

Handout: Writing to Video

Prepared by Paula Otto

Why Video is So Important

In television, we have the advantage of telling our stories with video and sound as well as words. But the best video in the world won't have much impact if the words don't match. And a great story that has video that doesn't make sense – and doesn't match – won't be a great story after all.

What can we do to help ensure we're gathering the right video in the field and that we use it in the best way possible when we're editing?

- **Know Your Story Before You Go.** Do as much research as possible about your story before you go out into the field. With that research you can start to sketch out your story before you leave the newsroom. If you have a good idea of how you're going to tell the story, you know what video to get.
- **Communicate with Your Photographer.** If you're working with a photojournalist, he or she should know everything you know about the story. That means sharing your research and your preliminary thoughts about how you'll tell the story.
- **Be Open to Input from the Photojournalist.** The best stories are told by reporters and photojournalists who work together as a team. The photojournalists may capture some compelling footage or sound and suggest that's a strong way to open your story. For example, if you're doing a story about new recruiting restrictions for college sports teams, your photographer may suggest using a shot of the coach packing team t-shirts while saying "Everyone loves a t-shirt, I always take lots to give away."
- **Watch and Log Your Video.** It's impossible to write to video if you don't know what the video is! Even if you're on a tight deadline, you should be able to take a quick look at the video to get a sense of what you have.
- **Test Your Script.** You should show your script not only to your producer but also to your photographer to make certain he or she has all the necessary video. If not, you need to adjust your script!