

# A Student Pastor's Guide To Creating Videos That Don't Stink

from your friends at LifeWay Students

## First things first, consider your ENVIRONMENT.

When you're ready to record a video, choose an environment that meets as many of these criteria as possible:

- Natural light
- Little-to-no ambient noise
- Uncluttered background
- Comfortable seating—something that will keep you from moving too much. If you're a fidgeter, avoid chairs that spin or roll!

## EQUIPMENT—you probably already have what you need.

Don't feel overwhelmed here. Most of us are already equipped with everything we need to make good videos. It's all in how you utilize what you already have, which is what this guide will help you with.

- **Basic Setup**—a phone, computer, or tablet with a decent camera and working audio input.
- **More Advanced Setup**— a phone, computer, or tablet with some add ons. If you're looking to enhance your audio quality or lighting quality, here are a few affordable options we like:
  - [Lightning Port Microphone](#)
  - [Phone Tripod with Right Light](#)
  - [Flexible Phone Mount](#)
- Whether you're using a phone, tablet, or your computer, make sure you have a stable place to rest your device. Holding your device can lead to a shaky and distracting image for viewers, and you're more likely to accidentally cover your mic.

## LIGHTING—start with what God gave you.

Start with natural light when possible. It might surprise you, but turning the lights OFF in rooms that are generally lit makes a great environment for video. Turn your lights off and open up your forward-facing camera.

### Troubleshooting tips:

- If your face is dark but your background is bright, chances are that you're sitting in front of a window. Do a 180 degree turn and see what it looks like—should be much better!
- If you're facing the window but your picture still looks dark, that's when it's time to turn on a light or two. Again, try to keep the light sources in front of you. Make sure you aren't getting any "hot spots" on the screen—spots that appear too bright or blown out.

- GO OUTSIDE! If it's nice outside and you live in a QUIET place, remember that the outdoors are always an option. Surprisingly, cloudy days produce some of the best video light.

## **FRAMING—what a good shot actually looks like.**

There are some pretty simple basics to remember when you set up your shot. In most cases, this will involve paying attention to what's behind you, what's between you and your camera, and where you fall in the frame. For the type of videos you're likely recording, let's keep it really simple. Keep these things in mind:

- Make sure your background isn't too distracting. It's okay if the bookshelf behind you has fun knick-knacks, but make sure it isn't messy or disheveled.
- Clear anything that might be between you and the camera. Your coffee cup, water bottle, books... anything that sits between you and the camera will appear larger than life (thanks, camera optics) and will likely be distracting. Especially if you're picking it up and putting it down.
- For most teaching videos, it will be appropriate to frame yourself in the center of the shot.

## **AUDIO—can you hear me now? Good.**

Audio is one of the most important parts of a video. This may seem counterintuitive, but if your video looks great but your audience cannot understand you or has a hard time hearing what you are saying, your message will be lost. Here are a few things to keep in mind when it comes to audio and your videos.

### **AMBIENT NOISE AND ECHO**

- What does the room you are recording sound like? Take a minute and just listen—really listen. Do you hear cars going down the street? Is there a loud buzz? Can you hear an appliance from somewhere else in your house? These are all sounds our brains tune out on a normal basis, and they can be louder than we realize.
- Does the room echo badly? A loud snap can help you gauge an echo and how long it takes the sound to dissipate. Your room doesn't have to be perfect, but you also don't want to sound like you are talking into a canyon. Most rooms with carpet and furniture will do just fine.

### **INTERNAL MICROPHONES**

- If you do not have an external mic, you'll want to consider the framing of your shot and your device together. You will need to be close to the internal mic on your device. This likely means your shot will be head and shoulders only. The mics in phones and laptops are not made for distance of more than a couple of feet.

- If you do not have an external microphone, using ear buds with a built in microphone is always a good option. They can be bluetooth or wired. You will obviously see the headphones in your shot, but this option does allow you to control your audio more closely.

### **EXTERNAL MICROPHONES**

- If you decide to use an external mic, place it as close to you as you can, but not in the shot (unless you are going for that look). Not all mics are created equal—some are made to be an inch or so from your mouth, others are made to be farther away—they are not interchangeable.

#### **TYPES OF MICROPHONES**

- A **dynamic** mic needs to be close to your mouth...no, closer! I mean really close. Setting it up farther away and turning up the gain won't help your audio, it will actually make it sound worse.
- A **cardioid or condenser** mic can be set up farther away, just make sure you are not picking up a lot of unwanted noise.

### **BEST PRACTICES**

- Always record a sample and listen to it with a set of headphones to make sure your audio sounds good. Record 15 seconds of you not talking, then talk for 15 seconds. This will allow you to hear the room and then hear how your voice sounds in the room.
- Remember, you are not aiming for perfection or trying to win a grammy with your audio engineering skills. Your people want to hear from you! So ask yourself—can you clearly understand what I am saying and is it easy to listen to? Is it too loud? Too soft? Too inconsistent?

If you'd like help troubleshooting your specific setup, please reach out! You can [me](#) or [Nathan Howard](#) to set up a time to chat. We're rooting for you!