

THE  
**Five Pillars**  
of  
**Film and Video**

Equipment  
Planning  
Cinematography  
Sound  
Editing

JASON ROBERTS

# The Five Pillars of Film and Video

How to plan, film, and edit your videos and films.

Jason Roberts

This book is for sale at <http://leanpub.com/filmandvideo>

This version was published on 2023-01-23



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# Introduction

**Think back...**

...back to your first experience of seeing a movie on the big screen, popcorn in hand, the house lights dimming and the whispering of the audience subsiding in anticipation...

...back to your first movie you saw as a child, sitting in your home, cosy and comforting...

...back to the last YouTube video that made you smile, think, or that you learned something from.

The moving image has power. The power to move us to tears. The power to inspire us to soar upwards to meet our dreams. The power to make us laugh uncontrollably. The power to transfer knowledge and wisdom.

Anyone can learn to wield this power, the power of video, the power of filmmaking, the power of the moving image.

This book will teach you the basics in all the key areas of making moving images.

Whether you are a filmmaker, YouTuber, documentarian, wedding filer, videographer, maker of product commercials, or someone who just wants to learn more about moving images: **this book is for you.**

By the end of this book you will have the foundational knowledge needed to plan, record, and edit your videos and films.

## Conventions Used in this Book

In this book the terms film, video, and filmmaking are used interchangeably to mean the recording (or playback) of “moving images”. When it comes to purely aesthetic topics, no difference between digital capture and film capture will be expressed. Unless otherwise stated, technical discussions will assume that images are being captured digitally, whether that be on a cinema camera, DSLR, mirrorless camera, mobile phone, etc. Unless otherwise stated, terms such as film/filming refer to the recording of moving images and not specifically to using film cameras: for example “when filming a subject....” does not specifically refer to using film.

Some topics such as the fundamentals of cinematography apply regardless of the capture medium (digital or film) - this book assumes that the majority of readers will be capturing digitally.

When the term “film(s)” is encountered in this book (meaning a work of moving images), no differentiation is made as to whether the “work” is a narrative theatrical release, TV documentary, YouTube video, or other type of project: the reference is simply to a work of moving images. Where the word “image” is used it refers to the visual makeup of a piece of video (imagine pausing a video and looking at its visual qualities).



# **The First Pillar: Equipment**

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# Cameras

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## Types of Filmmaking Cameras

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## Camera Features and Settings

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### ISO

The simplest way of thinking about camera ISO<sup>1</sup> is that the ISO number represents how sensitive the camera will be to the light passing through the lens. Whilst there is a lot more to sensor technology<sup>2</sup> and sensitivity, from a practical standpoint you can think of the ISO setting as one way to make your image darker or brighter.

There are consequences to using a higher or lower ISO value<sup>3</sup>. A lower ISO value typically produces video with less noise and a higher ISO typically produces an image with more noise. There is another complication here and that is some cameras have dual base ISOs.

ISO is measured in whole numbers with a lower number being less sensitive to light and a higher number being more sensitive to light. Assuming that all other settings

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<sup>1</sup>To see a short video about ISO check out this video: <https://youtu.be/udLPLtO1oEA>

<sup>2</sup>A complete breakdown of the various digital sensor technologies is beyond the scope of this book and sensor sensitivity is often not a changing of the sensor sensitivity to light, but rather the amplification of the signals created by light hitting the sensor.

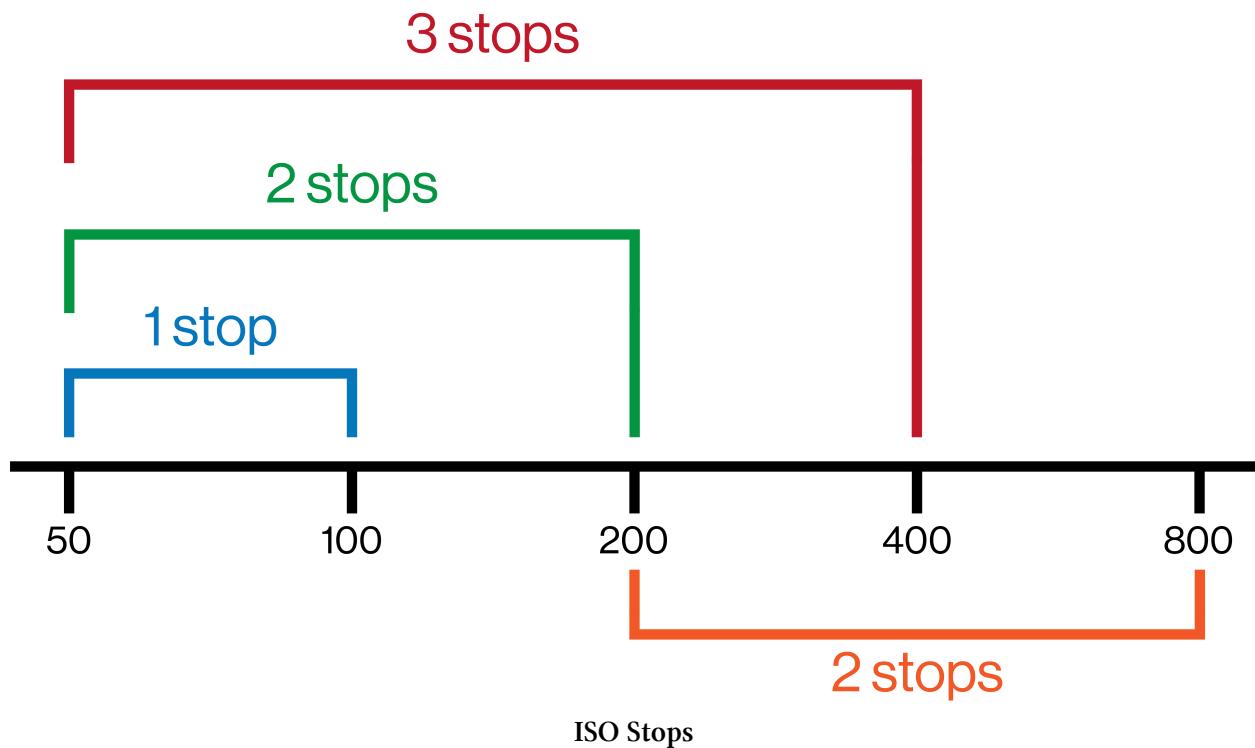
<sup>3</sup>The ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an organization that develops and publishes standards related to many different things, not just cameras.

are being kept the same (aperture, shutter speed, etc.), the darker the scene you are filming, the higher the ISO will need to be. Some cameras are better able to handle low-light situations while still producing video with a low amount of noise.

There are a number of technical reasons why noise may be introduced into the final image. For digital sensor cameras this can be due to the electrical processes inherent in the sensor, thermal related noise, noise in the light itself (photon noise), analogue/digital conversion noise, etc. For cameras shooting on traditional film, this “noise” is often referred to as film “grain”. Some may prefer the visual aesthetic of film grain over digital noise and think it looks more “organic”.

Fundamentally, the higher the ISO number that you set in the camera, the more sensitive to light the camera will be, meaning the resulting image will be brighter. You will need to use a higher ISO setting the darker the scene you are filming is, unless you can increase the brightness of the scene (by using lighting) or by altering other camera/lens settings such as shutter speed or aperture.

The camera ISO number represents sensitivity to light, each time you double the ISO number, the sensitivity to brightness increases by one “stop”. An ISO “stop” is a doubling (or halving) of the sensitivity. For example, ISO 100 is one stop higher than ISO 50 and ISO 200 is 2 stops higher than ISO 50.



The base ISO of a camera is the ISO number that usually produces the cleanest looking image with the lowest amount of noise. The base ISO can sometimes change depending on the video profile being used (see video profiles). Some digital cameras have dual base ISOs (sometimes referred to as “dual native ISOs”). This means there will be two ISO settings that will produce the lowest noise and best dynamic range. In brighter scenes the first (lower) base ISO may be used. In darker scenes the second (higher) base ISO may be used rather than adding more light to the scene.

## Frame Rates

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## Shutter Speed

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## Aperture

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## Sound Settings

Depending on the camera there may be more or less control over the audio you can capture internally. You will also usually have a volume setting for controlling how loud video playback in the camera will be. You will usually have some control over the built-in microphone recording level (or an external microphone plugged into the camera). You may also have the ability to enable/disable features such as automatic volume control and wind noise reduction. Automatic volume control will increase the microphone recording level when sounds are quieter and decrease the volume when sounds are louder (this often does not produce a pleasing effect). Wind noise reduction attempts to compensate for the flow of air across the microphone which can cause unpleasant hissing/blowing/overloading noise, as with automatic volume control this setting may not produce a pleasing effect. It is possible during editing to apply noise reduction and volume control techniques which we will discuss in the Fifth Pillar.

## White Balance

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## Image Stabilization

Some cameras come with features that make the recorded video feel more stable, for example reducing the little vibrations when shooting handheld (“micro-jitters”) or smoothing out larger movements while walking or running with the camera. The stabilization may be implemented physically with IBIS<sup>4</sup>, it may be achieved using digital stabilization, or a combination of both.

---

<sup>4</sup>IBIS (In Body Image Stabilization) is a mechanical process where the sensor in the camera moves small amounts to compensate for movements of the camera while shooting.

There may be different levels of stabilization available in a given camera, for example a more “gentle” version and more “aggressive” version for more active situations like running with the camera. The stabilization of video can also be implemented via a mechanical process on some lenses or by mounting the camera to a stabilizer of some kind such as a gimbal. Some cameras can use IBIS in conjunction with a stabilized lens to achieve higher levels of image stabilization.

IBIS may not be suitable for use in some situations (such as moving internal car shots), in these cases using a camera with no IBIS (but possibly in conjunction with an image stabilized lens and/or digital stabilization) may produce a more pleasing result.

Even with no IBIS, “smooth” moving-camera results can still be achieved by attaching the camera to a [stabilizer](#) of some kind.

## **Focus Settings**

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## **Video Recording Resolution**

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## **Physical Sensor Size**

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## **Video Profiles and Settings**

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## **Video Encoding and Compression**

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## **Video Bitrate**

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## **Video Color Spaces and Color Modes**

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## **Video Gamma**

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## **Video Bit Depth (Color Depth)**

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## **Video Color Subsampling (Chroma Subsampling)**

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## **Sharpening, Saturation, and Other Settings**

There are usually ways to fine-tune the settings of (non-RAW) video recording modes such as increasing or decreasing the digital sharpening built in to the file or the saturation of colors. If you are not planning to do any post-production work (color grading, adding sharpness, etc.) before publishing the video then you may want to modify the default camera settings to get the “look” you want straight out of camera.

If you plan on doing post-production work then you may want to get a more neutral looking video out of the camera to start with, for example not adding too much sharpening or increasing the color saturation in the camera itself. These things can be added later during editing/post-production. If you add them in the camera then they are “baked in” to the video file and may give you less flexibility to change things in post-production. As an example, if you are shooting in a log profile (S-Log3, C-Log, etc.) then you will probably want to leave the camera settings close (or the same) to the default values supplied by the camera manufacturer.

If you are shooting in a power law gamma (i.e. not log, raw, or HDR) and you also want to do color grading and other post-production work, you may want to either use a “neutral” or “flat” profile that comes with the camera (these usually have lower amounts of color saturation for example) or if the camera does not come with such a recording preset then you could make your own. In the latter case you could use set reduced amounts for things like contrast, color saturation, sharpening, etc. You should perform some test recordings with different settings (and also test that you can get the look you want in your editing software) before filming anything important.

## **Rolling Shutter**

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## **Dynamic Range and Latitude**

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# **Lenses**

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## **Focal Length**

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## **Zooms and Primes**

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## **Aperture**

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## **Depth of Field**

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## **Cinema Lenses**

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## **Lens Mounts**

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## **Teleconverters**

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## **Anamorphic vs. Spherical Lenses**

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## **Specialist Lenses**

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## **Optical Image Stabilization**

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## **Image Circles**

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# **Editing Equipment**

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## **Monitor**

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## **NLE (Video Editing Software)**

Video editing software, sometimes referred to as Non-Linear Editing software (aka “NLE”) allows you to edit digital video footage in a non-destructive way. You can freely move forward and backwards through the footage and the edit, hence the term: “non-linear”.

There are many NLEs available today at various prices and with various features. The three most popular for “serious” or “professional” video editing are:

- Premiere Pro from Adobe (PC & Mac)
- DaVinci Resolve from Blackmagic Design (PC & Mac)
- Final Cut Pro from Apple (Mac only)

There are other examples of NLEs that still offer the ability to edit videos but are often not considered “serious” or “professional” and include:

- Camtasia from TechSmith (PC & Mac)
- iMovie from Apple (Mac only)

Some NLEs such as Premiere Pro require an annual subscription whereas other products such as DaVinci Resolve you can purchase for a one-time payment. Some NLEs are only for Mac, so if you are a PC user you will not have access to NLEs such as Final Cut Pro or iMovie.

Some NLEs have better out-of-the box support for color correction/grading, for example DaVinci Resolve has extensive color support and is often the tool used for color grading major movies. Premiere Pro also has color grading tools included (Lumetri Color) that offer a lot of color grading features - though not as extensive as DaVinci Resolve. All the major “serious” NLEs also support the ability to install third-party plugins to add additional features.

Some NLEs have additional visual effects (VFX) tools built into them. For example, DaVinci Resolve has Fusion for VFX built into it, whereas Premiere Pro requires a separate external VFX tool such as Adobe After Effects.

At the time of writing costs are as follows:

- Adobe Premiere Pro: \$239.88 USD (subscription cost per year)
- DaVinci Resolve: \$295.00 USD (one-time purchase)
- Final Cut Pro: \$299.99 USD (one-time purchase)

## **Network Attached Storage (NAS)**

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## **Directly Attached Storage (DAS)**

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## Backups

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## Control Surfaces

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## Keyboard & Mouse

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## Studio Reference Monitor Speakers

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## Sound Interface

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# **Other Equipment**

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## **Motion Control and Camera Movement**

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## **Stabilizers**

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## Elements of a Shot List

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### Extreme Wide Shot (AKA Extreme Long Shot)

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### Wide Shot (AKA Long Shot)

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### Full Shot

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### Medium Long Shot (AKA Medium Wide Shot)

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## **Cowboy Shot**

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## **Medium Shot**

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## **Medium Close-up Shot**

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## **Close-up Shot**

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## **Extreme Close-up Shot**

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## **Other Shot Types**

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## **Establishing Shot**

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## **Master shot**

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## **Aerial Shot**

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## **Two Shot**

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## **Point of View (POV) Shot**

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## **Over-the-shoulder Shot**

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## **Birds Eye View Shot**

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## **Vlog Shot**

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## Camera Shot Angles

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### Low Angle

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### High Angle

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### Dutch Angle

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## Camera Shot Height

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## Camera Movement Types

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### Tracking Shot

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### Dolly Shot

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## **Trucking Shot (AKA Truck Shot)**

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## **Panning Shot (AKA Pan Shot)**

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## **Tilting Shot (AKA Tilt Shot)**

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## **Crane Shot (AKA Jib Shot)**

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## **Pedestal Shot**

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## **Handheld Shot**

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## **Dolly Zoom Shot (AKA Vertigo Shot)**

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## **The Static Shot (AKA Locked-off Shot or Tripod Shot)**

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## Benefits of Shot Lists

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# Storyboards

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## How to Make a Storyboard

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# Location

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## Things to Consider

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## How to Find Locations

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# Equipment

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# **Insurance and Legal**

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# **Scripts**

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## **The Shooting Script**

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# Other Planning Considerations

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# **The Third Pillar: Visual Aesthetics and Cinematography (not yet written)**

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# **The Fourth Pillar: Sound (not yet written)**

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# **The Fifth Pillar: Editing (not yet written)**

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# **Afterword (not yet written)**

# **Glossary (writing in progress)**

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