

Transcript for: AUDIO BASICS
Video runs: 11:24

We're going to cover how to get good audio for your video. Good sound is very important because viewers will not tolerate sound they cannot understand. They'll stop watching. Viewers will usually tolerate shaky, grainy video, but they will NOT put up with sound that is difficult to comprehend. Sad but true and I have seen this a million times.

The single best way to get decent sound is to make sure you record your audio in a quiet place. No matter what kind of microphone you are using, the cheapest to the best, you need quiet. Turn off all sources of noise that you can, even low grade white noise like fans. Then, stand an appropriate distance from the microphone you have and speak clearly and distinctly. Some mics are designed to be right up there next to the mouth, usually handhelds and desk mics, lavaliers are designed to be about 6-8 inches away, boom mics work best when they are 2-3 feet away or even further. Know which kind of mic you have and use it as intended. The microphones that come attached to a lot of video cameras are usually best about 2 feet away or so for a voice talking, but they're really best suited just for recording what's called natural sound, or ambient sound....that's just whatever noise is happening, from cars driving to birds tweeting, to crowd murmurs and clapping, that's called natural sound and all on-board camera mics are intended for but they do get used a lot for someone speaking in a talking head. You can get away with that and it works if you are both close enough and the room is quiet.

To get the best quality voice recording, like with a talking head, you need to use a microphone other than the one that comes attached to your camera. The onboard mic will do in a pinch if the room is quiet enough and you are close enough to the camera, but for high quality, you need to use a supplemental microphone that is close to the speaker's mouth and that's going to be either a handheld, lavalier or desk mic. But like I mentioned in module 3, the only problem with that is not all video cameras take a supplemental microphone. Very few consumer grade cameras or pocket cameras have a place to plug in a separate microphone. The Kodak Zi8 is one that does. (The Zi8 has been discontinued)

To plug a microphone into the camera, use either one of these tiny plugs or a larger, professional grade XLR cable. Make sure the mic and camera you have are compatible. The Zi8 and other small cameras that accept mics, of course use these tiny stereo plugs. It takes a prosumer grade camera to get XLR inputs although you can go to stores like Radio Shack and get adapters so you can use one kind of microphone with the other type of input.

If you want to buy a supplemental microphone, rest assured that even the cheap \$20 mics do a decent job.

Lavaliers look best on camera because they disappear, they're so small. Handheld microphones can be durable and cheap and good for on-the-go-situations. But holding a mic looks kind of clunky so lavalier are usually the microphones of choice for on-camera work. Plus, holding a microphone introduces noise and shake so desk mics get better quality than handheld mics if you are not on the go.

Desk mics are usually used in voice-only situations where you're not seen, like radio, or voice-overs. They're best mounted on some kind of movable boom for precise placement next to the mouth. A pop filter is a cheap yet important accessory for a desk mic to keep some of the air puffs from hitting the mic and turning into a P sound. That is what a pop filter is for.

A boom mic, AKA a shot gun mic is used when you are going to be picking up audio at a distance of several feet. Specialized ones can really go far, 20-30 feet away.

These are the kinds of microphones so if you are going to get one, buy the kind that is best suited for whatever situation you are going to find yourself in.

If you're buying a microphone, think about whether you need a wireless one or wired. Both have pros and cons. Wireless mics cost more and the cheap wireless mics tend to be deadly frustrating. Save yourself some trouble, don't buy a cheap wireless microphone. To get a quality wireless, you're going to have to spend at least a few hundred bucks. Wireless mics are good for shooting out in a field, especially when the people on camera are moving around a lot. The more movement of your people, the more you need wireless mics. They certainly couldn't do shows like the Deadliest Catch with wired microphones and cables going everywhere! But if your people are not moving around you don't really need the wireless mics you can get by with wired.

Wireless also lets your on-camera person be far away from the camera. So let's say you're shooting at a football field. The camera could be way on the 50-yard line and the person could be at the goal post and you could still pick up the audio. So that is an advantage to a wireless you simply could not do stuff like that with a wired microphone.

Wireless microphones work by transmitting the audio signal much like a radio does from the microphone to wherever it is being recorded.

So out in the field using a wireless, the receiver portion is plugged into the camera and the person on-camera wears the mic and a transmitter. Usually when you buy a wireless microphone, you're really just buying the transmitter and receiver, the mic is separate and almost any mic will work, what you need are the transmitter and receiver. Of course you can also buy kits too where you get the transmitter, receiver and the microphone all at once.

Now here's a do-it-yourself tip. Professionals record in fancy audio booths with expensive sound proofing foam on the walls. It makes it pin-drop quiet and it makes a huge difference in the quality of the audio they are able to record. Now, here is a cheap, easy, portable audio booth I made from a tri-fold piece of cardboard bought for 7 bucks at the office store. I glued on pieces of egg-crate foam. I used a cheap bed mattress from Wal Mart for my foam and it's so much less expensive than true soundproofing foam. This thing really helps absorb and block out sounds. And it's lightweight and portable enough to put anywhere. You can hunker down in the tri-fold surrounding by sound absorbing foam. Especially for what it cost this thing works wonders! It can really help you get better audio by blocking out noise around you. It won't win the good

housekeeping seal of high class decorating, but it's very functional and I did the whole thing for about \$10.

Here's one awesome thing about audio for video that you probably never thought of before. Audio is a totally separate thing from your video track. That means, **you can make a video starring yourself by just using your voice which makes the whole process of video making faster and easier.** It is a whole lot less intimidating for most people to record just their voice not their face, so if you are camera shy, maybe you could just use a hand held or desk mic plugged straight into your computer. You can get audio cables that have a USB connection on one end and an XLR on the other. The XLR will go into tons of different mics, not necessarily expensive at all. A cable like this with XLR to USB will let you record a voice track straight to your computer hard drive. Of course you'll need the right software. More sophisticated video editing programs have a voice record tool. Otherwise you would need some audio editing software. If your video editing program will record audio, you will probably never need to get a separate audio program. You can just get your mic and your cable and plug straight into your computer. Today, they do make microphones that are USB on both ends and those are great but if you don't have one of those and you just have a standard microphone with an XLR, get yourself one of these cables with XLR to USB and you'll be good to go.

In addition to cutting narration or a recording a speech or conversation, lots of audio for video comes in the form of music. **If you want to add music or something to your voice, that is done in editing,** not while you are recording the voice track or the video. Adding music is done later in editing.

For music, I want to remind you that it's best to use royalty free music. Royalty free music is music especially made for video production and you do not have to worry about high copyright or licensing fees. You pay one small fee when you buy the song and then you can use it over and over. Where do you get such things? One of my favorite places to get royalty free music is Footage Firm. Footage Firm has audio and video clips. They've got a great selection and they are absolutely one of the most economical places to get royalty free clips.

(Footage Firm is now found at <http://www.videoblocks.com>)

Music can really help create more of a feeling of excitement and so forth so music is used in a lot of videos.

That's it for this module on audio for video. I hope you learned a lot of practical stuff to help you get high quality videos online without a lot of hassle.