


## Lesson 7

# Making Your Masterpiece: Shooting and Importing Video

In Lesson 5, you learned that not everything you shoot needs to be edited into a finished movie. You can happily enjoy a collection of raw video clips right in your Event Brower—just as you do with your still photo collection in iPhoto.

But some events, such as graduations, weddings, or memorable trips, beg for special treatment. Some of you may also plan to use iMovie to create more familiar forms of filmed content, including documentaries, promotional videos for your business, music videos, or even narrative fiction. Such Events require editing to reach their full potential. 

This lesson contains some shooting tricks that will help you get cool results when editing in iMovie. These tricks are not special effects, mind you, but rather they are simple concepts for gathering footage that will give your videos a more sophisticated style.

This lesson also covers the various ways of importing footage into iMovie, as well as preparing footage to make the editing process as smooth and quick as possible.

language  
collecting good parts

### Shooting to Edit

At its heart, editing is about collecting the "good parts" and stringing them together in an engaging way. But in order to edit something, you need to have shots that will go well together, so moving from one to the next isn't jarring or confusing. Getting the right shots while you're shooting will make the time you spend editing much shorter and more enjoyable.

Over the past 100 years of film history, a film language has emerged. You may not know how to speak it fluently, but you certainly can understand it. Whenever you watch a movie or a television program, you follow intuitively what's going on, even though the content has been chopped up and recombined in all sorts of ways. Now that you're behind the camera, you can take advantage of the same techniques to help make your video easy to understand and fun to watch.

The most basic idea is that you want to get multiple shots of the same subject from different angles. If you're shooting a group of people playing pool, you want to get some shots that show the whole pool table, and some shots of individual players, and some shots of the balls on the table. The more shots you get, the more choices you have in the editing room, and the better you can make your movie. The combination of shots that cover a particular scene is called coverage.

Coverage

### Covering a Scene

Instead of collecting a series of random shots with your camcorder, shoot in pairs. Think of every shot as having some kind of relationship to at least one other shot. If you shoot someone from far off, your next shot should be the same person close up. If you show someone reading a book, show the audience what she's reading. Whatever you do, get a minimum of two shots of the same subject. You'll use these when you go to edit.



shoot in pairs!

Film language

PAIRS  
minimum of 2 shots

gulls, etc.

Cutaways

Then, after you've gotten a few pairs of shots, shoot a few short cutaways. A cutaway is a shot that's not part of your main action but is somehow related. If you're shooting a scene at the beach, get a few shots of seagulls or the waves. That way, if you can't find a smooth edit between any of your pairs of shots, you can cut away to the seagulls to cover the transition.



Who what where

Ultimately, the whole trick to effective filmmaking is to choose each shot to answer a specific question: Who is this scene about? What are they doing? Where is it taking place?—and so on. If you don't know precisely what the subject of each shot is, chances are your viewers won't either, and that will leave them bored or confused.

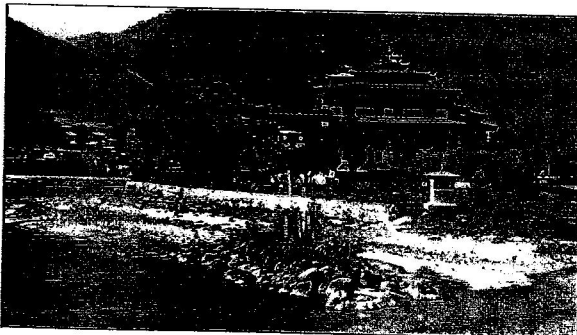
in in who what where

## Looking for Story Structure

Another important aspect of coverage is story structure—that is, finding shots that represent the beginning, middle, and end of the event you're shooting.

Your video shouldn't be a random sequence of shots; it should be a short story.

Fortunately, this is easier than it sounds. Sometimes all you need is a shot of people walking into the frame for a good beginning or people walking out of the frame for the ending.



Story Structure

establishing shot

It's also a good idea to shoot some kind of *establishing shot*: a shot that shows the location where the event takes place. This could be a shot from far away showing an entire room, or it could be the sign over the door. Establishing shots serve as natural beginnings or endings to most scenes.

Natural events also make near-perfect beginnings and endings. Someone walking off into the sunset is a classic (even clichéd) finale. A car pulling up and parking, someone opening a door to enter a house, or people walking into a room are all natural introductions to a scene.

**TIP** One of the great things about digital video edited with an application such as iMovie is that you can cut together your shots in any sequence you want, regardless of when you shot them. For example, you might get your establishing shot last but use it at the beginning of the scene, or get your cutaways last but intersperse them with the main action.

## Moving the Camera

In many ways, shooting with a camcorder is the same as shooting with a still camera. All the rules of exposure and lighting apply (keep light behind you, not behind your subject), as do the rules of composition (don't always center your subject; remember the rule of thirds). It's important to hold the camcorder steady (two hands, always) and frame any shot before pressing the Record button.

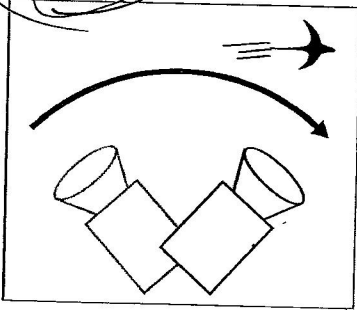
But a camcorder has the added feature of motion, and consequently it can do lots of things that a still camera can't. You can move the camera or zoom the lens during a shot, and the camera records all of it. So in addition to basic photography skills, you need to learn some rules about moving pictures and good video.

## The Lingo of Motion

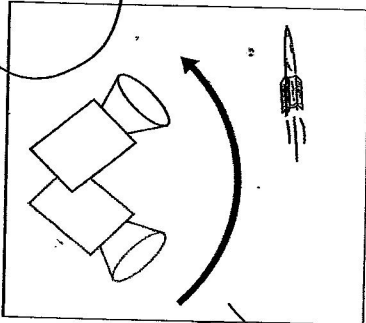
Before you start moving your camcorder around, familiarize yourself with the relevant vocabulary.

Rules of 3RD  
1/3

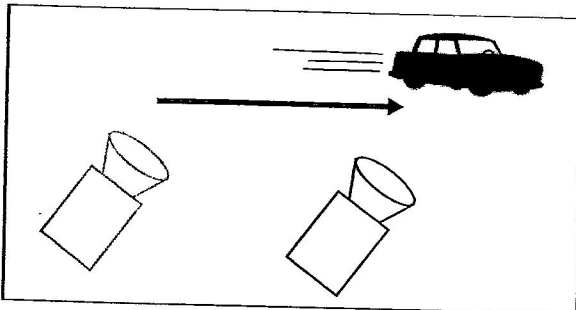
**Pan** A pan is a move from side to side, along an imaginary horizon.



**Tilt** A tilt is similar to a pan but up and down, like scanning a tall building.



**Track** In a tracking shot you move the camera along with a moving object, such as shooting from one car to another. (The term *dolly* is also used when the camera is moving closer to, or farther away from, the subject.)



**Zoom** A zoom is a change in frame size that moves toward or away from an object, using the lens and without physically moving the camera.

Rules

CAVE THINGS

## Justify Any Movement

Your camcorder is small. It's light. It fits in your hand. It seems natural to walk around with the thing recording, shooting up and down, left and right, following people around, and so on. But effective camera technique is all about choosing a particular subject and filming that one thing.

To help you make the best use of the moving camera, learn and practice the following three rules of camera movement.

- ▶ **Rule 1:** The single most important rule about moving the camera is that you should never move the camera without a reason. Something must motivate the camera movement; otherwise the viewer doesn't know what to look at. Why are you moving the camera? If you can't answer that question, stay put! One common trick is to follow an object. A bird flying by might motivate a pan; so might a car going across a bridge.
- ▶ **Rule 2:** Practice the move before you press Record. If you know where you're going to start and stop the movement, you can move confidently and stop cleanly. If you're figuring it out as you go, your audience will feel your ambivalence, and they'll stop paying attention to the subject of the shot and start thinking about you shooting it.
- ▶ **Rule 3:** Always let the camera run for a few seconds before you begin the camera move and for a few seconds after you stop. This extra room around the edges of your camera move will be essential when you get to the editing room.

One more critical bit of advice: Always let people enter and exit the frame. We all have a natural tendency to follow people as they move around, but when you're editing, it's very difficult to make a smooth edit when the camera keeps following people. Rather than pan around to follow someone's movement, let them exit the frame in one shot, then frame up the next shot and let them walk into it. Presto! You'll have a beautiful seamless edit.

Think of moving the camera as a special effect—it's fun and can produce cool results, but it's also something you should reserve for when the moment is right.



## Fix It Later

What you're about to read is considered heresy among traditional filmmaking instructors, but iMovie '09 is anything but traditional. As you'll learn in Lesson 9, iMovie '09 has a very powerful video stabilization feature. Your handheld shaky camerawork can be magically transformed into smooth-as-glass camera moves that will look as though used a \$5,000 camera dolly.

Take advantage of this! Don't worry so much about using the tripod, and don't be afraid to walk around with your camera or shoot from a moving car (while following the rules above, of course). Sure, try to keep everything as smooth as possible—the video stabilizer has limits to what it can repair, and it can take a long time to work its magic. But thanks to advancing technology, a little bit of shakiness is now entirely fixable.

If you're going to follow this blasphemous advice, then a trick you can employ is to frame the shot a little bit wider than you actually plan to use. When a shot is stabilized, it will have to be digitally zoomed in a little bit. If you plan for this and leave a little extra space around the edges of the frame, it will help you get what you ultimately want. It also will help that the wider the framing, the less distracting the remaining shakiness will be.

READ!  
THIS O

Shaky

## Recording Sound

Unfortunately, sound can be difficult to manage on your camcorder if you try to do it while you're shooting video. The built-in microphone picks up sounds from everywhere around you while you record, resulting in a lot of unwanted noise. Also, because you shoot from a number of different positions—moving close to and far away from your subjects, starting and stopping the camera between shots—getting a consistent stream of audio is almost impossible.

Because it's so hard to get good-quality sound from the camera's microphone while you shoot video, the fastest way to get good sound in your finished project is to mute most of the audio from your shoot when you're working with the footage in iMovie and replace it with music from a professionally created CD.

If you want production sound—that is, the sound that's going on while you're shooting the video—it takes more effort. You need to use additional microphones