Lesson: Vlog like a pro

Learn ways to master the craft of vlogging.

Build a direct connection to your community

YouTube's top creators have grown their communities into the millions, often by being their authentic selves on camera. But for beginners, talking into a camera lens can feel a little weird. Fear not, we’ve got some guidelines to get you comfy with the art of vlogging. And remember, the more you practice, the better you’ll likely become.

Talking to viewers in an authentic way on camera is often what makes the difference between an audience and a community. An audience is made up of listeners. A community is willing to follow you from video to video and interact with your videos. Essentially, many of them consider you a friend.

It sounds easy enough, right? Just sit down with your camera and start chatting away. But the reality is, this isn't that easy for a lot of people. After all, the lens can seem kind of scary, and being in front of it can feel like public speaking. If you can work past that feeling and push your comfort zone a little, there are huge potential benefits.
The benefits of vlogging

If you’re not sure about putting yourself on camera for the world to see, it’s perfectly understandable. However, there are serious perks to this format. Consider some of the benefits:

1. **Building a more loyal community.** Vlogging gives your fans access to the real you, and this can help create a more dedicated community that’ll follow you, even as your channel evolves over time.

2. **Connecting with people like you around the world.** Viewers will get to know the real you, opening up the potential for people around the world who share your same interests and sensibilities to communicate with you and each other.

3. **Uploading videos that are often easier to make.** Vlogs typically aren’t as hard to produce as other videos. Sometimes, they’re simply recorded with a hand-held camera or smartphone, and all in one take. Therefore, it can be much easier to make a lot of videos.

4. **Operating a more sustainable channel.** With easier-to-make videos, you can operate a more sustainable channel with consistent content. This may help you balance YouTube with the rest of your life.

6 ways to be conversational
Not sure how to actually make a vlog? Here are some popular types. One thing to note is that they’re all conversational, using a relaxed or informal tone. It’s like you’re there in the room talking to friends.

1. **Personal topic:** The first thing a lot of people think about when they hear “vlogging” is someone documenting a day in their personal life. This is effective because the creator is opening themselves up to the audience, usually from home, and sharing some of their inner thoughts. Audiences can find this fascinating because it feels like they’re getting a peek into someone else’s life.

2. **General topic:** With this type, you can still talk directly to your viewers in a personal way, but the subject is not your personal life. Rather, it’s something more general, like a product review, advice, travel video, or tutorial.

3. **Storytelling:** Telling stories into the camera is another great way to be conversational. Perhaps it’s what happened last week on your way to work, or the hilarious story about the first time your Uncle Travis tried water skiing. Maybe it’s funny, sad, or simply interesting. Either way, a compelling tale told well can make for a very watchable vlog.

4. **Fictional character:** Even scripted, narrative videos can be conversational, when an actor is playing the character of a vlogger. Does it work? Just look at some of the most successful scripted projects on YouTube, such as The Guild, the Emmy-winning Lizzie Bennet Diaries, and Breaking Out. Each involved a fictional character talking to the lens. The audience likely knew the people on camera were playing a role, but they still enjoyed the direct-address style.

5. **Supplemental videos:** What if you don’t want the main videos you produce to be vlogs? You can still be conversational in supplemental videos. These can be separate from your main content, or attached to the beginning and/or end of videos. This could be a casual greeting to your viewers beforehand or a call-to-action afterwards.

6. **Responding to comments:** Subscribers are usually super excited to hear you call out their name in a video. Responding to comments—especially on camera—shows that you’re listening, you care what they think, and that you’re willing to interact. All of this builds fan loyalty. If you don’t want to make a vlog like this, even simply responding in the comments can help.

See it in action
Personal topic

This personal vlog from Judy, of ItsJudysLife, shows her at home, comfortable, and talking about what’s been going on in the life of her family.

General topic

Marques Brownlee's vlog is an in-depth review of a smartphone. He's at home, talking to the camera and being his true self, but not discussing personal details.

Storytelling

In between producing short films, filmmaker Olan Rogers tells stories. Pay close attention to his relaxed, casual tone—as if he's speaking to his best friend.

Fictional character

This first episode of Breaking Out starts with a personal vlog, then transitions to a more traditional style of scripted entertainment.

Supplemental video

These conversational, handheld updates from the filmmakers at WongFuWeekends remind viewers that there are real people behind the glossy short films typically produced on their channel.

Responding to comments

Sandi, of the CutePolish channel, responds to some of her fans' comments. Notice how she even put a hashtag in the title to encourage more questions.

12 production tips to be great on camera

Now let’s dig into the details of what you should consider when getting ready to talk to the camera. Keep in mind, this typically works best when you’re authentic and let your true personality shine through.

1. **Have a point:** Successful vloggers often have a singular point that is made clear in the title and thumbnail, which they deliver in the video. Have a clear
idea of what you want to say, and stick to that topic (a list of bullet points can help you stay on track). Check out the tips from Hank Green's vlog.

2. **Pick your location:** The location can communicate a lot about who you are and what you're talking to the camera about. Experiment with shooting while seated in your house, or while walking, which can add interesting visuals to the background.

3. **Think about your look:** Viewers decide if they want to watch a video within the first five seconds, and how you present yourself can matter. Do you want to appear polished and clean cut? Or perhaps cool and casual?

4. **Find the light:** Bright, full lighting is usually ideal as it maximizes image color and sharpness. Soft light is most flattering on skin tones, whether it's sunlight through a curtain, or diffuse light from an electric bulb.

5. **Frame your shot:** Consider placing the camera as close as you're comfortable with, keeping in mind that many of your viewers will likely be watching on small screens. Think about the height of the tripod and your position in the frame. Some creators like to have their head directly in the center, while others like placement towards the sides. And last but not least, don't forget to focus the camera!

6. **Be close to the mic:** It's best to start with a clean, clear recording since sound is sometimes more critical than the picture quality. If viewers can't hear you, your message might get lost. Try to get close to the camera mic, or get an external mic with a range that will reach you. For more on good audio, dive into our lesson on recording sound.

7. **Choose your tone:** Your tone is your general demeanor or attitude, and it's directly tied to your brand. What do you want to communicate to your audience about who you are? Cool? Confident? Sarcastic? A lot of creators are high-energy and super positive, but you don't have to be. Experiment with your tone and allow it to evolve naturally over time. In general, it's a good idea to sit or stand casually, and to speak as if you're addressing a single person.

8. **Get comfortable:** Practice, practice, practice! Make video after video, even if you never upload them. Watch what you've recorded and make a checklist of what to improve. Chances are, you'll get better and become more comfortable. When you're ready to evolve and grow consider uploading the videos and get feedback from your audience.

9. **Add energy:** Most successful creators tend to really amp their volume and
enthusiasm. Once you feel comfortable enough on camera, consider trying this yourself. If you're normally at a 5 by way of energy, try to dial up to an 8 or 9 to really show your passion and to get viewers on board. Of course if your preference is a cool, calm demeanor instead, that also works.

10. **Lead with awesome:** Derek of Veritasium uses: leading with awesome is all about “front-loading” your video with the best part, or teasing it out. This can help capture viewer attention and keep them from clicking away. Derek explains it well in his video here.

11. **Edit for pacing:** Jump cuts are an editing technique where you make cuts in the middle of the same shot, or of similar shots to remove the “uhs” and “ums” and edit together segments. Love it or hate it, it’s a way to improve the pace of your videos and make them more narratively pleasing. Some people make cuts in the middle of sentences, some after each sentence, while others don’t use jump-cuts at all and any way is fine. Get more tips on editing.

12. **Upload and get discovered:** Remember to package the video in a way that’s true to its content. Try to make your thumbnail, title, and description reflect what you’re talking about. We call it “delivering on the promise of the video” so viewers are happy that they clicked on it!

Above all, talk about what you love, be yourself, and try not to be overly critical of yourself. Being unique and authentic can make a vlog enjoyable to watch.

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**Try it**

What makes you authentic on camera?

Which type of vlog do you think would work best for your channel?

**Sign in** to save your answers.

**Check your knowledge**
What’s the best way to get better audio for your vlog?

- Shout into the mic so it can pick up your voice.
- Use hum and noise removers when editing.
- Get closer to the microphone.
- Turn on the automatic sound mixer inside the camera.

Sign in first if you want to save your results.