

How To Get Good Sound From Amateur Video Cameras

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WHAT IS SOUND? Sound is a vibration in air! It is a movement similar to the waves created by a rock thrown into water! These sound waves go in all directions and bounce off any hard surface, walls, ceilings, floors, furniture, and even travel around corners. Sounds from all over mix with the sound you are trying to record.

WHAT IS GOOD SOUND? Good sound is cleanly recorded audio without outside competing interferences or other ambient noises in the recorded track.

Bad Sound, Poorly Recorded cannot be fixed in post production by your video editing program. Bad Recorded Sound stays that way!!

Sounds easy but it isn't!

The Built-In Microphones on all camcorders are terrible. Most of them point upwards not forward towards the sounds or speakers you are trying to record. Built-in mics are set to record a wide sound pattern and therefore record all of the ambient sounds and noise in the room including camera motors to some degree, sounds of passing cars, room noises, etc.

To Get Good Sound shut off the Automatic Gain Control on your camera. This control levels the audio to the louder sounds it hears which is not usually what you are trying to record.

To Get Good Sound use a good set of Headphones connected to your camera so that you can hear what you are recording in real time, not wait until you have finished.

To Get Good Sound Don't Record Outdoors! unless you have the proper equipment, narrow pattern mics, field mixers, boom poles, wind screens etc.

To Get Good Sound use a Shotgun Microphone or a narrow pattern Handheld mic aimed at the person or sound you are trying to record. For interviews use a Lavalier Mic attached to the collar of the person you are recording, even a cheap one is better than the cameras mic!

To Get Good Sound you simply record your video while simultaneously recording your audio using a separate Digital Voice Recorder such as the Zoom H1 or H2. These are inexpensive and do a terrific job of recording. Then sync the sound in your Video Editing Program to the Video you shot. This can be done in Imovie, Final Cut, Sony Vegas, Premiere, etc. Use a Clap Board while recording your video or just have your talent clap their hands so that you have various sync points to match the audio to, (just like the big boys do in Hollywood)!

To Get Good Sound move your microphone as close as possible to the person or sound you are trying to record, you cannot record good sound from across the room without having the proper equipment. If you are more than 2 feet away from the person you are recording that's too far away to get good sound.

To Get Good Sound use a Stereo Microphone when recording.

You can also record decent sound on an Iphone or Ipod Touch; there are apps available to do this on those devices.

To Get Good Sound try to Silence as many noises as possible in the location you are using.

If you camera has a visual audio level meter, pay attention to it and do not exceed a -6 on your levels.

Microphone Placement is always critical because you are recording 3 things, Direct Sound, Reflected Sound and Background Noise.

To Get Good Sound takes a great deal of effort but your reward will be in the reaction of the audience watching your video!!

References:

Article By Dave Kaminski: How to get good audio from a cheap video camera.

Article By David Tames: Practical sound recording and editing techniques for better video.