

# **Audiovisuals in the field**

Céline Ferlita, 7 September 2020

Translated by Lameen Souag

## **1. Summary:**

1. Constraints in the field
2. How to choose your video recording equipment
3. How to choose your audio recording equipment
4. Audiovisual language
5. Some advice...

## **1. Constraints in the field**

### Filming conditions:

- Lack of time
- Speaker refusal
- Weather conditions

## **1. Constraints in the field**

### Technical conditions:

- Access to electricity
- Forgetting your equipment
- Breaking your equipment

## 2. Choosing your video recording equipment

### 2A Mobile phone

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Accessible	Fragile
Portable	Small accessories
Easy to set up	Limited audio/video capabilities
Price: 500-800 euros	Limited memory and battery life

**To be used occasionally**

### 2B Camera (hybrid, reflex)

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Accessible	No headphone jack (depending on the model)
Portable	No microphone jack (depending on the model)
Price: 700-2000 euros	Recorded sound needs synchronization (depending on the model)
Good-quality video	Needs tripod, other accessories

### 2C Handheld videocamera

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Accessible	Small memory cards
Portable	No microphone jack (depending on the model)
Price: 600-1200 euros	Recorded sound needs synchronization (depending on the model)
Good-quality video	Needs a tripod

### 2D (Semi)professional camera

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Very good quality video and sound	Price: 1500-5000 euros
Portable	Portable, but heavy
Video synchronised with sound	Needs a tripod
Price: 1500-5000 euros	Small memory cards

## 2 What are the right questions to ask yourself?

### Questions about your project:

- What is my field site? What are the conditions there like?
- Should I focus on video or sound? Or both?
- Do I have time to film?
- Do you have an added-value project along with your documentation?

### Technical questions:

- What is my budget?
- What format is the video recorded in? (FULL HD, 4K etc.)
- Is there a mic jack (mini jack or XLR)?
- Is there a headphone jack?
- Can a mic be added? (e.g.: hot shoe)

### 3 Choosing your audio recording equipment

#### 3A Microphones

Accessories

- Tripod or base
- Wind muff
- Consumables (batteries, rechargeable or disposable) and chargers
- Protective cover

#### 3B Audio recorders

These days, recorders are very effective:

Functioning:

- Power source: Battery (rechargeable or disposable), mains
- Memory cards for recording

Microphones: Possibility of multitrack

- Internal microphone
  - External microphone (XLR jack)
- 
- Check the recording rate: 16 bits / 48 kHz / .wav
  - Possibility of changing the playback and recording volumes

#### 3B Synchronising sound and video

For this, you will need to do a CLAP. That means making a visual and audio signal in front of the two recorders.

1. Set up the apparatus: speaker, videocamera, audio recorders
2. Once everything is ready, shout in a loud voice: "Action!"
3. Get both devices recording **and** make sure they are recording PROPERLY
4. Make a clear announcement (*e.g.* "date", "recording with Mr. and Mrs. T, first take")
5. Clap both hands flat against each other in a brief, ringing back and forth movement
6. Wait for the person who clapped to leave the scene
7. If forgotten, clap at the end

## 4 Audiovisual language

### 4B The shot: the basic unit

A shot is an uninterrupted video recording (no Rec/Stop). **The length of a shot will depend on the storage capacity of the recording device.**

A shot is defined by a field delineating the limits of the image, or the situation. It concentrates the attention.

A shot can have different sizes: from a close-up to a wide shot.

Extreme close-up (Très gros plan)

Close-up (Gros plan)

Tight shot (Plan rapproché)

American shot (Plan américain)

Italian shot (Plan italien)

Full shot (Plan moyen)

Long shot (Plan d'ensemble)

### 4D Filming with a tripod

Filming with a tripod is the **ideal situation**. This will prevent shaking as well as fatigue from carrying the videocamera filming.

What height should I put the videocamera at?

- At the level of the speaker's gaze, at the height of a person, facing the subject
- Use the spirit level / "bubble" (so the horizon is straight)
- Don't place the camera relative to yourself, but rather relative to the subject being filmed

### 4D Filming with a tripod

	High-angle	
Subject	Eye-level	Photographer
	Low-angle	

WARNING: Avoid high- or low-angle shots (UP/DOWN or DOWN/UP)

### 4D Filming without a tripod

**This is not ideal, but sometimes we have no choice.**

- Stand firm
- Put the camera-strap around your neck to balance the weight
- Use both hands to counterweight each other
- Try to find a support: a wall, a tree, a post, a table...
- Hold the camera along the body

#### 4C Take light into account

Cameras are bad at handling low light levels.

- One has to adjust for the ambient light and try to get close to the lens
- White reflective surfaces can “light up” a face
- One can increase the ambient light, by turning on the lights or adding booster lights that you bring along

**Warning:** The subject should not be filmed:

- with the light behind them, which leads to **backlighting**
- with the light in their face, which may bother them

#### 2E How do you make good shots?

##### Common problems

Shots too short between moving

Stability problems

Systematic misuse of the zoom

Position relative to the subject

Camera set to automatic, or  
poor understanding of the settings

##### Good habits

Leave a few seconds before and after the person being filmed speaks

Use a camera tripod, or surrounding materials

Resolve to do only fixed shots, and train

Consider what is important in each shot, and how far away to place oneself for filming it

Train yourself to use the camera – learn the settings, the menus, and the ergonomics

## **5 Some advice**

Before going off to film, check in advance:

- the batteries are charged
- how much consumables you have (batteries, memory cards, tapes...)
- tripod compatibility with the camera
- connectors and cables
- recording time available on the device
- the need for a rain cover
- for an audio recorder, same recommendations
- cigarette paper or glasses cleaning cloth to clean the lens with
- road map (what am I going to film? whom? where?...)

## **5 Some advice**

When you get back from filming:

- recharge empty batteries
- move the contents of memory cards onto your computer / format them
- make sure the tripod mount is back on its original tripod
- do not leave batteries inside the apparatus

**See you on Monday 7 September at 4:35 PM to answer your questions**

Céline Ferlita, film director, ARDIS [Research and Knowledge Diffusion Support] – UPS 2259  
(01 49 58 37 09) [celine.ferlita@cirs.fr](mailto:celine.ferlita@cirs.fr)

*Translator's note:* For help translating filming terminology across European languages including French and English, try <https://www.lecinedico.com/>.