



Guidelines for Producing an Our Rock Project Film

There are some rules that all filmmakers must follow and we expect you to follow them if you wish to share your film on our website. Please share the guidelines with your students before they begin working on their film projects.

The Our Rock Project is a STEAM based educational program and therefore we require you as the filmmaker to be truthful and scientifically accurate in presenting your story. We reserve the right to exclude any films from our archive that presents false or misleading information or is of a nature that we deem inappropriate for our site and viewing audience. If you have a question regarding your film topic and how you plan to tell your story, please consult your teacher, your club supervisor, and your parents. If they all feel it is an acceptable topic and your approach to it is acceptable, then chances are it will be acceptable to us as well. Or you can even send us a copy of your film treatment and we will let you know if we would host your film in our archive.

One of the most important rules in filmmaking is the copyright law. You will have to abide by these rules if you wish to share your film with the world. Your teacher or supervisor will instruct you on the details of these laws, but in essence here are a few rules to follow that should cover the majority of what you will encounter as you proceed through your film production.

You may not use someone's photo, film clip, graphs, music or written words without their permission. Given that you are producing a student educational film; most people will be glad to have you use their work if you ask them politely. They are entitled to a credit at the end of your film and sometime may want a payment for using their work in your film. The best thing to do is to write them and explain what you are doing and how you are using their work.



Credit for and ownership of the copyright to a photo or a video clip belongs to the creature who snapped the picture or ran the video camera during its capture. There is a very interesting legal case going on right now with a photographer who had his camera grabbed by an orangutan who then snapped a series of selfies. The camera owner has claimed copyright ownership of the photos, but the courts have said that the rights to the photos belong to the orangutan and are therefore free to use as they fall into “public domain” because an orangutan cannot own a copyright. So, remember this when you are shooting your film. Just ask and always give credit where credit is due.

Another filmmaking rule that you need follow is that you cannot put someone in your film without his or her permission. In other words, you will need to get written permission from each person you interview for your film. And you have to be careful not to have other people in the background of your shot if you do not have their permission to do so. You are primarily concerned here whether or not you can recognize or see their face in your photo or video clip. You can always blur their face in your post-production process, but that is a lot of work and it is much easier just to be careful while filming your documentary.

Product placement – When you are shooting your interview and b-roll you need to be mindful of everything that appears on screen. You should avoid all logos and brand names that appear on products, t-shirts and signage. The manufacturers of these products might not want their product in your film and can take legal action against you if you have not been given written permission from them. So avoid including shots of things with logos and names.

Editing integrity – When you are interviewing someone you need to be careful when you are editing your film so that the essence of what your subject says in the interview is not misrepresented or altered to sound like they said the opposite of what they meant in the



original interview. Here again, you could be subject to legal action for doing so.

For your safety, please do not chase or try to capture animals, birds, sea creatures, etc. This can be very dangerous to you and to the creatures you are attempting to film. The best example I can give you is the death of Steve Irwin. Irwin was renowned for chasing after creatures and grabbing them while explaining some facts about their life and place in the natural world. He was killed by a stingray while filming a segment about coastal marine life in Australia. This was once a big thing in broadcast TV for the Discovery Channel and National Geographic, but after his death, this practice has been removed from television and highly discouraged in all aspects of science and natural history filmmaking. If you present us with a film that contains a chase-capture scene, we will not host it our archive. In other words, we will not promote this behavior. If you wish to make a documentary about an animal, bird, fish, etc. please use an observational approach when filming it.

As you are filming, your footage should continuously be uploaded to google drive. This will prevent any footage from being lost whether from a technology malfunction or even from a lost or stolen hard drive. And lastly, students will need to finish their films with a MP4 codec for easy uploads to the archive.

Please know that this is just a short list of the rules for filmmakers and by no means represents the entirety of the laws regarding the filmmaking process. But if you follow and abide by this short list you should be just fine throughout your film production process. In short, be truthful, accurate and honest in your film and you will have nothing to worry about. If you have a question regarding your production, please consult with your teacher or youth group supervisor for clarification and guidance.