



An **OUTLINE is the architecture of your proposed film** – a sketch of the audiovisual elements that will make up the finished film, arranged in order, illustrating the storyline of your film.

- Developing an outline for your VAP is a part of the Pre-Production stage of your work.
- Shooting your video only begins once the outline is developed.
- A well-thought-through outline is a particularly crucial in the case of human rights and social justice filming.
- Preparing an outline will help you to think of what you need to tell your story in a compelling and dramatic way.

Planning and Preparing an Outline

The basics of a story: what, where, when, who, why, how?

During preproduction, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- *What* story are you trying to tell? What story are you leaving out? And why?
- *When* did the incident, event or violation happen?
- *Where* does the story occur?
- *Who* will appear in your story?
- *Who* will tell the story?
- *Why* are you telling this story?
- *How* will you tell the story?

You may find that you will have more than one answer for each of these questions.

- Why are you telling this story?

For *advocacy-oriented* video you should be absolutely clear from the outset why you are telling your story, as both a filmmaker and as a social justice advocate. You also need to determine clearly who your audience is, and what they will find persuasive or compelling. On the basis of this you should choose the most appropriate story to tell.

- How will you tell your story?

Will you be following a particular chronological order or sequence? Will you concentrate on a character, an issue, or a place? How can this story most effectively be told, and how can you ensure that it will be interesting to watch and responsible to the people who participated?

- Has your story been told before?

At this stage, you may also need to do some research about other videos, films, books, websites, and other forms of media on the subject. There's no sense in reinventing the wheel, and these sources may also help develop your own project.

Reference Sheet continued



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Preparing an outline for your video

During pre-production of an advocacy video, you will establish a clear goal and audience, and begin developing the most effective message and messenger for this audience.

At this stage, you should prepare an outline or working script. An outline is the architecture of your proposed film—a sketch of the audio and visual elements that will make up the finished film, arranged in order, illustrating the storyline of your film. From your outline you will work out what shots you need to shoot in any given location, interview or activity. A well-thought-through outline is particularly crucial in the case of human rights and social justice filming, where there is not always the opportunity to go back and get re-shoots of the material.

Preparing an outline will help you to think of what you need to tell your story in a compelling and dramatic way. You do not have to stick to it once you come to film and edit but it can act as a guide to help you think about creative ways to tell your story.

An outline format is shown in Table 1. You use note form, with the visuals on the left, and the audio on the right.

Table 1 Outline format

Picture	Sound
Crowds demonstrating outside government building	Sync sound**
	Narration on recent rights abuses, and government involvement
John B tells story of the night in the cell, c/a* Still photos: John B, tortured	Interview on-camera with John B, victim of torture
Action pictures of him doing interviews at place of work where he works monitoring rights violations	Narration on case; voiceover from interview with another human rights worker

Notes:

*c/a = cutaway (a shot of a detail of a location or of a person, or of a visual related to the story, which is used to cover cuts in an edit of an interview and to add impact to an interview. For more detail, see Chapter 4)

**Sync sound = “synchronous” sound recorded at the same time as the picture

You will also be considering issues of characters, point of view, and narrative structure—who is telling the story? How are you telling the story?

What audiovisual components will help you tell the story?

- All video is made up of combinations of visual and audio elements. Think creatively and expansively about different kinds of sound and images. What will make this story visually interesting? Can you tell your story using different combinations of visuals and audio components? What will have most impact on your audience? What do you have access to given security, budget, and time constraints? Can you make a virtue out of necessity?

