

GOING HANDHELD

A tripod is a great tool for supporting the camera and keeping your shot stable, but what if the subject needs to move and the shot calls for a constant frame size? You need to go handheld.

Handheld shots can add energy and emotion to a scene. It pulls the viewer into the moment, something a camera mounted a tripod just can't do.

The basic technique is simple, but takes a little practice. There are industry stabilization tools that you can purchase like a steady cam or glide cam, but if you don't have one you can still make a convincing shot. You, the camera person, become the stabilizer. The basic rules are:

1. Brace your camera elbow (arm holding the camera) against your body (for stabilization).
2. Use your free hand to steady the camera by gripping the lens.
3. Keep your lens zoomed out to its widest position.
4. Assume a comfortable footing and lower your center of gravity.
5. Avoid zooming. Move in closer or farther away to adjust your frame.

This style of shooting works well, but we must remember planning and safety. Before you start:

- Plan out the distance you will be traveling with the talent. If the talent is speaking, make sure there is enough distance to say the lines.
- Physically walk the path to make sure it is clear of any debris that could cause you to lose your footing.
- Practice with talent. Do several runs to work out timing and pacing. During the runs, check the audio levels are consistent.
- When all is set and safety has been met, shoot the scene.