



DIY smartphone filmmaking A-Z

Just using a smartphone? No problem.

Smartphones today have high-quality cameras, making it easy to capture authentic footage without expensive gear. The following A-Z contains a mixture of practical tips for filming with a smartphone, as well as simple ideas for pre-production and post-production.

- A Audio.** Clear sound is more important than perfect visuals. Record in quiet places with a good amount of furniture (to minimise room noise or echo).
- B B-Roll.** Capture extra footage (e.g. events, people in action) to overlay during editing and add variety.
- C Call to Action.** Always include a message like 'Donate now' or 'Join us' to guide viewers.
- D Do Not Disturb.** Turn on this mode to avoid calls or notifications mid-filming.
- E Eye Level.** Film people at eye level for a natural, respectful perspective. From below = powerful, from above = vulnerable. Eye level = neutral.
- F Framing.** Use the rule of thirds and avoid too much headroom. Subject should be on left or right third.
- G Gridlines.** Enable these in camera settings to help with alignment and balance. *See F - Framing!*
- H Horizontal... or vertical?** Horizontal (landscape) for YouTube, websites, or presentations. Vertical (portrait) for Instagram Reels, TikTok, and Stories.
- I Interviews.** Keep answers short and natural. Have your subject repeat the question in their response.
- J Jitter-Free Shots.** Stabilise your phone with a tripod, mug, or books—shaky video distracts viewers.
- K Keep it short.** Aim for 30–90 seconds, especially on social media.
- L Lighting.** Use natural light where possible. Face toward windows and avoid backlighting.
- M Message.** Stick to one key message. Plan it before filming to stay focused.
- N Name Titles.** Introduce speakers with simple on-screen name tags (also called 'lower thirds'). Include their name and role (e.g. 'Amina – Volunteer').
- O Orientation Lock.** Turn this on to avoid accidental rotation while filming. This keeps your video stable and ensures consistency—no weird sideways footage!
- P Practice!** Do a test shot to check sound, lighting, and framing. Don't be afraid of retakes.
- Q Quality Settings.** Use HD or 4K if available, but beware of large file sizes.
- R Rear Camera.** Always use the back (main) camera—it's much better than the selfie one.
- S Storytelling.** Structure your video: problem → solution → impact → call to action.
- T Tap To Focus.** Before recording, tap your subject on the phone screen to lock focus and exposure. This prevents the camera from constantly refocusing or changing brightness.
- U Use Free Apps.** Take advantage of free smartphone apps like CapCut, InShot, or VN Video Editor to edit your videos easily.
- V Voice.** Encourage clear, slow, and passionate speaking. Avoid monotone delivery.
- W Wind.** Outdoor filming? Use a windscreen or record in a sheltered area to avoid noisy audio.
- X Xylophones.** OK, fine. We struggled with X. How about this... **eXperiment...?** Try different angles, lighting, and shots.
- Y You!** Your authenticity matters more than perfection. Show authenticity and passion. Making mistakes or stumbling over words makes you relatable.
- Z Zoom With Your Feet.** Physically move closer instead of using digital zoom to maintain image clarity.

