

# Yes! You Can Make a Documentary!

So, if you're asking "How do I make a movie?" Ask no more. The answers you seek are below. You will have approximately a million more questions. But part of the job of making movies is experimenting, shooting a lot and using a little and not being too precious about how things turn out (aka learning from your mistakes). It's also about getting good at asking questions and fearless about asking things of other people. (Pro Tip: It gets easier the more you do it).

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## Watch movies!

Yes, this is part of making movies. It's actually one of the most fun parts. Attached, you'll find a list of great documentaries. Find one that seems interesting to you and watch it. Then, watch it again. If you're feeling REALLY ambitious, watch it a third time.

- **The first time:** watch the movie to see how it makes you feel. Ask yourself questions. Do you like it? What emotions come up? What was the overall feeling it left you with? What would you copy? What would you do differently?
- **The second time:** Watch it as a moviemaker. Notice the different visual elements, things like the use of still photos, title cards, live footage. How does the story unfold? Chronologically or does it jump around in time? Notice the pacing--fast or slow? Notice the tone, serious, or funny? How is the story told? What questions get asked? How many shots are there? (This time is about the noticing, in case you hadn't noticed).
- **The third time:** Pat yourself on the back for watching the movie so many times, Then, think about how this movie fits in with other movies that you've seen. Did it do anything new or different from what you've seen in prior movies?

## Great Docs (in no particular order)

He Named Me Malala	I Am Maris	First Position	Science Fair
Biography, Susan B Anthony	The Race	Never Say Never	Brickumentary
Mad Hot Ballroom	I am 11	Brickumentary	Homecoming
March of the Penguins	Bully	GMO OMG	Hoop Dreams
Miss Representation	Trash Talk	The Square	Supersize Me
Repudiation: Stadium Tour	Chasing Ice	Wings of Life	Paper Clips
What's On Your Plate	Cosmos	More than Honey	Food Inc.
Jiro Dreams of Sushi	Girls Rock!	Place at the Table	That Sugar Film

# *Sample Documentary Checklist*

1. Pick subject
2. Write outline
3. Create storyboard
4. Make a question list
5. Make a Schedule for Shooting
6. Shoot videos
7. Get other materials (photos, etc.)
8. Load onto computer
9. Make a rough cut, repeat earlier step(s) if something is missing
10. Get Feedback, make a second cut, repeat if needed
11. Produce final video
12. Upload to FilmFreeway

## Good How To's

It's easy to fall down the rabbit hole and watch movies about making movies all day, but they will help to give you a grounding. Here are some of our favorites.

How to Film a Documentary In One Day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zM2XI-1kOM>

A Documentary on How to Make A Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdKGHkTljh0>

Four Ingredients you need to know to make a documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx99KdAF1LI>

One Hour Crash Course on Filmmaking

<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/filmcrashcourse>

Interviewing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUavqu9o4aQ>

8 Tips for your First Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W03NUilpIRM>

Documentary Storytelling Basics

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_lolwJh9hs8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lolwJh9hs8)

Seminar at Brown University with Perri Peltz, documentary filmmaker for HBO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tUMiJYKT2E&t=47s>

Griffin Hammond's You Tube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/griffinity>

Hammond's career advice? Make lots of work, jump at opportunities and be really nice. (It's good advice).

# Using iMovie

Once you have your story and your footage, you'll need to do something with it! For beginning filmmakers, we like iMovies.

Apple Support for iMovie

<https://help.apple.com/imovie/mac/10.1/#/mov5ec96da08>

Apple Schedule of Classes

Apple holds classes on cinematography, small screen moviemaking, making trailers and more. Check the individual Apple Store for details (Walnut Creek, Emeryville, SF)

Capturing a Cinematic Shot, May 11th

<https://www.apple.com/today/event/video-walks-capturing-cinematic-shots/6526580040514509189/?sn=R014>

Making an iMovie in Five Minutes

[https://www.google.com/search?q=you+tube+how+to+make+an+imovie&rlz=1C5CHFA\\_enUS709US710&oq=you+tube+how+to+make+an+imovie&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j69i64.4577j1j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#kpvalbx=1](https://www.google.com/search?q=you+tube+how+to+make+an+imovie&rlz=1C5CHFA_enUS709US710&oq=you+tube+how+to+make+an+imovie&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j69i64.4577j1j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#kpvalbx=1)

Advanced Filmmaking

<http://www.svnfilm.com/production/general-production.html>

# *Interview Questions*

The questions that follow are good places to start, but the most important thing you can do while asking questions is to listen as though your movie depends on it. Because it does--good listening helps your subject trust you, which helps them to be more open. And, it'll help you to ask good follow up questions, and get deeper.

Make sure your subject knows what you'll be talking about. You may want to give them the questions in advance, so they have time to think about their answers.

The first rule of interviewing is: NEVER, EVER ASK A YES OR NO QUESTION. Why? (Now that's a good question, but we'll get back to that.) The real reason we never ask yes or no questions is that they're boring! Documentaries are about the details and there are no details in a yes or no question.

Start with the basics. Who? What? Where? When? And then the big one. Why? There are probably multiple Why's that you can ask. Also How?

Ask yourself these questions before you start. Why are you telling the story? Why is it important? What happened--what was the conflict or struggle? When did it happen? What can you show that will pull the viewer through your movie and keep them riveted? Take your time with this. Watch documentaries and think about how the filmmaker answered these questions.

Once you've got the 5Ws covered, you can really dig in to the details.

**How did that make you feel?**

**Can you tell that to me again, like you were telling me a story?**

**Can you give me some examples?**

**Do you wish you could go back and do it over again? What would you do differently.**

**If you had one wish for the world, what would it be?**

**What or who helped guide you?**

**What else should I know that I haven't asked?**

**You may also want to ask them practical things--do you have any photographs or other materials that would be good for the movie? Is there anyone else I should talk to?**

# Sample Outline

Think of it in three parts: the hook, the body and the conclusion, better known as the beginning, middle and the end. It's a good idea to start from the end and work backwards. You'll have a better sense of how you'll spend your screen time after you shoot, but starting without the conclusion in mind is like going on a trip without a GPS or destination. This is an outline for a six minute short documentary.

The Hook: 30-60 seconds

This is about telling people what you're going to tell them. It sets the vibe of your movie and draws viewers in.

The Body: 4-5 minutes

Now tell them--usually in the form of 3-6 segments, interviews, reenactments, events.

The Conclusion: 30-60 seconds

Wrap it up. If you have an opinion, state it here. Pay attention to how you want people to feel and use all the storytelling craft you can muster to get them there.

Below is a sample script for a six minute short documentary: **Malala Made Me Do It**

Opening: Includes Credits

- Shots of the Swat Valley in Pakistan
- Video of kids rushing to school
- Picture of Malala and a voice over: This is the story of how her story inspires

Body

- Voice Over gives Malala's timeline, clips from Nobel Prize acceptance speech
- Interview with Jane Person who has taken action inspired by Malala
- Footage of Jane, who collects food for the food bank
- Interview with John Public who donates money to help fund a school for girls in
- Footage of the School
- Interview with Jessica Child, who donated her birthday party money to the animal shelter

Conclusion: Includes Credits

- Voice Over: Malala has used tragedy to shine light on injustice, and her story
- Images of people working to create a ripple of change in big and small ways.

# *My Movie Worksheet*

Movies are like news stories, the five Ws, help you think about how to frame the story.

Who is in my Movie? One main character or many? AKA The Subject

What is My Movie About? Which visuals will tell the story best? AKA The Story

Where are we going to shoot? AKA, the Locations

When are we going to shoot? AKA the Production Schedule

Why are we telling this story? What do I want to make sure that I get across to the viewer (you may not know this until you're done, but it's still important to ask.)

