

GENERATOR

Production: Getting Started

Education Resources



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GETTING STARTED

PRE-PRODUCTION

Many people say that the most important phase in the creation of a film is pre-production. Everything from the first production ideas through to preparing for the actual shoot is part of the pre-production phase. An engaging film is the direct result of strong ideas, effective planning and organised preparation. The filmmaking process takes time, and each production phase is critical to the creation of a successful product.

It is essential that filmmakers carefully plan and clearly outline the intent of their production. When commencing pre-production, filmmakers need to:

- Develop an idea, message or concept.
- Research and analyse their target audience.
- Decide which medium is best suited for expressing their ideas.
- Explore which genre will best suit their concept.

DEVELOPING THE IDEA

Filmmakers need creative inspiration to help spark their ideas before pre-production can begin, and some filmmakers work through a variety of brainstorming activities to motivate and challenge their creative thinking process. With a strong idea or purpose in mind, filmmakers can begin to think about the creative possibilities and style for their production. A strong idea also provides the necessary motivation to follow the project through to completion.

BRAINSTORMING

Using large sheets of butchers' paper, mind-map two to three possible ideas for a film concept – the more options the better.

- Write words, phrases, lines or poems to help spark your imagination.
- Select an unusual or everyday object to use as a device to drive the narrative of your story. A board game, kitchen appliance or even a gardening tool can inspire creative, abstract or quirky ideas.
- Cut out newspaper articles and magazine pictures or use old photographs that may help you select a possible message or issue to explore.
- Think about your own experiences. Do you have a personal story you are passionate about telling?

TARGET AUDIENCE

The next step in the pre-production process is to identify the target audience and consider the production possibilities that will communicate most effectively with that audience. Audience members observe, listen and respond in different ways. Contemporary audiences are generally more media savvy as they are experienced at interacting with the range of available media forms in new ways, spaces and locations. Emerging technology has increased filmmakers' accessibility to wider audiences and expanded opportunities for the public to interact with the moving image. Audience demand for innovative approaches to

filmmaking should be taken into consideration when selecting the medium most appropriate to communicating a message.

Whether a production is mainstream, niche or subcultural, its success relies upon initial in-depth research and understanding of the target audience. The diversity of the intended viewer must be considered, including:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Geographic location
- Cultural background
- Education
- Religion

SELECTING THE MEDIUM

With the intent of the production and target audience clearly defined, selecting the appropriate media form to tell the story is the next stage of the pre-production process. The most obvious choice for many filmmakers may be (digital) video, however other media forms, including photography, print and multimedia, may also be appropriate or provide greater room for innovative production ideas – particularly when one or more are fused together. The possibilities for communicating the intended message are endless.

Comparing and contrasting the limitations of the equipment and technology available will often reveal what media form best suits the purpose of the work as well as highlighting how that media form might shape the overall look, feel and content of the final product. Audience expectations and the viewing context should be considered when selecting the appropriate medium. It helps to think through the following steps:

- Visualise where the target audience will view the film.
- Explore the impact that different media forms might have in communicating with the target audience.
- List the advantages and limitations of each possible media form.
- Select the form that best suits the production intent and target audience.

SELECTING THE GENRE

Films, both narrative and non-narrative, can be classified by their genre, which is based on shared or recognisable codes and conventions such as structure, content, pattern or style. Contemporary genres have evolved as a result of blending and borrowing from the conventions of one or more popular genres. Some well-known genres are:

- Horror
- Science fiction
- Romance
- Western
- Musical
- War
- Fantasy
- Action

Studying genre reveals patterns of repetition and difference in films. Some films have identifiable similarities but may also contain elements that are used in innovative ways. Genres change over time, and a new genre can emerge when a filmmaker borrows or experiments with the conventions of other genres. The popularity and reshaping of different genres often highlights the values and attitudes deemed important by society at the time.

Watch the opening sequences of three to four films of the same genre and identify the conventions they share and the style they have in common, such as:

- Plot devices
- Thematic conventions
- Filmic techniques and style
- Location or setting
- Character types
- Visual imagery and symbols

During pre-production planning, filmmakers need to select a genre that best supports their intended message and suits their overall production style. The function of that genre and the influence of the production context should also be considered.

To support the planning process:

- Watch a range of films that provide new and innovative takes on established genres.
- Think about the reasons why a director may deliberately choose to reject the conventions of genre and what the implications of this may be.
- Consider how audience expectations may influence or result in new approaches to a genre.
- How will the selected genre tap into the audience's demand for innovation or change? What stylistic or conceptual approaches could be used?

Extending upon the process of pre-production planning, consider:

- The values and attitudes of the target audience.
- How the intended audience's values and attitudes might shape the way filmmaking conventions are used in the production.
- The impact the intended audience's values and attitudes have on the selection of the appropriate genre for the message.

To avoid limiting your creativity, try to consider genre as a broader category. Working with one or more sub-genres in mind may further extend the narrative possibilities of your work as well as the scope of your target audience.

While genre serves its purpose in categorising a film and simplifying the selection process for the audience member, it can also play a major part in the marketing and promotion of a film or television show. This may raise further ideas about the promotion and distribution process and about using a film's genre as a way of targeting mainstream or niche audiences.

- Consider how genre can be used as a marketing strategy and promotional tool.

- Why promote a film based on its genre?
- What impact might this have on the audience's selection and viewing preferences?

YOUR NOTES