

## Lesson 5: Location Scout

### Overview:

This lesson will help you plan your shoot for One Day on Earth through a location scout. Visiting your location in advance will help your students visualize what they will shoot, and it will also help you determine what to bring with you for a successful shoot. Students will take test shots in the space, make notes on quality of light and sound, test framing ideas, and identify set up positions. Based on this experience, your students will discuss and create a general set up plan and a shot list for your shoot.

**Note:** If your topic takes place outside of your classroom, this lesson is a field trip. For the best results try to visit the space at the same time of day that you will be there on your shoot date. Consider also what day of the week it is, and take into consideration what will be happening in the space on that day.

**Skills Taught:** writing, photography & video, observation, art

**Goals:** To become comfortable with your chosen topic in the location you will be filming, while understanding

### What you will need:



the digital camera or video camera you plan to use on your shoot date and its manual

headphones, wireless mic or shotgun mic if you have one

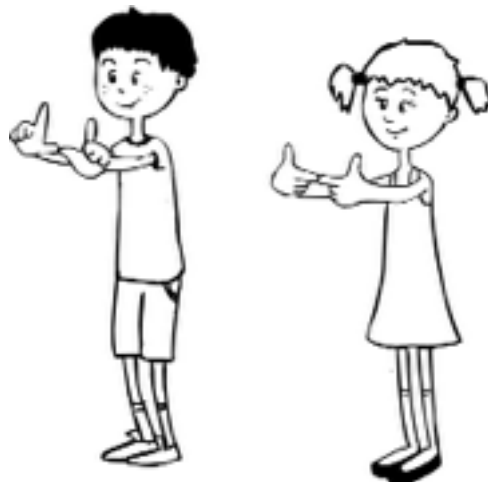
the framing device that you or your students make from the instructions on page 3 of this lesson

**Materials:** worksheet and framing device

**Prep:** arrange transportation, make framing device with students

**Class time:** at least 2 hours in the space plus travel time

**Activities:** framing and test shoot, observing light, space and sound, shot list and set up plan



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## Take notes:

While you explore your location, write down everything you observe. After you've finished your location scout you can use these notes to determine if the location is the right space for your shoot. Notes will also guide you in developing a plan and shot list for your shoot. One way to take notes is to take still photos or shoot a little video with a running audio commentary. Note the time of day, the quality of the light, the sounds in the air, and where you are standing.

## Activity: Becoming aware of the space

### Part 1

Seeing involves negative space. Notice the subject, and the space around it. Take notice of how the location you are in is set up. Every location has its limitations, in this activity we will explore together how to make the best use of the space you where you have chosen to film. Please answer following questions in your notebook:

#### If you are inside:

- What types of things are in the room?
- How many exits are there?
- What is the floor like?
- How high is the ceiling and what is it made of?
- How many windows are there and where are they located?
- Is there a source of electricity that you can use to power your camera?
- Is there a bathroom near by?
- Do you feel crowded, does the room have an occupancy notice?
- Where can you stand to fit the entire room into your view? Is there more than one spot?

#### If you are outside:

- What type of outside location are you in?
- Is there any source of electricity available to you?
- Is there a bathroom near by?
- Are there any obstacles in the way of your frame?
- Where can you stand to get the entire location in frame? Is there more then one spot?
- Is there a shade cover anywhere in your location?
- What time of day will you be filming?
- What is the typical weather in this area, and what will you do if there is unexpected weather on your shoot date?

## Part 2

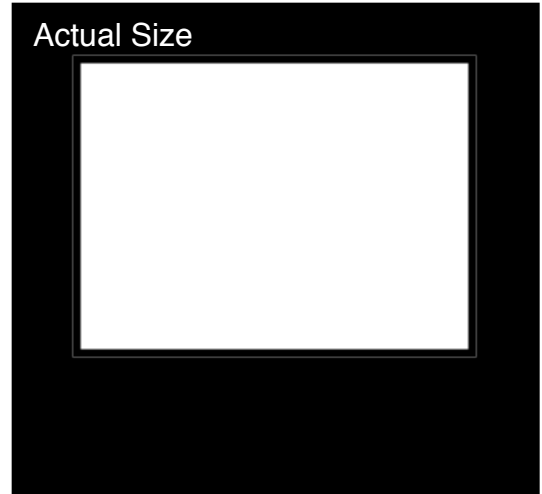
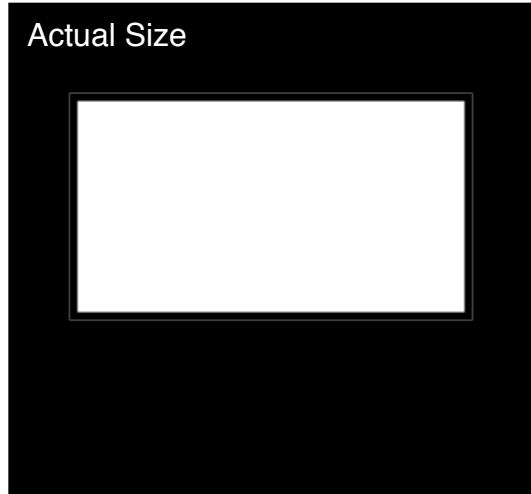
**Framing and Test Shoot:** Getting familiar with looking at your topic and its location through a camera will help you and your students better understand the many ways you can document your topic. This exercise will help your students begin to think about what is inside, and what is outside, the frame.

**Step 1:** Have students trace and cut-out the viewers provided on the lesson 5 worksheet onto a piece of cardboard.

**Step 2:** Ask your students to move through the space and practice framing shots in the location.

**Step 3:** Have students look at the location from every vantage point. You may want to take test shots from different perspectives and decide which points you like the most.

**Step 4:** Based on these points of view, make a list of where you want to put your camera to get the shots that you need to cover your topic.



Trace these shapes onto a piece of cardboard, and cut out the white center.

*Now you have a framing device that you can carry with you to practice framing wherever you go!*

## Observing light:

Light is continually moving and shifting. It is important to know and understand the quality of light in the location that you are planning to shoot in. For the best results, visit the location at the same time of day that you plan to shoot on your the filming date. If possible, try to visit this place at different times during the day to fully understand its light quality. This will help to determine the time of day when the light is the best for filming your topic. Also take into consideration that weather can greatly affect the quality of light on any given day. If you are in a location with windows, weather can even affect the light inside your location.

Outdoor lighting conditions can be challenging. As you're scouting, determine if the time of day you are shooting has your location in full sun, partial sun or full shade. Bright sun can create harsh shadows on people's faces, and light-colored surfaces bounce light and overexpose footage. Partial sun can cause your camera to have trouble handling the high contrast in this lighting situation. You may find that fully shaded locations or overcast days produce the most consistent results.

**TIP:** There is a time of day referred to in filmmaking and photography as “magic hour” or “golden hour”. This occurs just before, to just after, twilight and dawn. The sun at this hour is low in the sky, creating well defined shadows from its direct light, and there is also a soft, even light from the sun’s rays reflected in the atmosphere. It is a great time to film. Will you be able to film during this time on your shoot date?

## Questions to answer:

- Is your location inside or outside?
- Do you have control over the light in the location?
- If you are inside, how many sources of light are there?
- Windows are a great source of natural light from outside.
- Count how many windows are in your space.

## Activity:

If you are inside, try turning on or off different sources of light. How does this affect what you can see? Make notes on how this affects your location. Take test shots for each lighting source.

If you are outside take test shots of in shaded, partially lit, and of fully lit areas and compare them. Which photos look better?

**TIP:** Don't forget to adjust your exposure and white balance.

## Understanding the sound of your location:

Depending on what topic you are filming, sound may play a very important role in your video. If you are filming a person who is speaking, you need to make sure that the location you are using will provide the proper sound quality so that you can hear everything they say.

Take a moment without anyone speaking or making noise, and write down your answer to these questions about sound:

- What do you hear in this moment?
- Do you recognize all of the sounds?
- Do you hear any humming or small sounds?

What you are listening to is the *ambience* of your location. Ambience often identifies a location audibly. If your eyes were closed, would you know where you are? Is this important information to support the story you are telling?

Exercise: If you have headphones and a wireless or shotgun microphone, plug them into your camera and listen to your location through them. Now try setting your sound levels on your camera. (refer to your manual if necessary)

*Discuss and answer the following questions with your class to create your sound plan:*

- Will you be recording people speaking in this location on your shoot date?
- If so do you need a microphone?
- Does your location have any distracting sounds?
- How important is sound to documenting your topic?

## Discussion:

**At the end of your location scout have a class discussion that addresses the following questions:**

1. What light quality does the space have at the time of day you plan to shoot?
2. Is this light quality acceptable for your shoot?
3. Will you need any additional lighting?
4. What shots do you need to properly cover your topic? Did you get test shots of your locations?
5. Were there any sound interference issues that you noticed while in the location? Is there a way to work around them?
6. Were there any obstacles that will affect getting the shots you need? If so is there a way to work around them?
7. Do you need permission to film this space? Can you get permission?
8. Will this location work for the topic you want to document on the day of filming? Is there possibly a better location? Where is it?

**Assignment:** Based on the notes and test shots from your location scout, create a plan for your shoot. The plan should address light, sound, and equipment set-up; travel plans to and from the location; an estimate of how much time will be needed in the space; a list of what to bring with you; and a shot list.