SHOOTING STARTS

Lights, camera, action! At last the time has come to start shooting, but where do we begin?

The fact that cinema production has switched from film to digital has made filmmaking far more simple and affordable today. We no longer need complex professional equipment, instead we can use devices and technologies we all have in our daily lives. To make your film you can use a digital camera with video capture or, easier still, any tablet or phone. If you use a phone, like Luca in this lesson, then you must remember always to use it in a horizontal position, so as to ensure your video has a "wide" picture, just like the ones at the cinema or on TV. If you forget, and use your phone in a vertical position, then any video you take will end up with large black areas on both sides if it's ever shown on screen.

Another vital aspect you must always keep in mind is the light. Always remember that your camera captures the light first and then all the colors. Filming inside a room is far easier than filming outside. In your own room or the living room at home, or even in the classrooms and corridors at school, you can use artificial lighting, which means that the scene will be lit in the same way over a period of time. You still have to be careful, though, about the outside light coming in through the window: as the day progresses, or with a change in the weather, even just the sun going behind a cloud, the light in the same scene could change completely. Needless to say, the same kinds of changes in light can occur if you decide to set your story outside, in a garden, courtyard or along a river.

It is more complicated to film outside, but it's also fun to shoot with the changing natural light, and it can make your film richer and more alive.

Another question to consider is sound. You must always remember that, as soon as you start filming, you will be recording not only the dialogue of the scene, but also any other noises going on around you. So you should normally film your scene in some quiet setting. Unless, of course, the noise is part of the scene itself. Say you want your superheroes to save some defenseless puppies from the traffic in the city: in that case the noise would be an essential part of the scene. In fact you could even have fun creating your own additional noises by clapping your hands, playing an instrument, singing or shouting.

Finally, it's incredibly important to learn how to handle your camera.

Luca starts off with a very useful piece of advice: never be shy, either in front of or behind the camera. On the contrary, always try to find shots that tell the audience as much as possible about what is happening in the scene. Viewers are always curious to know what's going on, they don't want any detail to be left out.

If you film with a phone you will have the big advantage of it being so much more flexible as you move around the space, making it so much easier to film the scene from different angles and change your own position frequently. On the other hand, don't overdo the camera movements, or you risk causing a "motion sickness" effect in the viewer. That's why it's usually a good idea to put the phone on a tripod to keep it absolutely still. You don't necessarily have to have a professional tripod, with a bit of imagination there are various ways to construct a "homemade" substitute, say by using clips to fasten the phone to a table or other stable structure.

However you use the camera, and however much you move around, always remember that the cinema has its own specific language, and that each different shot conveys a different message to the viewer. For example:

A long shot is one in which the character(s) can be seen, but they are not necessarily the focus of our attention, because in a long shot the setting is equally or more important. If the human figures in the scene are tiny and the surroundings even more extensive, this is called an extreme long shot.

In a full shot, on the other hand, both the figure(s) and the setting are important, with a good balance between the two.

A close-up is a shot in which the head and shoulders of the person are seen: this is very commonly used when a character is talking, or when it's important to see their facial expressions. To concentrate even more on a particular detail of their face, the camera can "close in" for an extreme close-up.

In addition to the width and depth of field that you include in your shot, it's very important to consider the angle of the camera. If you film a person from the front, the point of view will be fairly neutral, while the same person filmed from below will appear much bigger and taller. This type of shot works very well if you want to make a character in your story appear threatening, but you could also use it in a different way to emphasize the new superpowers that your superhero or superheroine has acquired, after putting on their mask and costume.

On the other hand, a shot filmed from above will make a character seem smaller and more vulnerable, so this could be an ideal way of getting across a moment when the hero or heroine is feeling fragile before their transformation.

Now it's up to you – have fun experimenting with various camera angles and movements to tell your story!

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