



## **Digital Film school**

### *Piece to Camera*

#### **Rick Goldsmith**

In this video we will show you how to set up a piece to camera, for yourself or for someone else. This is a popular and useful format and you will see it absolutely everywhere. We're going to use two examples from The Open University, the first is a video diary format for a project called Creative Climate, the second is a podcast.

#### **Joe Smith**

Creative climate is a ten-year global multi-media diary project. We're trying to capture a whole range of perspectives on how people are understanding and responding to global environmental change issues.

#### **Rick Goldsmith voiceover**

Creative Climate works through a standard set of questions. For any piece to camera, it helps to have a set of prompts like this.

The first thing is to decide where to shoot. Joe decided to shoot his diary in his office, which is fine because it's not too busy and he had it to himself.

Creative Climate diaries are really undemanding to make. You need just one shot and the focus is on your experience – you don't need the best looking shot in the world.

The audio is important and it might have been nice to have a better quality microphone, but he is close to the camcorder and there's little competing background noise. It's a short piece so you can play it back and redo it if you're not happy. Use something to hold the camera steady. This mini-tripod did the job.

Even though you don't need something that works on a cinema screen, there are some easy things that you can do to make yourself look good on camera. So once you've checked yourself in the mirror, set up your shot so that you're well framed and are illuminated by a good source of light – either sunlight or artificial lighting are fine – sometimes strip lights from above can create unflattering shadows so try to make sure the light isn't all from directly above.

## **Joe Smith**

How did I first get into environmental issues? Well, I must have been something of a nature child because my Canadian grandmother sent me a subscription to *Ranger Rick* magazine.

## **Rick Goldsmith voiceover**

Try to avoid filming with your back directly against a sunlit window, as there is a good chance of silhouetting. Do a test run to see if your visual composition works and make sure you are happy with the shot before progressing – most camcorders have a flip screen which you can use to check framing (but don't leave it open for the whole piece as you might find it too distracting).

When you're ready press record and count to three answering each of the questions in turn.

If everything has gone well and you get through your questions without stumbling then you can stop the camera and review what you've done – otherwise re-do it straight away in another take. If you only need to re-record a particular section you can then edit these clips together with a short transition or a jump cut.

## **Joe Smith**

Come and join us on Creative Climate, a ten-year global environmental change diary project. It doesn't have to be a big deal, just every six months we're going to invite you to keep some video or audio or written material that holds your account of how you understand and are acting on environmental issues.

## **Rick Goldsmith voiceover**

Although many of the podcasts you see on the Internet are quick and easy, low-budget affairs, they can also be done very professionally.

If the message you are trying to convey requires high production values, then this example will discuss making a podcast in a professional studio setting

John, who is in charge of this studio, has a camera with an auto-cue – this is a clever piece of technology, which allows Julius to look straight to camera whilst reading a script that he has prepared beforehand. The script is fed from the control room where John is monitoring the performance and keeping a watchful eye on sound levels. There is also a blue screen behind Julius, which allows John to add in a different background in the edit suite.

**Julius Mugwagwa**

Hi there, my name is Julius Mugwagwa, a Research Fellow at Leverhulme Scholar.

**Rick Goldsmith voiceover**

The room is kept clear during the podcast so that nothing distracts Martin, helping him not to break his contact with the viewer.

A large organisation like the OU can support several professional quality studios with equipment and staff to match, especially as making media is something the OU does a lot. Even so it takes a little forethought and pre-planning to ensure that Julius, John, and all the preparations are in place when the shoot is due to begin. Once Julius has done his job it's a relatively simple matter for John to edit the podcast and upload it for approval. If everyone is happy it will be public within hours.