

Basic Video Editing Class Equipment List

For May 2011 class in Italy / Dec. 13, 2010 / By Dr. Norm Lewis

1. Required: Computer

Best is if you have access to a Macintosh so you can use Final Cut Express. Why a Mac?

1. Even the cheapest MacBook sold today has enough power to edit video. Not every Windows machine does. Most Windows notebooks cannot handle video. Some Windows laptops can't, either.
2. The UF Bookstore sells Final Cut Express cheap. It is a \$200 program. The education price through Apple is \$180. The Bookstore sells it for just \$70. That's the best price on the planet. And Final Cut Express is very powerful.



Q. I don't own a Mac. Do I have to buy one?



A. No. You may be able to share with someone else on the trip. Maybe you can buy the software in exchange for sharing a laptop for video editing. We're also trying to see if renting is an option. Bottom line: Don't buy a laptop just for this class.

Q. I have a new Windows laptop and want to stick with Windows. Can I do so?



A. Yes. You will have to buy a program called [Adobe Premiere Pro](#), which costs about \$400 at student pricing. You can buy it as part of an Adobe CS5 suite through an education reseller such as [JourneyEd](#). In addition, you'll have to do more self-education in the software and invest in a [manual](#) because I don't use Adobe Premiere. (Note: Do not buy the cheaper Adobe Premiere Elements. It's worthless.)

Q. I need a new laptop anyway and have been thinking about a Mac. Which is best?

A. The best deal for the money is an entry-level [MacBook Pro](#) (I use a 2009 model) for \$1,100 (education price). The newest version has lots of power, memory and battery life (10 hours). If you think you'll get serious about video, which creates large files, consider doubling the hard drive to 500GB for an additional \$135. Or, consider an external hard drive. I recommend the [LaCie Rikiki](#), which is small and reliable, and costs \$60 for 500GB. If you are considering a larger and more powerful laptop, Macworld [compares](#) them.



2. Required: Software



See above for details. Final Cut Express for the Mac is just \$70 at the UF Bookstore. The store also has a great deal on Final Cut Studio (\$300 rather than \$900) if you want more bells and whistles. But Express is all you need for this class. A new version of Studio is slated to come out in [early 2011](#), which means a new



Express may be forthcoming, too. So you might want to wait until March or early April to buy.

3. Required: Video Camera

You'll need something to capture video. Anything will do. It can be low-def or high-def. Eventually, most people prefer high-def for the clarity of the image. But if you have a low-def camera, that will work fine for this class.

Pocket camcorders



An excellent option for video is the Flip-style pocket camcorder. The one at left, the [UltraHD](#) with two hours of memory, is \$179. Although Flip was the first of its type, other companies also make pocket camcorders and their features vary. If you like this style, consider this handy [guide](#) from my favorite photo review site, [dPreview.com](#).

Point and shoot



You also can use a small point-and-shoot camera that takes pictures and video. The Canon PowerShot, such as the [SD1300](#) at left, costs \$110. But there are lots of good cameras from Nikon, Panasonic, Casio, Nikon, Samsung and others. Here is a link to Cnet [reviews](#), though some are a little old. [Macworld](#) has a point-and-shoot camera review site, too. New York Times technology writer David Pogue annually [reviews](#) top cameras for less than \$300, as he did in [February 2010](#), and tries to persuade consumers that [megapixels don't matter](#).

Pro-style cameras with video



Increasingly, Canon and Nikon make cameras that offer excellent still photos and high-def video. Of course, these also cost much more. The new Nikon 3100 at left is a nice, entry-level (it [teaches](#) you how to take better pictures), pro-style digital single-lens reflex ([DSLR](#)) camera that takes high-def video. It will cost about \$600 or so on sale. See this [Ken Rockwell](#) review for more.

Hand-held camcorder



If you want a compact camcorder with a true zoom lens, you'll need something better than a Flip. Cameras like the Canon Vixia [HF M300](#) are going to start at \$350. I am quite satisfied with my older Canon Vixia HF200, but other companies make good camcorders, too. Cnet walks you through the [options](#).

4. Probably Required: Storage



Most cameras store images to digital flash cards. Buy a few smaller (say, [4GB](#) at \$7 each) cards rather than one or two large (16GB or 32GB) cards unless you have a high-def camcorder. That way you can organize your files by locale (Florence, Vienna, Rome, etc.) – and you won't panic as much if you misplace a card. Flash cards vary according to how fast they can record images. For most cameras, a Class 6 is plenty fast enough. Check with your camera or camcorder, but you probably won't have to pay for a Class 10 card.

5. Highly Recommended: Sound recorder



You will need sound for your video, and you can record sound with your camera. But sometimes the quality isn't good, especially if your camera isn't close to the subject speaking. That's one instance when a digital sound recorder can be handy. You also can use a recorder to capture ambient sound while you're documenting something else with your camera. I recommend the Olympus [VN-8100](#) (I have an older version that works great) for \$45. This new one records in WMA and MP3 formats. The matching (and very optional) Olympus [microphone](#) looks promising. I use an [Audio Technica](#) condenser lapel microphone.

6. Recommended: Tripod



This [Sony VCT-R100](#) fits in my backpack, pans OK, seems sturdy enough and is just \$27. I wish this expanded to a greater height for my 6-foot-3 build, but you can't have both height and compactness in a tripod. If you don't get a tripod, we'll teach you how to hold the camera relatively still without a tripod. But for interview shots, a tripod gives you a more polished look than a steady hand can provide.