



CCM Gorilla Guide

(tips for filming without bells and whistles or high-tech equipment)

The following is a list of things to keep in mind when you are filming with your cell phone (and/or without a lot of prep time). First rate cinematic quality is now in everyone's pockets thanks to the tech giants. Entire feature-length films have been created entirely using an iPhone. When creativity strikes, you can take action on the spot just by whipping out your phone. Following the below tips may help you ensure that your end result meets the CCM's quality standards. **If you're recording a testimonial, we'll share 6 tips to help you make your self-recorded testimonial look great. You can refer to the rest of the guide for more details.**

1. Prioritize sound.
Audio mistakes stand out as much, or even more than, video mistakes. It's important to test your audio to ensure that it sounds crisp, clear, and comprehensible.
2. Abundant light is your goal.
Sunlight is best. Morning and late afternoon sunlight are the best of the best; because while you want plenty of light, you want soft light – not hard light.
3. Be aware of your background.
Your background can provide interest, but it should be neutral. You don't want it to compete with you in any way.
4. Know and use the rule of thirds.
Imagine that there's a 3-by-3 grid laid over your image. The lines and the points where the lines intersect naturally draw focus, so situate important elements of the video there, if you can. In other words, your lovely face should not be the dead center of the frame.
5. You hold your phone screen-side up and vertically for everyday use BUT for your testimonial, use your phone's outward facing camera (and use landscape orientation. Holding your camera horizontal is extremely important.
6. Be still.
Viewers are motion sensitive. Unless you are using movement as a storytelling tool, avoid shaky movements. Use a tripod. They're very affordable and easy to come by.

SOUND

- Audio is being mentioned first because mistakes are more noticeable than many visual mistakes – and oddly more distracting and/or unforgivable. If you know your audio is being altered or refined in post-production, great. If not, take a moment to test the audio in the environment in which you're filming at the beginning of your recording session.

* Gadgets that help with sound:

Mini boom mics that you can plug into your cell phone can increase range.

A teeny wide-angle camera lens can allow you to get closer to a subject – and thus capture cleaner sound.

VIDEO

- How's the light where you're filming? Sunlight makes the best pictures.
- Place your subjects facing a light source and not in front of it. Make sure your subject isn't being lit from behind. For example, never film an interview with a subject's back to a window unless your goal is to capture a silhouette.

* Gadgets that help with lighting:

Mini ring lights that plug into your cell phone can beautify your shot.

Colored transparencies (carefully) placed in front of lights can have a big impact on the way your video looks. You can even mimic sunlight this way.

- Beware of accidental optical illusions, distortions, and bogies. Be aware of the background as well as the foreground. Avoid patterns that appear to be vibrating. Move objects in the background that impact the foreground in an unusual way.
- Picture composition is an art form. To simplify it be mindful of the size of your subject within a frame and the shapes that objects within the frame are making. Size-wise, mid shots (or shots where the subject isn't very close or very far away from the camera) work best for interviews. Shape-wise, learn and remember the **rule of thirds**: Placing subjects in the direct middle of the frame is visually awkward. Refer to the below image that shows how the audience's focus is usually drawn to the outer thirds of an image.



“The goal in this shot was to draw attention to the actor's eyes, so the shot was framed with the eyes two-thirds of the way up the frame and two-thirds of the way across the frame. This leaves the actor positioned more to the right of the frame. You could move her more to the left instead, but because the actor is already looking to the left of the frame, positioning to the right is the preferred choice. It's better to leave some open space for the actor to look into.”
<https://www.dummies.com/photography/video/types-of-shots-in-filmmaking-and-how-to-frame-them/>

For a closer look at composition as impactful art, I recommend visiting:

<https://mymodernmet.com/raymond-thi-film-compositions/>

- Brace yourself – or remember to control the motion of the ocean. A shaky image, if that wasn't your intention, can be very distracting. Movement within the frame is good, but the camera should remain smooth and steady if you're moving the camera along with the subject, for example, walking with a subject.

* Gadgets that help with stability:

Hand-held steadycams are the best bet for stabilizing the video on a cell phone. You can find them everywhere for as little as \$15.
