

# CONTENT CREATION EQUIPMENT

GUIDE

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content we create check  
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# LET'S GET STARTED

"The best camera is the one in your hand", meaning that what you have to create with right now should be used to create with right now! Getting started is the biggest obstacle you will have to overcome in content creation and the excuse that, "my gear isn't good enough", no longer applies in a world where sufficient technology is readily available; literally in your hand.

## So let's get started.

No matter your budget or experience here are some helpful tips, tricks, and advice on what to buy when adding to your current gear. Buying video gear can be a landmine and there are plenty of different brands, styles, and budgets to consider. This is not an extensive list; we have created this quick guide to make this process easier for you.

[CAMERAS](#) 

[STABILITY](#) 

[AUDIO](#) 

[LIGHTING](#) 

[SOFTWARE](#) 

[PODCAST](#) 

[ACOUSTICS](#) 

[POSTING](#) 

# CAMERAS

Access to a quality video camera has never been easier; small and compact smartphones, affordable DSLR cameras, and 4k video cameras.

## GOOD

### SMARTPHONE



#### PROS

- > User friendly
- > Good image quality
- > Edit on the go
- > Light weight
- > Connected to social media
- > Auto focus
- > Always on you

#### CONS

- > Limited flexibility
- > Battery life
- > Data storage
- > No optical zoom
- > No flip screen

## BETTER

### DSLR CAMERA



#### PROS

- > Flip screen
- > Auto focus
- > Cleaner image
- > Greater depth of field
- > Optical zoom
- > Run and gun

#### CONS

- > Expensive lens
- > Recording time max 30 min
- > Battery life
- > Camera knowledge

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## BEST

### VIDEO CAMERA



#### PROS

- > Continuous play
- > Auto focus
- > Flexible output
- > XLR inputs
- > Flexible data storage

#### CONS

- > Hard to travel
- > Bigger investment
- > Heavy

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## SMARTPHONE

Before you spend any money on gear what sort of phone do you have? Smartphones are a great tool to use when filming on the go and have very competitive features compared to most entry level point and shoot cameras and will most likely serve you well for most of your initial filming needs. With a basic microphone and a simple lighting set-up as discussed later, you can have your own recording studio for less than a few hundred dollars.

## DSLR CAMERA

Although we've been seeing a rise in mirrorless cameras (newer technology therefore in the higher budget), DSLR (digital single-lens reflex) cameras are considered by many as one of the best choices not only for photography but filming videos as well. Having more function flexibility than a smartphone and being lighter and cheaper than a Video Camera, it finds its home in Vlogging, traveling, and run-and-gun-style filming. It can also make a great studio camera, however, there is a maximum of 30 minute record time on DSLR and mirrorless type cameras.

DSLRs can be set to automatic point-and-shoot style filming, a set and forget scenario, however to get the best out of your gear you will need practice and gain an understanding of the basic photography terminology to work your way around the camera settings. DSLR cameras range in price, usually the more expensive provides more flexibility with features, however, with more flexibility also comes a higher difficulty to operate.

## VIDEO CAMERA

A professional's goto, the video camera, has had a rocky past with the everyday consumer; even more so with the improvement in quality of DSLR and Smartphone video capabilities. The one thing that sets a video camera apart from its counterparts is its adaptability. Able to continuously record, the ability to hold more data storage as well as a wide selection of connections to outside sources makes it a great choice for filming live events.

Having the ability to attach multiple microphones, external audio from a sound desk, or video to a computer for a live feed can save you a lot of time and money in the long run. Traveling with a high quality camera can make this difficult as they can be quite bulky and heavy. The main downside of a good quality video camera is the cost, with prices almost twice as much as a DSLR.

# STABILITY

Having the ability to have a steady shot is valuable to increase the production value of your content. Without Stability you run the risk of making the viewer motion sick which will repel them from your content. Stacking a pile of books behind your camera or hanging your camera from an elaborate canopy of tape will only get you so far.

SMARTPHONE

## GOOD GORILLAPOD



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## BETTER GORILLAPOD + MOUNT



SEE...

SEE...

## BEST MOBILE GIMBAL



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HAND HELD  
MOBILE

## HANDHELD TRIPOD MINI



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## GORILLAPOD



SEE RECOMMENDATION

## DSLR GIMBAL



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STANDING  
STUDIO

## TRIPOD



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## FLUID HEAD TRIPOD



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## PRO FLUID HEAD TRIPOD



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### GORILLAPOD

A Vloggers trusted tool is the Gorillapod. A multi-purpose tripod that can be used at any level of production, from holding a camera to setting up a light in a strange position. It has the added advantage of being light weight which makes it easier to travel with and can give you that little bit more length when filming in selfie-mode. There are several cheap versions available, for the best 'bang-for-your-buck', Joby has several different sizes and are a much better quality build. A Gorillapod is flexible which is great for shaping it into any position you desire to use as a handle, low-level tripod, or wrap around a pole. However, this flexibility does come with a downfall as they are known for drooping, or even worse, falling over if not set up properly.

### TRIPODS

Adding a tripod to your gear can be very beneficial to making your content appear more professional. Not only will the footage be more stable than a hand held camera, it will also give you the ability to come up with better angles and lock that in so you can create that same scene again and again. When you have a small recording space in your home or office, it can be setup ready to go so you can make content whenever you feel inspired.

Not all tripods are built the same and there is a difference between a tripod you would use to take photos and one to record video. Tripods designed for video have a solid structure and weight usually isn't an issue, however, you can get away with a standard tripod, using one with a fluid-head will make operation of the camera while shooting much easier. You will be able to tilt and pan the camera to create a much more

appealing shot. Fluid-head tripods are available at all price ranges, the main difference being the build quality of the product, spend a little more and you will see your shots move a smoother with less resistance from the head.

Another product on the market is a ball head mount that has become very popular with photography-style shooting although not recommend for video due to its restrictive movement; it is a viable option if you looking to have a stationery shoot or what to travel light.

If filming with a smartphone it is recommended that you buy an MClamp mount that can attach to the top of the tripod via 1/4 thread which is the universal thread for all camera mounts including DSLR, video cameras, lighting, and gimbals. Take into consideration the size of your phone when buying the mount as some of the plus size smartphones struggle to fit into the clamps properly.

### GIMBALS

Gimbals have come a long way in the past several years. Becoming smaller, easier to use, lighter and surprisingly more cost effective. There are several affordable styles of gimbals for smartphones and heavier cameras. Although they are a really handy tools, it does take a bit of practice and patience to get it working. Generally bad footage is due to user error. They are very much a 'nice-to-have' and while making shots easier, the extra weight and bulkiness of the gimbal often is more of a bother than it is worth.

DJI are the cornerstone when it comes to variety and reliability. Be cautious when buying cheap no name brands as the can be unreliable and potentially break your gear.

# AUDIO

A good video means nothing without good audio to go with it; especially considering most videos are watched with headphones which emphasises bad audio and no one wants bad sound in their ears.

PHONE

GOOD

GENERIC EARPHONES + MIC



SEE RECOMMENDATION

BETTER

SMART LAVALIER



SEE RECOMMENDATION

BEST

SMARTPHONE SHOTGUN



SEE RECOMMENDATION

SHOTGUN

MICRO SHOTGUN



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VIDEO SHOTGUN



SEE RECOMMENDATION

PRE-AMPED SHOTGUN



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LAPEL

WIRED



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STUDIO



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EVENT



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It is particularly disappointing when you have filmed a really good piece of content then you play it back only to find that the sound is bad; the background is so loud that you can barely hear yourself or the volume on the camera has been set to max and is clipping (this is when the audio is so loud the device can't properly record it so it is clipped off). The first recommendation for equipment upgrades is the audio.

You can get away with using the internal mic on your phone or a pair of earphones with talkback capabilities, however, people will stop listening if there is too much background noise in your video. An air-conditioning unit, loud fan, general pops and peaks in the volume are some of the things you need to be aware of while filming. Before filming always test the audio to make sure that it is the best you can achieve in that environment. Clean audio can be real valuable but don't forget to include the right atmosphere. It can add value to your content and submerge the viewer into the content easier. I.e. If you are in a workshop, some banging of tools in the background adds to the atmosphere as long as the sound does not overtake the talking.

## LAPEL / LAVALIER

Generally used in a setting where getting a good audio recording of someone talking either live or in a studio. Most lavalier microphones are omnidirectional which means that the microphone will pick up sound with equal volume from all sides or directions of the microphone. This means that whether a user speaks into the microphone from the front, back, left or right side, the microphone will record the signals all with equal volume. It creates a more natural sound which is why it is preferred to be placed on the Lapel of a jacket so it has the best chance to capture the audio from the speaker.

There are two different ways to connect your lavalier to your device, either via direct plugin or radio transmission. Direct plugin is much more cost-effective and is handy for on-the-go recording audio quality, although it does restrict mobility and limits the variety of shots you can perform to the length of the cord. A radio packet with a transmitter and receiver offers great flexibility of movement as you are not restricted with an attached cable. The speaker wears the transmitter on their belt or in their pocket and the receiver is attached to the camera or recording device. These systems are great for moving around the scene and are handy for traveling, however, to have good audio quality these systems can be quite expensive.

## SHOTGUN

A shotgun microphone is a directional microphone that when pointed directly at its targeted sound source, can cut out a lot of the background noise while still leaving some ambient noise. Generally attached to the top of a camera or on a boom pole, it is great for catching the overall atmosphere of the scene. When a scene requires several sound sources (speakers) to be recorded a shotgun microphone can be really helpful to catch both on the one track e.g. interviewer and client, general conversation between multiple people or even background noise to the footage later on.

A shotgun microphone is much easier to use as it is generally already on top of the camera and there is no need for messing around with attaching microphones to the person, however, they can pick up too much background noise in a noisy environment and not appropriate if the subject is further away from the camera.

# LIGHTING

Good lighting as well as correct light positioning has one of the greatest visual effects on your content. It can turn a lifeless dull scene into a vibrant, colourful, engaging piece of content.

EQUIPMENT

GOOD

SELFIE RING LIGHT



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BETTER

SOFT BOX



SEE RECOMMENDATION

BEST

LED PANEL



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There is no one right way when it comes to setting up lights. However, there are three lighting terminologies that you need to understand before you start filming.

### 1. KEY LIGHT:

The primary light that should be intense and a direct source of light, this will be the first light that you set up and is often set away from the camera at roughly 45 degrees facing the subject.

### 2. FILL LIGHT:

Will cancel out the shadow cast by the key light, generally position on the opposite side of the scene angled in a mirror-like fashion to the Key Light. The intensity of this light should be lower than the Key Light if possible.

### 3. BACK LIGHT / HAIR LIGHT:

This light hits the subject from behind / above and acts as a frame (halo) so you can see a separation between the subject and the background. This light is not necessary, however, adds creatively to the scene.

**TIP:** Don't forget to light the background, lighting objects that are different colours can add texture to your scene.

A Ring Light is a good tool for a basic setup if you are in a tight space and filming shoulders up. It provides an even dispersment of light across the subject's face and creates a nice glowing ring in your eyes, however is not good for people who wear glasses or for lighting backgrounds.

Be aware of some of the cheaper lights and the amount of light it throws on the subject, if the subject is positioned too far away from the lighting rig, you could spend a lot of time setting up your lights only for them to essentially have no effect. Lights also consume a lot of power so if you are in a remote location be sure to grab extra batteries or alternatively continuous power supply.

# SOFTWARE

There are many different types of software to edit with across different platforms and on a basic level they pretty much all do the same thing.

BASIC

iMOVIE

MOVIE MAKER



SEE...

SEE...

INTERMEDIATE

SCREENFLOW



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PROFESSIONAL

ADOBE CREATIVE CLOUD



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The main difference between cheaper or free software (iMovie, Movie Maker) compared professional editing suites (Adobe Creative Cloud) is in the flexibility of the program and what more you can do with the footage. Colour grade, sound design, multi track editing, or even adding a graphic or logo, there is more freedom in professional editing suites.

This often means they are harder to use, so if you are starting out and never edited video, it is recommended that you start off simple by using the editing suite that generally comes with your computer. It will give you the ability to understand the basics and improve your skills. As you build experience you will find limitations and then you can decide on when to upgrade.

You can still get great content out of simple video editing tools, also, most of the major editing suites have a smartphone app version for you to download which is perfect for some on the go editing.

Video editing does take a lot of computer power to run the program, which can cause processes in the software to run slower than expected and sometimes crash. This is also another reason why you should start off with a simple editing software as it will be less taxing on your computer. If you do want to boost your computer with little cost, upgrade your RAM, Graphics Card, and CPU cooling system. Upgrading your Hard drive (HDD) to a solid state drive (SSD) will also increase your response speed and startup time on the computer.

# PODCAST

Quality of sound is paramount for podcasting as it is the only point of contact with the audience.

MICROPHONE

GOOD

MICROPHONE KIT



SEE RECOMMENDATION

BETTER

BROADCAST



SEE RECOMMENDATION

BEST

PROFESSIONAL WITH BUILT IN SHOCK MOUNT



SEE RECOMMENDATION

MOUNT

SHOCK MOUNT



SEE RECOMMENDATION

STAND

DESK STAND



SEE RECOMMENDATION

EXPOSED BOOM ARM



SEE RECOMMENDATION

HIDDEN BOOM ARM



SEE RECOMMENDATION

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A PODCASTING MICROPHONE

The two commonly used microphones for podcasting are the Condenser or a Dynamic mic. Both have a noticeably different sound so personal preference will play a big part in picking the right one for your needs.

### DYNAMIC MICROPHONE

Are generally less sensitive by design the plus side is they are more forgiving to sudden outburst and you are able to get up close to the device and create style of audio called proximity effect, this gives you a classic intermittent radio sound with a nice low-end. Great for conversation podcast or recording in a louder room or when one host is louder than the other.

### CONDENSER MICROPHONE

Due to being a more sensitive microphone and having a higher frequency range condenser microphones create a transparent sound and when a bit away from the sound source create a natural conversational tone. Ideal for a properly sound treated room as they do run a risk of picking up a lot of the ambient room sounds.

**Tip:** Podcast mic do have 2 different types of inputs/outputs, USB for connecting to computers or a XLR which connects to a sound desk or audio recording device, so be sure you buy the type that matches with the device you are connecting it to. Don't forget to buy cables to connect it all together.

MORE ON PODCASTS >

# PODCAST CONTINUED

RECORDING

GOOD

SMARTPHONE/COMPUTER



BETTER

PORTABLE RECORDER



BEST

PRODUCTION CONSOLE



SEE RECOMMENDATION

SEE RECOMMENDATION

HEADPHONES

MONITOR



SEE RECOMMENDATION

DYNAMIC



SEE RECOMMENDATION

STUDIO



SEE RECOMMENDATION

SOFTWARE

GARAGEBAND



SEE RECOMMENDATION

AUDACITY



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ADOBE CREATIVE CLOUD



SEE RECOMMENDATION

## HEADPHONES

Having a good quality set of headphones or for that matter any type of earphones can go a long way to improving the quality of sound. They act as a monitor so you can review the audio while recording, it may take you several attempts to get used to listening to yourself while recording, but the results are worth it. Once you are comfortable you will be able to avoid unpleasant noises like plosive thumps going into the microphone.

Plosive thumps are strong blasts of air that create a massive pressure change at the microphone's diaphragm, and happen most often with strong P, T, K, and B sounds. These can be avoided by repositioning the microphone, or moving the subject so that air isn't directly blowing into the microphone. Changing the angle or position the mic further away from the source is the quickest way to achieve this.

**Tip:** Get a pair of headphones that cover the whole ear with some form of noise cancellation will give you the ability focus on the sound. A lot of consumer headphones have a bass boost setting designed to make music sound punchy eg. beats by Dre, avoid these as they will give you an uneven sound. Companies like Audio-Technica and Sennheiser overall produce a clearer sound when it come to monitoring and are surprisingly affordable.

## SOFTWARE

Like video editing software there are dozens of different types ranging from beginner to expert and it's not always the wisest of choices to start at the top if you're inexperienced. Start with a free software like Garageband that comes with you computer to understand the basics of editing.

**Tip:** Add a short intro and outro tune to the podcast that matches your style, there are plenty of royalty free sites that you can use. Currently Epidemic Sound is quite popular subscription based website with up to date tracks over different genres.

# ACOUSTIC TREATMENT

## MAKING THE ROOM SOUND RIGHT

Quality of sound is paramount for podcasting as it is the only point of contact with the audience. Quality sound starts off with the recording space you are holding the podcast in. There are two types of treatments you can do to help the quality of sound you are recording and a combination of both will give you the best quality sound for your podcast.

## ACOUSTIC TREATMENTS

This treatment is used to improve the sound and speech coming from the inside of the room you are recording in. The easiest way to test the acoustics of a room is to stand in the middle and clap loudly if the acoustic is bad you should be able to hear the sound of your clap echo through the room. There are several different methods to acoustically treating a room, firstly fill the room with every day house hold or office items this will help with absorption of sound waves.

To really improve the quality of the sound most common style of acoustic treatment is installing Acoustic panels in patches around the room, large foam panels that look like the inside of an egg carton, they create pockets of air which absorb unwanted noise like an echo within the space, as well as, offset the angle the sound waves travels back to the microphone. A hard flat surface will creating a horrible reverb sound on your finished product. Ideally using a space with carpeted floors will also help overall acoustic sound.

When positioning the panels I would focus firstly behind sound source.

**Tip:** You can make some frames that can hold the acoustic panels and cover them with some art work or plain coloured cloth that can match your overall ascetic of the room and can be removed once finished if you are using a shared space.

## SOUND TREATMENTS

This treatment is designed to keep as much noise form the outside as possible, local traffic, plumbing, dogs barking, birds chirping even a television in another room can be picked up by the mic and you wouldn't notice it till you played the audio back. It could potentially make the recording inaudible.

Recording in a small space away form noise with thick insulated walls like a walk-in wardrobe (Those winter coats you only wore once back in the 90s can make for great acoustic treatment) or broom closet would be the obvious option. This isn't always practical especially when conducting an interview style recording, however, large open space with floor to ceiling glass windows isn't ideal. The sweet spot is in the middle.

Medium sized space with not many windows and as far away from local and foot traffic as possible.

## SOME TECHNIQUES TO SOUNDPROOF A SPACE:

- > Covering windows with either thick heavy blankets or insulation bats is very effective. Be sure to cover the whole window.
- > Close all doors.
- > Choose the time of day purposefully, you may find yourself in a situation where there is more outside traffic in the morning then say the middle of the day or afternoon.
- > Turn all devices off or silent, unwanted dings and notification can be very distracting and a pain to remove in post.
- > Let people in the surrounding area know that you're recording, most people will accommodate and consciously make less noise.

**Tip:** Start getting in the habit of studio noise or noise capture. This is a process that helps you remove/lower unwanted noise by capturing a sample of the background noise and removing in post via software. After every session keep recording for 10-15 seconds so that you can record the room noise only. This can potentially save a recording that you thought was in-audible.

# POSTING

## POSTING

You've created your podcast, it sounds fantastic you have created a thumbnail or logo to make it stand out. So what do you do with it? Apple, Samsung, Google, Amazon all have an app or systems that can feed your podcast out to the greater community. In order to do this, the easiest way is through a podcast hosting site. Sign up is usually free and you will either have a free period or a free amount of upload space measured by time. From there the podcast hosting site can then spread your podcast over different platforms using the RSS feed. Quality hosting sites like Podbean are easy to use.

## THUMBNAIL

Having the right type of thumbnail to stand out in the crowd is important having the right size and aspect ratio for even more so. There are some basic requirements you need when adding a thumbnail.

- > Minimum 1,400 x 1,400 pixels (maximum 3,000 x 3,000) 1:1 ratio
- > RGB colour space (not grayscale, CMYK, 8-bit indexed, or transparent)
- > JPEG or PNG file format (JPEG is more highly recommended)

## CONSISTENCE

Like all creative content Momentum is key when creating a following:

- > Organise a regular time that the podcast will be available to listen to and publish accordingly.
- > Set a length of time you would like your podcast to run for, this is more of a guideline as opposed to a hard finish time. It assists in keeping a structured podcast for you the creator and the consumer (traveling to work takes 30 mins, I know I can listen to my favourite movie podcast in that time)
- > Schedule podcast on the hosting website so that you can publish at the same time every-time
- > Always aim to have a back up podcast so that if life gets in the way you have a fall back, it doesn't have to be the best content information wise but it will keep the listener engaged enough to keep following

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WE HAVE LEARNED SO YOU CAN START TO  
CREATE QUALITY CONTENT AND STAND  
OUT FROM YOUR COMPETITION

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