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Author of Macs All-in-One For Dummies, 2nd Edition

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by Joe Hutsko and Drew Davidson

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Dedication

Both authors wholeheartedly dedicate this book to Sue Godfrey. "You said . . ." :-)

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Joe Hutsko is the author of *Green Gadgets For Dummies, Macs All-in-One For Dummies,* 2nd Edition, and *The Deal: A Novel of Silicon Valley.* For more than two decades, he has written about computers, gadgets, video games, trends, and high-tech movers and shakers for numerous publications and Web sites, including *The New York Times, Macworld, PC World, Fortune, Newsweek, Popular Science, TV Guide, The Washington Post, Wired,* GameSpot.com, MSNBC, and Salon.com. Before becoming a writer, Joe worked at Apple from 1984 to 1988. You can find links to Joe's stories on his Web site, JOEyGADGET.com.

Drew Davidson purchased his first film camera at a garage sale (an 8mm Kodak Brownie) and has since enjoyed all types of home and professional filmmaking. That first purchase opened the door to the wide world of filmmaking: from editing to camera work, from stop motion animation to documentary *cinéma vérité,* from complex computer-controlled motion control cameras to cameras duct taped to his mountain bike on his many mountain biking forays around the world. As a professional editor and cameraman, some of Drew's credits include *Nightmare Before Christmas, James and the Giant Peach,* and MTV's *Celebrity Deathmatch.* Clients he's worked with include GameSpot.com, Time Inc., The American Museum of Natural History in New York, The New York Historical Society, the Intrepid Air and Space Museum, and the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. His video work is represented by Getty Images, and his full body of work can be viewed at `www.drewmovie.com`.

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Introduction

Your Flip is probably the easiest-to-use camcorder in the world. Just point, shoot, and copy to your computer. A few clicks later, friends, family, and even strangers around the world can view your creations on Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and other sharing Web sites. Burning your movie to a DVD so that others can watch it on TV or their computer is nearly as quick and easy as the online sharing options. So why, you might wonder, would anyone need a whole book for such an easy-to-use gadget? Let me count the ways. . . .

About Flip Video For Dummies

Options, baby, options. Sure you can shoot and upload your video in a few clicks. By editing your video and adding titles, credits, special effects, and a music soundtrack, however, you can make your movie more interesting to others. You'll see how to do that in this book. Want to capture individual snapshots from your videos and then string those pictures together to create photo slideshows? It's in here. Wondering how to upgrade your Flip's internal software *(firmware)* and desktop FlipShare program so you benefit from the latest and greatest features? It's in here.

And while you're mastering those things, you'll also pick up tips and tricks for capturing and editing your videos, thanks to the expert advice the filmmaker-half of the author duo's contribution to this book, which will help you get the very most from your Flip camcorder.

Here are some of the things you can do with this book:

- Learn about the features unique to each of the current Flip camera models.
- Find out how to properly connect (and disconnect) your Flip to (and from) your computer.
- Import your videos to your computer, share your videos online, or burn your videos to DVDs that you can give to others.
- Turn your simple video clips into fuller, richer mini-movies, complete with titles, rolling credits, and music soundtracks.
- Install free updates to ensure that your Flip camera and the FlipShare program give you the latest and greatest features.
- Learn simple expert tips to help you take your best shots — and edit those shots so they're interesting to your views.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we made a few assumptions about you, dear reader. To make sure we're on the same page, I assume that

- You know how to turn your computer on and locate and run programs.
- You can navigate your computer to store (and later find) files.
- You have a favorite Web browser and are familiar enough with navigating the Web to download a file, such as a program update installer file, and can then open that file.
- You appreciate the speed at which technology-based products — such as the Flip camera — change, with newer, sleeker, better, faster models replacing previous versions in as little as a few months.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate this book, we use a few style conventions:

- Emphasized terms or words are *italicized* (and defined).
- Web site addresses, or URLs, are shown in a special monofont typeface, like this: `www.joeygadget.com`.
- Numbered steps that you need to follow and characters you need to type are set in **bold**.

What You Don't Have to Read

You don't have to read anything that doesn't pertain to what you're interested in. In fact, you can even skip a chapter entirely. We hope you don't, though, because we believe that reading every chapter can make your overall reading experience more efficient and (dare I say it?) enjoyable.

As for sidebars you encounter throughout this book, feel free to ignore them because they contain, for the most part, tangential thoughts, miniature essays, or other bits of information you don't need to know to do the things we show you in the book.

How This Book Is Organized

Flip Video For Dummies is split into five parts. You don't have to read it sequentially, and you don't even have to read all the sections in any particular chapter. You can use the Table of Contents and the index to find the information you need and quickly get your answer. Here is what you'll find in each part.

Part I: Getting to Know Your Flip

This part is all about getting comfortable with your pocket-sized camcorder — or learning about one you're thinking of buying if you don't already own a Flip. You can read about the latest Flip camera models, how to adjust your Flip's settings, and how to upgrade FlipShare. Troubleshooting information is also contained in this part.

Part II: Putting Your Flip to Work

Using your Flip involves two activities: Shooting videos and transferring the videos you shoot to your computer. In this part, you'll dive right in and start recording videos with your Flip while picking up tips to help you capture the best shots possible. Here's where you find out how to transfer the videos you shoot to your Mac or Windows PC.

Part III: Creating and Sharing Movies with FlipShare

Sure, you can share your video clips with others exactly as they appear, but your intended audience will find your videos way more interesting if you trim out boring parts and add movie-like elements like a title, a music soundtrack, and even closing credits that crawl up the screen when your viewers come to The End. Taking center stage in this part is the FlipShare program, which you use to create Magic Movies and Full Length movies and send your movies (and snapshots!) as e-mail messages and greeting cards. You also see how to burn your movies to DVD and upload movies to Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube.

Part IV: Editing and Sharing Movies with Mac and Windows Programs

Editing your clips using your Mac or Windows computer's free video-editing program (iMovie or Windows Live Movie Maker) is how you turn your more serious moviemaking dreams into realities. In this part, you'll perform movie magic by turning your video clips into fuller, richer movies that boast the look and feel of movies you see at the Cineplex.

Part V: The Part of Tens

If you're looking to stabilize your Flip (out of the box, it lacks *image stabilization)* or take your editing to the cutting edge, the Part of Tens has the information you need. Here, you'll find lists of shooting tips and editing tips.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons you encounter throughout *Flip Video For Dummies* are tiny road signs to attract or steer your attention to particularly useful information — or, in rare instances, potential trouble.

The Tip icon points out useful information that can help you be more efficient or direct you to something helpful that you might not know about.

When you spot this icon, it steers your attention to something that's interesting or useful; either way, you'll want to read it. And remember it.

When you see the Warning icon, you know to proceed with caution in regard to a topic, an issue, or a series of steps that it's cozying up next to.

Where to Go from Here

If you recently purchased a Flip camera or you're thinking about purchasing one, Part I is definitely the best place to begin using this book. Parts II and III have the nitty-gritty details for shooting footage with your Flip as well as creating a masterpiece with FlipShare. But if you've been there and done all that and you're ready to get more serious about this movie-making business, head straight to Part IV and jump in to video editing with Windows Live Movie Maker or iMovie. At any time, feel free to turn to the Part of Tens section to pick up expert tips that aim to improve your video shooting and editing skills, and to find great add-ons to help you enhance your Flip experience in more ways than one (actually ten, but who's counting?).

Part I

Getting to Know Your Flip

In this part . . .

A few years ago, shooting your own videos involved wrangling bulky camcorders and juggling cumbersome videotape cassettes — not to mention extra batteries you had to carry to keep your camcorder juiced throughout the day. Thanks to the Flip, those days are gone (at least for us everyday folks who just want to have fun shooting and editing videos).

This part introduces you to the Flip phenomena that has millions of consumers literally flipping over Flip cameras. You start out with a big-picture view of what it means to Flip; then you zoom in for a closer look at Flip models. You also get the 411 on adjusting your Flip's settings, as well as upgrading your Flip and FlipShare software so they can be all that they can be, thanks to regular free updates that you can download and install.

1

Touring Flip Models and Features

In This Chapter

- Considering the big Flippin' picture
- Getting acquainted with current Flip features and specs
- Taking a closer look at the SlideHD
- Designing your own custom SlideHD or MinoHD
- Installing FlipShare on your Mac or Windows PC

Got a new Flip (or an older model) and want to find out what it can do so you can put it to good use? Or perhaps you're thinking about buying a new Flip, but you're not sure which model to choose?

Either way, you've come to the right place to get up to speed about what you can do with the Flip camcorder you already own — or the one you're thinking about purchasing.

From getting your head around the bigger picture of what Flips are all about, to wrapping your hand around individual models and figuring out which buttons do what and what features you can use, this chapter marks the best place to begin your journey into the world of Flip camcorders.

Flipping Over Flip Video

Here a Flip, there a Flip, everywhere a flippin' Flip. Or that's how it seemed to me when my editor asked whether I wanted to write this book. When I said yes, I was suddenly seeing Flip camcorders everywhere. From the local news replaying winter storm footage captured by ordinary Joes to *American Idol* contestants hamming it up on those excursions they take between episodes, everywhere I looked, people were Flipping.

So what makes the Flip so ubiquitous (and the reigning #1 bestselling no-brainer camcorder brand on Amazon.com for more than a year, as I write this)? That's simple: simplicity. Apple's iPod has enjoyed a longtime reputation as one of the world's easiest-to-use gadgets ever (and it is), but the Flip camcorders are even easier to use.

Never before has shooting and making movies been so easy. Point, shoot, save, edit (or don't bother), and share. Just like that, you're making movies.

Thanks to the Flip's small size and super-easy controls, carrying a Flip on your person and spontaneously capturing videos wherever and whenever you want becomes second nature. Don't like what you captured? No big deal; just delete it and try again.

I could go on and on about why Flip camcorders are so attractive and popular to ordinary people, in a way that their predecessors — videotape-based video cameras — never were. I could also list the ways that Flips are a bigger hit with more of us average Joe-types than the higher-end "prosumer" camcorders that capture video at quality high enough to make movies that play in theaters and film festivals. But why waste precious space and time going over what was and what isn't. The fact is that you're holding this book, and that's evidence enough that you're more interested in focusing your energy on doing the Flip thang. Time to get Flippin'!

Familiarizing Yourself with the Flip Way

Turning something that starts as an idea into a reality — be it sculpting a heart-shaped modeling clay teacup, or writing a book about Flip video cameras — typically begins with getting familiar with the tools or implements you can use that are best suited to your task at hand. The next step is discovering how you can use those tools and implements to construct and produce a tangible creation to share with others.

When it comes to creating and sharing movies with your Flip camcorder and your computer — the *Flip Way,* if you will — your tools and the ways you can use them include

- **Directing and shooting:** Your Flip camera aimed at someone or something that interests you is all you need to start capturing video footage that you can eventually turn into a movie and share with others. What, when, where, why, and how you capture video footage with your Flip is up to you. Want to make a movie of your puppy's first tussle with a tennis ball? Go for it.
- **Managing and editing:** Your Mac or Windows computer and the FlipShare program that comes preloaded on your Flip camera provide the basic tools you use to manage and edit videos you capture and then

copy to your computer. Using video-editing programs that offer greater flexibility and more features than FlipShare (like iMovie [Mac] and Windows Live Movie Maker) allows you to enrich your movie with special touches, such as transition effects between shots or rolling credits at the end of your movie that crawl by just like the ones you've seen on the big screen.

- **Producing and sharing:** Shooting and editing a movie that plays to an audience of one — that'd be you — has its rewards, but the fun really begins when you share your Flip movies with friends, families, coworkers, and even strangers. Producing your movie and then sharing it with others quickly and easily is, for many Flip owners, the ultimate reward in this journey known as the Flip Way. You can share the movie as a DVD that you can hand to someone to play on her DVD player or computer; or send your movie as a birthday e-mail greeting card; or upload your movie using the free Flip Channel feature on the Web; or post your movie to one of the other popular Web-based venues, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and MySpace.

Flipping through Flip Models

When I mention the Flip line of camcorders, I'm referring to the models available as I write this book. Those models, and the length of recording time each offers, include the following:

SlideHD	240 minutes
MinoHD (two models)	60 minutes
	120 minutes
UltraHD	120 minutes
Ultra	120 minutes

I refer to these models throughout this book, explaining obvious and not-so-obvious stuff on a need-to-know basis: factoids like how the letters *HD* on some models stand for high-definition (or hi-def), and how most fully charged Flip models (except the SlideHD) will never run out of battery juice before you run out of shooting space on the Flip's built-in memory because the camcorder's battery life lasts longer (from 2 to 4.5 estimated hours) than the actual length of time you can capture live video footage.

Now and then I also talk about earlier Flip models, including one you might own. To ensure we're on the same proverbial page, I give you a fuller rundown of specs and features in the next section so you can determine what your current Flip model can or cannot do, and so you can weigh the pluses and minuses of those models against the current models in case you're considering buying a used or new Flip camcorder.

Key specifications and features

Each Flip model is built with particular features and specifications. Some models have many of these features in common, and other models might not have some of these features.

Here are the features you'll find on Flip models as of this writing:

- A **video camera and microphone** for recording video and audio that are saved in video files on your Flip camera's built-in memory.
- An **LCD display** that acts as a
  - *Live viewfinder* to show you what you're capturing when you press the Record button so you can properly frame what you're shooting.
  - *Playback display* so you can watch videos recorded and saved on your Flip, or existing video files copied from your computer to your Flip.
- **Control buttons** for turning your Flip on and off, recording video, controlling video you watch on the Flip's display, zooming in and out, increasing and decreasing playback volume, and deleting video files you don't want to save.

  In the case of the SlideHD, these "buttons" aren't actual physical buttons you push, but rather simulated buttons that appear on the 3-inch touch-screen when the screen is closed. The buttons disappear when you slide up the screen to view videos you recorded and saved with your SlideHD.
- A **USB connector** that "flips" out at the press of a latch, so you can plug the connector into your Mac or Windows computer to copy files between your Flip and your PC. The USB connector also charges the Flip when plugged into a computer or an optional AC charger adapter.
- Preloaded **FlipShare installation software** for Windows and Mac computers, so you can install the FlipShare program on almost any computer you plug your Flip into.

Understanding Flip model technical specifications and how they benefit (or if they're absent, don't benefit) your Flip experience can help you determine what your current Flip can do, or what a new Flip you're thinking about buying can do.

Like with most high-tech gadgets (except when discussing weight), higher numbers typically translate to higher performance and capacity (which in turn translate to higher prices). When it comes to Flip models, higher technical specification numbers translate to higher-quality video recordings and more storage space for saving videos. These technical specifications and other features for current models include

- **Memory capacity** and estimated number of minutes of video you can record and save (4GB, 8GB, or 16GB of memory to capture 60, 120, and 240 minutes of video, respectively)
- **Camera resolution,** which is the level/quality of the video footage: standard-definition (SD) 640 x 480 pixels (px) on the Ultra, and HD 1280 x 720 px on all other models
- **Display screen diagonal size and resolution,** for viewing live video that you're recording or watching video that you've recorded and saved

  Display screens range in size from 1.5 inches and 176 x 132 px to 3 inches and 400 x 240 px.
- **Microphone type** (stereo versus mono)
- **Built-in speaker** (stereo speakers on SlideHD only)
- **Headphone jack** (SlideHD only)
- **Battery capacity and type** (2-hour internal battery for SlideHD, Mino, and MinoHD models versus a 2.5–4.5-hour, replaceable, rechargeable battery pack for Ultra and UltraHD models)
- **Video-out port** (HDMI or composite type)
- **Tripod mount**
- **Other video-related specs** that I don't detail at length:
  - Video sensor type
  - Light sensor type
  - Video performance processor
  - Frame rate (30 frames per second for all models)
  - Bit rate
  - Video format (H.264 video compression, AAC audio compression, and MP4 file format for all models)
  - White balance/exposure (automatic white balance and black level calibration; automatic exposure control with dynamic exposure compensation for all models)
  - Lens type
  - Aperture
  - Zoom (smooth multistep 2x digital for all models)

Reviewing the latest Flip models

Models come and go like the seasons, and the best way to find out which models are in and which are out is to visit the Flip Web site (`www.flipvideo.com`).