23 Fun Video Projects!

Digital Filmmaking FOR KIDS

- Shoot video with a camera or phone
- Edit into a masterpiece
- Add your friends to your film crew
- Share your video online

Nick Willoughby
Filmmaker, teacher, and film geek

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Digital Filmmaking For Kids

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by Nick Willoughby

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Digital Filmmaking For Kids For Dummies®

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Introduction

So you want to be a filmmaker? Have you ever watched a film or a TV show and wondered how they made it and what it would be like to make your own? Well, you picked up the right book — this is where your filmmaking journey starts.

Digital filmmaking is the process of creating and telling a story or presenting information through the art of film using digital video cameras. Basically, it's a way creative people like you can turn the ideas in your heads into films audiences can watch on movie screens, TVs, or computers. The filmmaking process can take weeks, months, and even years, depending on the length and complexity of the film being made. It involves taking an idea, turning it into a story and a script, storyboarding the script into a series of images, recording the actors performing the script using video cameras and microphones, transferring the video clips from the camera to a computer, and editing the footage into the final film for the audience to enjoy. It may sound like a complicated process, but it's not, really — it's fun, and I'm sure you'll enjoy every moment.

There are thousands of filmmakers in the world, living their dreams of making films and documentaries every day. You could be one of them! *Digital Filmmaking For Kids For Dummies* introduces you to the magical world of filmmaking and guides you through the process of making your own films to share with your family and friends.

About This Book

There aren't many places where you can discover and develop filmmaking knowledge and skills and then

practically apply them to your own film projects. In *Digital Filmmaking For Kids For Dummies,* I give you all the knowledge and skills you need and guide you through the filmmaking process step by step.

They say a wise person learns from his mistakes and a clever person learns from other people's mistakes. I've learned everything I know from working in different roles within the filmmaking industry, and the mistakes I made along the way helped me develop my skills and made me better at what I do. The great thing about this book is that I share with you the tips and techniques that I learned, which saves you having to make the same mistakes I did.

In this book, you

- Explore the different types of camera shots and angles you can use in your films.
- Discover how to record sound using onboard and external microphones.
- Find out about how to light your scenes and add mood using natural light and extra lights.
- Edit your own films together using the editing tool on your computer.
- Create, film, and edit your own 60-second film trailer.
- Explore ways to share your films with others, including uploading your films to YouTube.
- Create, film, and edit your own info film or documentary.
- Audition people to play the characters in your film.
- Create a story, write a script, create a storyboard, and then film and edit your own short film.

It's better to understand the process and techniques of filmmaking before you go out and make your first film. This book helps you gain this understanding, as well as the following:

- **Inspiration:** I help you think of ideas and stories to tell through film and find ways of making your camera shots look great.
- **Knowledge:** I give you the information you need to get the best from your ideas and stories and turn them into amazing films.
- **Skills:** I show you ways to enhance and improve the look and sound of your films through camera and microphone techniques.
- **Results:** I explain how to edit everything you've filmed together and bring it to life in the editing tool to make a film you are proud to share with your family and friends.

Foolish Assumptions

You may know a little bit about me (especially if you've read the "About the Author" section at the back of this book), but I know nothing about you. Still, to write this book I had to make a few guesses and assumptions about the things you already know about filmmaking and about the experience you may have had before reading this book. These foolish assumptions helped me to decide what to include in this book.

I assume that you're interested in making films, which is not a difficult assumption since otherwise you wouldn't have picked this book up in the first place. Maybe you've been involved in filmmaking before reading this book, or maybe you never used a video camera before. Either way, this book can help you.

Also, I assume you have access to a digital video camera, whether it be a camcorder you own, a video camera on your cellphone, or someone else's camera you can borrow. Even if you don't have access to a digital video camera right now, don't worry — you'll still find this book useful.

Finally, I assume you're new to filmmaking and that you want to learn the whole process of making a film from start to finish. Of course, even if you're a professional or have made films before, I'm sure you'll find this book useful, even if only to refresh your knowledge and skills.

Icons Used in This Book

As you read through the projects in this book, you will notice a few icons as shown below:

The Remember icon gives you a little reminder about important things to remember when you make your films.

This icon will appear when I am explaining technical information and techniques.

I use the Tip icon when I have information or advice that could help you with your film project.

If there is something that could be dangerous or should be avoided, the Warning icon will appear.

Beyond the Book

I have made available a lot of extra content that you won't find in this book. Go online to find the following:

- **Online articles covering additional topics at**

  `www.dummies.com/extras/digitalfilmmakingforkids`

Here you'll find videos where I demonstrate some of the ideas discussed in this book and give you some tips to help you make your films.

- **An online Cheat Sheet for digital filmmaking is available at**

  `www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/digitalfilmmakingforkidsfd`

  Here you can find a list of notes that you can quickly read to help you make your film.

- **Example footage and clips are available at**

  `www.dummies.com/go/digitalfilmmakingforkidsfd`

  Becoming a filmmaker is a very visual experience, which means that sometimes you need to see examples of what I am explaining. For that reason, I have included example footage and clips filmed by our crew when making their films.

- **Updates to this book, if there are any, can be found at**

  `www.dummies.com/extras/digitalfilmmakingforkids.`

Where to Go from Here

Digital Filmmaking For Kids For Dummies will help launch you into the filmmaking world and give you the confidence you need to get out there and turn your ideas into films. After you have read this book, you may wish to study this topic further at college or look into any film courses near you. Whatever you decide to do next, I encourage you to keep watching films to get inspiration and techniques from, and to keep making your own films as that is the best way to develop as a filmmaker.

It's now time to start your filmmaking journey. I'm really excited to be able to introduce you to the filmmaking world and to guide you through making your own films.

This book is made up of projects, which are designed for you to be able to jump to different stages of the filmmaking process. If you already understand how your camera works, the different types of camera shots, the best way to record sound, and how to edit a film, then you can jump to Part II, Part III, or Part IV, as you like. You can always come back to Part I later.

Even if you're an experienced filmmaker, however, I recommend starting at Project 0 and working your way through all the projects in order. If you jump ahead, you may miss something really important. In Part I, for example, I share some great ways to enhance the look and sound of your film, which you will find this information very useful in Parts II, III, and IV.

Week 1

The Basic Digital Filmmaking Process

This week you'll . . .

- ☐ Getting Started with Digital Filmmaking 9
- ☐ Getting to Know Your Camera 19
- ☐ Framing a Great Shot 40
- ☐ Making Your Film Sound Good 56
- ☐ Getting the Best Lighting 68
- ☐ Adding Magic by Editing 82

For Dummies can help you get started with lots of subjects. Visit www.dummies.com to learn more.

PROJECT

0

Getting Started with Digital Filmmaking

Welcome to *Digital Filmmaking for Kids For Dummies.* What is digital filmmaking and how is it different from ordinary filmmaking? Good question! Many years ago, perhaps before you were born, films were captured using cameras that recorded a series of still images to a reel of film or tape that ran through the camera. These reels were then cut together by hand, which was a very long and complicated process. Back then, fewer people were able to make high-quality films due to the cost of the equipment and production.

Digital filmmaking is simpler and less expensive than traditional filmmaking because digital cameras are able to capture images digitally through electronic chips, which send the images to media cards or hard drives and not to reels of film, which are expensive to buy and can't be reused. The importing and editing process is also simpler because each section or clip of recorded video is imported and edited as separate files, making the editing process quicker and more efficient.

Some filmmakers still prefer traditional filmmaking to digital filmmaking because they prefer the look of the images captured with old, traditional film cameras. That look used to be hard to replicate with digital cameras, but things are changing. Some of the latest digital cinema cameras produce unbelievably beautiful footage.

The introduction of digital cameras has opened up opportunities for future filmmakers like you to get your films made and get them seen. It's never been easier or cheaper to turn ideas and stories into films. Just look at the number of short films on YouTube and Vimeo — we live in a creative world!

With the skills and tips you learn in this book, you will be turning your ideas and stories into films to share with your family and friends.

The Filmmaking Process

The filmmaking process can be divided up into five main stages:

- Development
- Pre-production
- Production
- Post-production
- Distribution

If you imagine the filmmaking process as a journey, these five main stages are stops on the way. You can't get to your final destination unless you stop at each of these places along the way. Each of these stages are discussed in the next few sections.

Development

This is one of the most important areas of the filmmaking process, and it can be one of the hardest. too. It's usually the longest part of filmmaking, because it's important to get the concept and the story right before moving into the production phase. Development can be rushed, however, and is sometimes skipped altogether, although this leaves the story undeveloped, which can cause problems for the filmmaker later in the pre-production stage. The development stage involves creating ideas and building the story so that it's ready to take into pre-production.

In the development stage, the filmmaker comes up with themes and ideas in order to create a story with a good beginning, middle, and end. This story is then used to create a script for the actors to work from and a storyboard for the director and crew to work from.

Pre-production

This stage uses the idea, story, script, and storyboard created in the development stage to prepare for the production stage. In pre-production, everything is planned for as much as possible. If this stage is rushed or skipped, something may go wrong during the production stage, and it could take longer to film.

In the pre-production stage, actors are cast for the characters in the film, locations are found and sets are built for each scene, each filming day is planned and scheduled, and rehearsals for the actors are organized. The time and attention spent at this stage saves time in the production and post-production stages.

Production

The production stage is where the story and characters come to life through film. This stage relies heavily on the previous stages: If the story and script aren't finalized or if no actors have been cast or no locations chosen, filming can't begin.

The production stage starts with running rehearsals for the actors to learn their lines and to develop their characters. During production, camera equipment is set up on location, and the planned scenes are filmed. The final stage of production is to review the filmed footage to make sure all scenes and necessary shots have been captured, and that the footage looks good enough to pass on to the post-production stage.

Post-production

The post-production stage is where the footage captured during production is pieced together to tell the story through editing. This stage is exciting: The filmmaker gets to see the results of all the hard work put into the previous stages and to watch the film come together in the editing tool.

The post-production stage starts with importing and editing the footage captured during filming in an editing program, such as iMovie, on a computer. When all footage is imported and edited together, music and sound effects can be added and the footage can be enhanced with color and effects ready to be distributed.

Traditional forms of film editing are *linear,* meaning that they involve searching through reels of tape to edit film in sequence. Video-editing programs, such as iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, Final Cut, and Adobe Premiere, are known as *non-linear editors (NLE)* because they are freer; with them, you can view and edit video footage in a timeline in any order you like.

Distribution

Distribution is the final stage in the filmmaking journey. At this point, the film has been produced and edited, and it's ready for

the audience to enjoy. This can be a worrying time for the filmmaker because the film will be viewed by an audience who will supply comments and reviews. This is the first point at which the filmmaker will get to see an audience's response to the film.

Most mainstream films are first distributed to cinemas and then released on DVD, online streaming services, and television later. Low-budget films, on the other hand, don't always get a cinema release. Instead, they first appear at film festivals and are then released to online video-hosting sites (and sometimes DVD) later.

Lights, Camera, What?

As you read through this book there will be some words that are new to you. Here I've created a list of filmmaking-related terms and their meanings. If you're ever unclear about a word I've used in this book, you can refer to this list.

Action: A term called by the director during the filming of a scene to let cast and crew that a take has started.

Angle: The position of the camera with respect to the subject.

Blockbuster: A large-scale film with a high production budget usually released globally into cinemas.

Boom: A long pole with a microphone attached. Booms are usually held above the actors to record sound in a scene.

Camcorder: A video camera, which is a device used to record video footage.

Camera phone: A cellphone device that can capture still images and record video footage.

Cast: The group of actors appearing in a film or video.

Character: A person within a story, usually fictional.

Clapperboard: A board on which details of the film shoot are written, which is held in front of the camera to introduce a scene during filming. Traditionally chalk was used to write the

details on the clapperboard but now marker pens are used. A clapperboard is sometimes referred to as a *slate.*

Costume: Clothes worn by the actors during filming.

Crew: A group of people behind the scenes or behind the camera who are involved in the making of a film or video.

Cut: A term is called by the director during filming to let the cast and crew know that a take is over.

Development: The process of building and creating the film.

Dialogue: The words spoken among the characters in a film or video.

Director: The person who works with actors and crew when filming to help tell the story through their performance and the shots captured.

Editing: The process of putting the film footage and clips together after filming.

Editing tool: The software on a computer used to edit video.

Effect: A visual or audio technique used to enhance or change the look or sound of a video clip. Effects can be added during filming or when editing.

Establishing shot: This is the first shot to appear in a new scene, which "establishes" for the viewer the setting of the scene.

Filmmaker: The person who creates a film or movie.

Fictional film: A film based on a story that is imagined by the writer and not normally based on fact.

FireWire cable: A way of transferring data and video footage from a camera to a computer. FireWire connections can also be referred to as IEEE 1394.

Focus: The sharpness of an image.

Frame: A still image taken from the many images captured within a video clip or film footage.

Lens: A device attached to the camera that uses glass to focus on a subject.

Lighting: Devices that provide light to a scene.

Lines: Character dialogue or words in the script performed by the actors.

Location: A place or area used to film a scene.

Media card: A storage device that captures and holds the information or video being recorded by the camera.

Microphone: A device used to record sound when filming.

Monitor: A mini TV screen usually used to view what the camera captures as it films or to review what already has been recorded.

Nonfictional film: A documentary film created using factual information or real events starring real people involved in the events.

Post-production: The work put into a movie after filming.

Prop: Any item used by an actor in a scene or that is otherwise involved in the film.

Reel: A length of filmstrip wrapped around a metal wheel so as to be more easily viewed on a projector. Film was the medium used to record motion pictures before the age of digital video (and is still used in increasingly rare cases), but because only a portion of all cinemas have upgraded to digital projectors, even digitally shot movies are often still distributed on film reels. An average movie requires three to five reels of film.

Scene: A series of shots filmed at one location to tell a section of the main story.

Schedule: A plan of the day's filming that shows the times and details of shots to be filmed.

Script: A document showing the details of a story that is to be filmed, including the scenes and dialogue to be performed by the actors.

Set: An area built and constructed where a scene can be filmed.

Shoot: To film or record video footage.

Shot: One section of footage recorded by the camera from start to finish.

Shot list: A list used by the crew showing the shots to be filmed within a scene.

Sound effects: Sounds added to a film when editing.

Storyboard: A series of images created before filming to plan the shots to filmed.

Subject: The person or object being filmed.

Take: One recorded performance of a scene during filming. A filmmaker could expect to shoot tens or hundreds of takes per scene (depending on the length of a scene).

USB cable: A way of transferring data or video footage from a camera to a computer.

Voiceover: A recorded voice used in a film or documentary. The speaker is not shown.

Zoom: The magnification of an object or subject when filming that makes the subject appear to be closer or farther away.

A Filmmaker's Tools

A filmmaker can spend a fortune on all the different tools available to make films. However, to get started, a filmmaker needs only a few basic tools, most of which are relatively inexpensive:

- **Video camera:** Without a video camera, there is no film. A video camera captures the picture and audio and stores them on a media card, hard drive, or tape, ready to be imported and edited later.

- **Microphone:** The microphone picks up sound waves and converts them into signals that can be understood by the camera,