

9 Tips to Shoot an Interview Documentary Style

[Nathalie](#)



If it is important to [learn from the masters](#) and [nurture our creativity](#) to better express our voices, I feel it is equally important to improve our skills, as indie filmmakers, on [how to make great videos for clients](#); as this is often how we make the necessary money to eat and stay warm while working on our creative projects. After last month detailed **Stillmotion**'s masterclass on [how to prepare and shoot a video from A to Z](#), this month's article is giving out 9 complementary tips from **JP Morgan** to shoot an interview documentary style.

The first thing to know about Morgan's shooting style is that he goes for a two cameras set-up. Now, everybody doesn't have the necessary gear to handle that, *but*, all the other tips remain relevant, and, if you ever plan on upgrading to two cameras, you now know where to find the necessary info.

To the list of tips:



Tip 1: Create an Outline

This is a pure pre-production step. Here is what Morgan's says about it: "Before starting the project, [I outline] several points that I want to cover: where the company is located, the main reason they are in business, how do they benefit the community... this outline should cover the main points i want in the interview and gives me guidance for the B-Roll."

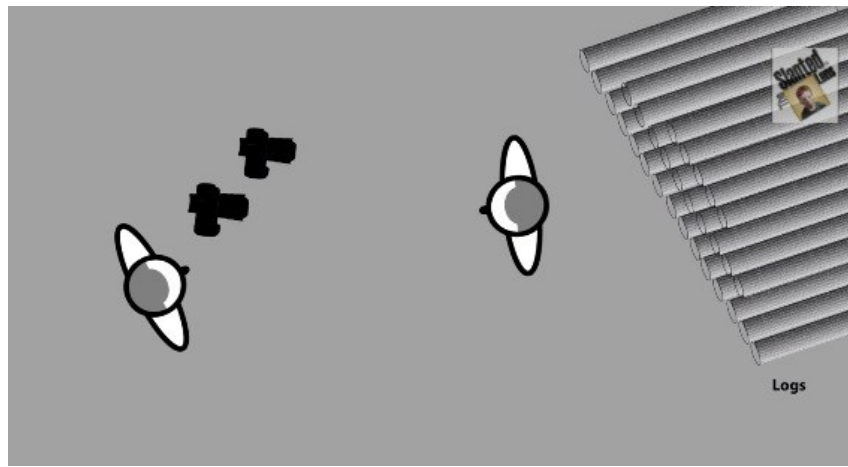
Tip 2: Write a Series of Questions

Once your outline done, find questions that will direct and illustrate the story toward the angle you set your outline on.

Tip 3: Find a Good Location to Shoot

Since this is about telling stories with images, finding a good location is key to set-up a mood and create a good story. Morgan recommends finding one to two locations and scouting them before the official shooting starts and the pressure is on.

- **But what if you can't find a good location?** "If the location is not interesting, I'll try to go out of focus and let it become indiscernible."

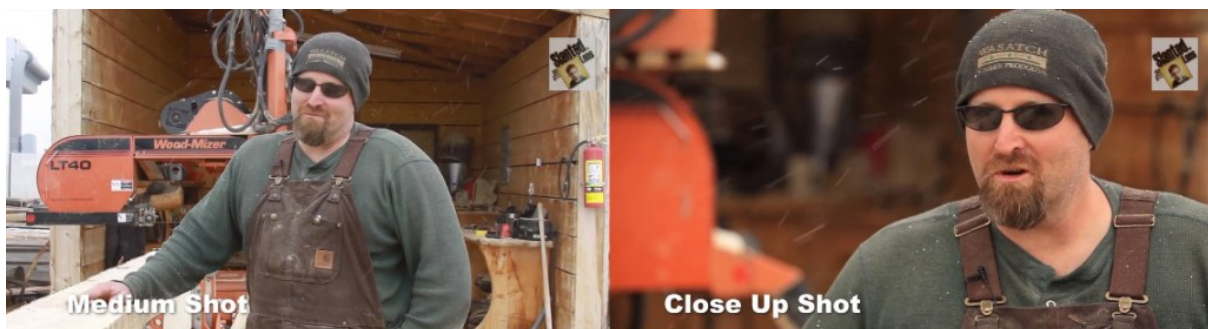


Tip 4: Use Two Cameras

As I mentioned earlier, Morgan goes for a two cameras set-up. Above is a sketch of how he places the camera, which is by using one camera set on a wide or medium shot, and looking straight at the subject, and one camera set on a close-up shot, either on the right or the left side of the establishing shot camera, depending on which direction you want the subject to look into the frame.

Below are the two options:

- 1) when the subject looks to the left (close-up camera placed to the left of the medium shot camera)



- 2) when the subject looks to the right (close-up camera placed to the right of the medium shot camera)



Tip 5: Have the Subject Looks Right at You

Quite an important tip: directing the subject to make sure their eyes don't go crazy while you are interviewing them. It also helps them focusing on something and having one thing less to think about. Here is what Morgan adds: "Stand as close to the close-up camera as you can, their look will be slightly off camera but that's totally ok."

Tip 6: Ask the Subject to Repeat the Question Before Answering

Another simple but essential tip. If you are also editing what you shoot, chances are you are already very aware of the matter but if not, make sure this happens or it will be very complicated to create a story with bits of sentences.

Tip 7: Always Look at the Subject When They Are Talking to You

The way you conduct your interviews and behave with the persons you are interviewing is either going to help or kill your story. For people to open themselves and give you good lines, being present and nice at all times is as key as having a strong list of questions. And Morgan to adds: "Listen to their response and make sure you get B-Roll to illustrate their answers."



Tip 8: B-Roll is Critical

“B-Roll is the footage that you shoot without sound that gives the piece its style. Make sure you have coverage of everything your subject talks about.” And more if possible. Even if you don’t have a [Kessler Crane](#) or a [GoPro](#), [work on your framing](#) and [your eye](#), and try to capture the essence of your video with images.

Tip 9: Always Shoot, Don’t Turn Off the Camera

That’s pretty self-explanatory.



Hope you will find this 9 tips helpful. I left out the gear part, as it always depends on the situation, but go check out the [full video here](#). I would have loved to embed it, unfortunately the option was deactivated for mysterious reasons. And if you are curious to see the final result, you can check JP