

# Roots & Reels Tools Manual

Everything you need to film, edit, and share your story

**INTERNATIONAL HISTORY COMPETITION**

**FOR YOUNG DIGITAL STORYTELLERS (13–27)**

What story from the past still speaks to you today?

- **Organised by:** IDMC – Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture
- **Initiated by:** EUSTORY
- **Supported by:** Körber-Stiftung





# Editing Tools for Short Videos

The right app makes all the difference — here's where to start.

## Easy Mobile Apps

- **CapCut** — auto subtitles, templates, very beginner-friendly
- **InShot** — ideal for Reels and short clips
- **KineMaster** — more control, still accessible

## More Advanced Tools

- **LumaFusion** — powerful mobile editor (one-time cost)
- **Canva Video** — simple storytelling and quick edits
- **Adobe Premiere Pro** — professional desktop software

# Free Resources: Images, Video & Music

No copyright worries — all free to use.

## Free Photos

- **Unsplash** — high-quality photos
- **Pexels** — large image library
- **Pixabay** — photos, illustrations, graphics

## Free Video

- **Pexels Video** — HD and 4K footage
- **Mixkit** — cinematic stock clips
- **Videvo** — clips, motion graphics, effects

## Free Music

- **YouTube Audio Library**
- **Free Music Archive (FMA)**
- **Pixabay Music**

## AI Music Tools

- **Suno AI** — generate songs or background music
- **Udio** — different styles and genres
- **Beatoven AI** — music by mood and scene

**Always check the licence:** Look for "free for commercial use" or "royalty-free" before using any content.



# Transcription Tools

Turn spoken words into text — fast and accurately.

## Top Picks

- **ElevenLabs** — fast, accurate AI transcription
- **TurboScribe** — highly accurate, free tier for short files
- **Whisper (OpenAI)** — excellent open-source accuracy

## Reliable Free Alternatives

- **Otter.ai** — great for interviews and conversations
- **Notta AI** — real-time transcription, free plan
- **Google Docs Voice Typing** — simple, built-in tool



**Tip:** Transcribing interviews helps you quickly find the best quotes for your video.



# Subtitle Tools

Subtitles boost clarity, accessibility, and reach — especially for international audiences.

## Easy for Beginners

- **CapCut Auto Captions** — subtitles built into the editor
- **VEED (free)** — auto subtitles and easy editing
- **YouTube Studio** — automatic captions after upload
- **Kapwing (free)** — quick subtitle generator

## Best Practices for Short Films

- Keep text **short and easy to read**
- **Synchronise** with the speaker's voice
- Make text **large enough** for mobile screens
- Use **Subtitle Edit** or **Descript** for fine-tuning



# Filming with a Smartphone

You don't need professional gear — just good technique.

1

## Clean the Lens

Wipe before every shoot — smudges ruin clarity.

2

## Use the Back Camera

Better quality than the front — use both if needed.

3

## Record in 1080p or 4K

Maximum quality from the start.

4

## Film Vertically

A Reel request :)

5

## Avoid Digital Zoom

Move closer instead — zoom degrades quality.

6

## Keep It Stable

Use both hands or a surface to reduce shake.

# Composition & Framing

Good framing instantly makes a video look more cinematic.

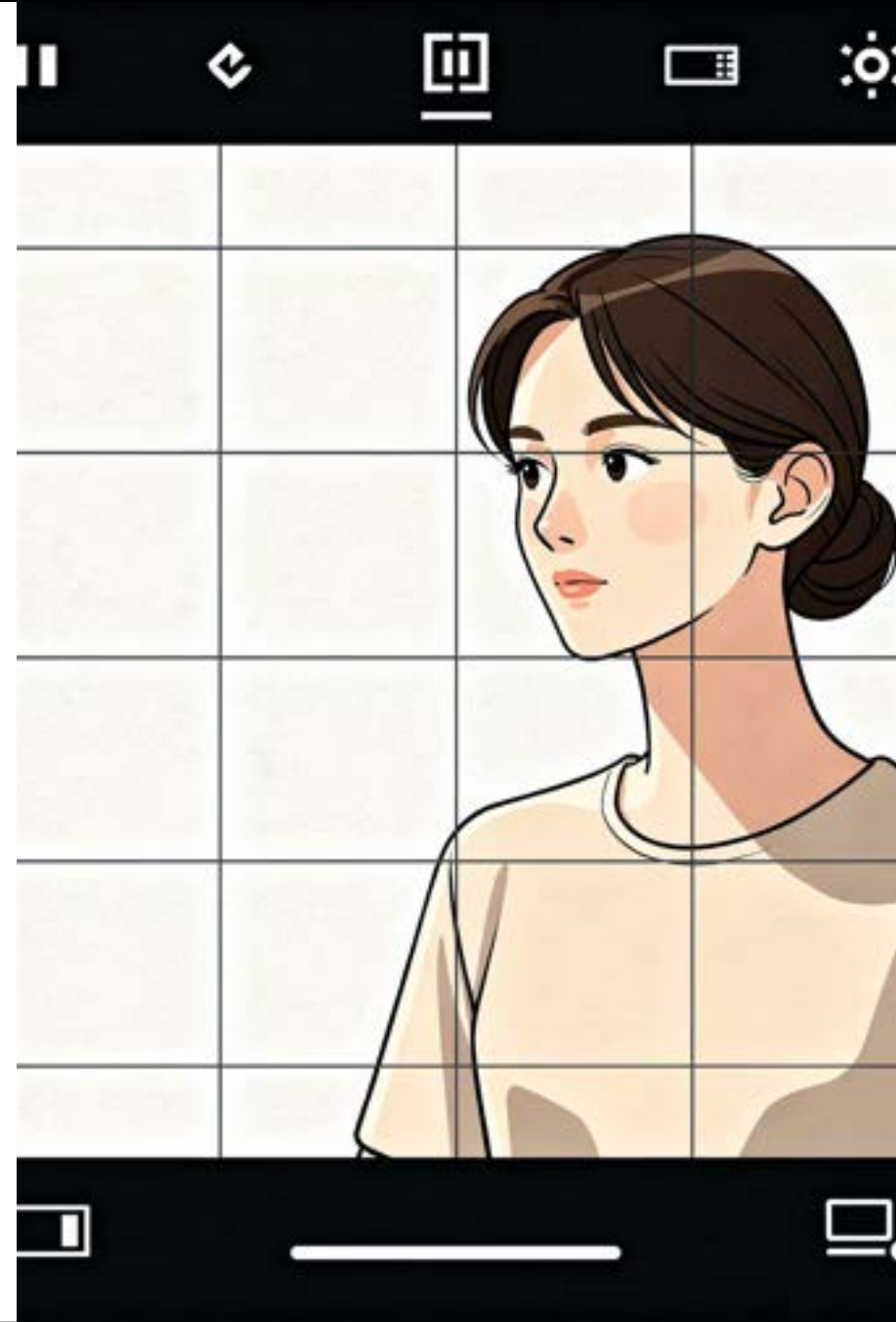
## Rule of Thirds

- Divide the frame into a **3×3 grid**
- Place the subject **slightly off-centre**
- Position eyes on the **upper horizontal line**
- Leave space in the **direction the subject faces**

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Subject too close to the background — lose depth
- Too much empty space above the head
- Subject dead-centre like a passport photo

📄 Distance between subject and background creates natural depth and a 3D effect.



# Shot Types for Storytelling

Mix these shots to keep your film visually dynamic and engaging.



## Wide Shot

Sets the scene — shows location and context.



## Medium Shot

Shows the person — ideal for interviews.




## Close-Up

Captures emotion and connection.



## Detail Shot

Hands, objects, photos — adds texture and story.

 A great video mixes **interviews** with **B-roll footage** — tracking shots, panning, and movement shots add energy.



# Audio Recording

**Good audio beats  
perfect video.**

## Key Tips

- Record in a **quiet environment**
- Avoid wind, traffic, and background noise
- Keep the mic **close to the speaker**

## Equipment

A low-budget external microphone makes a **huge difference** in audio quality — even a basic clip-on lapel mic is enough.

# Lighting Basics

Good lighting is the fastest way to improve your video quality.

## Best Option: Natural Light

Face a window during the day  
— soft, flattering, and free.



## Avoid Backlight

Never place a bright window or light **behind** your subject — it creates silhouettes.

## Filming at Night?

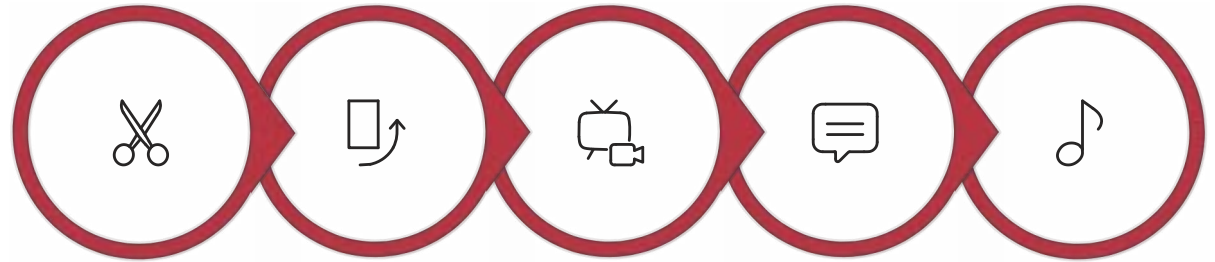
Record indoors with room lighting, or outdoors with available artificial light. A portable LED panel is an affordable upgrade.





# Simple Editing Workflow

Follow these six steps for a clean, focused final video.



Select Clips

Structure  
Story

Add B-roll

Insert  
Subtitles

Add Music



**Keep it short, clear, and story-focused.** A tight 2–3 minute video is always more powerful than a long, unfocused one.