DSLR Quick Shooting Tips

1. Resolution and Frame Rate- most DSLR cameras can shoot at least 1280x720 resolution, many go higher to 1920x1080. Depending on your subject matter and your cameras capabilities choose appropriately. If you’re shooting a lot of action try using a higher frame rate like 60 frames per second(fps) since you can play it back in slow motion, in general though 24 or 30fps will do just fine.

2. Shutter Speed- The general rule of thumb to follow is to keep your shutter speed at least twice your frame rate. So if you're shooting at 24fps your shutter speed should be at least 1/50th of a second. Or if your frame rate is 30fps set the shutter speed to 1/60th of a second. There's room for experimentation here but in general about twice the fps should give you nice results.

3. F-Stop- When it comes to the aperture you need to think about the depth of field you'd like in your video. Do you want to focus on a main subject with a blurry background or are you shooting a landscape scene where sharp details throughout the frame are important? Decide where you want emphasis to be conveyed and then adjust the f-stop accordingly. Remember the larger the aperture the shallower your depth of field and vice versa. Also keep in mind that in low light, you may have to use a larger aperture setting to get enough light on the image sensor.

4. ISO- The key here is to avoid raising the ISO higher than necessary. If your ISO is too high you'll start to see noise and your image quality will suffer. For sunny settings 100 should work fine but as you move indoors or shoot at night you'll have to raise the ISO until you have a decent shutter speed to work with.

5. White Balance - It's important to make sure you're capturing colors accurately. You don't want your images looking too warm (orange/red) or too cold (blue). If you have time the best thing you can do is to customize your white balance on location. Your camera should have a manual white balance mode, alternatively you may be able to set the Kelvin manually. If you're unsure just go with automatic or an appropriate camera preset like sunny, cloudy, tungsten, etc. While it's important to get this setting right there are solutions you can try later on in the editing phase, namely color grading.

6. Focus- Your camera has two basic focusing modes, automatic and manual. Now this is a source of some debate, but in general we recommend shooting in manual mode. Automatic focus is great if your subject or object isn't moving and your camera is stationary but that's not very common when taking video. Getting used to focusing manually can take some time but it's a skill you'll develop with practice.

7. Picture Styles- This will vary from one manufacturer to another but this setting affects how the camera processes varying amounts of light and color in your shot. In general we recommend using either the standard or neutral setting.

Finally don't forget the obvious! Always have your batteries charged up and memory cards ready for recording. There's a lot to think about with all this technology, and we haven't even touched on sound, but keep these basic tips in mind when in doubt and when you have time read the lessons linked throughout for a more detailed explanation of each topic.

One last tip, clean your lens before you press that record button!