

Shooting video of yourself on a smartphone

First: Use the highest resolution your phone allows. Check the settings for your camera app. If 4K is an option, choose that. 1080p (full HD) is the next step down, and 720p is the minimum option.

Here are five areas to think about for a good video:

1. Lighting

- Light your face. If there is a window, it should be in front of you (out of view) or to the side — never behind you. A desk lamp just behind the phone camera will help light your face. Better yet, use two desk lamps, at the 10 and 2 positions.
- If you are outdoors, position yourself in the shade rather than in the sun. This will minimize shadows and harsh differences in lighting. If you are in the sun, shoot early or late in the day, when the sun is low in the sky and the light hits your face from the side rather than directly above.

2. Stabilization

- A shaky camera is distracting and can even make your audience nauseous. Stabilize your phone camera. A mini tripod works great. If you don't have a tripod, set it on books, boxes, etc.

3. Framing

- Use landscape mode (horizontal)—never portrait mode.
- Let your head and shoulders comfortably fill most of the frame, with some room to spare above and to the sides. The shot should feel comfortable, as if you are sitting across a table from someone — not up in their face, not half a room away.
- Do not zoom by “pinching” your fingers on the screen. This lowers the resolution. If adjustment is needed, just move the phone closer to or farther from your face.
- Maintain eye contact with the camera, which equates to eye contact with your audience.

4. Camera angle

- Set the camera at your eye level.
- If you are alone, use the phone's rear-facing camera (on-screen) so you know exactly what the shot looks like. OR ... if you cannot see the camera view as you shoot, do a 10-second practice shot and then watch it to make sure you are in exactly the right place.
- Minimize distractions in the background. Be especially careful that it doesn't look like a background object is “growing” out of your head.
- If you wear eyeglasses, either remove them or adjust the camera angle to minimize glare or reflection.

5. Sound

- Audio quality is even more important than video quality. Find a quiet place to shoot. This will usually be indoors in a room that does not have a lot of echo. Minimize background noise: fans, heating and cooling vents, music, traffic, birds and insects. All of those will be more distracting than you realize. Be aware of background noise as it occurs while you are filming, and pause if necessary.
- Silence your phone and put it on airplane mode while filming, to avoid calls and messages.
- Use an external microphone if possible. If you do not have one, check your phone's earpieces. They may have one built in.
- If no external microphone is available, the phone's built-in microphone can work as long as there is no background noise.
- Speak clearly and at a volume just above your normal speech. Do not shout.
- As you record, include about 10 quiet seconds before and after you speak. This helps with editing.

If you are shooting video of people singing ...

- *Audio:* It is especially important to minimize echo in the room. If there is little or no background noise, you can also try shooting the video outdoors.
- *Visual:* Follow *Lighting* guidelines above. Position the camera as close as possible while still showing everyone in the group.