

Camera Operation – Check List

The things you need to check in your camera and view-finder.

1. White Balance

Sunlight or artificial light – change location or where camera is set up and you will need to check white balance.

2. Shutter Speed

The normal setting for your shutter speed is 50 fps. If you need to film fast moving objects then increase the shutter speed. Only decrease the shutter speed if you need more light, but beware if you have a lot of movement the picture will “strobe”. If you see this “strobe” effect in your view-finder, and you don’t want it, then invariably the shutter speed is on the wrong setting.

3. Gain

Under normal circumstances and in good light conditions your “Gain” should be set at “0”. The gain acts as an amplifier in low-light conditions, therefore if you need extra light you can use your gain. The higher the gain you use the more the picture quality is affected. At night-time using 18db of Gain will help you get a picture but it will be very “grainy”. Try not to go over 9db of Gain.

4. Exposure

Getting the correct exposure is essential. Make sure the main area you wish to get right, e.g. your interviewee is correctly exposed. Look for texture. Look for a “good black” and a “good white”. Not too dark and not too bright. f1.6 means the iris is wide open and you have little light, f11 means that there is a lot of light and the iris is small. In bright sunlight you may have to add an ND1 or ND2 filter. These filters act like sunglasses on the lens and help reduce the amount of strong light going into the camera. The ND filters do not change the exposure values.

5. Audio Levels

Your audio levels need to be set before recording. The camera mic should be on Auto and does not need to be set. The external or main mic should be recording at approx 12db - it should never “peak” into the red area, this means the audio is distorting. Wear headphones when recording and also check your meters that you’re recording at the correct level.

6. **Focus**

Focussing your camera is an operation that you need to do over and over again. Focus on the main subject that you want to show in your frame. If you move the camera, no matter how small, or change location then you need to re-focus. To focus on the area you want - Zoom in, focus and then compose your shot. Low-light can affect your focus dramatically so be careful.

7. **Frame**

Think about the composition of your picture. Take care with head-room. People should be talking "into frame" not "out of frame". Remember the "rule of thirds." Your picture should feel balanced and informative, even when you use close-ups.

8. **R e c o r d**

Finally, press your record button when you have checked all the above features. Start the camera recording at least 5 seconds before you actually start filming the shots you want, and try to leave a 2 second run out at the end of your shot.