



Tell Your Story With Power and Impact

Developing photographic and video skills for better visual communication

BY PETER WHITE

All of life is story—yours, mine, ours, from a million points of view, in various combinations and permutations, with endless possibilities. Stories of people and places, of individuals and congregations, at home here in Canada and around the world.

Real stories that inspire and challenge, encourage and disrupt. Authentic stories that make people think and make people feel.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada makes it possible

for you to tell your stories with excellence and share them with passion through the magazine, *Alliance.ca* (in print and online) and *Alliance Alive*, a DVD magazine.

Alliance.ca is not a news magazine but rather is a resource to Alliance churches. Its focus is on new paradigms in ministry, new initiatives and new projects. It is oriented to a deeper knowledge of the how and the why things are happening and changing and sharing ideas and concepts with

Real stories that inspire and challenge, encourage and disrupt

the larger Alliance constituency.

Alliance Alive is designed to show Alliance churches what God is doing through the Alliance in Canada and around the world. The video material you provide can be used both to tell your ministry story and as background footage for other Alliance productions.

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TAKING BETTER PHOTOGRAPHS

Despite all the emphasis today on new media, photography has not lost the power to move us. And although the narrative may help us better understand, it is through the photographs that we remember.

The ability to take interesting and engaging photos is a skill worth developing. Here are some practical tips to help in that process.

1. **Good composition.** This is the secret to great photos. Take a few seconds to visualize how you want the photo to look. Compose your shot to emphasize the subject and subordinate the details.
2. **Move in close.** Taking photos from too far a distance is a common mistake. The best shots are often the most simple. Move in close to eliminate excess details and capture emotion and intimacy.
3. **Avoid distracting backgrounds.** Plain ones often work best. And make sure nothing is sticking out of your subject's head like a tree, chimney, or utility pole.
4. **Sense of balance.** Resist the natural urge to place the subject in the centre of the photo. Instead, dissect the frame into thirds—horizontally and vertically. Place the subject in one-third of the frame. This gives the subject room to move in or out of the frame.
5. **Watch the light.** Next to the subject, light is the most important part of every photo. Find a spot where lighting is adequate or use the flash, even in daylight conditions. Avoid backlit or high contrast situations and keep the source of light at your back.
6. **Ministry context.** Avoid mass group shots (e.g. 150 people at a regional Bible study). Mix in

close-ups with long shots of larger groups. Show people in action doing various in-church and outreach activities.

7. **Map out the story.** Think ahead about what shots you'll need. Vary the shots. It takes different angles to tell a complete story.
8. **Photographing people.** When taking a picture of someone, hold the camera at the person's eye level to unleash the power of magnetic gazes and mesmerizing smiles. Provide candid activity shots in addition to people posing. Capture them both in various activities—worship, fellowship, and outreach—and in a variety of settings—church, home, workplace, etc.
9. **Identification and commentary.** Make sure all photos submitted are clearly identified and attach a commentary describing how each photo relates to your ministry work.
10. **Importance of high resolution.** Always take photos at the highest resolution possible. Make sure your digital camera has a memory that can produce images to a standard of at least 300 dpi in order to ensure quality reproduction in publications.
11. **Memory and backup.** Save your photos on a computer and clear your digital camera regularly. Carry a second memory stick or card in the event the camera's memory becomes full.
12. **Always be discrete.** When taking photos in public, use discretion according to the culture in which you are ministering. Judge each situation on its own merits and behave accordingly.

SHOOTING BETTER VIDEOS

Videos are the optimal vehicle for expression and communication. They are also the best tool

for connecting people.

What follows are some techniques to help you become more proficient in shooting videos that communicate your ministry message clearly and memorably.

1. **Focus—manual and auto.** Always use manual focus. Zoom in as tight as possible on the subject, focus the camera, and pull back to the size of shot you have chosen to record. Your scene will then be in focus, even when the subject moves away from the centre.
2. **Panning and zooming.** Avoid pans and zooms. But if you must, keep pans short, crisp and at a steady, controlled pace. To reduce zooming, record a long shot to establish the setting. Then record details of the scene, one by one, at close proximity and from various angles.

ANNOUNCEMENT



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Details coming soon to www.cmacan.org

3. **Steady your shooting.** Use a tripod whenever possible. Without one, secure the camera or yourself against a post, tree, wall or another person to make sure your shots are steady. For hand-held videotaping, hold the camera with two hands for steadiness.
4. **Recording people.** When a person is speaking, keep the camera fixed on them. Resist the temptation to wander to features they are describing. Record subject content details either before or afterward. Have persons being interviewed identify themselves, spell their names and give their proper titles on camera.
5. **Audio recording.** Get up close to the subject to achieve better audio and reduce echo. Use a hand-held or lapel microphone whenever possible. Avoid venues with annoying or loud background sounds. When videotaping a person speaking behind a podium and microphone, choose a camera angle at which the speaker's face is not blocked out.
6. **Proper lighting.** Unless absolutely necessary, avoid low lighting situations where the camera's *gain* function must be used. Accentuate one lighting source. Avoid backlighting, high

contrast conditions, and lighting that creates glares or shadows.

7. **Head space and framing.** Leave a proper amount of space above the subject's head. With objects or persons in motion, pan with the movement while leaving a little extra space in front of their movement and less behind.
8. **Shot selection.** To capture scenes with more visual impact, augment your long shots with ample close-ups. This is true with both scenes and people. Avoid videotaping from a moving vehicle.
9. **Continuity and tape speed.** Maintain continuity throughout the video. If, for example, a person is wearing a hat or glasses or carrying a backpack in a scene and then wants to remove any of these items, have the camera record the change being made. Also, record at the fastest recording speed available on the camera.
10. **Highlighting your ministry.** Create an entire ministry story by showing exterior and interior shots of facilities, actual ministry activities and events, landscape shots and social settings that provide a sense of place and culture, personal testimonies and interviews.
11. **Tagging tapes and information.** Do not use in-camera titling or

date displays. Instead, label tapes with subject matter and recording date and include an information sheet describing the scenes in the order they appear. Also include pertinent background facts and figures that could be used in an accompanying narrative about your ministry.

12. **Be discrete.** When videotaping in public areas, be aware that some people, and even entire cultures, are not open to being videotaped. If there is any doubt, ask first before recording.

By keeping these few things in mind, while applying your own passion and creativity, you will soon be taking better photographs and shooting better videos. But more importantly, you will be communicating your story and ministry needs to supporters in a much more powerful and effective manner. ☛

Peter White is an independent communication, media and adult education consultant

This article draws heavily from *Tell me a story!* a training DVD of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada

For more information on *Alliance.ca* and *Alliance Alive* contact magazine@cmacan.org

WANTED: Your Photos

We have an ongoing need for good quality photos of individuals and congregations in action at home and around the world. See your work displayed on our website, in brochures, on posters, etc.

Send identified high resolution images (300 dpi or 5"x7") in JPG format as an e-mail attachment to thompson@cmacan.org or on disc (CD or DVD) to:
 ATTN: Communications
 The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada
 30 Carrier Drive, Suite 100
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