Smartphone Filmmaking Starter Kit

Shoot clean, cinematic video with the phone already in your pocket.

1. Set up your phone

- Clean the lens with a soft cloth before every shoot.
- Shoot horizontally (landscape) for films and YouTube; vertical only for Reels, TikTok and Status.
- Choose 1080p or 4K at 24 or 25 fps for a film look; use 30 fps for vlogs and 60 fps if you plan slow motion.
- Turn on the grid to line up horizons and use the rule of thirds.
- Lock focus and exposure (tap and hold on most phones) so the picture does not pulse.
- Put the phone in airplane mode to avoid calls interrupting a take.

2. Light is everything

A cheap phone in good light beats an expensive camera in bad light. Face your subject towards a window, shoot outdoors in the first and last hour of sunlight, and avoid harsh midday sun overhead. Indoors, switch off mixed lights so skin tones stay natural.

Problem	Quick fix
Face too dark	Turn the person to face the window or add a lamp in front of them
Harsh shadows	Move into shade or bounce light with a white sheet or wall
Grainy picture	Add light rather than raising brightness in the editor
Blown-out sky	Lower exposure by sliding the sun icon down after locking focus

3. Sound beats picture

Viewers forgive soft images but not bad audio. Get the phone close to the speaker, record in a quiet room with soft furnishings, and use a wired or clip-on microphone when you can. Record ten seconds of room silence at each location: it helps you cover cuts in the edit.

4. Keep it steady

- Hold the phone with both hands, elbows tucked against your body.
- Walk heel-to-toe with bent knees for smoother moving shots.
- Rest the phone on a table, wall or bag for static shots.
- A small tripod or gimbal is the single best upgrade.

5. Shoot for the edit

For every scene capture a wide shot (where are we?), a medium shot (who is here?) and close-ups (what matters?). Hold each shot for at least five seconds and start recording a second before the action. This gives you choices when editing.

6. Edit simply

1. Use a free mobile editor such as CapCut, VN or InShot.
2. Cut out every pause that does not add meaning.
3. Keep music lower than voices; duck music under dialogue.
4. Add captions: most social video is watched without sound.
5. Export at the same frame rate you filmed in.

Your first project

Make a 60-second film about one person doing one thing they love. Use three locations at most, ten to fifteen shots, and no more than two lines of dialogue. Finishing a short film teaches more than planning a long one.