



COVID-19

Content Resource
Guide for Artists

Ever resourceful and creative, artists are experimenting with new ways of generating income during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is having a great impact on the arts industry. We expect more resources, innovations, and strategies will emerge as the situation evolves.

At present, the most common and accessible strategies we see artists using to connect with audiences and generate income are (1) producing virtual concerts and lessons that audiences can tip or buy a “virtual ticket” to experience; (2) establishing subscription-based services on such platforms as [Patreon](#); and (3) establishing online stores through their own website or online marketplaces such sources as [Etsy](#).

This resource guide contains tips and tricks for DIY video recording and some of the options available to artists interested in using these strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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VIDEO RECORDING 101

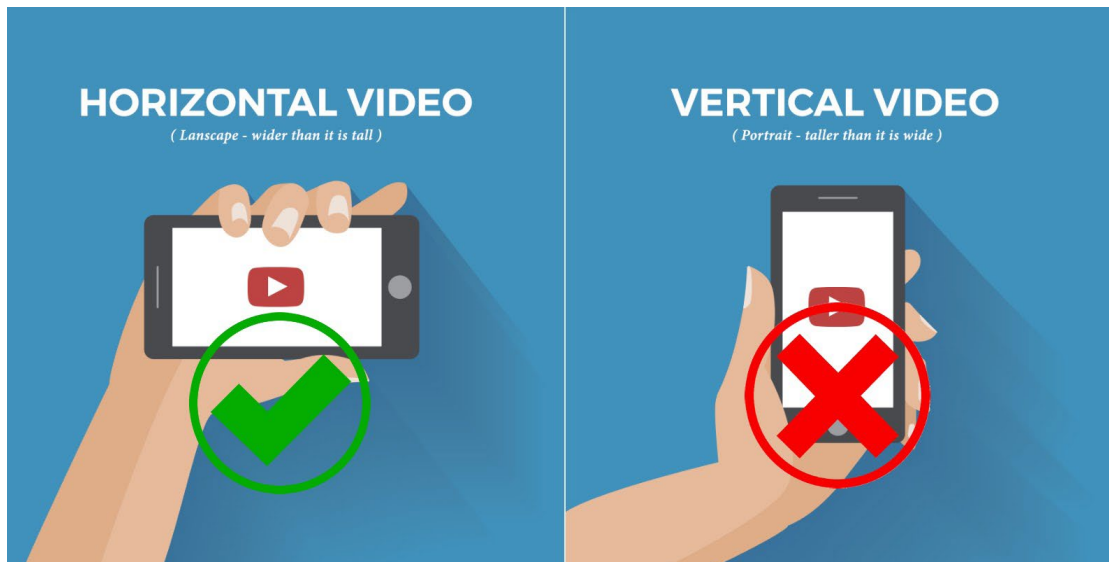
Recording video is an art form of its own, and one that can take years of training and practice to perfect, but this handy guide will give you some easy ways to make sure your home-recorded video is high-enough quality to share with your fans!



SMART PHONE VIDEO RECORDING 101: TIPS AND TRICKS

Your guide to recording video on your smart phone

Composition



Hold your phone horizontally and not vertically. While some phone apps are vertical, we recommend shooting horizontal.

■ GETTING STARTED

Phones can shoot all types of file sizes and frame rates. We recommend 1080p and 30 frames per second. You can shoot larger—at 4K—but that eats up a lot of space on your phone and takes longer to upload and download.

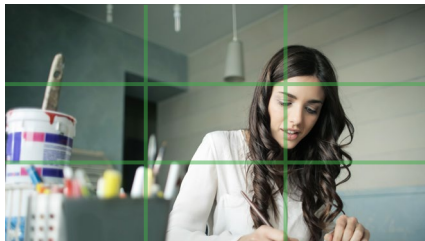
To change the settings on your phone, go to **Settings > Camera > 1080p at 30 fps**.

Please note some phone models may offer different recording options. When in doubt, enter “change camera settings” in your browser to find your phone’s make and model.

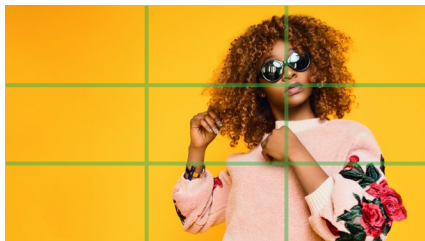
Composition



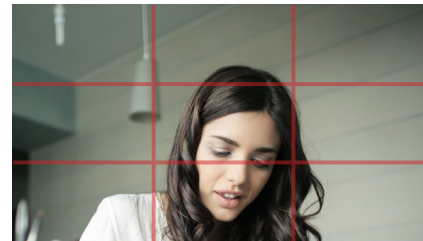
To frame a nice-looking shot, use the rule of thirds. Keep your subject in one third of the screen.



Be sure to give your subject headroom (space above their head). But not too much



Avoid the temptation to place the subject in the center of the screen like the hole in the center of a donut.



Don't cut off the top of your subject's head



Lighting



Try to shoot with the sun or a window in front of you, not behind you. This will keep you or your subject from becoming a dark, faceless shadow. Your camera will iris-down to accommodate for the bright sun.



Zooming



Create a close-up shot by staging your camera close to the subject you are filming instead of using the zoom function. Using the zoom often results in poorly lit, grainy footage.



Recommended Equipment



*MeFOTO Sidekick 360
Smartphone Tripod Adapter*

You should have a tripod of some type for your phone.

[Here is a decent one for \\$33.](#)



Paper Cup Tripod

You can also make one for next to nothing by cutting out the bottom of a plastic or paper cup.



*Rode smartLav+ Lavalier Condenser
Microphone for Smartphones*

If you will be mobile during your shoot, it may be worth adding a microphone to your production toolkit.

[Here is a relatively inexpensive one.](#)



CONTENT STRATEGIES

Once you're comfortable using your video setup, it's time to decide which route you want to take to broadcast your content and generate income. One distribution option is subscription-based rewards through a platform such as Patreon. Another is virtual concerts, lessons, or Q&A livestreams through social media platforms. Or try both!



THE SUBSCRIPTION MODEL

PATREON is a subscription service. Supporters and fans who pay to subscribe to an artist's Patreon site are eligible for ongoing "rewards" created by the artist. Patreon's website is user-friendly and provides recommended best practices for almost every artistic medium. When you sign up—a simple process—you can choose to have Patreon set up a YouTube/Facebook/Twitter page for distribution of your content. This is great if you haven't already established social media accounts, or if you would like to keep the content created while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic separate from your personal accounts.

Visit <https://www.patreon.com> and click "Get Started" to create your Patreon account. You can also hover your mouse over the "For Creators" tab at the top of the website menu and click the appropriate medium you'd like to learn more about.

Choosing rewards: Now is the time to get creative. Different subscription levels warrant different rewards. Consider what your typical monthly income is with your art and go from there. For example, subscribers at \$5 a month have access to a new song each month, while subscribers at \$20 a month can get that five-dollar perk as well as their choice of a custom-recorded cover song or a 30-minute video chat lesson. Exploring Patreon's site will be useful. Find out what other artists are doing and at what subscription cost and base your decisions on that.

Once you have gone through the sign-up process and have organized your profile, you're ready to start promoting it. Use existing social media outlets, listservs that you are on, and organizations you've worked with.



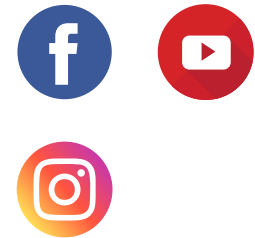
Refer to the section on **PAYMENT** for information on payment services.

FACEBOOK / YOUTUBE / INSTAGRAM LIVESTREAMS

This is the most straightforward route that we have seen artists and performers shift to during this time. The technical needs—detailed below—are minimal. The biggest limiting factor is whether or not you, as an artist, already have an online following. If you do, the most effective way we have seen these “live sessions” executed is to promote them in much the same way as you would a concert. Set a time for a live session coming up soon—for example, “Friday, March 20th, 4:30 PM EST”—and push that out through all of your outlets.

Setting up a livestream is simple. The [following guide](#) walks you through the process on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram and offers some useful tips to ensure that your stream is successful and appeals to your audience. [Refer to the Video Recording 101 section for composition tips and tricks.](#)

The way these performances work is like a tip jar at a venue. Because you are broadcasting publicly, there is no way to charge “admission,” but you can direct viewers to your [Venmo](#) and [PayPal](#) accounts continuously. These accounts should be linked in the bio text that you’ve posted on the social media platform from which you are broadcasting.



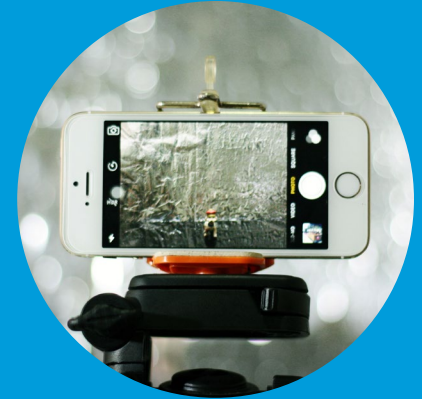
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LIVESTREAMING 101

Livestreaming is a great way to interact with your community and fans.

Guidelines

- We recommend that individual artists keep performance streams to 30 minutes or less. Any longer than this and you'll start to lose people. Make sure you build in a buffer for questions and answers with your audience.
- If possible, have a friend or collaborator log questions from the audience that may be coming up in the chat. You can answer the questions as they come in on-air or answer them all at once toward the end of your event. The appeal of livestreaming from the perspective of viewers is that they feel like they are participating in the event. . . make sure to interact with them!
- For longer streams, workshop-related content is a great idea. People love watching other people make or fix things and teach them how to do it, too.
- Practice good stage etiquette. Be professional. Know when you're live, and don't make any off-camera or off-topic comments.
- Be prepared for going live. As soon as you hit that "Go Live" button, stay in character and maintain your persona until the stream ends.
- If you can, have your device mounted on a tripod or stable surface. Shaky video can make people nauseous.



STREAMING APPLICATIONS

Facebook

- Facebook supports livestreaming directly from the app or website, if you're using a browser. No additional tools needed.
- For better or worse, many people will be glued to their devices during this time, and Facebook livestreams will probably garner you a lot of views and interaction.
- Facebook does not let you edit your recorded video after it has gone live. Make sure you are on point at the beginning of the video; otherwise your errors will live in perpetuity.
- Facebook livestreams can be scheduled ahead of time to give people notice.
- Streaming within the Facebook website/app is strictly "camera and mic only."

YouTube

- YouTube supports livestreaming within the YouTube Studio page or the YouTube Studio app.
- YouTube livestreams can be scheduled ahead of time and promoted to your audience to give people notice.
- The share link can be sent out for anyone to watch your stream, whether or not they have a Google account.
- Only viewers with a Google account can comment or chat.
- YouTube videos can be edited after they have gone live.
- Streaming within the YouTube website/app is strictly "camera and mic only."

Instagram

- Instagram supports livestreaming within the app. No additional tools needed.
- Promoting an Instagram livestream often begins with artists sharing a post on their social media accounts announcing an upcoming livestream.
- The app supports joint livestreaming from different locations. You can go "live" with another artist if you'd like.
- Comments can be enabled or disabled during Instagram livestreams.
- Videos can be saved and repurposed on your Instagram account.

PAYMENT

These services allow a “customer” to pay an artist directly and virtually. You’ll want to update any social media profiles, website headers, online storefront pages, and social media copy with information about how to access your Venmo and PayPal accounts. This will allow patrons to access them easily and send you money. Below are quick walkthroughs to get started on either, or both, platforms. (We recommend setting up both if you are able.)

PAYPAL: PayPal is a secure, peer-to-peer money-sending service that is available to use via desktop or cell phone app. The service charges no fee to withdraw money from a user’s bank account and deposit it in yours. To set up an account, go to [PayPal.com](https://www.paypal.com), click to create an account, and then link your bank account to it. (You’ll need your bank routing number and account number, located at the bottom of a personal check.)

VENMO: Venmo is effectively the same service as PayPal, but it focuses on mobile devices rather than computers. The steps to set up a Venmo account are the same as those for PayPal, but you will use your credit or debit card instead of a bank account. We recommend using a debit card, if possible; credit cards charge a 3-percent fee on withdrawals, whereas the only penalty for use of a debit card is a one-to three-day waiting period for the transaction to be completed.

Both Venmo and PayPal have a prompt within the service to create a “display name”: on PayPal, it’s called [PayPal.me](https://www.paypal.com), and on Venmo, it’s called a username. Both are located under the “Settings” tab of the respective services. We recommend making the names similar on both; something like “JohnDoeMusic” is a good starting point.

*Note: Some artists also use **CASH APP** — a mobile peer-to-peer money transfer service, similar to Venmo.*



A NOTE ON COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

This is uncharted territory and we are all navigating and problem-solving on the fly. One thing we know for sure is that the arts community in North Carolina is strong, and we will lift up our fellow artists as we are able. Community organizing is important even outside of a global pandemic, and we often see it in the arts. What is a festival if not a community-organized event? What are shows that feature multiple performers if not a community event? Use this perspective when employing online strategies. Are you planning to livestream a concert on Friday night? Put a call out to other performers you have worked with, make the livestream a “multiple-act event,” and co-promote it. Your 30-minute livestream could be a two-hour event that five different acts perform on, all pulling from different audience pools. This can work with other art forms or mediums, too.





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