



environmental
defence
INSPIRING CHANGE





environmental
defence

presents



Young Reporters
for the environment



YOUNG REPORTERS

FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Youth-Led Environmental Journalism

Guide to Filming like an Environmental Journalist



www.youngreporters.ca

YOUNG REPORTERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Youth-Led Environmental Journalism



**Young Reporters
for the environment**

YOUNG REPORTERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT is an international project from the *Foundation for Environmental Education*. In Canada it is coordinated by *Environmental Defence*.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE

We are Canada's most effective environmental action organization. We challenge, and inspire change in government, business and people to ensure a greener, healthier and prosperous life for all.

FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (FEE) is a non-governmental and non-profit organization aiming to promote sustainable development through environmental education (formal school education, training of staff and general awareness raising). FEE is mainly active through our five environmental education programs: *Blue Flag*, *Eco-Schools*, *Young Reporters for the Environment*, *Learning about Forests* and *Green Key*.



environmental
defence
INSPIRING CHANGE



Hey, Young Reporters!

If you're reading this guide it's because you care about the environment. You understand that film illuminates difficult subjects and creates an emotional reaction, and you are interested in learning how to use it to get people interested in important environmental issues in their communities.

You also might know that by submitting a film to **Canada's Next Green Journalist** you have the chance to have your video featured on **www.youngreporters.ca**, win cool prizes, and use your video to gain valuable attention on a pressing issue.

In this guide, you will discover everything you need to know to become an effective *Young Reporter for the Environment*.

This guide is full of tips for shooting great films from filmmaker *Stephen Milton*. By the time you're finished, you will have an excellent piece that will educate people about a significant environmental issue in your community.

Before you jump in, check out the next page for a brief overview about everything you need to know to submit your piece, and then you are good to go!

With students from all across Canada, we can't wait to see everyone's videos. So what are you waiting for?

YOUNG REPORTERS TEAM

yre@environmentaldefence.ca

Editor's Guidelines

Part of the fun of the contest is the chance to have your video featured on www.youngreporters.ca and to win cool prizes. In order to be eligible, there are just a few quick things you'll need to keep in mind:

1. Videos should be about the following topics:

- **climate change**
- **coastlines**
- **energy**
- **water**
- **agriculture**
- **cities**
- **waste**
- **biodiversity**

2. Make sure you include **local** content. We're interested in how this topic affects your community!

3. Your video should be **no more than 3 minutes** in length.

4. Your video should be in either documentary or reporter/interview style.

THAT'S IT!
Now let the
filming begin...



YOUNG REPORTERS
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Youth-Led Environmental Journalism



Young Reporters
for the environment

Top Tips for Filmmaking

If you've got an eye for bold imagery and believe that a film can tell the perfect story, then this guide is for you. Becoming an effective filmmaker will take a little practice, but the process will also be fun and leave you with a great film and super skills.



Stephen Milton is a Canadian documentary film producer and writer. For the past twenty years, he has conceived and produced many science and history television programs for the Discovery Channel, National Geographic and History Television. In this guide, he has put together 6 steps for making great films. Use this guide as a quick overview on how to shoot films, or check out www.youngreporters.ca if you want more filmmaking advice.

Step #1: Decide what you have to work with

All journalism tells a story. And having a rough idea of the story you want to tell before you hit the streets with your camcorder will make it easier.



Some questions you might want to ask:

What's the problem? *Green journalism is about fixing environmental problems. So what problem do you want to fix, and what pictures of the problem do people need to see? It doesn't have to be complicated. You know your part of the world better than us. But whatever subject you choose, you'll need video of it.*

What's the solution? *Making a video is different than writing a story or doing radio. You need pictures of every bit of the story you want to tell. So if you're doing a video about cutting down trees, you'll probably need good shots of a healthy forest.*

Visualizing the invisible. *Since many environmental solutions don't exist yet, you may need to use a little visual imagination to show people what the future may look like. Try to think of visual symbols that can stand for what you're talking about. So, in a city that doesn't have a blue box campaign, you might want to film a warehouse full of boxes to show how many blue boxes will be needed to create a recycling program.*



Who can you talk to? *Most good stories are about people. So make sure you have people who can explain what's going on, why they want something fixed, or how they're helping fix it. They don't have to be experts. They could be someone who just lives nearby. Try to choose people who are passionate about the issue - they're more interesting.*

Step #2: Write a script

Most folks do a grocery list before they go to the supermarket. Making a video is no different. Spending time sketching out what you want to show will make things easier, helping you get the video you need, and making your story as short as it can be.

That's right, keep it short. Check out popular videos on YouTube. They're not long, just a few minutes. To be eligible for **Canada's Next Green Journalist**, keep your video under 3 minutes in length. That usually means a script that is no longer than two pages.

Sounds short, doesn't it? Writing a shooting script before you film anything can save you a lot of wasted time out in the field.

Your script might change later and that's okay. Just make sure you have one before you get going. You can't change your plan if you don't have a plan.

Stephen's Top Tips:

Make it current. *People care about what's happening now. It's like the news. It shows what happened today through pictures. Your video should too.*

Keep it local. *Even if you want to do something on a global issue, like climate change, make sure your story is about your community. If you live in Manitoba, for example, focus on Manitoba rather than Antarctica.*

Keep it simple. *TV news isn't complicated. Less information makes it easier for others to understand.*

Think of the last TV news story you remember. Chances are you remember it because of something you saw, not an expert talking about facts.

Keep it safe. *We don't want you to get hurt. So run your ideas by an adult before you hit the streets.*

FOR MORE TIPS FROM
STEPHEN, PLEASE VISIT
www.youngreporters.ca

Step #3: Do your interviews first

That's right! Speak to people before you get video of things like a forest or power plant or highway. They might give you ideas of what to film. And they will help you tell a story, because chances are you'll be using their words in the finished video.

The best interviews are about feelings (hope, anger, fear), not facts. And everyone's favourite subject is themselves, so make it easy for them to speak about, well, them. You'll get better interviews, and more interesting videos.



Stephen's Top Tips:

Ask open-ended questions. If someone can answer something with “Yes” or “No”, the question isn’t very good. For example, “Do you like the windmill?” isn’t a good question, but “How do you feel when you see the windmill?” is. You want longer answers, so you have more quotes to pick from when you edit.

Make them talk about feelings. Let’s say you’re doing a story on toxic waste. It’s better to ask someone how it makes them worried for their family’s health than to ask about the chemicals. The more human interest the people you interview give, the better your video will be.

Don’t be afraid to ask the same question again. It’s your interview, so make sure you get the best answers you can. You don’t have to be rude, but if someone gets flustered, drop the question and move on. Make a note of it, and ask it again later on in the interview.

Get them to look at you. Interview subjects shouldn’t look straight into the camera. An interview is just like a conversation. So have them look at you, standing just beside the camera, to make them comfortable. While filming them, try to change the frame size on alternate questions. So, for the first question, put them in a medium shot from the middle of their chest to a bit over

the top of their head. For the next shot, zoom in for a close up, with just their head in the frame.

Do it in a quiet place. Make sure you can hear the person clearly. You don’t want background noise like traffic making it hard for others to hear. The magic of editing lets you put their voice over top of pictures, but they don’t need to be near what the pictures are about to talk about them. Remember that half of film is sound. So make sure to test the sound when you get started filming to make sure it’s okay.

Make them do something. Watch the TV news, and you’ll see people typing or walking or reading something. Getting a few seconds of the person you’re interviewing doing something natural will let you use that shot to introduce them. This can be as simple as walking down a street, answering the phone or even looking out a window. Don’t forget this!

FOR MORE TIPS FROM
STEPHEN, PLEASE VISIT
www.youngreporters.ca

Step #4: Get your pictures

Making a video isn't the same as taking a picture, but some of the tips in the *Young Reporters'* guide to photography can help. It's on www.youngreporters.ca and you might want to check it out.

The difference with video is things move. Cars, animals, countryside, a recycling plant all move—even if it's just with the wind. And your camera can move, too.

Just remember: you're going to edit things, so you don't need tons of video. You might only use five seconds of one picture. But getting different kinds of video will help when you get into the editing booth.



Stephen's Top Tips:

Get things that move. Video, like TV or YouTube, is about showing things in motion. You wouldn't watch a video of something perfectly still. So get people doing things, or cars moving, or the wind blowing a tree.

Get different angles. Some of your video will be used when you or someone you've interviewed is talking. Getting different angles—some from far away, some close-up—of the same thing gives you more options in the editing room.

Move your camera. Not up and down, or around in circles. That wouldn't be very easy to watch. But if you want to show, say, a forest or a traffic jam or a bus depot filled with parked buses, moving the camera—especially if it's on a tripod to keep it steady—from left to right will give you a moving shot even if what you're filming is still. Handheld cameras give pretty good shots if you walk at an even pace. Try standing on an escalator or shoot out of the windows of moving vehicles.

Beware of moving the camera too much. That will just make the viewer dizzy. A quick move that stops and settles in on a moving object can make for a cool transition.

FOR MORE TIPS FROM STEPHEN, PLEASE VISIT
www.youngreporters.ca



Step #5: Write your final script

After the filming is done, you're almost ready to edit. But before you start cutting, revise your script to reflect what you actually shot. This is called the assembly script. There might be big differences between what you expected to get and what you actually shot.

Try to figure out what you have and what you need on paper before starting a big edit. Editing is like going into a forest - it's easy to get lost in all the trees and forget what you went in there to get.

Part of writing that assembly script is reviewing the stuff that you shot. Sit down and take notes, describing what is on each tape or disc, taking note of where it appears. Once you have notes of everything you shot, you'll know where to get that great shot of a tree blowing in the wind without having to search.



If narration is part of your film - and your script - you need to keep it short and to the point. Try this: sit down with a friend for a few minutes and tape record your conversation. Talk about what you're doing on the weekend, or your favourite sports team or what you've got on your iPod. It doesn't matter. Then, play it back to yourself and write it down. You'll find you speak very differently than you write—lots of short sentences, almost always in the present tense. That's how you should write your script. Just like you speak.

To write the assembly script, get a piece of paper, and on the left hand side list all the pictures you want to show in order, and for how long. Remember, pictures can include people speaking. You'll need to watch the video you've shot and pick which seconds you want to use first.

On the right hand side, list what sounds will go with those pictures. This might be sounds of the pictures themselves, someone being interviewed, you speaking or even music.

Make sure you include how long you want various pictures on screen for, and time how long the words—yours or from an interview—are. And remember, you don't need someone speaking for every second of video. It's okay to have images without someone speaking.

Step #6: Editing

Now, with your assembly script in hand, it's time to edit. Put the chunks of your film together in the order you have on paper. You may need to record some narration, so do that too.

Lay it all out. It's going to be messy at first, but that's fine. The good news is that you have grown up watching news reports, so you will be able to see when something isn't working because it is too long or boring. Editing is about cutting out the boring parts so that your story is short, succinct and interesting. You don't have to tell the whole story, just the interesting parts.

You'll find that you need fewer words than you expected. That's because a picture is worth a thousand words. A good shot of a tree or pollution will say more than many lines of narration droning on about it.

Editing is really where a film comes together, so give yourself some time, and take breaks. A fresh eye really helps. It's not uncommon for a film's shape to change in the editing room - the shots you filmed for the beginning end up at the end, an interview gets dropped, something you got by accident turns out to be the best part.



Submitting Your Piece

By the time you have finished this book, hopefully you will have tried out all the tips and tricks and created a video you want to submit to **Canada's Next Green Journalist**. You now only have to submit it for a chance to win amazing prizes. It's easy!

Log on to www.youngreporters.ca. Go to the "Enter Canada's Next Green Journalist" section and fill in the requested information - this will make you eligible for Canadian prizes and to have your piece featured on the website.

Winners of Canada's Next Green Journalist will automatically be considered for the international competition.

For more information visit the website, or email: yre@environmentaldefence.ca

Thanks for participating in **YOUNG REPORTERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT!** Check out the website for more ideas to stay involved with environmental issues in your area.

YOUNG REPORTERS
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Youth-Led Environmental Journalism



Young Reporters
for the environment

www.youngreporters.ca

