TEN STEPS TO WAY BETTER MOVIES

One - Use a Tripod
The first step in improving your videos is stabilizing them. Your camera may have built-in image stabilization, but it can only compensate for so much motion. To improve the appearance of your videos, use a tripod by screwing in the small connector piece to the bottom of the camera. Then pull the release and position the camera on top of the tripod and secure in place.

Two - Use a Lavaliere Mic
When you are creating a video, it is extremely important to keep in mind that there is more to the video than just the video - audio is equally, if not in some cases more, important than video. The best way to capture high-quality audio is through the provided lavaliere (lapel) microphone.

Three - Pan and Zoom, Carefully
One of the most common video mistakes is making constant movements and adjustments. Be deliberate when making adjustments; don’t just make changes without a reason. Take a shot of something and leave it there for 10-20 seconds, stop the recording, and take an alternate shot. Don’t quickly pan the camera from one subject to another. When panning and zooming, use slow, smooth, and deliberate motions. This will make your videos much more watchable.

Four - Compose your Shot
Before you hit the big red button, look at your shot and see if you have everything in it that you want and that it is framed nicely. Do this as you would if you were taking a still picture; prior to pressing record, not after. Good shot composition uses the “Rule of Thirds.” This is where you threat the screen as being divided into a tic-tac-toe pattern. The lines intersect in four spots. Your goal should be to frame the action using one or more of these spots. When framing a person, you want their eyes on the top line and the center of their head on the left or right line (ie. facing inward). Although this may cut off the top of the subject’s head, it will provide the proper balance and really make your shot look professional. Of course, rules are made to be broken, but this is one you should master before you break.

Five - Know your camera
The best videographers know every function of their camcorder and could operate it with their eyes shut. Having a good knowledge of your camcorder’s features and functions is a necessary element of making better videos. The most obvious need for this knowledge is to allow you to always have your eye in the viewfinder or on the LCD screen, not looking away at the controls to zoom, focus or make other corrections. More than just knowing where each control is, you should learn how all the image settings affect the image.
**Six - Look into the Light**
A lot of image quality problems can be solved by employing some simple lighting techniques. You may not want to invest in or have the desire to carry an entire lighting kit with you wherever you go, but you can make the best of natural light or available lighting situations that you face. Whenever possible, shoot in a well-lit area. Make sure there is no bright light like the sun behind a subject. If you subject is standing in a bad light situation, have them move into better light if possible and the video will look much better.

**Seven - Get to Know Someone**
A great way to improve your videos is to interview subjects. Interviews can provide good insights through the actual words of the people involve. When doing an interview, frame the shot with the head and upper chest showing and with the subject off-center to one side or the other. As the interviewer, you do not need to be in the shot, but rather stand next to the camera. Stand on the side of the camera that will be the open side of the shot and have the interviewee face you. Tell the interviewee NOT to look at the camera, but just carry on a conversation with you and keep eye contact. This may seem awkward but it works really well and it is how almost all professional interviews are done. Remember to leave plenty of space in the shot to allow for the interviewee to move naturally and not. This way they won’t slip out of the shot.

**Eight - Zoom with your Feet**
It’s true for camcorders as well as cameras: optical zoom, good; digital zoom: bad! Your particular model may tout some astronomical digital-zoom number (200x! 500x!) but unless you like grainy, pixilated video, never use it. If you need to get even closer to your subject, follow the old photographer’s maxim: zoom with your feet.

**Nine - Don’t forget the Glue**
In other words, the B-roll. For example, if you are documenting a soccer game, the video you shoot of the game itself is A-roll – the primary action, the main focus of the movie. B-roll is supplemental footage, the extra stuff you shoot to fill in gaps, transition a scene, hide a zoom, or illustrate something that’s being described in A-roll. In the soccer example, your B-roll could be a close-up of the coach shouting instructions, shots of other fans’ faces while they watch the game, and so on. When the time comes to edit, you can sprinkle these shots throughout the movie, thereby adding visual diversity and making it much more interesting to watch.

**Ten - Be Prepared for your Shoot**
Prepare yourself for your shot. Always have a storyboard done and your shot list completed before going out on site to do your shoot. This will ensure that you do not leave the site without capturing all of your shots. Always remember to bring all of your equipment as well. Don’t forget the tripod, lavaliere mics, extra batteries or extension cords, extra tapes, and some grub.