Helpful Hints to Avoid Pitfalls of Video Production

Be SURE camera is turned on (REC); for the VHS Panasonic Camera, if turned on but still doesn't record, make sure it has not automatically switched to "Standby" (if so, push "standby" button) and that gate on top of camera is set for record rather than VCR "play" functions.

Use long leaders & trailers between segments (to enable proper editing without losing footage).

Do NOT have any blank (non-filmed-upon) space—not even a couple of frames—between video segments on raw footage tape; it will shut down the editing equipment.

Segment Transition Techniques: use fade-in (-out) function if available slowly move in to and out of focus.

Avoid extraneous noise when filming (trucks, dogs, telephones, printers): re-film if interrupted.

Avoid dark shadows (use back-lighting when possible).

Avoid extreme contrast of light and shadow (confuses the camera's light meter).

Do NOT shoot directly into sun or bright light; be sure light shines on subjects, not behind them (or you will get a silhouette effect and viewers will not be able to see your subject).

Avoid squinting by people being filmed.

Direct voice AT microphone (it is preferable to use in-studio microphones rather than trying to record on camera, especially with the limitations of the equipment we have).

Use tripod when possible.

Titles and subtitles help structure video; these can be produced in many different ways.

Do NOT film outside when <50°F temperature; avoid getting camera wet (snow, rain, etc.).

Remove battery any time when NOT IN USE.

Use electrical outlet for power when possible (more reliable; helps save limited battery power).

Charging/recharging battery: see information in relevant instruction books.

Pan/zoom SLOWLY.

Move camera parts carefully (so as not to break them).

If conducting an interview, give interviewee questions ahead of time (keep tone informal); you also should conduct a preliminary interview BEFORE any on-camera interview during your video planning process so that you know how to script your video.

Use clean, simple backgrounds; remove anything that is visually distracting.

Stage sets can be created (table, chair, plant, etc.); remove anything that is visually distracting.

When editing video and sound clips, place audio and video cuts at different places from each other...this helps "smooth" the video.

Using several individual "clips" from different angles or perspectives, then editing them together, is MUCH smoother, in most cases, than continuously filming a long segment, incorporating lots of panning and zooming just to get different views.

If you DON'T know how to operate some camera function, ASK (both to minimize frustration and avoid breaking camera).
Be SURE the sliding "gate" on the top back of the camera is slid all the way to the left so that the panel of control buttons is covered (only CAMERA-REC should be visible).

Be SURE the camera is turned on (green light shows in viewfinder).

The red flashing light on the front of the camera indicates to subjects when the camera is recording.

To move the viewfinder, rotate gently; to return to non-use position, you first must push the UNLOCK button.

On the bottom of the viewfinder is a lever that allows you to adjust the viewfinder screen for in-focus viewing.

An external microphone can be plugged in and used instead of the existing on-camera mic (which is susceptible to picking up lots of unwanted noise interference, including wind).

Using the FADE function: At the end of filming a segment, you must hold the button continuously until the fade is complete; turn off camera, then release fade button. To fade back on for filming the next segment, hold fade button until image is faded out; turn on camera, then release fade button and it will fade back on.

Before filming, be sure to check all your settings, e.g.:
- Focus (automatic or manual)
- Date/time (leave this in the center setting so date and time are NOT recorded onto your film)
- Lighting (in the center setting for outside filming; see instruction manual for appropriate setting when filming indoors); ALWAYS set the camera color balance by filming something white when you first turn on the camera in a new lighting condition.

If there is a lot of bright light behind the subject (avoid this condition if possible), press the BACK LIGHT button so the camera will partially compensate for this problem.

Camera has the capability of filming CLOSE-UPS (as close as 1 inch from the camera lens). To engage this function, push green button on top of zoom control lever and rotate zoom ring counterclockwise.

A rocker switch on the hand grip (marked T/W) allows you to zoom smoothly (T indicates telephoto; W indicates wide angle).

NOTE: Some of the other functions (e.g., character generation and audio dubbing) are not possible without other adapters.

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For the "new" VHS camera, be sure to read the instructions. Basic functions and principles are similar, but specific buttons or procedures may vary slightly; also, more functions are available on this camera.

NOTE: The digital camera has similar functions; however, it is much more portable and the function buttons are in different locations (and many of them must be programmed). You should use a tripod even with the smaller digital camera.