



FILMMAKING FOR ADVOCACY

All you need to know



Contents



| | |
|----|--------------------------------|
| 5 | Introduction |
| 6 | Context |
| 10 | Filmmaking Stage 1 |
| 11 | Pre-Production |
| 12 | Shooting Script |
| | Storyboard + Shot list |
| | Budget |
| 15 | People |
| 16 | Location |
| | Kit |
| 18 | Filmmaking Stage 2 |
| 19 | Shooting your film |
| | Lighting |
| 20 | Sound |
| | Space, Structure + composition |
| | Coverage |
| 22 | Filmmaking Stage 3 |
| 23 | Connecting with a Community |
| | Reaching out to Individuals |
| 24 | Applying to Film Festivals |
| | Optimising Existing Networks |
| | + Playing the Long Game |
| 27 | Distribution |
| 28 | Measuring Success |
| 30 | Glossary |

Welcome



INTRODUCTION

The British Film Institute is delighted to support the Young Women's Advocacy Forum 2020. We are extremely excited to have designed this programme on filmmaking for advocacy especially for you. We hope you'll have a fun, useful and engaging time, but critically we hope that the skills you acquire, on this world class programme in filmmaking and digital communication, ensure that the content you create enables connections and bridges to be made between national level campaign activities and global advocacy.

Filmmaking is a vital communication tool in the modern world; through this course you will be able to use the medium to raise awareness, and visibility, of issues affecting young women around the world, distributing and promoting content that you create to tackle these and other issues that are important to you. This programme has been designed to help you build skills that will help develop your agency and power your ability to affect global decision making and change.

You can refer to this handbook after the course, when it is time to put your new-found skills into practice. There are some reminders of the topics and areas that we cover during your sessions and masterclasses, along with some key information and guidance. We have also included a glossary, in case you come across any unfamiliar terms.

We believe passionately that film can be a powerful tool for change. It can document, and therefore, change the world. The British Film Institute is about to teach you new ways to use your voice and your ideas to advocate through film. You will learn how to empower yourself through the medium of film, how to expand the reach and impact of your ideas. We hope that you will learn all that you possibly can, and develop a great passion for film and filmmaking on this programme. Learn from those around you, then use your new contacts and these new skills to affect the change you want to see in the world.

Making a film may seem hard at first glance, especially if you have had limited experience prior to beginning this programme. However, it's just like learning a new language. Whether you are shooting a documentary or, for example, creating a video diary around your advocacy work, the language remains the same. And like any language, there are rules: learn the language first, then you can start breaking the rules. Most importantly, just pick up a camera –the one you probably have in your pocket or beside you as you read this – and start shooting.

Your story, your views, your passion are powerful tools and filmmaking is a fuel for transformation, so use it to make a difference.

Good luck.

Mark Prescott
British Film Institute



The key questions you should ask yourself before using film to support your advocacy

Advocacy lends itself to the documentary form, they are comrades in arms, but there are various different forms and styles of documentary filmmaking that can be utilised to communicate social issues from video diaries, to desktop documentary, or hybrid forms such as docu-realism and docu-drama. The key thing to keep in mind is that every advocacy film is designed to illuminate a marginalised individual, community or issue, using the tools of storytelling. In this way, it is just as important to consider narrative considerations such as: story, conflict, structure and character when embarking on your project.

The closer we are to a subject, the harder it can be to dramatise it for an audience. Passionate conviction is a valuable asset when used in concert with careful storytelling, so find ways to step back from issues the better to see them as creative problems that need solving.

TRY ASKING THESE QUESTIONS:

Why does your subject deserve attention?
What cinematic tools do you have to make this case?

Whose point-of-view is the film from? How will you structure that POV in order to create a narrative arc?

What is your personal relationship to the subject? Are you going to build that into your film?

Remember also that it is possible that you may find a new focus or way of telling your story in the edit, but when you ask yourself these questions throughout the process you'll be able to keep in mind the critical truth that narrative is integral to all forms of filmmaking and is a tool that will help focus your advocacy in this context.



Stage 1

Preparation



The Perfect Candidate

The films you make are about telling stories

FILMMAKING STAGE 1

PRE-PRODUCTION

Before you go anywhere near a camera (or your smartphone), use your pre-production period to prepare as much as possible – this is fundamental to successfully using film to advocate for causes that you are passionate about.

Ask yourself the following important questions at the start of your project:

WHY are you making this film?

WHO is your target audience and what do you want them to feel?

HOW will you reach your target audience?

WHAT style or techniques will you use to achieve the above?

Pre-production is the foundation of filmmaking. If you do not adequately prepare your project will suffer.

Research is the key, so learn as much as you can about your topic, small details or contributors that you discover during pre-production have the potential to impact the focus of your story significantly. Consult various sources where possible, talk to people and reach out to make new connections. Get used to talking about your project and your ideas so that you can draw more support for your project. Think about different sources you can use to help tell your story from archive footage, web content, written content, digital artifacts and images, and voice-overs, etc.

Finally, try to be flexible, preparation is key but things will also change, you may have set-backs, or unexpected events that impact your story, so being flexible will help you adapt and respond to the unpredictable and the unforeseen.

SHOOTING SCRIPT

A shooting script is the blueprint to every great film. Without one you will find yourself getting lost very quickly. Working with real participants, rather than actors, means a decrease in the director's creative control, so it's important to build flexibility into your approach when planning documentary footage of people. A shooting script is a detailed version of the original script, broken down into individual shots. It should include:

- Shot numbers
- Camera angles and movement
- Specific information on sets/locations, props, costumes, lighting
- Special notations regarding an actor and dialogue OR what a participant needs to be comfortable on camera.
- The more detail you put in at this stage, and the more problems you avoid, and the easier it will be when you come to filming and editing.

STORYBOARD + SHOT LIST

Your storyboard is the visual depiction of the camera shots you planned in your shooting script. You don't need to be a great artist to create a great storyboard (stick figures will do); you simply need a clear and logical series of images to communicate the story and the shots you want to capture. Storyboards serve as a useful reference tool for the director during the filmmaking process, as well as a communication device to show clients or other collaborators what the finished product might look like. Some documentarians don't use them as they prefer to be free to capture events as they unfold. Still, it's worth considering if some variation on this technique can help to capture your desired story.

Look at this example of a basic storyboard, from Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 film *The Birds*. Even a major filmmaker like Hitchcock storyboarded his films in advance. You can see that he keeps it simple, while clearly demonstrating the action within the scene. In fact, it's so clear, you can probably predict how this scene plays out even if you've never actually seen the film.

BUDGET

Depending on the scale of your project this may not be relevant in the early stages of your advocacy through film, but as your ambition grows you can use this pre-production period to prepare for every financial eventuality, so that you know how many crew members you need, any footage or music you might need to license, and what kit you can afford, etc.

START WITH THE SCRIPT

The script holds the key information about your project. Work through it carefully and note the number of locations, the number of participants with speaking roles, detail around any technical effects, etc. Use this analysis as a basis for your planning so that you can estimate the minimum number of elements you might need to produce this script. Be aware that not every shoot goes smoothly and there will always be factors beyond your control (eg weather, transport issues, faulty props), so you should add a contingency to give you some flexibility.





FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS

Fortunately, it is possible to make a quality short film on a very small budget. Embrace your financial limitations by thinking creatively for a cost-effective alternative: the best ideas often come when you're forced to improvise. Use what is already at your disposal (eg use your workplace after hours instead of hiring an expensive location).

PEOPLE

Form dictates the number of people needed to make a film. Fiction requires more resources, plus control of a set, whereas one individual can create a naturalistic documentary, provided that meticulous planning and organisation go into each stage of production. Here are two crucial roles, that could be folded into one:

DIRECTOR

The director is responsible for designing and implementing the vision of the film. They oversee every department, and work with the cameraperson (the cinematographer, or director of photography/DoP) to design every shot. It's the director's responsibility to ensure that, if a storyboard and shot list are being used, every shot on the storyboard and shot list is captured, and is of a good enough quality to cut together later. While a producer would usually oversee things like budget and efficiency while shooting, on a small-scale production these jobs will likely fall to the director.

Sound is just as important as camera. In fact, it's been said that you can get away with a low-resolution image as long as your sound quality is crystal clear. When budget doesn't allow for a sound recordist, it's perfectly possible for the director to take on sound duties while they are directing the on-screen action.

CAMERA

The cameraperson is responsible for capturing every shot. They need to be aware of lighting, focus, movements, framing and be acutely aware of each detail within the frame. Resourcing additional people to fulfil other practical roles will of course be beneficial, but you'll need to weigh this up against your budget.

LOCATION

When scouting out your location(s), consider the following:

LIGHTING

Will the light change significantly depending on the time of day, and if so how will this affect the look and feel of your film? For interior shots, be mindful that artificial lighting (eg overhead office lights) are unlikely to be helpful, so aim to choose interior locations which offer natural lighting wherever possible.

For interior shoots its best not to mix lighting sources (sunlight and artificial light) as this will look strange on film, eg if shooting next to a window in an office space. Choose one key light source and adapt all other lighting to suit.

SOUND

Pay attention to unwanted noise, eg a school nearby, or the hum from electrical equipment. A directional microphone is essential for most outdoor locations.

BACKGROUND

Keeping things simple tends to be better than picking a busy location that can fill the frame with unnecessary distractions. It is tempting to shoot in an exciting, stimulating location but remember that the story is key – keep your audience focused on the action.

KIT

In addition to your smartphone, tablet or DSLR, there are a few basic additions which can take your filmmaking from starter to smarter:

MICROPHONE

Whatever you're using to film with it will already have an in-built mic, but adding an external microphone makes a significant difference to sound quality. A clip-on mic can be useful for conducting interviews, but if you're doing any outdoor filming, or if your subject is moving, you should opt for a radio-operated mic to avoid trailing wires. We recommend investing in a directional microphone if you plan on doing any outdoor shoots for a discernible boost in sound quality.

TRIPOD

Do yourself a favour and purchase a tripod to give your static shots the professional edge. There really is no substitute. Ensure it has the correct adaptor to mount for your smartphone/camera.

GIMBAL

If you have lots of moving shots within your film, it could be worth investing in a gimbal (a special type of tripod) for extra smoothness on the move. Otherwise, there are smartphone rigs available that mimic the effect of a Steadicam, keeping motion judder to an absolute minimum.



Babyteeth

Stage 2

Shooting



Filmmakers carefully compose the elements

FILMMAKING STAGE 2

SHOOTING YOUR FILM

If you're reading this, you will have completed Stage 1: your shooting script, shot list and storyboards are written, the team recruited and briefed, your kit and locations sourced, and everything is fully costed. Let's do this!

LIGHTING

As we've already touched upon when considering locations, there's no escaping the fact that shooting a film indoors gives you greater control over your environment. This is most readily apparent when it comes to lighting. Natural light is a great option, but it means taking into account the shifting weather conditions, time of year and direction of the sun, whether indoors or among the elements. Be organised and keep an eye on the forecast in advance. If you do need to shoot outside, time is of the essence – don't waste it.

Bear in mind that different types of bulb give off different colour temperatures when captured on film. Remember, even if an object looks white in reality, it could look a totally different colour on the screen so it's wise to test out various options ahead of shooting so you know what the final product will look like. Aim to keep your lighting source (natural or otherwise) behind the camera and bounce it onto your subject at an appropriate height – this will ensure that your subject is not backlit and left in darkness, and will avoid nasty shadows on their face. Try using some cardboard covered in foil to act as a reflector if you're struggling to get the right effect.

SOUND

Again, you will have more control over the sound if you chose to shoot indoors. Without an additional, directional microphone, your in-built microphone will capture a wide range of background noise, so if you don't invest in this piece of kit, shooting indoors is essential. Always keep background noise to a minimum wherever you're filming, and remember to record a 'wild track' (at least 15 seconds of location 'atmosphere') that can be used in the edit to mask any jarring discrepancies that occur within the footage. As always, telling the story is crucial, so if there is dialogue, this needs to be crystal clear. Consider this to be as important as ensuring that the image is in focus. Music is usually added in at the editing stage.

SPACE, STRUCTURE + COMPOSITION

Now that you're on set, decide how best to use the space and compose your shots. You'll need to consider what needs to be within the frame, as well as how these things will be arranged. In the same way that painters do on canvas, filmmakers carefully compose the visual elements in their shots to not only draw focus to a particular subject, but also convey information and subtext. Angles and distance between elements help show the viewer the intentions of a character, or the atmosphere in a room. Certain composition techniques can also be used to create a particular aesthetic. Try some of the established rules such as 'the rule of thirds' (whereby the screen is split into three equal parts), or shooting a direct-to-camera interview with your subject positioned just off the centre-line.

COVERAGE

'Coverage' refers to how much you shoot. Now, provided you've done your homework in Stage 1, you should have your detailed storyboard and shot list to follow, and won't need to worry about shooting extra footage. However, capturing some establishing shots of the location and close-ups of your subject/actors (eg hands, costume) can give you some interesting choices to work with in the edit, or allow you to cover gaps if the original shots or 'takes' aren't to your liking. If you have the time and resources, it's worth shooting more than you think you'll need, as you're unlikely to get the chance again.



Stage 3

What next?



Connect the dots

FILMMAKING STAGE 3

CONNECTING WITH A COMMUNITY

So, now you know how to produce a short film. Congratulations! We encourage you to find your community. A film driven by a specific cause is the perfect calling-card for introductions to like-minded people in the field. Dedicate time to researching filmmakers, journalists, activists and film festivals working in similar or related areas, for they could become a support system and advise on how to get your work platformed at the right festival. When it comes to reaching out, it's often best to do so through private channels, tailoring your message to the individual with a level of detail that shows understanding of their work. Established creatives are often happy to mentor emerging talent, provided that you are respectful and ask clear questions. Look to your immediate peer group

for people who share your interests. Getting started can be lonely and having allies with whom to pool resources, tips and information is invaluable.

REACHING OUT TO INDIVIDUALS

- Who** do you admire and want to learn from?
- What** common cause do you share with them?
- What** specific questions can they answer for you?
- What** are they likely to be busy with now?
- Do** you have a mutual connection willing to offer an e-introduction?
- How** can you frame your asks as clearly and succinctly as possible?

APPLYING TO FILM FESTIVALS

There are thousands of film festivals across the world catering to every niche interest under the sun. It might feel ambitious to enter your first film into a festival, however the process of doing so will help you to understand where your work fits, and instil the habit of incorporating this stage into post-production moving forwards. Submission costs vary and bad-faith operators exist so do your research. There are organisations tailored to the exact purpose of advising filmmakers where to submit their films. e.g. Festival Formula

OPTIMISING EXISTING NETWORKS + PLAYING THE LONG GAME

Jump on distribution opportunities, big or small, that arise through reputable contacts in your wider community but do not be downhearted if those are slow-going. Much can be achieved under your own steam. Such as:

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

Search engines prioritise websites with video content. Video is a highly appealing and influential form of content, and is predicted to make up 82% of web traffic globally by 2022 (Citco, 2019). Search engines want to drive users to websites that provide them with the most engaging and useful experiences – therefore video is rewarded with a higher SEO rank. Video search result listings are much larger and more eye-catching than written content, which means you need to pay attention to your video thumbnail image, title and description – all crucial opportunities to capture your audience.

HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY SEO?

- Share your video content far and wide!
- Embed your video on all relevant web pages and any blog posts. Ensure that you're embedding it (along with the video transcript) on existing pages already populated with relevant information: it's easier to rank on video search than universal search, so make it your mission to conquer the former first.
- Always caption. Not only is this best practice for making your content more accessible to a wider audience, but it also gives your video a transcript, allowing it to be more 'crawlable' by search engines. If your video is hosted by YouTube, you can simply add automatic captioning, which usually only takes a little adjustment to ensure accuracy until you're ready to roll.
- Do keyword research: optimise your video content in the same way as written content and think about which keywords people are using.





DISTRIBUTION

If possible, aim to use a mix of the following three methods of video distribution.

If resources are limited, we recommend prioritising in the following order:

1. OWNED DISTRIBUTION

Share your video content through your own channels. This is a great way of capturing leads and it's totally free! Think: website; social media (organic); email lists; apps; blog.

2. PAID DISTRIBUTION

Use your budget strategically to advertise your video to the highest converting audiences. If you're cash-poor, even a small amount of money can be effective, especially when paired with owned- distribution methods to target exactly the right audience. Think: search advertising; paid ads on social media; native advertising; sponsored content.

3. EARNED DISTRIBUTION

Gain free publicity for your video through promotional efforts from third parties. This tends to require more strategic thought and return on investment (ROI) isn't guaranteed, however the extra effort can pay off, so it's worth doing unless you're really strapped for time. Think: PR; influencer marketing, securing reviews, social media sharing.

Be mindful that embracing filmmaking as a form of advocacy means that you are setting out your stall as a principled operator. Consider potential distributors through that lens. A platform or influencer sharing their reach doesn't help in the long term if it comes at the cost of your name. It's better to start with a small following and build that up by proving your integrity than to be a flash in the pan. Making a name for yourself is a life's work meaning it's important to celebrate the ethical decisions you make in private, trusting that one day they will bear fruit. As the great Adrienne Maree Brown put it: 'I honour the choices you made in solitude and I honour the work you have done to belong.'

MEASURING SUCCESS

STEP 1

Define the objectives for your video marketing campaign. With seemingly endless data available, there's no point tracking it all. If you keep your initial aim(s) in mind, then you shouldn't deviate too far from achieving ultimate success.

STEP 2

Select the metrics most relevant to each objective. Here are some examples of common marketing objectives and their corresponding Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

OBJECTIVE: To attract

METRICS: watch time; number of impressions; number of views.

OBJECTIVE: To engage

METRICS: watch time; bounce rate; play rate; number of views; number of click-throughs; likes/comments/shares.

OBJECTIVE: To nurture

METRICS: number of click-throughs; number of sign-ups; number of calls + sign-ups; number of sales.

STEP 3

Track those metrics. Demonstrate the worth of your video by translating your KPIs into a strong ROI. Evidence key stats such as: sales revenue and audience conversions, and where metrics don't directly provide this information, try to demonstrate intelligent estimates based on the available figures.

Tip: estimate how long it will take before your video will become profitable using a cost-per-view calculator.



Glossary



Action

Say this when you're ready to start filming a shot.

B-roll (also 'cutaways'):

Extra footage that can be used as inserts between shots in the edit.

Cinematographer

(also 'Director of Photography'/DOP):

The head of the camera department, the one responsible for how a shot is lit and filmed.

Close-up (CU)

A shot that's tight on an object or subject, in which they fill the frame.

Continuity

Ensuring consistency between shots.

Cut

Say this when you're ready to stop filming a shot.

Cutaways

The inserts you use in your B roll are known as cutaways.

Establishing Shot (ES)

This gives an introductory glimpse of your location and sets the scene.

Extreme Close-up (ECU)

An even closer shot than a regular close-up. Used for capturing extra detail and emphasising meaning or reaction.

Frame

The frame is what you see through the camera, or viewfinder. This is what the audience will see on screen.

Gimbal

A device used to stabilise your camera or smartphone, preventing shaky images.

Influencer marketing

A form of earned distribution and social media marketing where celebrities/personalities are utilised to drive a brand's message to their followers, eg through endorsements or product placement.

KPI/Key Performance Indicator

A measurable value used to demonstrate how effectively a marketing campaign is achieving its objectives.

Keywords

Words and phrases that people enter into search engines to find things (also called 'search queries').

Magic Hour

The time just after sunrise and just before sunset, when the sun is low in the sky – giving warm, golden light and long shadows.

Master Shot

The shot in which a large amount of action is captured in a single take with no cuts.

Pull-focus

When the camera operator changes the focus from one object/subject to another during filming.

Rig

A device on which to mount your camera, or lights or microphone.

ROI/Return On Investment

A ratio between net profit and cost of investment.

SEO/Search Engine Optimisation

The process of employing various strategies to increase the amount of visitors to a website by obtaining a high search ranking.

To-Camera

A direct address, in which the subject looks and speaks directly into the lens.

Two Shot

In which two characters are composed within the frame.

Wide Shot (WS):

When the camera is at a distance from the subject, taking in the surrounding environment as well as the key action.

Wild Track (also 'atmos')

An ambient soundtrack captured on location, used to mask any unwanted noises during the edit.

Zoom

A movement of the lens in the camera, as opposed to moving the camera itself (which is called a 'tracking shot'). Note: digital zooms can often degrade the image.

