

Documentary Filmmaking: Edit Your Story

Objectives:

- Craft a story from your footage
- Edit your footage using Adobe Rush

Post-production is another pivotal step in the filmmaking process where the pieces start to come together and the final outcome of the project starts to take shape. In documentary filmmaking, unlike in fiction filmmaking, you won't necessarily know what footage you actually have and what story moments you have captured. Production in documentary projects are unpredictable so a lot of documentarians see the editing process as the moment where the story comes to fruition compared to the scripting stage. It can be a daunting task to pull a story together from hours of footage but always remember: stories are told by people. Refer back to your original theme and subject but be open to what narrative you can pull together.

Task One: Edit Your Three Minute Documentary

How to Craft a Story

Before you start editing you need to plan out what story you're going to edit together using the footage you have.

- Watch all of the footage- It sounds tedious, but it is vital you watch through every frame of the footage you have shot. You never know what small, magical moments you might find nestled amongst your footage that can be used for your narrative.
- Refer back to your subject and story- When reviewing each shot or scene, think about whether that fits into your subject matter and whether it adds to the story. If a scene doesn't add to the story or present new information for the audience, cut it from the film!
- Find the tone and structure- You might be producing a documentary, but you can still use the same story structure that a fiction film uses. Have a clear beginning, middle and end. Think about how you can have an inciting incident, a midpoint, a climax. You need to think about what footage to use that will set a clear tone: is your story more light-hearted or shocking?

How to Edit

You should now have a plan or outline of what story you're going to be editing together. Before you dive into editing software you need to keep in mind a few things.

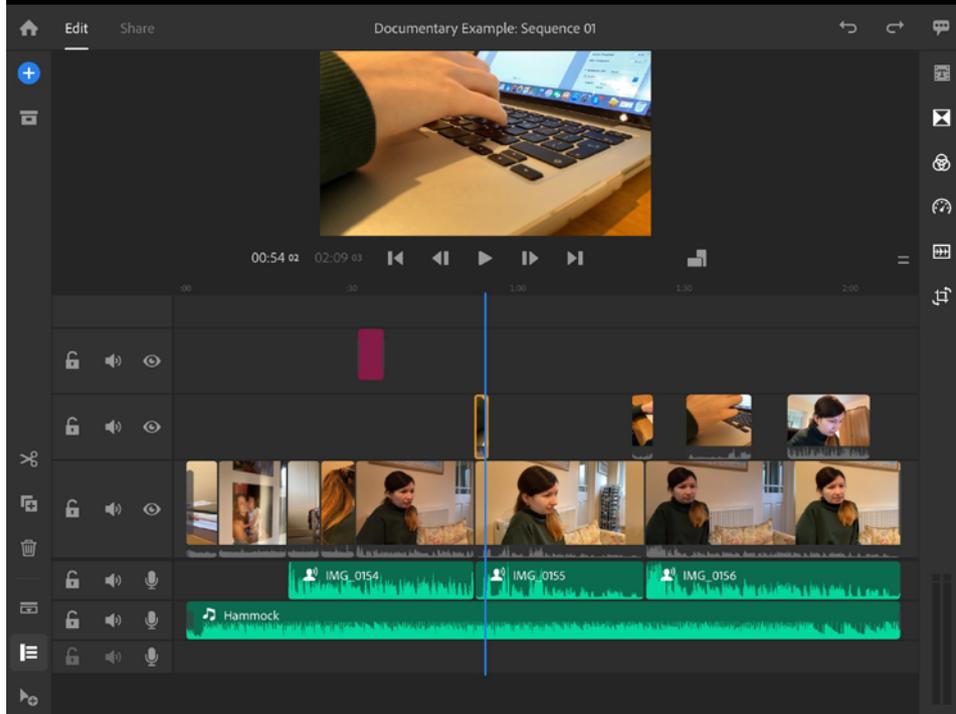
- Watch all of the footage- It is tempting to gloss over some of your footage, but it can't be stressed enough how important it is to watch every frame of the footage you have recorded!
- Introduce the language and story early- When thinking about the structure of your narrative, use the beginning of the story to not only introduce the subject matter and the people involved, but also introduce on a technical level how you are telling the story. Think about the visual style in the shots you select and whether it adds to the story you're telling. The first few shots should tell the audience visually what kind of film they are watching.
- Balance character with story- It can be easy to jump from one plot point to another but if the runtime allows it, try to balance out the plot with some character moments. Of course, think about whether these moments add to the overall story, but seeing your interviewee complete a mundane task, might pace out the story better whilst adding some insight to your subject area.
- Use your B-Roll to enhance the story- Choose B-Roll footage that will add to your story and enhance what your interviewee is talking about. Use your B-Roll to balance character with story too and make the B-Roll relevant to the dialogue and scene happening.



Editing on Adobe Rush

Just like with camera equipment and camera phones, there are cheaper and simpler alternatives to expensive software (such as Final Cut Pro and Adobe Premiere Pro) to edit your films on. Most editing software still requires a small amount of money to purchase or use the software, but there are a few free applications and free trials to take advantage of. You will need an Adobe log in to use Adobe Rush, but for those without an Adobe subscription you can use the application to export three films for free.

Adobe Rush is a simpler version of Premiere Pro designed for mobile use that works across all devices and desktops; regardless if it is Apple or Android. There are tutorials for those using the application for the first time, but as with any software or piece of equipment: play around with it, experiment and have fun!



(source- Gavin Spoons NUA)

Conclusion:

You can never predict exactly what will happen when shooting a documentary but knowing how to conduct interviews and how to shoot an interview alongside B-Roll footage will make sure you are prepared as you can be. Whatever application you end up using to help with shooting, have a play around with the functions available and do some test shoots before going into production. Have fun with it!

Further resources:

[Screenskills](#)

[BFI Film Academy](#)

[Doc Society](#)



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Useful Links

Creative Careers: <https://discovercreative.careers/#/>

UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>



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