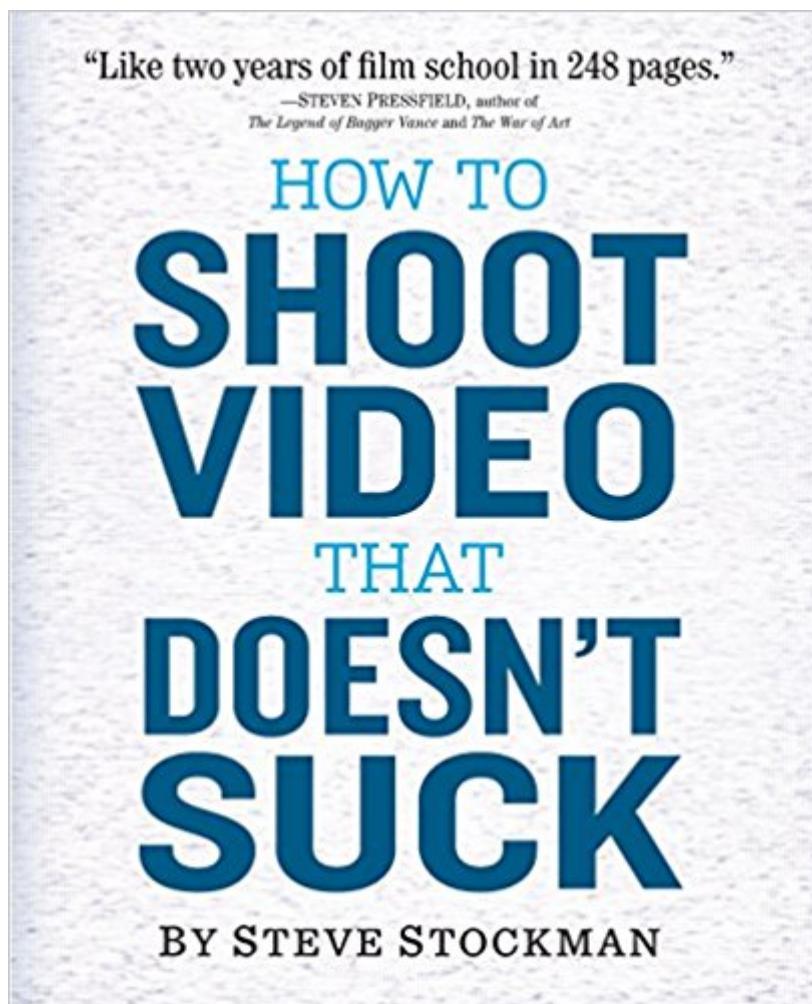


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How To Shoot Video That Doesn't Suck: Advice To Make Any Amateur Look Like A Pro



Synopsis

Newly updated and revised, *How to Shoot Video That Doesn't Suck* is a quick and easy guide that will make your video better instantly—whether you read it cover to cover or just skim a few chapters. It's about the language of video and how to think like a director, regardless of equipment (amateurs think about the camera, pros think about communication). It's about the rules developed over a century of movie-making—which work just as well when shooting a two-year-old's birthday party on your phone. Written by Steve Stockman, the director of the award-winning feature *Two Weeks*, plus TV shows, music videos, and hundreds of commercials, *How to Shoot Video That Doesn't Suck* explains in 74 short, pithy, insightful chapters how to tell a story and entertain your audience. In other words, how to shoot video people will want to watch. Here's how to think in shots—how to move-point-shoot-stop-repeat, instead of planting yourself in one spot and pressing “Record” for five minutes. Why never to shoot until you see the whites of your subject's eyes. Why to “zoom” with your feet and not the lens. How to create intrigue on camera. The book covers the basics of video production: framing, lighting, sound (use an external mic), editing, special effects (turn them off!), and gives advice on shooting a variety of specific situations: sporting events, parties and family gatherings, graduations and performances. Plus, how to make instructional and promotional videos, how to make a music video, how to capture stunts, and much more. At the end of every chapter is a suggestion of how to immediately put what you've learned into practice, so the next time you're shooting you'll have begun to master the skill. Steve's website (stevestockman.com) provides video examples to illustrate different production ideas, techniques, and situations, and his latest thoughts on all things video. Â

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Customer Reviews

"Like two years of film school in 248 pages" - Steven Pressfield, author of "The War of Art" and "The Legend of Bagger Vance" "Stockman has packed a veritable film school between the pages of this highly informative, yet entertaining book. Very highly recommended." •Videomaker Magazine"Great tips from a video expert." •PC World "Whip-smart and funny... teaches readers how to think about film and reveals the why and when behind techniques; there is next to zero tech or tool talk." •Library Journal "His simple-to-follow guide takes readers step-by-step through the film- and video-making process" •Kirkus Reviews •Stockman skipped past all the technical crap about how to use a camera and cut right to the chase: how do you shoot a video somebody else will WANT to watch? The only thing missing is a time machine so I could reshoot fifteen years of sucky birthday party and school play videos. --David A. Goodman, Executive Producer/Head Writer of •Family Guy •

My hope is that anyone, at any level, can open the book anywhere and get a great idea for their next video. IF YOU'RE BRAND NEW, this book will start you thinking about how to communicate with an audience. Your videos will be more fun to watch-- for your friends, your relatives, and even for you. It will help you make video you'll be really proud to share. MORE EXPERIENCED VIDEOGRAPHERS will find chapters on critical principles like storytelling, structure, emotion and composition-- plus exercises you can practice to improve your video skills. IF YOU'RE A PRO, you'll still find enough advanced ideas to make it worth the price of admission. Hell, when I flip through the book I find things I wish I'd remembered on last week's shoot (Because there's so much good stuff here, I'd like to think-- but it could just be failing memory.) Check out my blog (stevestockman.com) for more on shooting video that doesn't suck!

With no prior training, I was immediately drawn to this book to improve the quality of my home videos. Here are my take-aways to Plan-Move-Point-Shoot-Stop-Edit:
I. Plan:
- Make sure that every video, scene, and shot has a clear intent of how you want the audience to react and be explicit -
Select a point-of-view (the "side"/opinion of a specific individual) - Either script or build a checklist of an anticipated key shots.
II. Move:
- Keep the light behind you; make sure the lighting matches the story - Match location, background, and foreground to the story - Make moves in large increments.
III.

Point: - Focus on people's eyes to capture emotion - Do not move the camera or use digital zoom before or during the shot - Keep the focus of your image out of the middle square of a 3x3 grid - Use an external mic (lavalier or boom)IV. Shoot: - Make every shot an action with a clear hero and a beginning, middle, and end. - Make each scene answer questions from the prior scene and raise new ones - If using two cameras, manually sync their AWB (automatic white balance)V. Stop: - Keep shots under 10 seconds (if traveling, shoot two 10-sec shots per hour)VI. Edit: - Keep videos as short as possible; if doing a how-to, consider breaking into a series - Edit out everything that does not need to be there - Limit the use of graphics/text/titles; if used, make text/titles simple (ex: Helvetica) and effect-free - Consider using a call-back to link the final shot to the initial shot - Music & Sound: Test music that is on-story, counter-story; and unrelated and see what works; Add natural sound effects - Rely almost completely on cuts with a rare wipe (to convey movement) and even rarer dissolve (to shift to a somber mood) - Seek feedback and address all common concerns and think about unique ideas/concerns[UPDATE: I updated this review from 2 stars to 5 stars on Jan 14, 2013. Though the book has a high degree of redundancy, it has truly transformed the way that I approach video.]

I can't say enough good about this book, probably due to my poor education and bad typing. Steve's mantra in video is "entertain or die" (well, he softens it to "entertain or off") and he follows through on this book. Each chapter, each page is informative, concise and fun to read. He gives great examples of what we all dread--the neighbors' vacation video, for example--and shows how to improve on that. I've tried his techniques already, shooting bands in bars. A typical band video is dull, dull dull--four guys standing on a stage, bad sound from the onboard mic, weird lighting as the camera AWB tries to keep up with the stage lights. How many times have you ever sat through a four-minute song? Nope, not unless it's your kid's band. . .and maybe not even then. So I followed Steve's advice--set the white balance, got a shotgun mic and a separate recorder. . .and I put together a short compilation of a whole set. Seven songs, short clips of no more than 15 seconds. Thank you, Steve--I'm a hero to these bands! And I think it's likely people are actually watching all the way through. Anyway, I can't speak to making a vacation video your neighbors will enjoy, but so far Steve's advice has worked out great for me.

I've been using a video camera as part of my job for almost forty years. From film to digital, I've used one almost every day, and at the end of each performance run (acting troupe) or semester (drama students), I (made) tapes or (now) burn discs. With the help of this book, the discs now,

although they're supposed to be straight-on live theatre performances, are more interesting to watch. If I were to make something for YouTube again, or try to make my own short subject again, it would be just so much better. Information on angles, lighting, etc., all make sense from a practical and an artistic point of view, and the "don'ts" are invaluable. This really is a smart book. I wish everybody who sticks video of themselves up on YouTube and other sites would read it!

With a title this blunt, you had better deliver, and Mr. Stockman does a really good job of getting his point across with humor and insights into what will keep an audience's attention. As he says in the book, he doesn't get into how cameras work, settings, or anything of that nature. There are other technical manuals out there if you want to tap into your inner cinematographer. What he does in this book is explain how shots work together to make up something that people want to see. How to frame your shot, how long a shot should last, how close you should be to your subject -- these are the things that will keep people watching (assuming you have a camera that can obtain and keep focus). It's worth a read for sure, and I think it's a good starting point for anyone looking to move into video. It will at least get you thinking about your work, and how to maintain a viewer's interest.

Face it--People's attention span is less than a nanosecond. They don't read the articles--only the headlines. We can't waste the viewer's time--they will simply leave. We must make succinct videos packed with passion, emotion and interest. The author gives plenty of specific guidance on how to make this happen. Everyone posting videos should heed the messages in this book.

Well written. Excellent Advice for the aspiring videographer as well as good reminders for the more experienced camera operator. Should help anyone at any level improve their skill level at producing video that doesn't suck.

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