Guide on Amateur Video Production Techniques

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Introduction

Upon playing a little with amateur video production in the beginning of 2026th year I have decided to summarize my experience and publish it in the format of guide. All provided information is given for the following environment:

a) video is made in reporting and vlogging style (no advertisement, no music videos etc); the topic of livestreaming not covered at all;

b) filming is performed either on typical cheap smartphone (with a cost under 200 USD) or on not so expensive vlogging cameras (with a cost under 600 USD);

c) video editing is performed on a typical web development laptop (iCore 5, integrated GPU, 8GB RAM with large swap, 512 GB SSD drive) not targeted at multimedia production (with a cost under 800 USD); operating system is not very recent LTS version of Ubuntu.

I learned by myself the digital photography, filmmaking, and industry-standard video editing tools in the beginning of 2000s. That’s why I have some general vision of the topic from artistic point of view too.

Filming

You should pay attention to the following technical aspects of the process:

a) configure immediate backup for media in your smartphone; purchasing more space in cloud storage of your phone OS provider and more bandwidth on your cellular plan for backup traffic may be needed if you just started;

b) always keeping with yourself a microfiber is needed for cleaning objectives of your camera or smartphone;

c) purchase one or two SD cards with 256-512 GB capacity; check specifications of your smartphone or camera to find maximum write speed; write speed declared in SD card specifications may be peak possible, but not average; so, you should purchase the model that provides much higher write speed than one declared in smartphone or camera specifications; some vlogging cameras specifications may include exact list of recommended SD cards models.

Preparation for video editing

Upon completion of filming you should download all recordings to your local computer, review them, rename those that you will really use to make them having human-friendly names (but not system generated ones). Then you should build approximate plan of mixing records with keeping in text notes exact start/stop seconds from every used recording.

Video editors

Range of free powerful video editors supported on Ubuntu is not large. And considering that I would like to keep the system stable and not upgraded to the recent LTS (although using the most recent version of video editor) it becomes even less. It means that the only I can do is to install the tools available with Snap packaging/deployment system, and the only really powerful tool available there is Kdenlive.

Other powerful tools (e.g. DaVinci Resolve) are targeted at much more complex media business purposes, simpler tools (e.g. Shotcut) may be not suitable to me in long-term perspective, or not so stable as desired.

Editing

The process of editing is split into few basic steps:

a) create project with frame rates like 24fps, 30fps, 60fps depending on what and how you filmed; it is the most simple and the most logical approach to manage video data that are usually recorded on smartphones and cheap cameras with variable frame rates; 1080p (Full HD) format is what you will practically need in the most part of times;

b) add filmed clips into project, ignore variable frame rates warnings, they are not important for amateur level production; transcoding is not necessary (also, it may be too time consuming and too space consuming for large amount of recordings); however, if severe issues will arise later, or if time/space are not important for you, then you may transcode as you like;

c) place all clips on timeline as you planned and cut them accordingly; the most common effect that you may need to apply at this step is Transform with zooming parts of recordings, and correcting angles of rotation;

d) apply transitions;

e) implement separate video track with titles if necessary.

Enhancement

I prefer to perform enhancement procedures separately, and only upon completion of draft editing. Why? Usually smartphone and vlogging camera filming may result in having videos shot from different angles, with different aspect ratios, and containing too many unnecessary parts. Enhancing all this before cutting the required parts by Duration and Transform tools may be too time consuming and not needed work. Moreover, quick enhancement tools may break the parts that you really expect to use.

Also, considering that Kdenlive cannot process correctly videos made with variable frame rates sometimes (checked with the version 25), it is better to perform enhancement with external FFmpeg tool manually.

The technical procedure of enhancement will consist of the following steps:

a) turn off video track with titles, if it is present;

b) render the project (practically, you will need only MP4-H264/AAC format for rendering in the most part of cases); it takes about 5-10 minutes to render 3-minute Full HD video on hardware described above;

c) perform stabilization of video with FFmpeg to remove issues caused by filming from hands or in motion; further you may see settings for relatively static handheld filming with the camera without gimbal and autocentering, for filming made while walking or running actively you may use shakiness from 10 or 12, smoothing from 25 to 60, and zoom from 8 to 18; constant frame rate is used for more predictable stabilization algorithm behavior and for final better compatibility with Kdenlive; obviously, you should understand that any stabilization like one described here may cause a lot of unnecesary effects and destroy footage (every technology has its limits);

```
ffmpeg -i myvideo.mp4 \
 -vf vidstabdetect=shakiness=8:accuracy=15:result=myvideo.trf \
 -f null -
```

```
ffmpeg -i myvideo.mp4 \
 -vf
"vidstabtransform=input=myvideo.trf:smoothing=18:zoom=6:optzoom=2,fps=30,scale=1920:1
080:flags=lanczos" \
 -c:v libx264 -crf 18 -c:a copy myvideo-stabilized.mp4
```

d) perform colors and lighting enhancement with FFmpeg (conservative example is given with additional optimization for online publishing):

```
ffmpeg -i myvideo-stabilized.mp4 \
 -vf "eq=brightness=0.03:contrast=1.10:saturation=1.05, unsharp=5:5:0.6:3:3:0.3" \
 -c:v libx264 -preset slow -crf 18 \
 -pix_fmt yuv420p \
 -c:a copy \
 myvideo-stabilized-enhanced.mp4
```

e) optionally, you may test results with ffprobe tool after every step;

f) and finally, you may import resulting video file into your project and place it on the video track above previous one and under titles track; then you may apply additional effects and corrections with Kdenlive if necessary.

Publishing

As it was noted earlier final rendering may be made just with use of MP4-H264/AAC format for the most part of cases.

Besides technical aspects you may pay attention to the following details configured on online video hosting platforms:

a) license used for publishing on online platforms;

b) translations of title and description to target all necessary regional audiences.

Security

You should note the following security aspects when you will distribute your video via online platforms:

a) you should have full control over account used for logging in; strong password (20+ characters for 2026th year) and two-factor authentication are mandatory;

b) if you travel actively with using local SIM-cards you should enable autolinking foreign phone numbers into your phone OS account to be able to login with two-factor authentication to video hosting platform even abroad; tracking removal of these phone numbers manually upon returning home is completely in your responsibility;

c) if your account allows backup login codes for two-factor authentication (if connection or smartphone are not available) then you should download them and store in secure place;

d) if your account allows to login with different emails, it is better to link to the account at least 2 emails hosted on different servers;

e) all linked emails and phone numbers must be verified.

Backup

If you use Android phone with backup to Google Drive and publish your videos on YouTube primarily then you should understand that both platforms are controlled by a single company, and such situation creates risk of loss of access to video data upon some legal or technical issues.

Also, you should understand that YouTube (and other platforms) perform optimization of video upon upload. So, using it as backup is not recommended, it will not real original video made by you.

External platforms (e.g. Dropbox) may be a good choice, but I'm not sure whether they perform validation of correctness of upload of large media files.

If you will decide to buy your own server for backing up final versions of video, you should note that 3-minute MP4-H264/AAC video in Full HD 30fps format takes about 250MB of space. If you manage uploads to the server manually then validating result of upload with sha256sum hashing tool is strictly recommanded.

Next level

In next version of the guide (if it will be continued) I may review different techniques of production of large complex video projects including some artistic approaches.