How do you carve an elephant out of marble? Easy, get a block of marble and chip away everything that doesn't look like an elephant. How do you edit three hours of raw footage into a digestible three-minute finished piece? No problem, take out all the bad stuff. Here's a short list of techniques and "bad stuff" to look for as you sit in the edit bay.

5-Seconds of Heads and Tails
All right, this is more of a shooting technique than an editing tip, but chances are you are shooting as well, so I included it (and if you are not, make sure your cameraperson covers this). Heads and tails, or what some editing environments call handles, are amounts of tape recorded before the action starts and after the action stops. I usually record at least five seconds on either side. You really want these, especially if you are going to use a fade or dissolve before or after your clip. For example, if your subject starts talking as soon as you hit record, you won't have ample footage to fade in from black. When shooting, I hit the record button on the camera and announce "Tape rolling" and then watch the time code on the LCD monitor advance five seconds before yelling "Action!" After the subject has finished speaking I wait an extra five seconds before declaring "Cut."

Organization
Organization is extremely important, much more important than you might think. With today's huge hard drives and your own ambitious creativity, you can easily be working with hundreds of media files (video, audio and stills), even on a short project. As I go through my source footage, I organize all my clips into bins with keywords (for searching) and I use the color codes and the "good" check box option that Final Cut Pro has put in its Browser window. All advanced editing programs come with some sort of organizing tools and you would do well to check them out. When you want to find that great quote buried in 30 hours of raw footage, you'll be happy you took the time to use them.

Monitors
Video monitors are an expensive fix to a serious problem, but it should be on top of your equipment wish list. You need to see your video as it will be viewed and the picture on your computer monitor is not what it looks like on a television. Every professional edit bay has a video monitors for a reason. In our editing, we'll use a video monitor to examine the color, watch for interfacing problems and to check the masking. The best solution is to get a professional production monitor, but if you don't have $100 or so, a simple NTSC color television is certainly better than nothing.

Rhythm
Finding a desired rhythm was the best lesson I learned from three years and $60,000 worth of graduate film school. I was editing my first short on a desktop system when the director of the program noticed my creative struggle. He pulled up a chair and without explanation he tapped the space bar, starting the play head on the timeline. He then simultaneously tapped his foot, his finger on the desk and his head for eight beats and tapped the space bar again. He said, "That is where you cut." Rhythm has as many different definitions and techniques as there are editors. Observe the rhythm in other works and find the rhythm that works for your creative style and for the piece you are working on.

Related Information

**Color Correction**

In this color correction tutorial (which is really color enhancement) we offer color correction methods for basic, intermediate and advanced users.

**Getting Started With Free Video Editing Software**

If you buy a Macintosh or Windows based system, you are some time getting started with the free video editing software that comes with your computer.

**Basic Video Editing**

So you've got a camera and you've gone out and shot some video with it. Sooner or later you're going to want to understand how to do basic Video Editing.

**Editing Video Clips To Remove Unwanted Objects**

The most common offender is the tip of a shotgun mic that has dipped into the shot from above. We also might see the edge of a light stand or a hairbrush.

**Videomaker Instructional Series - Introduction to Digital Video Editing**

You'll learn important information about digital video editing software. You'll learn the tools you need to get started in digital video editing including valuable tips and techniques for creating titles, editing sequences and editing audio.

**Videomaker Instructional Series - Sound Success (DVD)**

Learn about the many types of microphones and how to use them wisely. Key insights for recording indoor and outdoor audio. Editing techniques to sweeten your audio by adding sound effects at the edit bay.

**Videomaker Instructional Series - Advanced Editing -- Guide to Advanced Computer Video Editing (DV/HD)**

The editors and experts at Videomaker have created this DVD to introduce you to the video editing software, and techniques you need to know to edit like a professional including tips for creating video titles, and how to adjust color when editing.

**Audio Compression**

There are many compression formats available to the video producer. Some use lossy compression like MP3 and others are lossless. The trick is determining which are useful or even practical. In this eDoc, we'll compare the major players and see how they fit in the production process.

**Composition 201**

It's time to learn the advanced techniques in Composition! In this second part, we'll go beyond the basics and take a look at some more advanced techniques that will make you a better producer. We'll review...

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Morgan Paar
March 2004

ShareThis
natural framing, depth of field, continuity, and lighting.

**Fix It in Post**

Four of the most dangerous words in the video production lexicon are 'fix it in post.' Easy for a director or cinematographer to say, but who is going to feel the pain? The editor and, most probably, the audience... Here are the important things to look out for while in post-production.

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