

HOW TO VIDEOTAPE A HUNT or any outdoor adventure sequence By Dan Bertalan

To create a “documentary” feel when videotaping your hunts, try the following pointers to help you better portray the “essence” of the hunting experience. Without that essence, it’s just another arrow or bullet being shot to make something become dead. This documentary style not only adds depth to your story, it’s without question both the easiest way to video a hunt in the field and later produce it with a “you’re part of the action” feel. Here’s how.

Just follow the general shoot list of ideas for videotaping the hunt below. Get the kill shot and cut-ins (close-ups of the pre and post action) to showing the entire sequence of the action unfolding. The only thing you won’t video is the typical and often stereotyped talking head to the camera as a hero. Instead, you can create the whole story by doing a setup interview with the on-camera talent or hero. However, you still need to video a hero-recovery of the animal, just no talking heads addressing the camera lens.

After you’ve taken the animal(s), select an attractive setting with a background of texture and contrast (no overexposed sky or water backgrounds please). Wear the same camo or hunting garb. Also use the bow and arrows as a prop in your hands, across your shoulder, whatever looks and feels natural. Now setup the camera – tripod is a must - with active shotgun mic about 3 feet from the “story teller”. Better yet, if you have a wireless, use it, especially if there is distracting background noise such as a barking dog or chainsaw. Just make sure the mic is working by using headphones and that the meter levels are set correctly. If the wind is hitting the mic, cover it with a fuzzy sock.

Frame the person (storyteller-hero hunter) with 1/3 framing so that 2/3 of scene is in front of the person’s face. Have the teller look ¼ toward camera but not at the camera. Just imagine a 60-Minutes type interview. Also set the camera to manual focus (or it might focus on the background) and set the manual F Stop (iris) on your camera to a low setting so the background is slightly out of focus but your teller is in sharp focus. This will give it a quality film look. **Note:** To get all the tech tips on setting up to videotape the interview, see that Tip Article on the website.

Now you’re ready to ask the teller to tell some stories. Here are the questions to ask the teller as you stand slightly off (2 feet) to the side of the camera. Keep the conversation moving and improvise with questions. Encourage facial and hand gestures/movements. **Note:** For a more comprehensive list of interview questions, check out that article back on the website.

- What brought you to this place on this hunt?
- What were your first impressions and feelings of this hunting environment?
- What did you feel when you saw your first quality animal on this trip?
- What challenges did you face in getting the shot?
- Why did you shoot the particular animal that you killed?
- Tell us how you felt from the moment you spotted your animal to the moment you finally touched its antlers?
- What were you thinking and feeling seconds before the shot?
- What did you learn about yourself from this hunt?
- Who did you wish could have been with you on this hunt?
- What is the personal meaning or essence of this hunt for you?
- How are these animals so different than similar species?
- What primal feelings do bowhunting these animals bring out in you?
- Why are these animals such a neat critter to bowhunt?
- What other predatory animal is similar to you on this hunt and why?

- Describe your feelings about finally filling your tag and what it meant to you?

On some of the more personally revealing questions, zoom in a little to fill the frame with the teller's face from their forehead to their chin. Zoom back for more general questions.

Also, here's a *Generic Shoot List* that you customize for your production or type of adventure.

**Check off each shot that you complete. Please try to shoot each scene at least twice.*

1. Shoot list for the Setting

- **Aerial view** of place as you fly in. Along the way and of camp or lodge. ELS, wide shots. Also static shots inside plane, pilot, controls, passengers, wing, prop.
- **Planned pans of countryside**; ELS, wide showing typical settings, take several, 10 seconds each. Each shot should begin and or end with object of significance such as camp, landmark or hunter.
- **ZIs or ZO's from general setting** to location or event that characters will be in. 10 seconds each, Examples; ZO from mnt top to hunter returning to camp. ZI from countryside to hunter entering woods.
- **Static shots, wide angle**, ELS of setting with foreground and background elements. Different locations and different times of day. Shot stats with scenery and/or people in action.
- **All of above with countryside**, camp or lodge, town or historic elements.
- People/faces are some of the more interesting elements of setting. Capture all that relate – in action with MS's and CU's. Example; guide saddling up packhorse. MS, CU, ECU.
- The setting will also be made up of **smaller elements. Shoot CU's and ECU's of**; plants, berries, mushrooms, animals, insects, rocks, water, spider webs, ferns, frost, fences, tree trunks, anything that's small and moves like grass heads in the wind.(try rack focus, or small F-stop).

2. Shoot list for the Characters - players should never look at the camera. 3rd person.

- If your characters are arriving by boat, plane, horseback or foot, set the stage by a LS of the water, air strip, horse trail, or path. Fancy example; rack focus of leaves that changes focus to hunters walking in distance.
- **Shoot LS & MS of the boat, plane, horse, or appropriate stage setters** as your characters arrive.
- **Intro characters to setting with action introduction.** LS, MS, ZI, Tilt up. ¼ past frame. Example, tilt up from trail to hunter walking past. ZI from wide woods to hunter climbing into treestand.
- **Reveal characters through action** – tighter shots; fixing gear, calling game, setting up, heading out, dressing, ITF/OOF. Each shot in progressive action should be tighter, and tighter.
- **CU of faces to reflect thoughts**, glassing, looking, sneaking, pausing, drinking, adjusting hat.
- **Record "internalization" voice** – *"I never imagined I'd be here doing this for these reasons"* Setup with good ambience background and record several short reflective takes. Use earphones!
- **Reveal players through interaction** – Hunter/guide ITF and discuss, *"Here's our plan today."* Videotape three times; once with all players MS, once with prime player CU talking, once with player 2 Cu talking, nodding, looking.

NOTE – All shots are tripod or treepod static's unless noted different.

- **Hunter going out.** Leaving camp or transportation. LS, MS.

- **Hunter getting to hunting spot.** MS, CU, walking, climbing, crossing creeks, over logs, rocks, MS quartering on and away shots, CU feet through leaves, water, shot of focal object (flower) with hunter passing in distance.
- **Hunter reaching spot/stand.** MS all action getting into position or in stand. CU feet or hands in action. CU's gear into stand.
- **Hunter getting ready.** MS's and CU's getting gear ready and settling in for upcoming action. Use your imagination and let the hunter do what they would normally. If you need them to redo a shot, direct them for the best angle and lighting.
- **Hunter waiting for action to begin.** Lots of CU's and ECU's of face looking, glassing, head moving, reacting to sounds or objects in woods, rechecking gear.

2. The Action/game

- Shoot all the footage you can of the **game approaching. Always connect your hunter as much as possible with pans, zi's zo's, tilts.**
- If you have the luxury, ZIs and get as many CU's of the game in action as possible.
- Videotape any other game that offers quality footage.
- As the shot approaches, try to **re-connect the hunter and game.** Before the shot, do a slow ZI to the game ½ the frame height.
- **After the shot,** track on the game until it leaves then zo and pan back to hunter looking. (5 secs)
- If animal is spined or goes down, immediately pan back to hunter. (1 sec).

AFTER SHOT YOU MUST re-create the action sequence – NO waiting until later, take 15 minutes and do this now! (or you WILL regret it later)

This is a basic list for you to build on from what actually happened or could have happened.

- CU's and ECU's **hunter's face eyes** as they spot game
- All actions MS, CU's of **hunter getting up or into position**
- All actions MS, CU's ECU's of **hunter getting gear ready**, bow off, arrow on, fingers on
- All actions MS's and CU's of waiting and **moving into and during shot sequence.** Gear and hunter; biting lip, taking breath, bunching jaw, narrowing eyes, arrow tracking, sight rack focus, hand on bow, feet, hands, bow, ECU's eyes.
- **Reaction**, facial after shot, including watching game depart.

4. Gather gear and take up trail

- MS of hunter and guide **recapping what happened** and what to do now
- Re-shoot **same with CU's of faces** during pow-wow recap
- LS, MS of **trailing**, ¼ on and ¼ away.
- CU of **feet, bodies passing**
- **Capture action** – kneeling to inspect, looking ahead, sneaking forward, eyes arrow ready.

5. Discovery or game – shoot from several perspectives and angles – match action

- Moving camera **over shoulder** of hunter
- Stat tripod of **hunter ITF ¼ on** and ¼ away to game.
- AA zi to game with hunter
- **Wide angle on ground off nose of game** with hunter approaching from rear.
- LS, MS, ¼ on, ¼ away of hunter to game

6. Recap of hunt with game – single hunter reflective only, 2 players dialog recap

- Shoot MS with **game & players, recap** relative to theme or tension, 30,60,90 sec versions.
- Shoot CU **same again on hunter, again on guide or partner.**
- CU's and **ECU's of game parts**, antlers, eyes, ears, hooves, hide with match action of hands

- Plan ending to story shot. Example; CU handshake-Cu faces smiling-CU game-ECU eyes of hunter getting misty. Or, CU of hunter looking down then into distance and nodding.
- If lone hunter, get reflective looks and voice.