

Documentary Film Making Guide



About UNESCO Cities of Film:

The UNESCO City of Film status is awarded to any city which has a unique film heritage, and is filled with great minds and inspiring innovators who led cinema and the moving image to what it is today. The network is designed to encourage greater partnerships between creative cities around the world that have worked to establish a strong reputation and foothold in the creative sectors.

ABOUT INTO FILM

Into Film is the UK's leading charity for film in education and the community. We provide screen industry careers information and advice, support young filmmakers, and bring the power of moving image storytelling into classroom teaching.

The core Into Film programme is free for UK state schools, colleges and other youth settings, thanks to support from the BFI, awarding National Lottery funding, and through other key funders including Cinema First and Northern Ireland Screen.

www.intofilm.org

ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Since 1934, the British Council has created friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and the wider world. Their work in the arts has been central to this mission for more than 80 years, seeking new ways of connecting with and understanding each other through creativity.



INTO
FILM

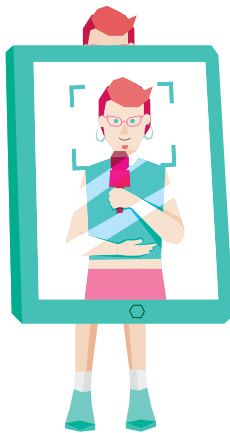
BRITISH
COUNCIL

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

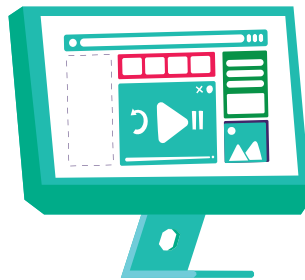
This resource has been created to help you guide your students through making a documentary.

If you have absolutely no filmmaking experience – don't panic! Anyone can make a documentary. All you need to do is have a plan and learn some basic tips. In this documentary filmmaking resource we have collected all the steps and vocabulary you will need to guide your students through making their own documentary.

WHAT YOU NEED:



A tablet/smart device



Editing software



Enthusiasm!

SAFEGUARDING

- Please watch all films in this resource prior to delivering these activities in class to ensure content is appropriate for your students. We also recommend you view content on external links in advance of sharing these with students as we are unable to accept responsibility for the content which may change, move or become unavailable without our knowledge.
- Please ensure that no personal information or surnames are included in your students' documentaries.
- Please ensure you have approval for every person involved in making the documentary. Into Film have a permissions sheet that you will be able to use, and [you can download that here.](#)

We very much encourage a school using what they have available to create a filmmaking project for students.

If you have an Apple device you'll already have **iMovie** and **iMotion** included, which gives you everything you need on one device.

If you have an Android device, there are a number of free Apps you can use, such as [Capcut](#).

STAYING COPYRIGHT FREE:

This is a vital point for your students to understand. If they are using music in their documentary then it's important that this is copyright free. Most music is copyrighted by the owner and cannot be used in short films or documentaries without permission or payment to the artist.

The most creative solution is for your students to create their own soundtrack by playing instruments.

If this isn't possible then make sure they use a copyright free source to download music - sites such as [Incompetech](#), [Bensound](#), [Purple Planet](#), and the [YouTube Audio Library](#) are all good sources of copyright free music.

Filmmaking Basics :

This section will provide you with all the filmmaking knowledge you need to help your students make their documentary.

SHOT TYPES

The most important part of filmmaking is understanding the different types of shots, and what they are used for.

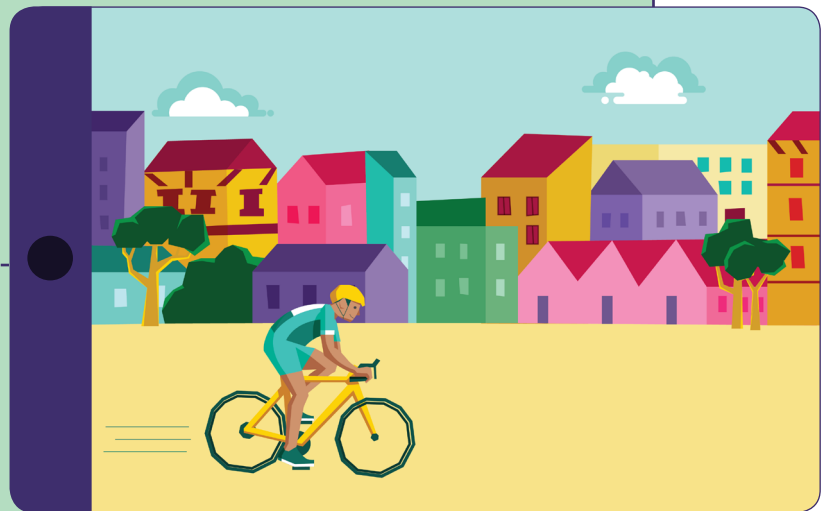
There are 7 shots you need to remember.



1

EXTREME WIDE SHOT

This is used to show a place.



2

LONG SHOT

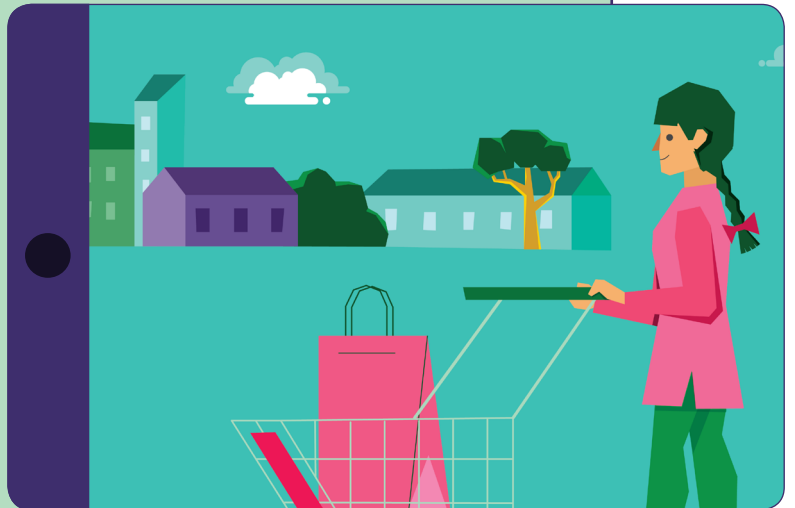
This is used to show all of a person, from the top of their head to their feet.



3

MEDIUM LONG SHOT

This is used to show a person from above their knees to the top of their head



4

MEDIUM SHOT

This is used to show a person from their waist to the top of their head



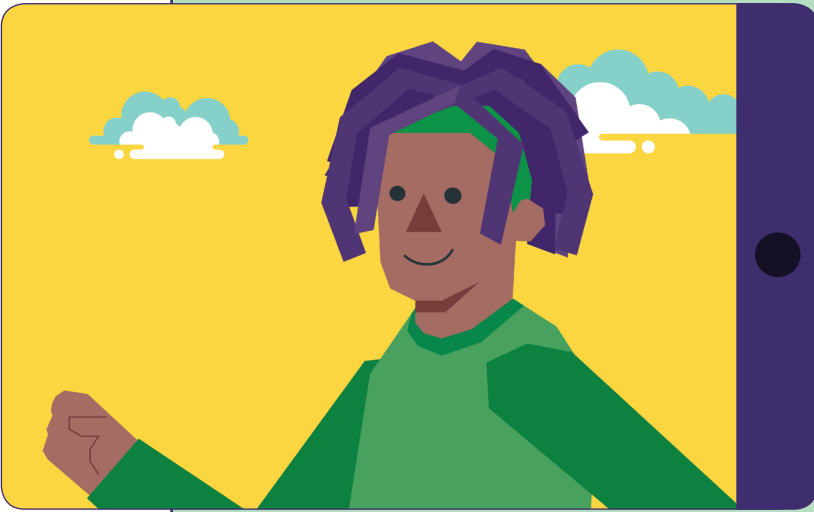
5

MEDIUM CLOSE UP

This is used to show a person from their chest to the top of their head



6



CLOSE UP

This is used to show the head and shoulders of a person



7



**EXTREME CLOSE-UP/
DETAIL SHOT**

This is used to show a very close image of something (very good for small details)



TOP TIP

If you're using a tablet or smart phone, make sure your students film everything in landscape, not portrait.



WHEN SHOULD YOU USE DIFFERENT SHOT TYPES?

Now you know the basic shot types, but when do your students use them? Here are some basic guidelines for choosing when to use different shot types.



SETTING THE SCENE

When your students are introducing a place, extreme wide shots are the best choice.

When your students are filming a person moving through or exploring a space, wide shots or long shots are the best choice.



@IntoFilm 2020



@IntoFilm 2018

TALKING TO THE CAMERA

When your students are filming a presenter talking to the camera or explaining something, long shots and medium long shots are the best choice if they're walking, and medium shots are the best choice if they're standing still.

INTERVIEWS

If your students are filming interviews, medium shots, medium close-ups, and close-ups are the best choice.

Interviews often begin with medium shots and slowly change into close-ups as the interview continues and becomes more interesting or emotional.

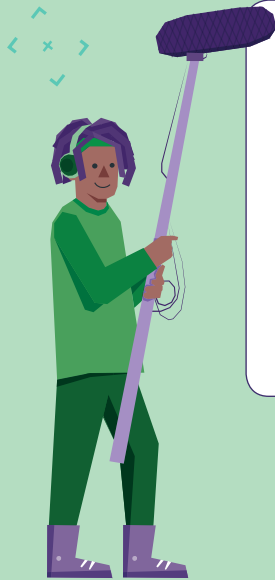
Encourage your students to plan ahead with what shot types they could use for their interviews and to try recording interviews with a variety of shot types.



@IntoFilm 2018



Documentaries often feature interviews with people. But before your students film an interview it's important that you consider a few basic elements before shooting:



SOUND – make sure that the sound of your interview subject is as clear as possible. If you have a separate microphone then use that, if you don't, then make sure your device (tablet, smartphone, etc) is as close to the subject as possible.

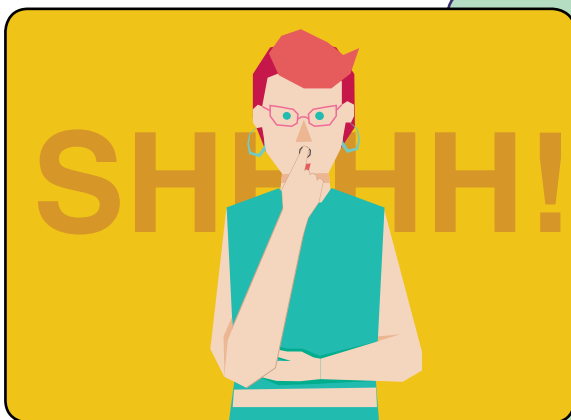
Also try to find the quietest location you can so the dialogue is clear. And if you can avoid wind then this is always recommended – wind can distort your sound when recording.

EYELINE – you'll need to decide where your interview subject is looking when they talk to the camera.



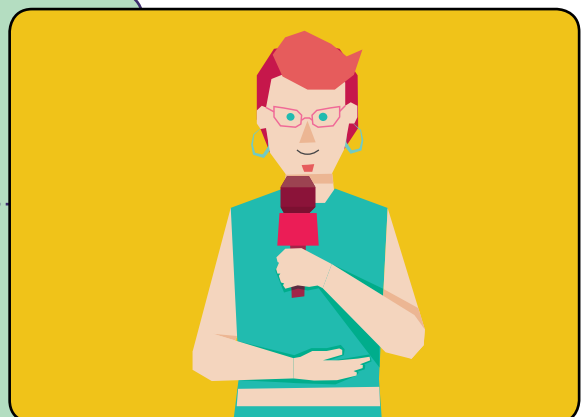
SOUND RECORDING:

When your students are recording the presenter talking to the camera, or interviews, they will need to think about sound. Here are some tips to help them:



RECORD SOMEWHERE QUIET – make sure there's not too much background noise. Find a quiet room and close the windows. It's a good idea to ask everyone to be quiet and listen to the sounds.

RECORD CLOSE TO THE SPEAKERS – the closer someone is to the microphone the better the sound quality will be.



CAMERA MOVEMENTS

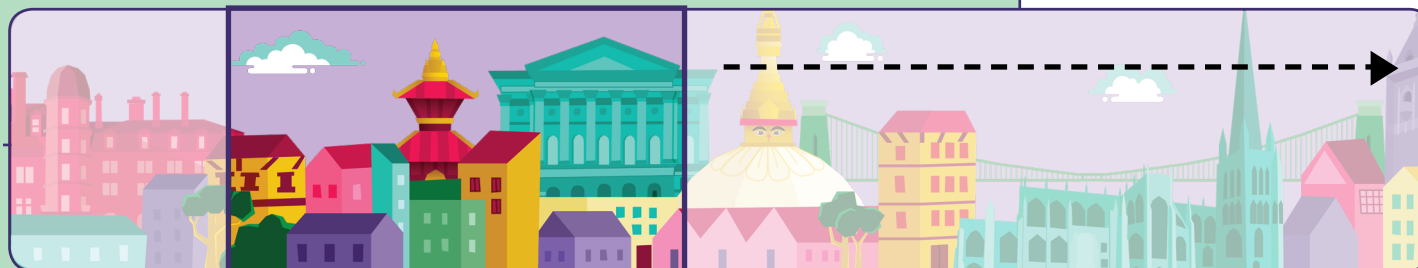
Now that you know about shot types, we need to talk about moving the camera. There are a very small number of camera movements to learn:

PAN/PANNING

This is when you move the camera from left to right, or right to left

When to use:

Panning is usually done to show a place, or to follow someone walking from one place to another

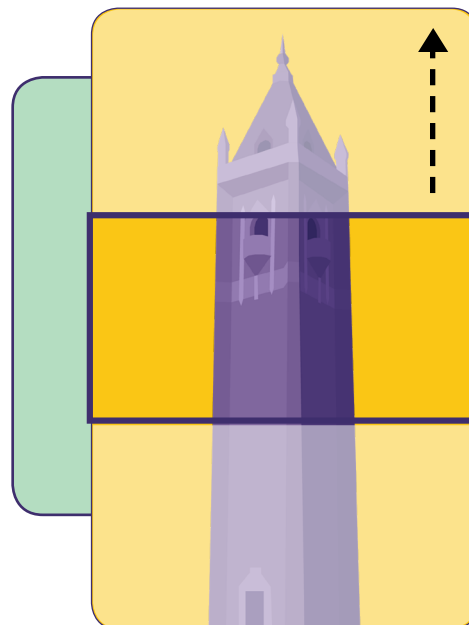


TILT/TILTING

This is when you move the camera from down to up, or up to down

When to use:

Tilting is usually done to show all of something very big, like a tall building.



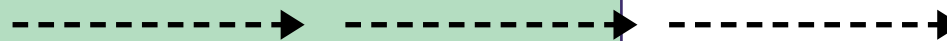
TRACKING SHOT

This is when the camera moves in a straight line, as though it was on a train track. You can track next to someone (moving with them), and also towards or away from them

When to use:

Tracking next to someone is very similar to panning

Tracking towards or away from someone is very similar to zooming in or out



TOP TIP

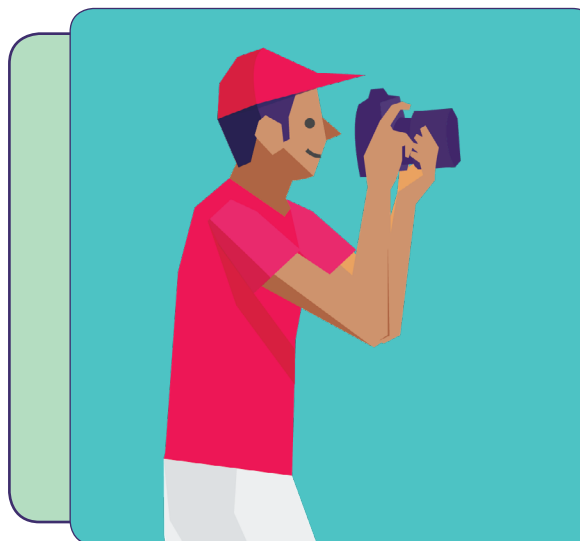
Use a handheld camera to create exciting moments in a documentary.

HANDHELD

This is when someone is holding the camera to move it

When to use:

Handheld shots are usually used to move with someone – it's less smooth than panning or tracking but can create more of an exciting feel





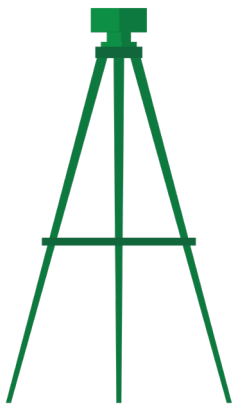
STAYING SAFE

When students are working with equipment like tablets and/or smart phones, we like to remind them of 3 key rules when they are making a film:

1. Safety to people
2. Safety to equipment
3. Make a great film

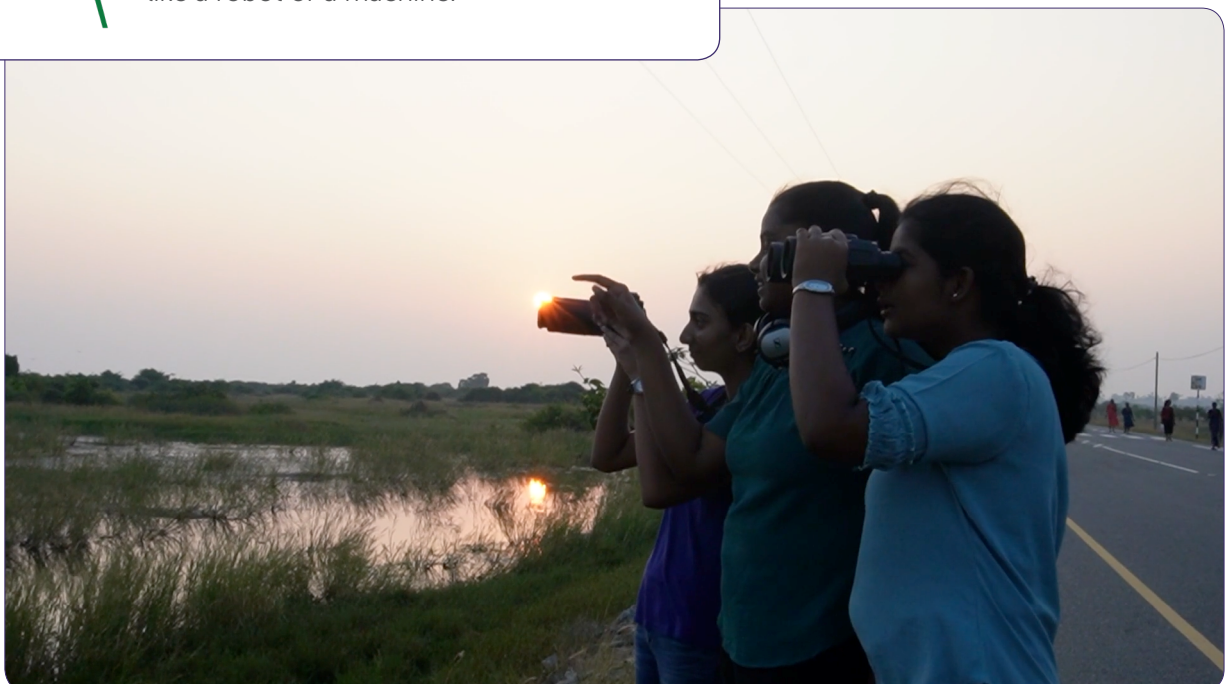
Safety to people and equipment at all times is very important, and of course we want your films to be great!

TOP TIP



If you have a tripod then you'll be able to do smooth pans and tilts. But if you don't your students can still have smooth camera movement in their documentary.

Get your students to practice their camera movements by holding the device securely in both hands, and slowly turning their body to get the shot. You can make it a game to see who can move smoothly, like a robot or a machine.



@IntoFilm 2023

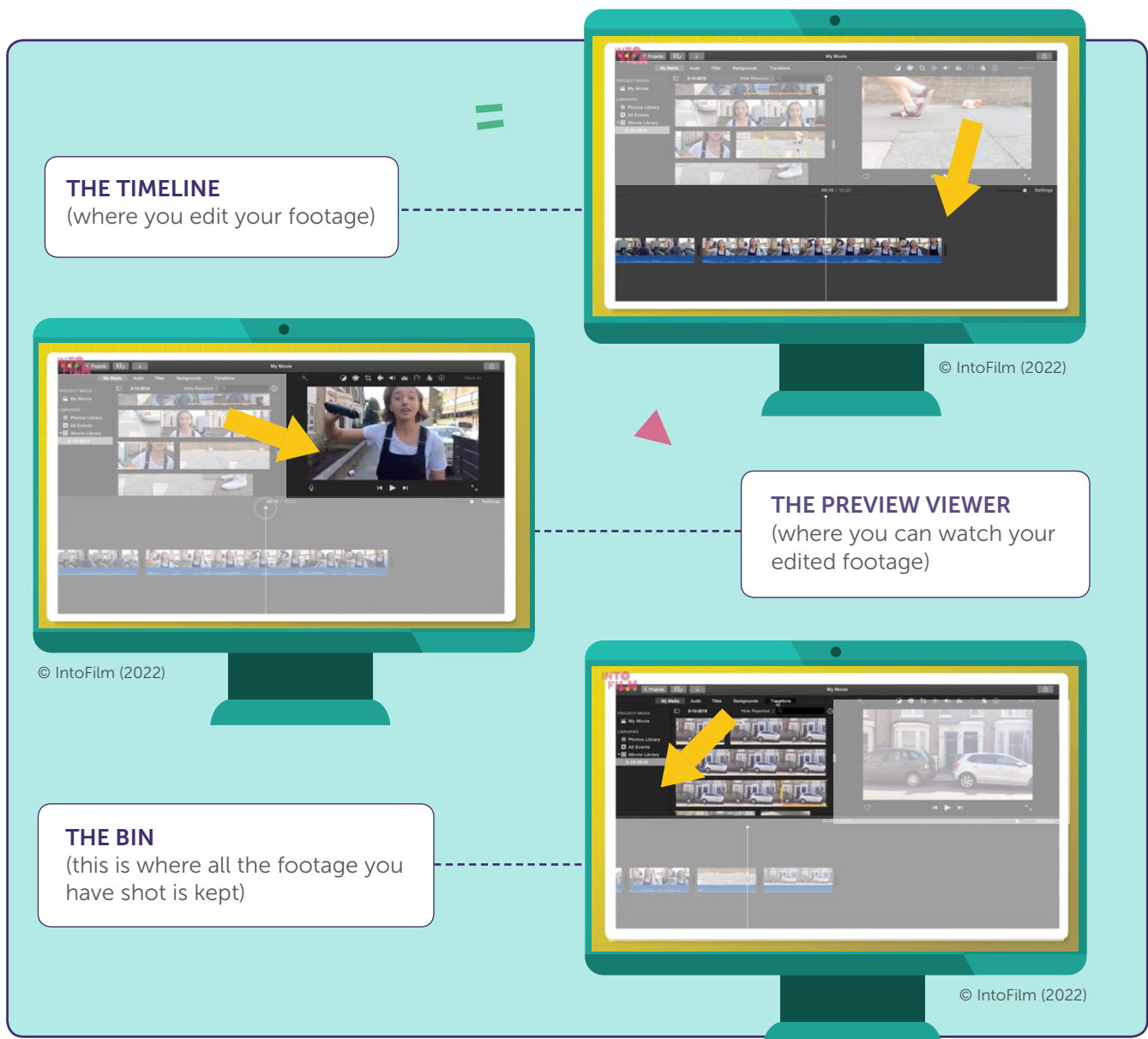
EDITING

After all the shots have been filmed, and all the sound has been recorded (if you are recording a separate voiceover) everything has to be edited together. This simply means putting all the clips in the right order to tell the story.

Editing involves dragging and dropping video clips into a timeline. There are different apps, but they all work in the same way.

TOP TIP

Some free editing apps use a 'watermark,' which means the name of the app will appear on the screen throughout your film. It's best to avoid apps that do this. That's why we recommend Capcut.



Clips are put into the correct order, clips are then cut or trimmed to the right length, music or voiceover is then added, the credits are written, and then the final film is exported.



For Nepalese students, you'll be able to use this video to show your students everything they need to know about editing: [Editing](#)

For UK students, you'll be able to use this video to show your students everything they need to know about editing: [Post-Production – Your Edit](#)



ACTIVITY

You can encourage your students to think about shot types and editing when they are watching any of the example documentaries in the [City of Film](#) resource. Here are two example games you can play with your students when watching any of the example documentaries in the [City of Film](#) resource.

GAME 1

Ask your students to clap their hands every time the film they are watching changes from one shot type to another.

This is a fun activity, particularly with younger students, but it also works very well to show students how many different shots there are even in a short documentary. Write down the number of claps, they will be amazed at how many camera shots there are even in a short documentary.

GAME 2

Allocate a different shot type to each student. For example, some of the students are extreme wide shots, some are close-ups, some are medium shots, etc.

Show them an example documentary and ask them to stand up when their shot type is on screen, and sit back down when the shot changes. This is a fun, fast game, with a lot of movement. It keeps your students thinking about shot types, and the better they all understand shot types the better they will be able to communicate when making their own documentary in groups.

