

## **ADVANCED EDITING TECHNIQUES: BEYOND THE SLIDESHOW**

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*“We have found that if we provide only basic [editing] suggestions, or keep the stories on a strict template, we may in fact make our job easier, but in turn stifle many participants’ initiative and inspiration. We want their introduction to new media and storytelling to have a magical, transformative feeling... So during the one-on-one support, particularly after the rough edit is complete, we will demonstrate possible approaches within the skill set of each of us as experienced editors and designers.”*

- Lambert, *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*, p. 82

When you’re new to video editing, the process can be alternatively exciting and disappointing: exciting when your image and audio tracks seem to together add up to something greater than the sum of their parts, disappointing when your image track feels out-of-sync, sparse, static, or slideshow-like. As Lambert suggests in the quote above, when new digital storytellers learn some advanced techniques, the video editing process can suddenly become a lot more exciting. Below are a few such techniques.

### **Ways to Add Meaning with Image and Audio Effects**

1. At the important shifts in your story, fade down to black to signal one section is ending. Fade up from black to signal a new section is starting. Do this by using the “Dip to Black” transition, or, if a longer pause is needed, insert a black slide between two images, and use the Dip to Black transition on both sides of the black slide.
2. Another way to emphasize the structural chunks of your story is to extend the break in the audio between paragraphs. Technically, do this by finding some ‘room tone’ in your recording—a break, when there is no talking, often present at the beginning or end of a take—cutting it out, and then pasting it between the paragraphs, to extend the gap between paragraphs.
3. If you are narrating a *scene*—that is, a specific moment that happened in a specific place—consider using a visual that helps the listener to imagine that scene. For example, if your narration begins with a dramatic moment in a bar when your significant other proposes marriage, an image that reinforces the moment in the bar—like a photo of a hand on a beer glass, or of the surface of a bar—may be more effective than a photo that doesn’t help to conjure up the scene, like a photo of you and your significant other sitting on the beach, or smiling in a selfie.
4. Consider varying the pacing of your photos in ways that reinforce the speed of the action happening in the story. For example, if you’re describing a panicked moment you felt as you stood on a stage looking out over a crowd, a staccato sequence of very quick shots of individual faces, with straight cuts between them, may be more effective than a photo of a crowd that’s on screen for a while.
5. Vary the perspectives of your photos: include some close ups, some distance shots.
6. A bit of adjusting your clips in the ‘color’ area of WeVideo (double-click the photo in the timeline, then click the half-shaded circle icon) can both improve photos and

yield some interesting mood effects. For example, you could demonstrate a happy moment that suddenly turned sad by moving from a full color photo of that moment to the same photo in black-in-white, with a crossfade transition between the two images.

7. If your narration has repeated moments in it—for example, it begins in a dramatic moment, then gives the backstory, then returns to that dramatic moment—you can help viewers to see that structure by repeating the same image both times you enter the description of the scene. In general, the deliberate repetition of a key image or few key images can often make a story feel more connected and complete.
8. In most cases, it's important to include an image of yourself early in the story, so that the audience has a visual of who is speaking.
9. You can in some cases increase the viewer's engagement by having images appear just a teensy bit before you reference their subjects in the audio. Having a little moment of uncertainty, as viewers try to figure out what the picture is about, can get viewers watching with more engagement.
10. At important moments in the narration, keep the visuals simple. A slow zoom on one image, for example, can encourage viewers to listen more carefully than would a challenging visual sequence.
11. Consider using audio as more than background: a shift from one song to another can indicate a shift in tone; music that begins after a stretch of voiceover alone can connote the idea of an awakening; etc.

## **Little Tips to Make the Image Track Cleaner and More Professional-Looking**

1. Fade the first image of your story up from black. Fade the last image of your story down to black. A zoom-out on your final photo, while fading down to black, is often a good way to visually emphasize the story has come to a close.
2. If you have black bars under/above or on the sides of your images (pillar-boxing and letter-boxing), use the Transform option to fit the image in the frame. Note that some portrait-oriented images may be best left with the black bars, as fitting them into the frame will alter the perspective too much.
3. Before you add a pan-and-zoom (with the Ken Burns effect), be sure you've gotten rid of the pillar- or letter-boxing. Otherwise, the motion will look odd.
4. Use the scale slider and push photos around in the frame to recompose them and maximize the visual interest. For example, if you've got a shot of three people with lots of space around them, you can crop in to make the people fill more of the frame. Note that it's important to be sure you have a big enough image so that this won't cause pixilation.
5. Don't pan and zoom too fast or too dramatically.