



The Fundamentals of Film Making

2011 THE MOSQUERS TOOLKIT

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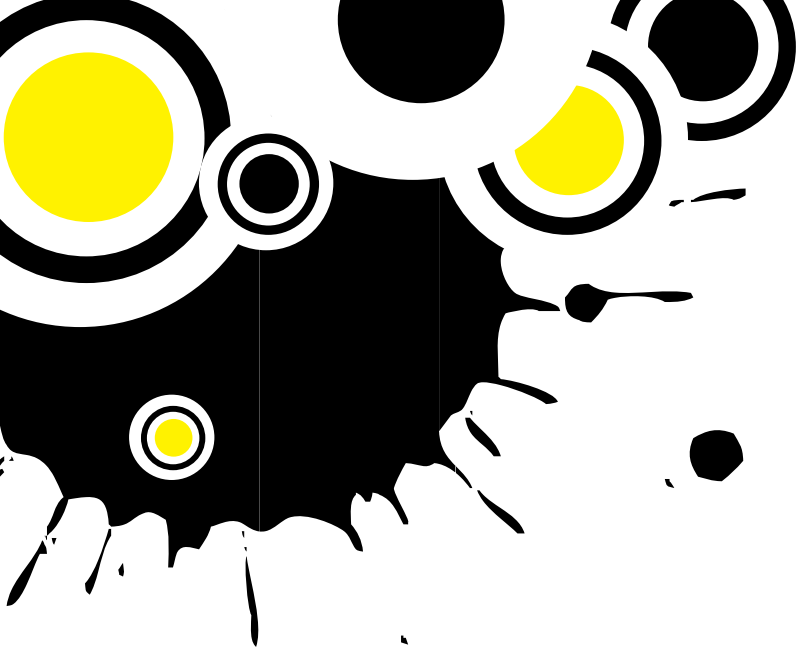
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2011 **THE MOSQUERS** TOOLKIT

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THE MOSQUERS (Backgrounder)

The Mosquers began in 2006 as a tool for Muslims to speak their mind about what it's like growing up as a Muslim in Canada in a post 9/11 world. The objective is to educate and promote understanding, and to decrease stereotypes and misunderstandings about Muslims and Islam by using the creative tool of film and video. We encourage people from all backgrounds and faiths to attend the event. Judges are selected to assess videos, a featured guest is invited, prizes are given, and media coverage is made. The key to the Mosquers is the movies – the films and videos submitted by film makers. There are certain criteria including Islamic etiquettes including Islamic etiquettes which need to be followed, as well as an application form which must be submitted in order to participate in the contest. All of this information is available on the Mosquers website: www.mosquers.com and in the partner toolkit to this one, **The Mosquers Toolkit: Event-Planning Guide**. You can download either toolkit from www.mosquers.com or contact info@cfrac.com to request a hard copy.

As The Mosquers is growing every year, the organizers continue to seek ways to improve the project by updating rules and guidelines of the contest, and keeping in mind Islamic etiquettes and values.

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This toolkit is a guide for you, the film maker, to use as you think about and begin making your movie for the Mosquers. It covers the basics of film making, providing you with essential tools, resources, and sample activities to help strengthen your film.

Introduction

Movie making is a creative way to express an idea. As a tool, a movie can both entertain and educate an audience. Most people, however, think they do not have the necessary skills or knowledge to make a movie, and often shy away from even trying. With the prevalence of affordable video cameras, the internet, and online video sharing websites, resources are now readily available to individuals who would like to make a movie.

Let's take a look at some common excuses individuals make which prevent them from even trying to make a movie.

1. I don't know how to make a movie!

While this might be a valid excuse, the only way you will ever learn is to give it a try! A lot of people like to take photographs and feel more comfortable with a still camera than a video camera. If you can use a still camera, you can use a video camera.

2. I don't have the time to make a movie!

Another valid concern. However, an idea and some proper planning can help save you a lot of time when you are making a movie. With some of the tips you will find in this toolkit, an idea, and a solid plan will quickly take you on your way to making your first short movie.

3. To make a movie, you need expensive equipment. I can't afford that!

While this may have been true 10 years ago, this is not the case anymore. With advances in technology, most digital cameras can shoot videos with fairly decent quality. Additionally, most consumer model video cameras are fairly inexpensive. For those of you who want to take your film making to the next level and use semi-professional equipment, a lot of this can be rented from local audio-visual stores. We'll return to this later on.

4. Even if I have shot my movie, I don't know how to edit it!

Most computers nowadays come with basic built in video editing programs. Windows Movie Maker for PC users and iMovie for Mac users are two programs that allow people to edit videos. With a little bit of practice, these programs are fairly easy to use.

This toolkit will give you a basic understanding of using camera equipment. It will also provide valuable tips, resources, and activities to help you shoot and build your first masterpiece. In addition, you will learn how to develop a strategy that allows you to share your movie beyond the computer screen.

We will be discussing 4 key areas:

1. Pre- production
2. Production
3. Post- production
4. Distribution (small scale)

1. Pre-Production

Idea/Concept

The first thing you need before you can even think about making a movie is an idea! Think about all the movies or documentaries you have seen. The end result, the masterpiece, did not just come together without thought. It likely started from a simple idea, which continued to build and progress. In the same way, your movie's starting point is coming up with an idea. Where the idea goes is up to you, but with an idea and some planning, you can create something unique.

Not sure about an idea? Reflect upon what inspires you, what challenges you, what upsets you, or what makes you happy. The list below may help get your creative juices flowing:

- What really irritates you?
- What is something you are passionate about or place strong importance on?
- Is there an issue you want to explore? Question? Debate?
- Is there something you want to learn more about? Something you do not understand?

- Is there something you want others to learn more about?
- Is there a certain issue you wish had more exposure?
- Is there something that always seems to get negative publicity and you want to shed some positive light on?
- What are some issues that people have strong opinions about? Can you find a middle ground? Can you show both sides of the story?
- Is there something that is affecting your community that everyone seems to be talking about?
- How do current events affect you/your surroundings?

ACTIVITY ONE:



This list is a good starting point for brainstorming. If you are using this toolkit on your own, choose one or two from the list above and write down the first thing that comes to mind. You might surprise yourself at how many amazing ideas you have discovered!

If you are using this toolkit as a group, ask group members to brainstorm some ideas based on one or two of the items from the list above. Write these ideas down on a white board or somewhere visible to the team.

Movie Style

Once you have decided on an idea, the next step is deciding how your movie will play out. Will a documentary style be the most effective way to get your point across, or can you get creative and make a comedy movie that highlights the

issues you want to focus on? Choose the style (i.e. genre) that you feel most comfortable with and go with it! Some common movie genres are:

Drama: A slow paced movie that is driven by the characters and their interactions. If you enjoy writing and storytelling, this might be the best medium for you. You will need to write an inspiring script to keep the audience watching.

Comedy: Probably the most difficult style to pull off for amateur movie makers, but the most rewarding if you can do it well. You will need strong character development and a creative script that will make people laugh.

Documentary: The safest route to go if you are a first time movie maker. A documentary can take many forms, but the most common form is an interview style where one or more subjects discuss a common theme, and as the movie maker, you create a narrative from their comments. These run the risk of boring the audience if it is a simple question and answer scenario, but with some interesting use of the camera as well as editing, you can make the scenario appealing and interesting.

ACTIVITY TWO:



Watch the following movies created for the 2010 Mosquers Awards (available online at www.mosquers.com). Each one showcases an example from the categories of Drama, Comedy, and Social Consciousness. Consider the questions below when watching each movie.

***Note:** If you are using this toolkit on your own, write down your thoughts. If you are using it as a group, have some discussion on what you saw.

The Movies

- **DRAMA – KUWWA**
- **COMEDY – THE MIXUP**
- **SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS – IN MY BUBBLE**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- **How does each movie fit into the category it belongs to?**
- **What elements make it a Drama, Comedy, or Social Consciousness category?**
- **Is there anything that really stands out as an essential element for it to fit that specific category?**
- **Is there something that weakens the overall movie?**

Storyboarding

Once you have your idea and concept down, you will need to storyboard it. A storyboard visually tells the story of your movie panel by panel, kind of like a comic book. Storyboarding will help you organize what scenes you want to shoot, where you want to shoot, how many people you will need for each shoot, and what scenes will best tell your story. This is also a good time to set a goal on the length of your movie.

***Tip:** For first time movie makers, a movie that is 5 to 7 minutes long is a good start!

Your storyboard should convey some of the following information:

- **What characters are in the frame, and how are they moving?**
- **What are the characters saying to each other, if anything?**
- **How much time has passed between the last frame of the storyboard and the current one?**
- **Where is the “camera” in the scene? Is it a close or distant shot? Is the camera moving?**

A storyboard can be developed in many ways. Some people use a blank piece of paper and create six boxes (panels) representing how they want each scene to progress. As you move through each box, your story evolves and you get a better idea of what scenes you will want to shoot, and how you might want to shoot them. Storyboards are usually drawn in pen or pencil. You can also take photos or use a computer to make your storyboards. The drawings in the storyboard do not have to be pieces of art! Use basic shapes, stick figures, and simple backgrounds when drawing out your storyboard. At the end of this section, you will find a few links available online that will show you examples of how others have used storyboards. You will also find a basic storyboard template you can use to brainstorm your ideas.

Things To Include In The Storyboard:

• Subjects/Characters

One of the main things you will need to keep in mind while developing your storyboard is who you will use to tell your story. If you are going to film a documentary, who will you approach and utilize as interview subjects? How many people will you need to interview? Where will you find these individuals? Are you going to consider one viewpoint, or multiple viewpoints?

If you decide to make a drama or a comedy, you will need to find some actors – namely, some of your friends who don't mind being on camera! How many characters will you need to tell your story? Is your central character likable and can people relate to him/her? If you are writing a script, you will always have to keep in mind who your characters will be and how they will relate your story to the audience. You will also need to keep in mind where each character will be in your scene; this will help you set your stage while developing your storyboard.

• Location

You also have to think about where you are going to film the scenes from your movie, which will also help you set the stage during storyboarding. You can usually utilize a natural setting for an easy backdrop to your movie, or you can stage certain places (even a friend's house) to look like a film set for a few hours. Regardless of where you decide to film, you should keep the following things in mind when thinking about places to film:

- Will I need permission to film in this location? (i.e. if it is in a coffee shop, mall, or other private space).
- Is it a quiet location or is there a lot of background noise? Will this noise interfere with what my characters/subjects are saying?
- Is the space too dark? Too bright?
- If I want to film something outside, is the weather OK? Is it too windy? Too sunny? Do I have a backup location in case I can't film outside?
- Will people or items in the background distract the audience?
- Is the background appropriate for the context of the scene?

It is important to keep these things in mind before you start filming, so that when you are ready to film, you can spend more time on capturing your story rather than roaming around with your camera, microphone, and characters looking for a place to film. *YOU WILL SAVE TIME!*

Once you have considered who your characters are, how many characters you need, and where you want to film, finalizing your storyboard should be fairly straight forward. At the end of this section, there is a blank storyboard template available for you to use. Try out the activity below to get some practice in storyboarding a movie.

ACTIVITY THREE

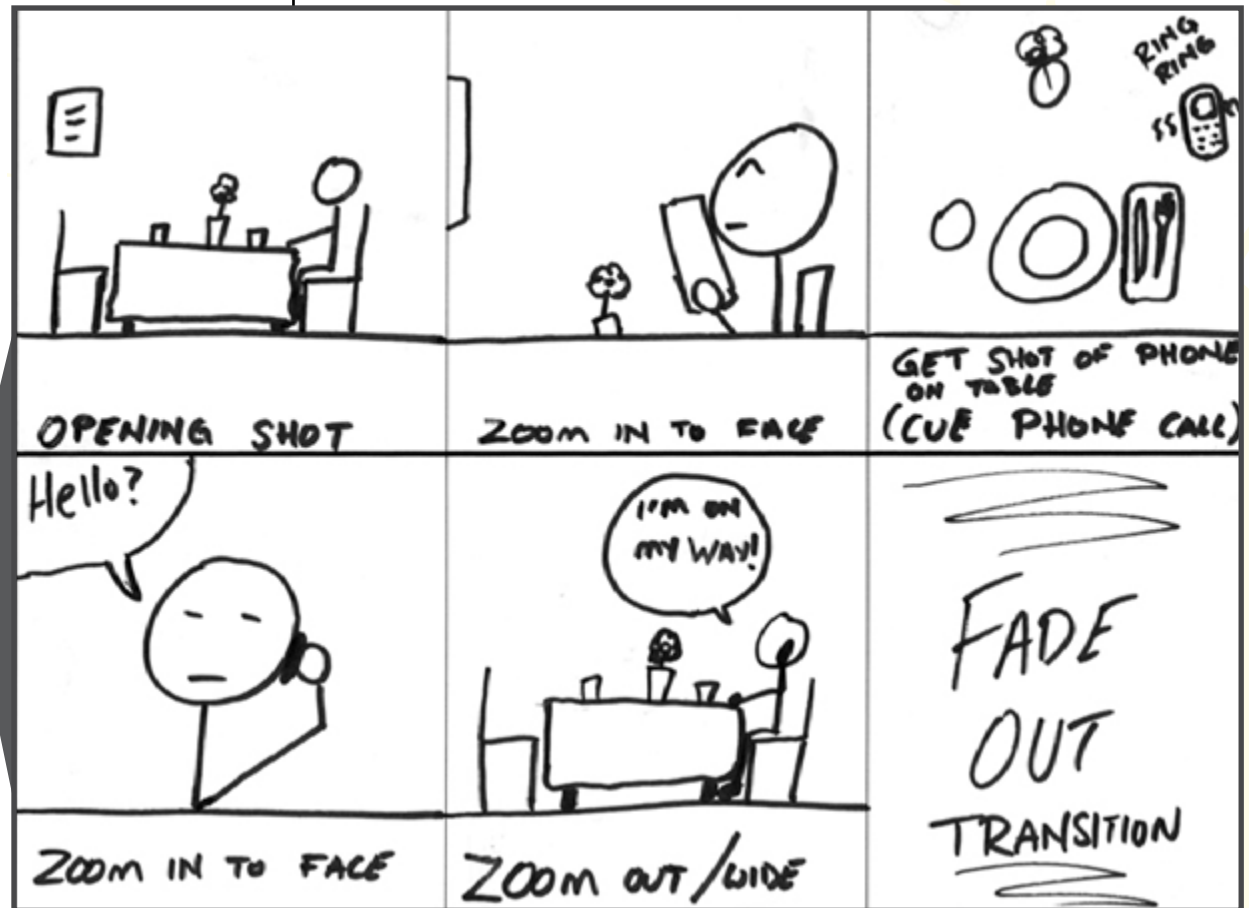
Using the storyboard template (in the appendix), create a scene that includes the following things:

- 1 central character
- 1 rival to the central character
- A minimum of 2 locations
- A situation they are facing
- Where you will place the camera

For a sample of how a storyboard might look, please see the example below. Additionally, the following links provide excellent tips on how to storyboard:

- <http://www.makemovies.co.uk/curriculum/page22.htm>
- <http://accad.osu.edu/womenandtech/Storyboard%20Resource/>
- <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/Section/What-is-a-storyboard-.id-305408,articleId-8154.html>

Sample Storyboard – Scene One: At The Restaurant



2. Production

Now that you have your story, your characters, and you have storyboarded some of the scenes you want to film, you can finally start to film and bring your idea to life! Production deals with one main thing – making your movie.

For most people who are new to film making, the biggest misconception is that you need a fancy and expensive camera to make a movie. While that might be nice to have, it is fairly expensive and not mandatory. We all, however, likely have access to some kind of a camera that is capable of recording digital video. Depending on what you want to film, you might even be able to shoot your whole movie on a digital camera (using the movie function). The following movie did just that:

BORN INTO POVERTY:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9z3PwglGx4>

Do not let the lack of a fancy camera and expensive equipment limit your potential. Use what you have. Keep in mind though, there are a few essential pieces of equipment you will need in your film making toolkit:

Your Film Making Toolkit

- Camera
- Microphone
- Headphones
- Tripod

The above list covers the essential items a first-time film maker should have in their film making toolkit. Rather than getting bogged down with expensive lighting kits or sound mixers that you may not know how to use, these basic items are adequate when making a movie for the first time. Below you will find some useful tips to keep in mind when considering what equipment to use.

Camera

The camera is obviously the most important piece of equipment to use when you are making a movie. Without it, you cannot record anything! If you go to any electronics store, there seems to be an endless amount of options to choose from when it comes to deciding what camera is best to use for your needs.

For first-time film makers, there are two types of camera categories you can choose from. Consumer video cameras and Prosumer video cameras.

Consumer video cameras are the most common, and are available at most electronic stores. They usually have basic functions and are not very complicated to use. Prosumer video cameras are more advanced than consumer video cameras as they have more features and options available.

Consumer video cameras usually cost anywhere from \$200 to \$900 while Prosumer cameras usually cost from \$800 up to \$1500.

Examples of Consumer and Prosumer video cameras are available on the following websites:

- www.mcbaincamera.com
- <http://www.vistek.ca/>

*If you do not have the funds to purchase a video camera, the two websites above also offer rental services. Please refer to their rental section for a list of equipment as well as prices.

Most consumer video cameras are single CCD (charge-coupled device) which – without getting too technical – are the sensors in the camera that take in the color you are shooting and give you your image quality. A single CCD camera means that all the colors you are shooting are filtered through one sensor. A lot of video cameras are using what is known as CMOS (complimentary metal-oxide semiconductor) which provides a greater image quality, and is fairly inexpensive to put in consumer cameras. Many of the prosumer video cameras use three CCD sensors, rather than all the colors being filtered through one sensor. With three CCD sensors, there is one sensor for each color (red, green, and blue). This technology allows you to get a better overall video quality.

Another thing you will need to think about when considering which video camera to use is how you will store your footage. Traditionally, most cameras use MiniDV

tapes. While that is still a viable option, current video camera's on the market give people the option to save directly on the camera's hard drive, as well as an external SD (Secure Digital) card.

MiniDV tapes can fit 60 minutes of video in both DV and HDV video cameras, or 90 minutes of DV in the lower quality LP (long play) setting. While MiniDV is currently being eclipsed by newer formats like DVD, hard disk drive (HDD), and flash memory cards, MiniDV is cheap and widely accessible. MiniDV tapes are fairly durable and their physical nature makes for easy archiving. Keep in mind with MiniDV cameras, you will need a fire wire cable to digitize your footage and transfer it to your computer for editing.

MiniDV compression generally offers better quality video than the other formats. Standard definition DVD, HDD, and flash memory camcorders all employ MPEG-2 compression, which has a much lower data rate than DV - almost 1/3 the speed (8.5Mbps versus 25Mbps). So although DVD, HDD and flash memory might make it easier to capture footage, they offer limitations in terms of space (i.e. how much footage you can capture before you run out of room), quality, as well as archiving (unless you save the original video file on your computer, you will probably end up deleting it as video files take up a lot of space on your computer).

Microphone

Most video cameras (both consumer and prosumer) have built in microphones. While most of the built in microphones are decent for capturing background sound, they are not very effective for movies – especially if you are trying to capture dialogue. As a result, you will need an external microphone. Be sure that when you are choosing a camera to use, there is an input available to plug in a microphone. Depending on what type of movie you are making, there are a number of options you can choose with regards to what microphone to use. For the purpose of this toolkit, we will focus only on using an external boom microphone that you can connect directly to your video camera.

Boom Microphone

The boom microphone is very popular in film and television production. It is basically a directional microphone mounted on a boom arm and positioned just out of camera frame. Booms microphones relieve the actor/subject of having a microphone hidden on them. People can move freely, and not worry about the microphone falling or being covered by their clothes, which affects sound quality.

You can make a simple boom from just about any straight item such as a broom stick, microphone stand, or even a one-legged tripod. All you need is a microphone that has a long enough cord to connect to your camera while at the same time mounted on a long item.

When using a boom microphone, the microphone must be as close as possible to the scene without any chance of

getting in frame. Keep in mind that this distance should remain consistent throughout the scene you are shooting in order to avoid fluctuating audio levels. Also make sure the boom does not cast a shadow on the scene.

If you are using a boom microphone, you will need another individual to help you as it is not possible to work the camera and boom microphone at the same time. If you are filming on your own, you might want to consider mounting the microphone on top of your video camera. Most cameras have a shoe on top that you can use to mount external devices like a microphone.

Headphones

Headphones are another important part of your film making toolkit. The main reason to use headphones while filming is to pick up minor sounds which are difficult to hear with the naked ear. For example, you might be interviewing someone and they are playing with their necklace as you film them. To the naked ear, you may not hear how much the sound of the necklace is disrupting your overall scene. With headphones, however, you would pick up the interfering sound. Headphones allow you to pick up the various sounds your microphone is picking up, especially if you are filming in a public space. Using headphones also allows you to ensure the audio levels are correct and that you can hear the people you are filming accordingly.

While most over the ear headphones will do, it is ideal to use ones that have some kind of sound reducing capacity that cover your entire ears. This will allow you to only be able

to hear the sound coming from your external microphone. Stay away from using in-ear headphones as.

Tripod

A tripod is an essential part of your film making toolkit. It will give you a steady shot, and will allow you to have a consistent level of quality throughout the scenes you film. While there are many options to choose from when deciding on a tripod, most first-time film makers do not need anything too elaborate. Believe it or not, tripods range in price from \$30 up to \$300! Most of us do not want to spend too much money on a tripod, so keeping the following things in mind will help you decide on making an appropriate purchase.

The most important part of the tripod is the head. This is where the video camera will sit and where you will control the camera flow. Having a head that is sturdy, but also fluid is important. A sturdy head gives your shot stability, and combined with fluid motion, you can easily swivel your camera on the tripod without much shaking or disruption to your shot.

The tripod's legs are another important function. Choosing a tripod that has adjustable legs is important as you are not limited in the type of scene you want to shoot. A tripod that allows you to adjust the height of your camera in numerous ways will give you the freedom to shoot a scene in almost any situation and at (almost) any height.

A good quality tripod will go a long way during your filming. Flimsy tripods tend to loosen up after a while, especially in the head area. This will cause your camera to gradually drop as you film since the head can no longer support the weight of the camera. Cheap tripods sometimes give out during a shoot. While you might have adjusted the height of your tripod to the desired setting during the scene, the clip might loosen causing your tripod to suddenly drop, and as a result, spoil your shot.

Although there is a lot of information to keep in mind when using your film making toolkit, these tips will help give you the best possible shot.

Below is a quick summary of the points discussed above, as well as a reference guide you can add to your film making toolkit.

Tips to keep in mind when using your film making toolkit:

- › **USE A TRIPOD:** This makes for steady shots
- › **DO NOT ZOOM IN/OUT WITH YOUR CAMERA:** Sometimes it is tempting to zoom into a shot, but unless there is a reason to zoom (i.e. to show emotion or a facial expression), do not do it!
- › **CAMERA POSITION:** Make sure the camera is close enough to the scene without getting in the way. This will give you the best shots when shooting characters and will also pick up the sound you want.

- **FRAMING:** Make sure that the shot is straight and there is nothing in the background that might distract the audience.
- **TEN SECOND RULES:** Hold the shot for 10 seconds before the scene and 10 seconds after the scene. This will help you during the editing process.
- **SOUND:** This is often overlooked by first time film makers, but it is the most important to consider. If you can afford it, use an external microphone to connect to the camera. This will give you better sound and is more effective than most built-in camera microphones. If all you have is the built in microphone, make sure you are close enough to the characters you are filming so the camera can pick up what they are saying.
- **USE HEAD PHONES:** Most cameras have a headphone input – USE IT! This will allow you to make sure sound levels are OK, and you will be able to pick up sounds that you might not hear with your ear.
- **LIGHTS:** Make sure you have enough light for your scenes. It is difficult to increase (or decrease) lighting during the editing process if you have bad lighting to begin with. If shooting outside, be aware of where the sun is and make sure it is not a distraction during your shot.

3. Post Production

Congratulations... you have now finished filming the scenes for your movie! Now it is time to edit and really make your story come to life. Nowadays, most laptops and home computers come with basic video editing software which are relatively easy to use. The windows operating system will likely have WINDOWS MOVIE MAKER included. The following link will be useful if you use this program:

- <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/default.mspx>

MAC users will have access to iMovie. The following link will be useful if you are using this program:

- <http://www.apple.com/ilife/imovie/>

Other, more advanced video editing software to consider include Adobe Premiere/Premiere Elements, Sony Vegas, and Final Cut/Final Cut Pro. Regardless of which editing program you use, it is crucial to stay organized and give yourself ample time to work on your final project. Keep in mind that the most time consuming part of the editing process is digitizing your video (depending on what format you used to transfer your movie onto your computer) and organizing your clips.

In addition to time, video editing requires a lot of patience. This step really brings quality and crispness to your movie. The same footage can be edited in a number of ways depending on what story you are trying to tell. While the information in this section is fairly general, below is a list of useful links if you want to learn more about editing a movie:

- <http://videoeditingtips.net/>
- <http://www.videomaker.com/learn/post-production/video-editing/>
- <http://ezinearticles.com/?Video-Editing-Tips&id=4593215>
- <http://www.pcworld.com/article/118523/video-editing-tips-give-your-videos-the-hollywood-treatment.html>

The step by step tips below are fairly general, but will be useful to keep in mind when organizing and arranging your clips as you work through the editing process.

1. Watch your footage – What you watch now is actually the film you made (and might be different from what you planned). Depending on how much footage you shot, this could take from 1 hour to 10 hours or more.

2. Take notes – Is there one scene that you really want in your movie? Is there something that does not make sense? Notes will help you remember what you want to include in your movie and what you want to take out.

3. Organize your clips – This is extremely important when you are making a movie. Organizing your clips allows you to easily go back to the shots you want to include in your film, exclude the ones that are unnecessary, and move some to different places in the film. This is the most important process because you are beginning to tell the story you want to tell through your video.

4. Make a rough cut – Once you have an idea of what clips you want to use, edit a rough cut of your movie and show a few people. Ask them what they saw (rather than you telling them what they should see). Keep these comments in mind when you go back to edit a final cut of your movie. Often a fresh set of eyes can help you discover what does or does not make sense to an audience. Though you know what your movie is about, you will need to assess the reaction of other people.

5. Final cut – Once you are happy with your rough cut, you can sit down and fine tune your edits based on the feedback you received from the rough cut. Positive criticism can help make your overall movie stronger.

6. Use transitions and video effects – With the appropriate transitions and video effects, your movie will develop a more professional production quality. First-time film makers often use too many transitions or video effects out of context. The best thing to keep in mind is keep it simple and keep it constant. Stick to the main transitions: cuts, fades, and wipes.

The cut

This is not really a transition, but a switch in movie clips. A cut occurs when one clip ends and the next one immediately begins. The timing of cuts is very important and there are many amazing things you can do with careful timing.

The fade

The fade is the most useful (and most used) transition. It is simply a cross-dissolve between two scenes. In movies, the fade typically occurs when the story changes locations or there is a change in time (i.e. from night to day).

The wipe

This effect is similar to a fade. It signifies a change in location. This effect is more obvious than the fade, and the audience is supposed to “notice” the effect.

To learn more about how to use transitions effectively, the following link to a short video provides some useful information:

- http://www.metacafe.com/watch/643828/tips_on_transitions/

7. Audio/Instrumentals - Sound effects may help set scenes and also can run the pace of a movie. Make sure the sound is not louder than the dialogue. Sound effects are often the last thing you want to add to your movie after you have finalized all your transitions and effects.

Please keep Islamic values in mind when selecting your audio and instruments

8. Saving your project – Depending on the editing program you used, your movie file will usually be saved in a .wmv (if using windows) or a .mov (if using a mac format). For the most part, these programs will save it as the best possible quality, depending on what you need your movie for. For example, in Windows movie maker, when you are saving your project, you can choose to save it so it can be uploaded to YouTube, saved on your computer, sent via email, or burned to a DVD. Depending on what you choose, the program will automatically choose the best setting for your purpose.

4. Distribution

Submit it to Mosquers!

The Mosquers is now a premiere event whose sole purpose is showcasing films made by film makers like you. This Edmonton-based event offers an excellent venue for your film to be previewed if you live in the province of Alberta.

Remember, your video must meet The Mosquers criteria and you must submit in an application form. All of this information is available on the Mosquers website at www.mosquers.com.

Show it to Your Friends and Family!

Now that you have finished your masterpiece, you want people to see it! The easiest audience you can find is your family and friends. Invite a few people over to your home, make some popcorn and have everybody gather around to watch your big premiere.

Online

Websites such as YouTube and Vimeo are the most popular in terms of uploading your movie to the internet and sending a link for people to watch. You can even upload a movie to your Facebook profile or Facebook groups you belong to and have users of that online community view what you made. You will have to register and have an account before you can post your movie, but most sites allow you to join for free (for a basic account).

Links

- www.youtube.com
- www.vimeo.com

The following website gives you a comprehensive list of websites similar to YouTube and Vimeo:

- <http://www.reelseo.com/list-video-sharing-websites/>

5. Conclusion

Developing a video or film may not be easy. However, with the appropriate training, knowledge, and tools, you may discover a personal talent you never knew existed, and create something unique and inspiring.

Remember, your film's objective is to send a message - to educate, promote understanding, and decrease stereotypes of Muslims and Islam. Keep the objectives and rules and guidelines of The Mosquers in mind throughout filming to ensure you are fulfilling the purpose.

We hope this information serves as a guide and resource for you as you develop your film for The Mosquers. Film and video is a new, innovative way of sending a personalized message by you, the film maker. We hope this will be an exciting and memorable experience for you!

For more information on the Mosquers, please contact Centre for Race and Culture at info@cfrac.com.



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**THE MOSQUERS
TOOLKIT**