

VIDEO PRODUCTION :: JOURNALING TEMPLATE

The video production process is generally thought of as being divided into four stages – **pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution** – each of which lends itself to (and is, indeed, dependent upon) writing. The template below defines those stages and outlines the type of writing and/or inscription methods that practitioners typically employ.

This template also provides an outline for the type of writing process that many media authors utilize. *Section instructors will give students more specific guidance on any recommended or required writing prompts from this template.* Grading rubrics include assessment criteria for evidence of journal entries during all four production stages.

pre-production

The creative process begins long before you pick up a camera. Most people who don't have experience as media authors don't realize the amount of time and energy that goes into this production stage. In this template, the pre-production stage contains the most questions. Although not all the items on the list below may apply to your project, many will.

Reflection, brainstorming, and research are essential activities at the beginning of any creative endeavor. Below is a partial list of questions and writing prompts that students can use to begin this process:

1. **PERSONAL:** What inspired your topic or subject matter? (How) does it reflect a personal interest, belief, concern, or question? What is your relationship to this subject?
2. **WORKING STATEMENT/HYPOTHESIS:** What is your personal persuasion about your topic? Is there a statement you wish to make? Try writing a hypothesis statement that uses wording such as, "In my life I believe ... my video will show this action by ... the main conflict is between ___ and ___ ... ultimately I want the audience to feel (or understand)...".
3. **RESEARCH:** What do you already know about this subject? What *don't* you know? What kinds of additional research do you need to engage in? What primary research sources are available that you might actually use in your video (i.e. people to interview, shooting locations, etc)? Are there secondary sources of possible value? Where do you need to go to learn more (library, websites, locations, people)? Can you write out a research plan? After conducting your research, what have you learned about the subject? What new questions have arisen? What do you still want or need to know?
4. **ANXIETIES:** What are your hesitations and anxieties about this project? What are the challenges? Potential obstacles? Is your idea realistic and doable? Can you complete this in the allotted time?
5. **TOPIC:** Can you write a concise paragraph about the subject of your video? If you had to write a press release, an abstract for a grant proposal, or a newspaper review for your piece, what would be a clear but brief description?
6. **BACKGROUND:** What background information will your audience need in order to understand and be interested in this piece? Is there a particular context for your topic that the audience needs to understand? How will this information be inserted into the video, how will it emerge?
7. **CHARACTERS:** Who are the main characters in your narrative? For each character, can you outline their place or role in the piece, their place in the overall narrative, their relationship to other characters, what makes them interesting and/or significant?
8. **CONFLICT:** What will be the central conflict or issue? Who wants what from whom? What aspects of this conflict do your characters represent? Will your piece put different principles in opposition (different opinions, points of view, visions, solutions)? Is there a culminating 'confrontation'? How will you communicate/present that in your piece?
9. **STRUCTURE:** What are the action sequences? Can you describe the structure? How will it begin, what is the opening sequence? Will there be a culminating moment? How will you handle the progression of time, can you describe how the piece will unfold?

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10. **CONTENT:** Is there key symbolic imagery you want the audience to encounter? Are there key facts you want your audience to gather along the way? At what point will this information appear?
11. **STYLE:** What are your thoughts about specific locations, camera angles, or lighting? Do you want the piece to create a particular mood or feel? How will you accomplish this?
12. **AUDIENCE:** Who is your audience? What are their views and/or biases on this topic? Will your piece support or challenge their views?
13. **RESOLUTION:** How will your piece end, and what would you like the ending to accomplish for your audience? What effect or impact do you want your video to have on your audience? Do you want to alter their views? Do you want them to take a particular action? How will your video accomplish this? What evidence do you need to present, and how will you organize and sequence it?
14. **LOGISTICS:** What is your production plan? Can you write it down? Can you break down the project into smaller components and/or a logical sequence? Can you generate a schedule/timeline for completion? Do you need to reserve equipment? Schedule meetings and/or interviews? What is your list of things to do?

production

Once you have done some initial research, generated a topic, and articulated some initial ideas about your approach, its time to start shooting and actually collecting footage. But there will still be a lot of creative questions and challenges that are unresolved, and you will need to somehow organize your thoughts, goals, and plans. Here are some useful writing prompts and inscription activities at this stage:

1. **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:** Can you generate a list of questions that will elicit detailed and informative responses (something beyond just 'yes' or 'no')? What do you think this subject wants to say? What do you want to elicit or discover, what are your intentions?
2. **SHOT LIST:** Generate a list of all the shots that you envision producing. Think about your primary sources – action shots, interviews, location shots, etc. – but also remember to consider “B roll” material – secondary material that might help create context, add visual variety, or more depth to your subject.
3. **STYLE + ELEMENTS:** As you generate your shot list, revisit the issue of style. Think again about locations, lighting, props. Think carefully about audio. Will you use the audio captured by the camcorder? Replace it with something else? Add other elements to it? Make a list of all the elements that need to be assembled, accessed, and/or considered.
4. **STORYBOARD:** Can you make a visual representation of what you see in your mind? Can you describe the narrative structure with the use of key image frames in the sequence. Can you represent the beginning, end, and other pivotal moments – the narrative arc – of the piece by using a sequence of still images. Can you describe the audio track(s) and transitions with words, and in relation to images?
5. **COMPOSITION + FORM:** As you start to visualize your project, and begin to assemble the media elements for your composition, consider these choices in relation to the content you are trying to convey. Why are you making these choices? Do they support your intent and what you are trying to communicate?
6. **IN THE FIELD:** Document your shooting and production process. What worked well? What didn't? Take notes on the scenes you shoot, all your various shots. Are there particular shots that you feel particularly excited about? Where there any surprises? Happy accidents?
7. **REFLECTION:** Capture your thoughts and feelings. How are you feeling about the project so far? What have you learned?
8. **IMPROVISATION:** Plans change. Life is unpredictable. Sometimes it becomes apparent that Plan A won't work. Sometimes we are naive, go down a blind alley, or fail. We make discoveries and experience breakthroughs. Sometimes we have to think on our feet, make quick decisions, follow our intuition. Most creative people take risks; meaning that to some extent they have entered the unknown and are learning as they go. These people are constantly paying attention – reviewing, reflecting, and adjusting. You should too: Review

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your pre-production notes and write about how your original plan has, or should be altered. Are there any particular ideas or plans that have shifted? Has the process of actually making something made you wiser or more realistic about the project? Has your focus shifted? Did you stumble upon something that changed your perspective? How can you let your project evolve and incorporate new knowledge on the fly?

post-production

Editing your raw footage.

1. **LOGGING SHOTS:** Review your raw footage to see what material you actually have. Make notes on material that looks promising. Make note of timecode marks for important video and audio. Here are three important questions to consider at this juncture:
 - What material do I have?
 - What do I want to communicate?
 - What can I communicate with what material I have? (improvisation?)
2. **SCRIPTING + 'PAPER' EDITING:** Review what you wrote in the production phase on style, elements, composition, and form. Begin assembling the shots you think you want to use. Create a 'paper' edit – a list of shots in sequence, with notes on trimming clips, audio, transitions, etc.
3. **RESHOOTS:** Is anything essential missing from your raw material? Do you have everything you need, is there anything else that could further support your narrative? Are you really done shooting, or do you need to circle back to the production phase?
4. **REFLECTION:** How are you feeling about your material at this point? What are your thoughts about how the raw footage can be edited to convey your intent? Do you see multiple possible narratives in the material? How do you decide what footage to use and what to exclude – what is your criteria? Why are you making particular choices?
5. **IMPROVISATION:** Are your ideas evolving? Are you utilizing new learning? Write about any adjustments and improvisations that you made while creating the paper edit.
6. **REHEARSAL:** Use your paper edit to start constructing your video. Consider creating a 'rough cut' – a quick version of the piece that allows you to actually experience the narrative in rough form. Write down your impressions of the rough cut. What are you satisfied with? What still needs work? What is missing? What needs to be shortened or eliminated? Does the sequencing work? Should the clips be rearranged? Can you improve the pacing? Do the cuts and transitions work? Does the audio work? Are all of your elements technically strong – good shots, good sound, etc. Does the piece actually convey your intent? Show the piece to others. Bring it to class. Get lots of feedback. Ask people to summarize and describe the piece in their own words. Are you communicating clearly to your audience? Do they find the piece interesting? Write down what seems most useful so you don't forget. Repeat #5 and then #6. (aka: multiple drafts)

presentation and distribution

The piece is finished and available to an audience. This point in the creative process is also an important time for reflection, critical feedback and assessment.

1. **REFLECTION + CRITICAL THINKING:** Write about the most important strengths and weaknesses of the finished piece. Is there anything you would like to change? What did you learn during this process? What are the important lessons to apply towards the next piece? (Think of this piece as a rehearsal for the next.) What are the pleasures and perils of being a video author? How is it different from authoring with text?
2. **AUDIENCE RESPONSE:** Did you clearly and successfully communicate your idea to an audience? Did you accomplish all your goals? What kind of audience response did you receive? What about the response was satisfying, disappointing, or surprising? What thoughts and topics arose in discussion of your work?
3. **DISTRIBUTION:** Do you want to make this piece available to a wider audience than your peers and classmates? If so, what ideas do you have about accomplishing this? Are there particular audiences and/or venues that you could target?