Production

Production is where the plan meets reality. Your only job on set is to be present and capture the raw material a great edit will need.

LESSON 1 OF 4

The shoot-day protocol

A shoot day runs on protocol, not vibes. Open with a 15 minute morning huddle to align everyone on one thing: the story objective for the day. If the crew cannot say in a sentence what the day is about, you are not ready to roll.

GEAR CHECK, EVERY TIME

Test every mic before anyone speaks. Record 10 seconds of room tone, the pure silence, in every location, because the editor needs it to patch audio later. Clean the lens. Shoot 4K with gridlines on: 24 or 30fps for a cinematic look, 60fps when you want slow-motion.

THE THREE-ROLL RULE

Never cut early. Start rolling 5 seconds before the action and let it run 10 seconds after the peak. The best reactions live in the silence after the explosion, the breath someone takes once they think it is over.

NARRATE AND COVER THE ROOM

Verbalize everything. You are a walking narrator, so say what you feel out loud and that becomes your voiceover. At every location run the golden-hour B-roll protocol: 3 establishing shots from different angles, 5 extreme close-ups of details, 1 high-angle and 1 low-angle.

QUICK CHECK

Your subject finishes a tearful confession, stops talking, and just sits there in silence. Your instinct is to cut. What do you do?

A. Cut right away, the line was delivered and you have it.

B. Keep rolling, do not cut, and let the silence after the peak play out. ✓

C. Ask them to say the line again for a cleaner take.

ANSWER

The three-roll rule says let it run 10 seconds past the peak. That quiet, unguarded moment is often the shot the whole scene is built around.

MATCH THE PAIRS

Match each shot to the story job it does.

▼ THINK IT THROUGH, THEN SHOW THE ANSWER

High-angle establisher	Isolation, the subject looks small
Tight detail of tapping fingers	Anxiety bubbling under the surface
Two-shot over the table	The battlefield where they clash
Walk-and-talk	Momentum, the story moving forward

Every shot is a sentence. The angle and framing tell the viewer how to feel before anyone says a word.

LESSON 2 OF 4

Mastering the reality TV zoom

Two zooms, two completely different feelings. One is filmed live and feels intimate. The other is faked in the edit and feels like a gut-punch. Knowing which is which keeps you from trying to do the impossible on set.

THE RACK FOCUS (CLEAN)

Lock the shot on a tripod and smoothly pull focus from a foreground object to the distressed face behind it. Use a manual camera app like Filmic Pro so you control the focus pull by hand. This one is real, captured in camera, and it feels deliberate and cinematic.

THE SNAP ZOOM (CHAOTIC)

This is a post-production move, not a camera move. Film a clean static shot, then in the edit keyframe the scale from 100% to 130% in 0.2 seconds on a moment of shocking news, and drop a whoosh under it. Do not try to zoom by hand on set, you will only get shaky footage you cannot use.

QUICK CHECKS 0 OF 2 DONE

CHECK 1 OF 2

The fast, jarring snap zoom on a shocking moment is created where?

A. Live in camera, by zooming the lens fast.

B. In post-production, by keyframing the scale on a static shot. ✓

C. With a special snap-zoom lens you buy.

ANSWER

Film it static and clean, then push the scale from 100% to 130% in 0.2 seconds in the edit. That control is impossible to get by hand.

CHECK 2 OF 2

You are framing your subject for an emotional beat. Which composition is the strongest?

A



✓

B



C



ANSWER

Placing the subject on a rule-of-thirds line with a little headroom gives the frame balance and room to breathe.

LESSON 3 OF 4

The end-of-day note

The day is not done when you stop rolling. Before you sleep, spend 20 minutes logging the day's footage while the moments are still fresh in your memory. Tired-you will thank rested-you, and the editor will thank you most of all.

THE FIVE COLUMNS

Log every clip into five columns: Clip | Timecode | Description | Story Beat | Editor Note. The timecode and a sharp note turn hours of raw footage into something an editor can actually navigate.

WHY IT BEATS THE FOOTAGE

This log is more valuable than the raw footage itself. It is the editor's lifeline. It flags the gold, points to the exact moment that matters, and saves the days of blind scrubbing that kill a deadline.

QUICK CHECKS 0 OF 2 DONE

CHECK 1 OF 2

Why is the end-of-day log called more valuable than the raw footage itself?

A. It lets you delete the original footage to save space.

B. It is the editor's lifeline: it flags the gold and points to the exact moment to use. ✓

C. It is required by the camera before it will export.

ANSWER

The footage is just hours of clips. The log tells the editor where the story is, so it is the lifeline that makes the edit possible.

CHECK 2 OF 2

You are filling in the Editor Note column for a clip. Which note will actually help the editor tomorrow?

A "Great stuff, really good energy here."

B "At 04:12 she goes quiet after the bad news. Use that pause for the act break." ✓

C "This clip is one of the ones we shot today."

ANSWER

A useful note gives a specific timecode plus which moment to use and why. That is what the editor can act on without re-watching everything.

LESSON 4 OF 4

Six camera habits that read well on TV

Some things feel strange when you do them in real life and look natural on screen. Shows that feel warm and easy to follow are full of them. Shows that feel cheesy usually skipped them, or faked the moment instead. Here are six to practice.

1. HOLD YOUR FACE AT THE END

After your last word, keep your expression for two or three seconds before you move or look away.

Why it works on TV. The editor needs a clean place to cut, and the feeling on your face is what the viewer remembers.

How to practice. Record yourself answering three questions. After each answer, count "one, two" in your head before you move.

2. ANSWER IN FULL SENTENCES

Put the question inside your answer. Say "The hardest part of the first week was the money," not "Yeah, it was."

Why it works on TV. The question gets cut out. Your answer has to make sense on its own.

How to practice. Have a friend ask you five questions. Start every answer with the words of the question.

3. SAY IT OUT LOUD AS YOU DO IT

Say what you are doing and how you feel while it happens: "I'm calling the bank now. My hands are shaking."

Why it works on TV. Viewers can't read your mind. The camera only gets what you show and say.

How to practice. Make a cup of coffee and talk through every step out loud for one minute.

4. TURN IT UP A NOTCH

React a little bigger than you would at home. Before a reveal, let the pause sit. This is the "spice it up for TV" part, and it is still your real reaction, just easier to see.

Why it works on TV. A phone screen shrinks feelings. What feels big in the room looks normal on screen.

How to practice. Watch a clip of yourself reacting, then film the same reaction about twenty percent bigger and compare.

5. DON'T LOOK AT THE CAMERA

Talk to the people in the scene, not the lens. The only time you look at the camera is in the confessional.

Why it works on TV. A glance at the lens breaks the feeling that we are watching real life.

How to practice. In your next three clips, pick a person or a spot just beside the lens and talk to that.

6. FINISH THE ACTION AND SAY THE STAKES

Walk into frame and out of it. Finish what you started before you stop. Say names and what is at stake: "Dana, if the generator dies today, three dogs go home matted."

Why it works on TV. A scene needs a start and an end, and viewers need to know why it matters before it happens.

How to practice. Before each scene, say the stakes in one sentence, with a name in it.

QUICK CHECK 0 OF 1 DONE

QUICK CHECK

You finish a sentence in a confessional. What next?

A. Look away right away so it feels natural.

B. Hold your expression for two or three seconds. ✓

C. Ask the crew if that was good.

ANSWER

The hold gives the editor a clean cut and lets the feeling land.

Read the whole course free at realityshow101.com. Module 11.