

Heidi Greensmith: Telling your story through film

Heidi Greensmith is a writer and director of documentaries, music videos and commercials. Heidi's award-winning debut feature length film, *Winter*, was released in 2015 and her second feature film, *Bloody Mary*, is currently in development.

As part of the Aviva Community Fund team, Heidi is offering her top tips on how to bring the story of your charity or community project to life through film and photography.

Compiling your entry: how to take a great smartphone photograph

Each entrant can submit up to five photographs as part of their entry. It's true that a picture tells a thousand words – and a stand out image that captures the essence of your group or charity can make all the difference to your entry, setting it above the rest.

To take a good photo all you need is your phone, a steady hand and something interesting to put in the frame. Take a moment to think about what will sum up your story in one picture: is it a group shot of all the inspirational members? Is it an action shot of your project or charity in action that paints a picture of what they do? Is it the moment a smile is put on a child's face thanks to the work your project does?

Once you have decided on the subject of your photo, there are a few simple rules you can follow when you come to take the picture with your smartphone:

1. Make sure your subject is lit from the front and not from behind
2. Make sure you are holding your smartphone straight and your subject is in the centre of the frame
3. Wait a moment for the camera to focus so that the picture becomes clear. Once you've taken the picture check it again to make sure it's not blurry
4. If you like, and are feeling a bit more technical, you can make simple edits like changing the exposure and contrast after you have taken the photograph; most smartphones nowadays offer an editing option when you select the photo you have just taken

Winning votes: how to make a short film for YouTube with your smartphone

In order to gain as many votes as possible for your entry and be in with a chance of winning funding for your project, you will need to spread the word about your involvement with the Aviva Community Fund once voting opens on 24 October. A great way of doing this is by making a short film about your project that you can post on YouTube or share on social media channels.

Making a short film is easy; you don't need to be Steven Spielberg and you don't need to hire or buy expensive kit to tell a great story. Just use what's in your pocket – your smartphone.

"To support our entry, we made a short film on a mobile phone in just one take! Even though it wasn't professionally shot, I think the amateur, slightly quirky nature of the video made it more fun and relatable."

Sarah Harris, Tibbs Dementia Services, 2015 Winner

Here are the key ingredients to making a good short film:

1. **Your story.** Think carefully about what you choose to shoot and why: choose the best people and surroundings to get your story across in the most compelling way. Select good talkers to speak on camera and decide what you want to ask them. Keep the questions short and ask the contributor to repeat the question before they answer it.

“As we all know, standing in front of a camera can be a daunting experience and it can be difficult to capture what you want straight away. We therefore made sure that we captured as much footage as possible, whether that was of participants, organisers, the surrounding area or anything that we deemed relevant. This meant that we had a large bank of content to choose from when editing the film.”

Rob Whitwood, Inspired Youth, 2015 Winner

Avoid questions that could be answered with a yes or no; you want the person you are interviewing to tell a story, that’s what makes it interesting. Remember to ask them to speak to camera about how people can vote for you. You might also choose to film clips of your project in action. Make sure you have written consent from everyone you interview.

2. **Getting Started.** To get started with mobile filmmaking, you simply need a smartphone, people willing to be interviewed and activity to capture that helps tell your story.
3. **Sound.** While smartphones are equipped with great recording capabilities, they don’t cope so well with the noise of the outside world. Wind noise, for example, can be an issue for most smart devices, so if it’s a windy day you might be better off filming indoors.
4. **Light.** Although smartphones are designed to cope with relatively low light, don’t push it, you don’t want to end up with footage you can barely see. Keep your filming outside to daytime and your filming at night to indoors with the lights on.
5. **Putting it all together.** You don’t need to edit together what you film; a series of clips captured on your smartphone showing your project in action or members talking about what the project means to them will be just as effective as telling your story through an edited short film.
6. If you do wish to edit your film, however, you can do so easily. There are many options out there available from the app store, but I would recommend [iMovie](#) which allows for simple editing, in a short time frame.
7. **If you’re feeling ambitious** and want to get a little more technical, you could download apps such as [FILMIC PRO](#) (which gives you control over your focus) and [SPARK](#) (a handy little app that allows you to shoot your film in segments and then apply filters) that won’t cost the earth and would help to give your film a professional quality.

You’ll need to upload your film to YouTube to support your entry.

Make sure you describe your project in the caption beneath the video and ask viewers to vote for you by directing them to the URL specific to your project entry.

You will receive your unique project URL the day before voting opens so you can go back in to edit the video caption to include your unique project URL when you receive it.

See below for an easy step-by-step guide to uploading a video to YouTube:

1. Sign in to YouTube. If you don't have a YouTube account you can easily set one up following this link: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/161805?hl=en>
2. Click the Upload button at the top of the page
3. Before you start uploading the video, you can choose the video privacy settings. Making videos 'Public' allows everyone to see it
4. Select the video that you'd like to upload from your computer or smartphone
5. As the video is uploading you can edit both the basic information and the advanced settings of the video, and decide if you want to notify subscribers. Make sure to include your unique project URL to encourage viewers to vote for you
6. Click Publish to finish uploading a public video to YouTube
7. If you haven't clicked Publish, other people won't be able to view your video. You can always publish your video at a later time in your Video Manager if you want to wait until you have your unique URL