

Location Sound Recording Notes

Location Sound Recording Workshop

Notes based on "Recording Sound on Location," Lizi Hesling, CADARN Learning Portal, *YouTube*, 9/14/2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKBzjSSaKXU>

Three Cs of good location audio

Good audio contributes to your audience immersing themselves in your video, you want your audio to be:

- **Clear:** you can clearly hear the sound that you're supposed to be hearing;
- **Clean:** there aren't any unwanted or distracting noises affecting the quality of the audio; and
- **Consistent:** the volume and the quality don't keep changing unless called for by the story or the visuals.

Five principles of good location sound recording practice

Principle One: Assess the environment to avoid noise as much as possible

The first principle is **assess the environment** and think about how you can go about minimizing the noises (unwanted sounds) so that you get the best audio recording possible, close your eyes and listen carefully; at the same time you don't want to get rid of all of the background sounds as they provide a sense of place, however, in fiction work these sounds are usually added in post production, but in documentary, it's valuable to establish this, it all depends on the specific needs of your production. Use both your ears and eyes when making assessments.

Use windshield to protect from wind noise

Office white noise and talking in the background

Avoid reverb, get away from reflective surfaces like hard walls, floors, and ceilings

Avoid traffic outside, close windows when you can

Be on the look out for occasional noises

Principle Two: Always monitor your audio with good headphones

The second principle is when you're recording audio it is essential to use a good pair of **headphones at all times to monitor** what's going on using headphones is just as important as using a viewfinder to look at the images that you're recording.

Mobile phone interference

Wind noise

Occasional noise

Cable issues

Principle Three: Know thy microphones

The third principle is know your microphones, they vary in terms of form factor, capsule technology, and pick-up patterns. In our sound kits we have the following options:

1. **built-in microphone** on camera or recorder, not in the right position most of the time;
2. **Better quality camera mounted microphone** (available in Sony Video Kit), improvement over built-in, but still not a good option;
3. **Shotgun microphone condenser design**, usually line-cardioid pick-up pattern, usually placed on a boom or pistol grip, very directional, be careful with placement as off-axis sounds are colored, best option for dialogue in many cases, especially when boomed from above (avoid reflections off ground);
4. **Lavalier microphone**, condenser design, usually omnidirectional pick-up pattern, close to the source, often the best option for dialogue, often too good compared to shotgun that offers some sense of the environment;
5. **Hand-held reporter's microphone**, usually dynamic design, usually omnidirectional pick-up pattern, but cardioid is also widely used, good for when it does not matter if you see the microphone, you can get it nice and close to the source.

Principle Four: Get close to the source

The fourth principle is get close to the source, find the sweet spot, and point it away from reflections and towards the source you want to record.

Placement, handling noise, and pickup pattern considerations

Handling the boom pole

Principle Five: Get your levels right

The fifth principle is get your levels right find the sweet spot, and point it away from reflections and towards the source you want to record.

avoid automatic level control (leads to pumping of noise floor which is problematic in the mix)

Use manual setting, avoid over-modulation (distortion) or a signal that is too low (lost in the noise floor), you want to record a healthy signal, above the noise floor, but not over modulating.

Engage the limiter to take care of peaks.