

Chapter 7 – Sound

HOW SOUND BEHAVES

- Bounces off hard surfaces. Therefore the echo. Therefore each space, each room has its own peculiar character. Called the “ROOM NOISE.”
- Sound travels thru matter, not just air – therefore handling noise in mics.

LISTENING

- Before you shoot, stand still and really listen for all ambient sound (background sound). You may think it's a very small sound but in post-production you may not be able to fix it.
- Most such noise, especially intermittent noise – utensils, vehicles, airplanes, TV sets blaring – will be impossible to rid of and will make the later editing a nightmare.
- Think about what or who you will be miking, and what your options are in getting the sound on tape. Don't be afraid to experiment with different mic placements, but don't gamble an important project on a method you've never tried before.
- Anticipate all sounds which could start up again while you are shooting and figure out how to prevent them. If cannot, make sure your mic is on the subject so you can capture the main audio track.

MICROPHONE TIPS

- Never tap or blow on the mic.
- Never yell/make an extraordinary loud sounds to close to it.
- Keep on the foam windshield its good protection.
- Place mic near the mouth but below it. The collar of a shirt is perfect location.
- Wear headphones while shooting otherwise you will not know how to control the audio.

TYPES OF MICROPHONES

There are many microphones in the market but these are the common two you will hear about and use.

Shotgun Mics – these are very directional mics and are therefore popular. This means they pick up sounds occurring directly in front of them most of all, as well as a little of the sounds happening off to either side. But shotgun mics do not capture much sound to the extreme sides of the mic.

Lapel / Collar Mics - with cable, or wireless type. Also called the Lavalier — Another popular mic for video use is the lavalier type. In India, they are also called lapel (meaning collar) mics.

A disadvantage of lavalier mics is the fact that they tend to be single purpose microphones - they rarely sound good if handheld or used away from the body. While the lavalier mic's small size makes it easy to tack on to the collar of the person you are interviewing, it is not the best microphone to use in other situations such as picking up sound bytes from a group of people at the same time outdoors. Tip – Try to keep the wire of the lavalier mic hidden from the camera, either by running the wire under a shirt or taking the wire over the shoulder and then letting the wire hang down the back.

AUDIO EDITING

Audio Filters:

If you are editing yourself, you can try and use audio filters to improve audio that's been poorly recorded, if you can't record it again. However, this is generally very painstaking and achieves results that rarely sounds as natural as well-recorded original sound. So, remember, not everything can be fixed with editing... Listen carefully to the sound when you shoot, as it is less visible than visuals but equally important to the final product!

When using audio filters, you have to have some idea about approximately what frequency the sound you are trying to get rid of, is at. If you're trying to reduce wind sound, that is often a low frequency, unless it's whistling wind, which could be a higher frequency. If you're trying to make someone's voice clearer, you could try increasing the 'gain' on the mids of an equalizer filter added to that audio clip.

A 3 band equalizer filter can be quite useful. The 3 band graphic EQ filter breaks the sound spectrum into the frequency range that the human ear can theoretically perceive, roughly 20 Hz to 20KHz, three different areas, low frequencies (roughly 80 Hz to 2,000 Hz), mid-range (roughly 400 Hz to 8,000 Hz) and high frequencies (roughly 5,000 Hz to 20,000 Hz). The three overlapping frequency ranges can be independently adjusted so that you can change the sound quality of just one portion of the sound you are editing.

Audio Transitions:

It's a good idea to fade in at the beginning of audio or music clips, cross fade between two different audio clips, or fade out at the end of audio clips, so as not to have abrupt changes in your soundtrack, which can jar your viewer.