



### Considerations for Creating Video Clips for Technical Assistance

Providing technical assistance through the use of video can be very constructive, straightforward and easy to achieve if you take time up-front to learn a few basics. Here are some tips that will help you develop fundamental skills for capturing video.

#### Learn how to operate your camcorder

Learn how to operate the basic functions of the camcorder, including turning the camera on and off, zooming, charging and changing the batteries, using the viewer, inserting and removing the memory card, etc. Cameras have settings for different levels of quality. Higher quality recordings will create larger file sizes. Practice with the different settings to determine what quality will be best for your application. You might find it useful to learn how to connect the camcorder to a TV monitor and use it in VCR mode.

#### Be prepared

Be sure that you keep blank memory cards, charged batteries, a power cord, a charger, and consent forms on hand. For home-based providers, it might be useful to purchase a battery charger that can be plugged into a car so that batteries can be charged while traveling from visit to visit.

#### Keep it authentic

Try to capture the child in context of typical routines, activities, relationships, and places. Most often, you will capture the child participating in activities with others, however if the child is typically participating in a routine or activity alone, that is what you would want to capture.

#### Avoid jerky motion

Whenever possible, use a tripod. This will be important if you video yourself interacting with children and families. Place the camcorder strategically so that it will capture all the action and you can just let it run. When videotaping just the child and the family, you might want to handhold the camera. Practice pointing and shooting the camera in ways that avoid jerkiness and excessive camera movement by taking a wide foot stance, holding the camera with two hands and/or stabilizing your arms against your body or a piece of furniture. Avoid panning and zooming in and out more than necessary. When you do need to pan or zoom, do it slowly and steadily.

#### Frame the shot

Be sure to capture the action that you and other viewers will need to see. Avoid “cutting off people’s heads” or shooting their backs rather than fronts. Sometimes, it may be better to allow the subjects to move in and out of the frame rather than following them with the camera. With young children it is sometimes helpful to shoot while sitting on the floor.

### Be aware of lighting

You will get better results by being aware of the natural lighting and using it to your advantage, e.g. avoiding shooting directly into a window or sunlight. If you have shadows on your subjects and are unable to position the camera to reduce the shadows, you can try using a white piece of paper to reflect some light onto your subjects if appropriate. (See video below for demonstration of paper reflection.)



Robbin is holding a white sheet of paper perpendicular, below her face. Shifting the orientation to horizontal causes changes in the amount of reflected light. Click image to play video

### Capture adequate quality sound

For many purposes it is important to capture good sound, e.g. children's language development, parent-child interactions, etc. Shoot your video within an appropriate distance for the microphone you will be using. You can test your microphone by standing at a distance and walking toward the camcorder, while it is recording, and reciting a passage at a constant volume. External microphones often perform better than built-in microphones. Be aware of background noise and close windows and doors if needed. When recording outside, take note of any wind. Even light winds can create a whistling noise in your recording. If you do need to record outside when there is wind, take a couple of practice recordings and listen back to see how much background noise the wind makes.

### Keep the end in mind

Always keep in mind your purpose for videoing in the first place. Plan the shot and make your decisions based on achieving your goals. Remember, 5 minutes is considered very long. Three minutes or less is ideal. Consider breaking the video into vignettes if the content requires more time.

There are some great resources on the web for learning more. Vimeo Video School is a fun place for anyone to learn how to make better videos. Start by browsing the Vimeo Lessons, or find specific video tutorials created by other Vimeo members: <http://vimeo.com/videoschool/101>

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