

Video Starter Guide

Better video for sermons, announcements, and interviews, with the phone you already have. Work through the steps in order.

1 Don't buy anything

If you're reading this guide, you don't need better equipment. You need to be better equipped. You already have an excellent camera: it's on your phone. You already have a passable microphone: it's on your headphones. You need a source of light and some training. That's it.

A professional with a phone makes a masterpiece. An amateur with a production suite makes a mess.

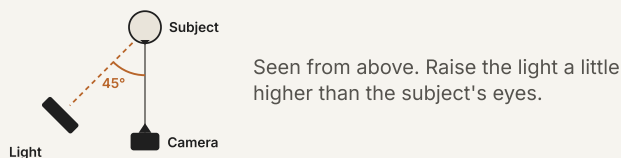
2 Stage for depth

Staging is how you arrange the space you're shooting in. Balance three things:

- **Depth.** Depth creates interest. Put as much space between your subject and the background as the room allows. Start here; it's the easiest.
- **A quiet background** that doesn't distract from your subject.
- **Room** for your light and your framing.

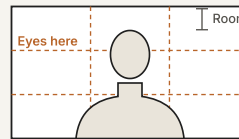
3 Light from 45 degrees

The best lighting creates shadows (depth creates interest!), and the most flattering pattern is Rembrandt lighting:



- The 45-degree angle gives the face a light side and a dark side.
- The extra height puts a small triangle of light on the dark-side cheek and a shadow under the chin (hard to see with beards).
- Keep the light soft: diffuse the bulb, like with a lampshade.

4 Frame the shot



Talking to the camera: center them.
Talking to someone off camera: give them looking room on the side they face.

- Leave about three finger-widths between the top of the head and the top of the frame.
- Put the eyes on the upper third line.
- Set the bottom of the frame above the belly or lap.
- Looking room keeps the shot from feeling cramped.

5 Get the microphone close

Don't use the microphone on your camera; it's too far away. Use one in the frame (a clip-on lavalier, or your headphones) or one just out of it (a boom). Out of frame, place it about six inches above the forehead pointing down at the top of the chest, or about six inches below the chin pointing up at it.

6 Re-stage if you need to

Maybe the window light won't come from the right angle, there's no room for the microphone, or the framing won't work. That's okay. Rearrange the room and run steps 2 to 5 again.

7 Prepare the person on camera

- Sit on the front two-thirds of the seat, sit up straight, and lean forward about 15 degrees. There's a difference between relaxing and looking relaxed. Relaxing on camera looks horrible; looking relaxed is an art.
- Talk with your hands, even when they're out of frame: way more than feels necessary.
- In interviews, the interviewer listens with nods and expressions, not "mm-hmm," which ends up on the audio. Be emphatic with those visual cues to make up for it.
- Answer in full statements. Asked "What are you most proud of?", start with "I'm most proud of our team..."

8 Only now, think about buying

- For one person talking to the camera, the best value is a good webcam, a dimmable LED soft light, and a USB microphone.
- More than one camera is a big step up: a close-up, a wide shot, and b-roll (footage of something else). An editor can cut between them so speech looks smoother and less nervous.
- Three-point lighting adds a fill light to soften the dark side and a back light to separate the subject from the background.