



Simple Tips for Better Business Videos

Basic lighting
You can do it! Just move stuff!

Advanced lighting
Only a little bit more advanced, TBH

Good composition
Easy-peasy

Better composition
*Who knew that moving your chair
could have such an impact?*

Bonus tips
*Now with more answers to questions
our clients have asked!*

Lighting tips for business video - Basic

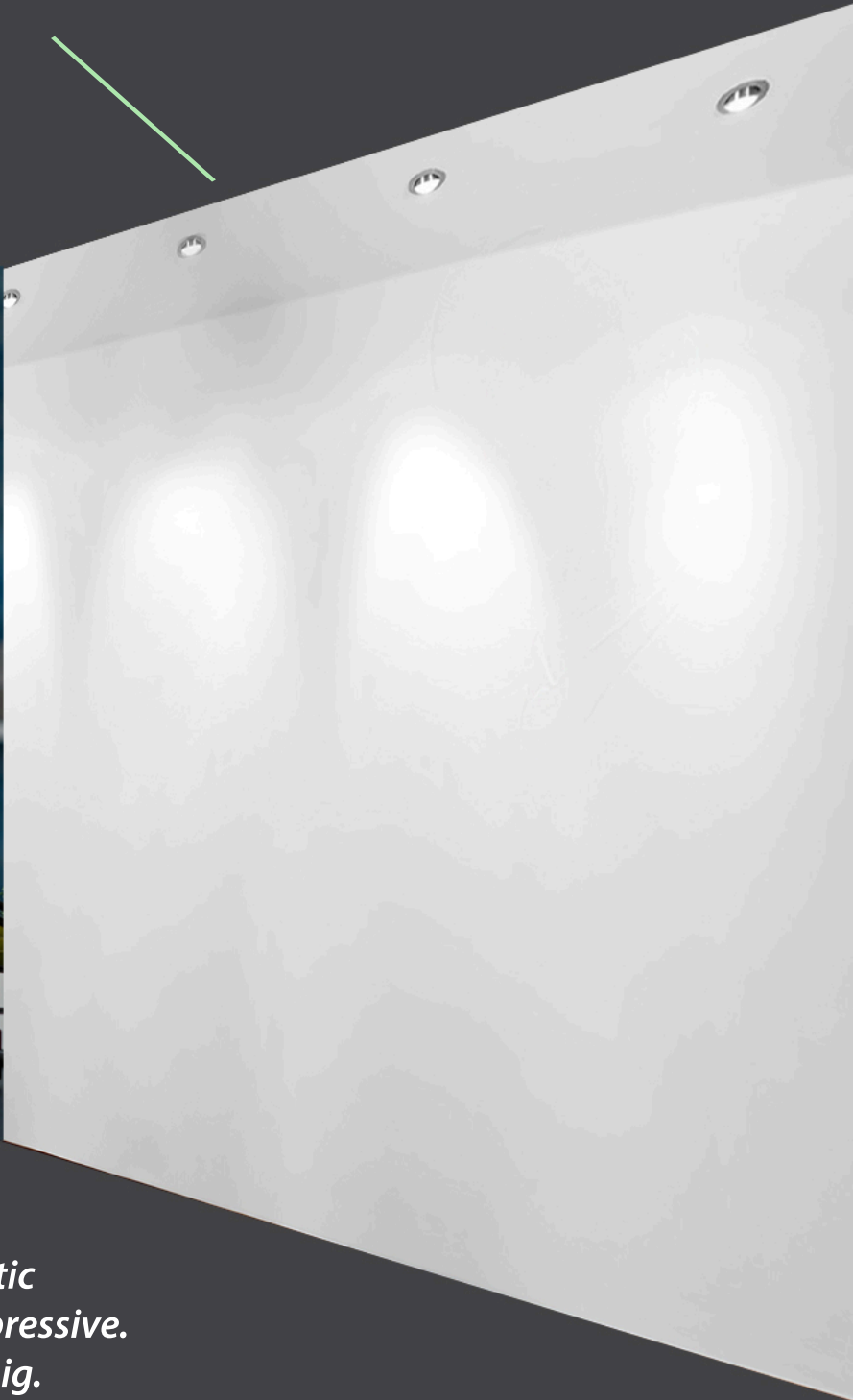
On left: Good natural light source, such as a large window, at least 3' - 4' from subject.

A challenge when using natural light is that it can change rapidly and dramatically due to weather, time of day, and passing clouds.

If you're planning on editing clips together or have multiple takes, try to film at the same time of day in the same weather.

On right (opposite natural light source): White or light neutral wall, curtain, sheet, posterboard, or other light background that bounces back some of the light without casting a color on your skin.

This can be very close to the subject, as long as it's not visible.



This speaker has a gigantic microphone. It's very impressive. You don't need one this big.



A ring light is optional. See next page.



Lighting tips for business video - Advanced

On left: something like this video continuous lighting kit (\$39 from Amazon). Light source should be at least 4' from subject to spread light so that it looks natural and flattering.



Large translucent reflector (\$16) - as close to subject as possible to envelop subject in soft light*



A ring light (starting at <\$30) softens shadows on a face and can add attractive "catch lights" in the speaker's eyes. Most come with mounts for phones or cameras. All-in-one units include webcams and clip to your laptop monitor.

This one is shown backwards for illustration. IRL the light faces the subject.

On right (opposite natural light source): Large silver reflector (\$16) to bounce back some light. This helps avoid harsh shadows and an overly dramatic look - because the "Meet the Beatles" album cover doesn't work so well for business video*



*Note: If you order a reflector set that includes both translucent and silver reflectors, you'll probably still need two sets. Only the translucent one has a frame (the other colors slide over it).

Reflector stands cost about \$35 each, but you may be able to get by without them.



Set & Composition: Good

The palette is good -- monochromatic shades with touches of contrast and color, for interest, but not too busy or distracting. A neutral palette would also work well.

Subject is centered, which is not ideal. (It makes the speaker seem static and low-energy.) But the background is not framed symmetrically -- it's off-center. Along with the microphone (see below), that framing helps counter a static effect.

Good distance between subject and background. Select a shallow depth of field, or a camera's "Portrait" mode, to keep the background out of focus. It reduces distraction and keeps attention on the speaker. On remote recordings or for live streaming, you can use artificial backgrounds.

IMPORTANT: If you see harsh or well-defined shadows, move the subject further away from the wall (toward the camera) until the shadows disappear.



There's just enough space in this setting. It looks airy, not cramped, but not like the speaker is in a cavernous room, either.

Large microphone is still overkill, but it adds a triangular element that "points" back to the speaker and adds some energy to the composition, also helping to counter the static look of the centered subject.



Better: Asymmetrical Composition Is More Dynamic



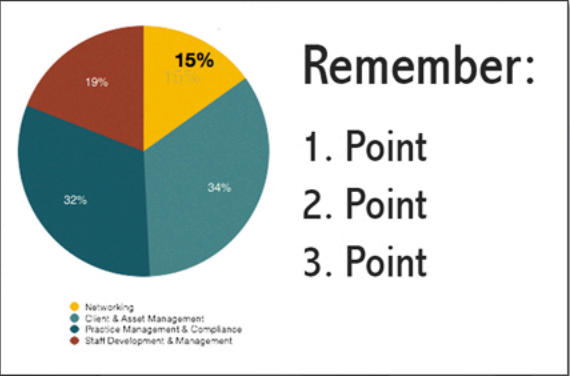
Give yourself some headroom, but not too much. Unless you're going for an extreme closeup, you don't want the top of your head cut off or bumping the top of the frame. On the other hand, too much headroom makes you look like you're floating in space, or quite small. And that makes you look less authoritative.

An extra benefit of an asymmetrical composition is that it leaves room for slides, charts, text, and other visuals. These add a change of pace to the video and help reinforce important points.

Subject is off-center, about 40% from the left edge of the frame. This makes the speaker look more energetic, dynamic, and interesting without making the rest of a wide frame feel empty.



(And yes, you can still crop square or vertical for other platforms.)



Bonus Video Production Tips

1. Keep each video to one main point and two or three supporting points. Doing so will make it easier for your audience to learn and remember new information.

2. Use examples. They add an extra dimension to your presentation, help connect your audience to the material, engage audience imaginations, and make it easier for them to grasp challenging concepts.

You could use a typical scenario. ("Jane and Peter are planning for retirement.") You could use a hypothetical. ("Let's say you're building a new deck and trying to decide which materials to use. Here are the pros and cons.") Or you could go through an exercise, ("It may seem daunting to assemble an IKEA kitchen, but as we work through the process together, you'll see that it's not so hard.") And those are just three of many possible examples.

(See what we did there? It works, right?)

3. Practice. Even if you plan to improvise your video, write an outline and do a few practice runs before you record. You'll get a smoother and more professional delivery, and save time and money in editing.

4. Don't move the camera. Shaky cameras distract from your message, so stabilize your recording device. You can use a tripod, put it on a shelf, or place it on a stack of books or other support. If you need to move the camera, for example, to walk around a home for sale, use a stabilizer rig.

Shaky camera work is also one of many reasons why you should not record videos while you are driving a car. Your mom, Reddit, and the DMV can explain the other reasons.

5. Use your camera's highest image size and quality settings and adequate light. Poor-quality video is usually caused by low-resolution settings, a poor-quality camera, inadequate light, or a combination of the three. On automatic settings, cameras and phones will try to compensate for low light by increasing light sensitivity (called an ISO setting). It works, but at the cost of quality, leading to graininess, a soft or muddy look, poor contrast, and blotchy colors.

If adjusting settings and adding more light don't solve the problem, try filming on a better device. If you're filming over Zoom or directly into your computer, you may get a better result by connecting your phone to your laptop and using the phone as your computer's camera. Or you can buy a separate webcam with a built-in ring light.

6. Record 15 seconds of "Room Tone". At the beginning of each session, record for at least 15 seconds before you say anything. Editors call this short capture of ambient noise "room tone." If your editor has to cover up any audio cuts or eliminate noises, having room tone to work with will make the edits sound natural and seamless.

BTW, recording clean audio is a whole other subject, and there isn't room to address it here.

7. Find or create an audio cue. Whether it's the snappy jingle of "Friends" or the two-note "stinger" that starts every episode of "Law & Order," there's a reason that movies, TV shows, and most commercials start with an audio cue. It establishes the brand, sets the mood, and gets the viewer ready to pay attention.

Stock music is plentiful, varied, and inexpensive. If you have musical talent, you can create your own musical cue. Just make sure that it fits your brand personality.

8. Don't use long introductions. Just don't. Please. We're begging you. By the time you get through 38 seconds between "What's up?" and "Let's get started!", your viewers have abandoned you for cat videos. While we're at it, don't say, "What's up?" or "Let's get started." Just start.

9. Don't end with a black card. You worked so hard to make a compelling video...and then ended it with plain text on a black screen. We're sad for you. Instead, take a little time to create a final image that expresses your brand and professionalism, and that includes a call to action. It's easy, and you can use the same title and end cards again and again.

10. Create a video series. People like to collect a set and to finish what they begin. So when you create a series of videos on similar topics, it encourages viewers to see them all. Breaking up a big topic into shorter videos also makes new information easier to learn. Finally, a series gives you a reason to communicate with your customers and prospects each time you release new content.

11. Keep your branding recognizable and consistent. Always use the same fonts. Pick your colors by the numbers, not by eye, to ensure consistency.

12. Keep our contact info handy. Whether you need a little assistance, or want someone to plan, shoot, edit, and promote your videos from beginning to end, the C3 Advertising video team is here to help.

