seconds at the end for your editor's sake!

I learned many of these 'tricks of the trade' many years ago as a video producer and I really thought I would not be giving this advice again, but then we have a God of surprises, don't we?

God Bless the wonderful work you are doing!

Mark Dale - Circuit Steward National Forest East.