

Shooting for the Pay It Forward Challenge

Requirements

Shoot All The Things

Shoot as much video and take as many photos as you can. You will have many meetings. Shoot video and take photos of them. You will be interviewing people involved with your chosen charity. Shoot video and take photos of them. You will be having many events and fundraisers in conjunction with this challenge. Shoot video and take photos of them.

Basically, if you do anything related to the challenge, shoot video and take photos of it.

Each team has been given a camera that shoots HD video and takes high quality photos. The cameras contain up to 8 GB of storage on a Mini SD card. You should have no issues fulfilling this first requirement.

YouTube Channel

A YouTube channel will be created with your team's Google account. The team with the best YouTube Channel design (as voted by the judges) will receive 100 points. The second place team will receive 90 points. Third place team 80. And so on...

Final Presentation Video

The video should highlight your chosen charity. It should be approximately three to five minutes in length. It should include (at least) two sound bites from (at least) one interview of someone at the charity (the head of the organization, one of the volunteers, someone who benefits from the charity). Your team should be visible in the video (i.e. we should see members of the team working with the charity at fundraisers or in a volunteer capacity).

It should be edited and uploaded to your YouTube Channel by the end of the semester.

If you follow these simple steps your team will receive 100 points for the uploaded Final Presentation Video.

Additional YouTube Videos

You should be routinely uploading short videos to the YouTube channel you create. These have no requirements other than each video should be about the team and the charity. Your team will be awarded 10 points for each additional video uploaded to YouTube (points awarded at judges' discretion).

Also, the more videos you have on your channel, the more views you can receive. The team with the most video views on their channel will be awarded 100 points. The second place team will receive 90 points. Third place team 80. And so on...

5) You should also upload still photos to the Facebook, Twitter, and Google Plus profiles you create. Each photo uploaded will be good for 1 point (points awarded at judges' discretion).

Share Raw Video and Photos with Protect America

All raw video and photos should be uploaded to the Google Drive associated with your team's Google account. Google Drive is free, thus it has a maximum storage limit of 5 GB. You are more than welcome to purchase more storage space if you feel that you need it, but it is not a requirement.

Once you upload something to Google Drive, you must contact Protect America's Video & Media Specialist Nicklaus Louis (nicklaus[at]protectamerica[dot]com). He will retrieve all uploaded videos and photos then let you know you can then delete them from your Google Drive to make room for the next batch.

To be clear, you will need to keep track of any videos or photos you plan to use in your Final Presentation Video. It would be best if you stored these files on a personal storage device for easy access when editing the video. Sharing your video and photos with Protect America is a requirement.

Create & Upload (YouTube) One Final Presentation Video (required)

Tips

Find a Photographer/Videographer and Video Editor

It would help if someone on your team has experience with a camera. If that's the case, elect that person to be the one who ALWAYS has the camera in his/her hand.

But if no one on the team knows anything about photography or videography, maybe one of the team members has a friend who does and would be willing to lend a hand. But even if no one on the team has any friends, there's no need to fret (but you should try to get out more). You're on a college campus. Surely you'll be able to find someone who is an aspiring photographer or filmmaker. Ask them to help.

Once all the video is shot, you'll need someone to slap it all together into your Final Presentation Video. The same tips apply for finding an editor...find someone on the team, find a friend, or find another student. It's worth noting that usually the videographer and editor end up being the same person.

If all of that fails, and one of the team members is forced to become a photographer/videographer/editor just so you can pass the class and win this challenge, here's some tips to help you out...

Options Are Your Friends

As a photographer/videographer, you should always give your editor **options**. Make sure he/she has plenty of shots to work with. Try your best to frame your shots. ([Here's a handy little tutorial on framing.](#)) Having plenty of options can go a long way towards creating a dynamic video presentation.

Always remember "**The Five Second Rule**". Basically, the rule states that you hold each shot static for at least five seconds. If you're taking video of a dog wagging its tail, hold it for five seconds before switching over to a shot of the smiling child waving at the dog...then hold that shot for five seconds before you switch to the shot of the mom running to save her precious child from the obviously rabid animal. Giving each shot a little extra time allows an editor the ability to extend shots during the edit.

There are three types of shots: **wide shots, medium shots, and close ups.**

Wide shot – a shot of a crowd of people.

Medium shot – a shot of a small group of people within that crowd.

Close up – a shot of a nose picker amongst that small group of people within that crowd.

It's not necessary to get a wide shot, a medium shot, and a close up of every subject you shoot. But the more options you give your editor, the less likely he/she is to add that behind the scenes shot of you picking your nose.

A moving shot can add a little flare to your video. There are two main types of simple camera movements you can utilize: **pans and tilts.**

Pan – a shot moving from side to side – following a subject as he/she runs across a field.

Tilt – a shot moving up and down – following a subject as he/she jumps on a trampoline.

When utilizing these techniques, keep in mind the aforementioned "Five Second Rule". Make sure you give the editor plenty of time to cut in or out of the pan or tilt.

Try to work the **angles**. Show us the same thing from a different perspective. For instance, if you're shooting a conversation between two people, show us a "two-shot" (shot from the side, showing both subjects) and an "over-the-shoulder shot" (a view of one of the subjects' face, shot over the shoulder of the other subject) from both sides. Also think about adding in some "low angle shots" (from the ground, looking up at the subjects) and "high angle shots" (from the ceiling, looking down at the subjects). Then get creative...like a shot of the two subjects talking with some donated food in the foreground.

Give your editor something to **cut-away** to. If you have a shot of someone speaking to a crowd, get some shots of people in the crowd listening. If you have shots of kids laughing and playing, get shots of their parents looking on and smiling.

Keep in mind that old Hollywood idiom, "**action** puts butts in the seats". Most people would equate their desire to watch someone sit in front of a camera and talk for a any period of time to the desire to pull their own teeth out with a pair of needle-nose pliers. Give us some shots of dogs or kids running around, of people carrying stacks of donated canned goods into a shelter, of people hugging and slapping each other high-five. Moving people move our emotions.

Showcase the **subject** you are shooting. If your subject is a mother of three, get plenty of shots of her three kids hanging from her arms. If your subject is an event organizer, get plenty of shots of him/her calling volunteers or printing out flyers. If your subject is a dog who was rescued from a bad home, get plenty of shots of the pup's ailments and his/her wagging tail and the volunteer that is giving him/her a bath. Get your audience's attention by showing them as much of your subject's existence as you can.

Get close ups of **hands and feet**. Watch any television show or movie and count the number of times we see a close up of a person's hands or feet. Hollywood knows the secret: what people do with their hands while they talk can tell you so much about them, and how people move their feet when they are walking or standing can speak volumes about how they're feeling at that moment.

Give your subjects a lot of **face** time. If hands and feet help us get a peek into someone's emotions at any given moment, then their face gives us the whole show! The face of a smiling child or a crying woman or a glaring man not only tells your audience how your subject is feeling, it also stirs the **emotions** of the audience.

Tell a Story

While shooting and while editing, keep in mind that you're are in essence telling a story to your audience. If you follow the tips on getting a lot of options, this should step should be a piece of cake. Because a shot of someone carrying a stack of donated food, or of a wagging dog tail, or of a smiling child will tell an emotionally charged story on its own. But let's delve a little deeper into the concepts behind telling a story.

Always give the audience a **beginning, middle, and end** to the story you're telling. It should be very simple in the case of your Final Presentation Video: We chose this charity (beginning). Here's all of the things we did for this charity (middle). And here's how we helped this charity (end). Don't ever cheat your audience by cutting out one of the three. Always tell them how it started, how it continued, and how it ended.

Take some time to learn about story from a guru. There's a lot of information on storytelling out there from people like [Robert McKee](#), [Blake Snyder](#), and [Dan Harmon](#). All three of these guys have a lot of good information on how to tell a story, but if you really want to dig deep, you should check out the work of [Joseph Campbell](#). He's the guy whose ideas those other three guys (and pretty much every storyteller since 1949) based their ideas on. He developed something he called the monomyth (or "The Hero's Journey"). His theory was that every story ever told followed the same basic pattern. We won't go into great detail about Mr. Campbell here, but we'd urge you to at least scan his [Wikipedia page](#) (and the [Wikipedia page on the monomyth](#)) so you can have a basic understanding of his theories about storytelling.

Usually, a capstone project like this would take time away from your T.V. and movie watching, but with this project, **watching television and going to see a movie** can help. Pay attention to how the filmmakers (writers, directors, cinematographers, editors, etc.) tell a story. Reality shows are especially good to watch in this instance. Pay attention to how these shows manipulate the emotions of the audience.

And right after we tell you to watch T.V. we're gonna flip the script and urge you to **read a book**. Just like watching television or films, reading a book and paying attention to how the story is told can help you better understand how to develop the story of your team and the charity you help.

Other Miscellany (concerning video)

Just a couple of things to keep in mind as you shoot, edit, and tell your stories.

Have fun and spread the fun. While taking this challenge seriously is advised, a little fun never hurt anyone. Be creative with your work. Be creative with your videos. Have fun doing it, and share that fun with your audience.

Show interest in your subject and pique your audience's interest. If you're interested in the charity you choose, then this should not be a problem. The more you show interest, the more you're going to do to get your audience to show interest.

Show Sound Judgement

Quickly, we need to talk about capturing sound.

When shooting **general video** (not interviews), be aware of **natural sound** (i.e. the natural sound in the environment). Some good natural sounds would be nature sounds like birds chirping or a babbling brook (as long as they don't overwhelm other, more important, natural sounds...like the ones we're about to mention), kids or animals having fun (laughing, barking, etc.), or general crowd noise (a dull murmur). Bad natural sounds would include the aforementioned nature sounds if they're too loud, the humming of an air conditioner or fluorescent lights, and loud or offensive crowd noise (screaming, yelling, or cursing). You won't be able to steer away from all bad natural sounds, but as long as you think about it as you shoot and try to work around it, you should be good.

When shooting **interviews**, keep all the aforementioned bad natural sounds in mind and try to avoid them. **Find a quiet place** to shoot the interview so no background noise interferes with the sound of the interviewee's voice.

Also, try to **find a happy place**, meaning you should find a place where the interviewee is comfortable. A comfortable interviewee gives much better sound bites.

Keep your interviewee close to the camera (while being aware of shot composition) so the on-cam mic has no issues picking up their voice. And don't speak over your interviewee. **Let them talk.** Ask short questions...let them give long, uninterrupted answers.