

Talking-Head Video Production — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a working studio you can use today. Each section maps to one course module and mixes hands-on exercises, fill-in worksheets, and pre-shoot checklists. Work through it once to build and document your setup, then keep the checklists and templates beside your camera for every future shoot.

Building Your Talking-Head Studio

Lock in your camera, exposure, white balance, and framing so every recording starts sharp, consistent, and flattering.

Exercise: Run Your 10-Second Test Clip

Set your camera to full manual using the course settings, record a 10-second clip of yourself talking, then play it back at full resolution and answer the prompts honestly before you record anything real.

- Are your eyes tack-sharp, and is the focus locked on your nearest eye rather than the background?

- On the histogram, is your skin sitting just right of center without touching the far-right wall?

- Does the white wall behind you read neutral, or is there an orange or blue color cast to fix?

- Is the camera at or slightly above your eye level, never tilted up at your chin?

Worksheet: My Locked Camera Settings

Fill in the exact settings you will use every time so your footage matches from session to session. Tape a copy near your camera.

Camera body and lens

Resolution and frame rate (e.g. 4K 24fps)

Shutter speed (double the frame rate)

Aperture (f-stop)

ISO

White balance in Kelvin

Focus mode (locked AF point or manual)

Distance from camera to subject (meters)

Checklist: Pre-Roll Camera Check

- Camera in full manual: exposure, white balance, and focus all locked
- Shutter set to double the frame rate (1/50s for 24fps, 1/60s for 30fps)
- ISO at the lowest clean value your light allows
- Zebras or histogram confirm skin highlights are not blown
- Eyes on the upper-third line with consistent headroom
- Lens at or just above eye level on a locked tripod or mount
- Memory card has space and the battery is charged or plugged in

Lighting and Backdrop That Look Intentional

Shape soft three-point lighting, keep your color temperature consistent, and design a background with depth.

Exercise: Map Your Three-Point Lighting

Sketch a simple overhead diagram of your space showing the camera, your chair, and each light. Place the key at 45 degrees to one side and above, the fill opposite and weaker, and the back light behind you. Then test and adjust.

- Does the key light create a natural shadow on the far side of your face, adding dimension rather than flattening it?

- Is your fill clearly weaker than your key, roughly a 2:1 ratio, so shadows are softened but not erased?

- Does the back light create a visible bright edge on your hair and shoulders that lifts you off the background?

- Is every light source soft (through a softbox or bounced) rather than a hard bare bulb?

Worksheet: Lighting and Color Plan

Document your lighting so you can recreate it exactly. Confirm one color temperature lights your face and any contrasting color stays in the background.

Key light model, position, and power level

Fill source (light or bounce board) and power level

Back light model and position

Key-to-fill ratio (e.g. 2:1)

Face color temperature in Kelvin (one value for all face lights)

Background practical lights and their color

CRI rating of main lights

Glasses or skin glare check (pass or fail)

Checklist: Backdrop and Set Check

- Subject is 1.5 to 3 meters forward of the background for depth and bokeh
- Background has layers and a few intentional objects, not a bare wall or clutter
- One light or practical adds glow to the background
- No object appears to grow out of the head; nudge chair or props if so
- Frame edges and the space around the head are clean
- No busy patterns or pure white or pure black behind the subject
- All face lights are one color temperature; contrast colors are background only

Broadcast-Clean Audio and Confident Delivery

Capture clean dialogue at the source, silence room noise and echo, and deliver natural on-camera performances.

Exercise: The 30-Second Room Listen

Plug in your microphone and headphones, set your level, and listen to your silent room with the gain up for 30 seconds. Hunt down every sound you hear, switch off what you can, and note what remains.

- What noise sources can you hear (fan, AC, fridge, traffic, computer), and which did you switch off?

- Does the room sound echoey, and which soft surfaces can you add to absorb reflections?

- Is your average speaking level around -18dB to -12dB with peaks no hotter than -6dB?

- Can you move the microphone closer to your mouth to raise voice over room sound?

Worksheet: Audio and Delivery Setup

Record your audio chain and your delivery plan for this video so both are deliberate before you press record. Microphone model and type (lav, shotgun, condenser)

Mic distance and position relative to mouth

Average record level and peak level

Safety or backup track (yes or no)

Room treatment used (rug, curtains, blankets, panels)

Delivery method (full script, outline, or hybrid)

Teleprompter app and scroll speed

Room tone recorded (yes or no)

Checklist: Audio and Performance Pre-Flight

- Microphone is close to the mouth and levels peak between -12dB and -6dB
- Headphones on to monitor for hiss, hum, and clipping live
- Noisy appliances switched off and phones muted
- Soft surfaces added to control echo in the room

- [] 10 seconds of room tone recorded for the editor
- [] Voice and face warmed up before the first take
- [] Plan to pause and restart the line cleanly on any flub

Editing, Polishing, and Publishing

Cut tight, finish with restrained color, audio, and captions, then export and repurpose for every platform.

Exercise: Cut a Tight Rough Edit

Import one recording, sync the external audio, and build a rough cut by removing bad takes, long pauses, and filler. Time how long your edit takes and reflect on the pacing before adding any polish.

- After tightening the gaps, does the opening of the video feel brisk and energetic in the first 30 seconds?

- Which jump cuts did you keep deliberately, and which did you mask with a punch-in or b-roll?

- Did you remove enough filler words to sound clean while still sounding human?

- Did you finish the full rough cut before starting color, audio mixing, or titles?

Worksheet: Finishing and Export Settings

Record your finishing passes and the export settings for each destination so you can repeat them reliably. Editor used (Resolve, Premiere, Final Cut, CapCut)

Color: corrected then graded (note the look)

Dialogue loudness target (e.g. -16 LUFS)

Music level relative to voice (dB under)

Captions source and proofread (yes or no)

YouTube export: resolution, frame rate, bitrate

Vertical clips export: resolution and aspect ratio

Course or LinkedIn export settings

Checklist: Pre-Publish Quality Check

- [] Rough cut locked before any color, audio, or title polish
- [] Color corrected with scopes; skin sits on the skin-tone line
- [] Dialogue normalized to about -16 LUFS with music ducked under speech
- [] Captions auto-generated and proofread for names, jargon, and numbers
- [] 16:9 master exported in H.264 MP4 at the shot frame rate and platform bitrate
- [] Vertical 9:16 clips cropped and captioned for Shorts, Reels, and TikTok
- [] Masters and project files archived for future re-cuts and re-exports

Your Action Plan

1. Lock your camera in full manual using the 180-degree shutter rule and document the exact settings.
2. Build a soft three-point lighting setup with one consistent color temperature on your face.
3. Design a background with 1.5 to 3 meters of depth and one intentional accent light.
4. Get your microphone close to your mouth, set levels to peak near -6dB, and monitor on headphones.
5. Silence room noise and echo at the source with a 30-second listening test before every shoot.
6. Choose a delivery method, set up your teleprompter, and record more reps than you think you need.
7. Cut a tight rough edit, removing pauses and filler before adding any polish.
8. Finish with restrained color, dialogue at -16 LUFS, and proofread captions.
9. Export a high-quality 16:9 master and repurpose it into vertical and square clips.
10. Save your settings worksheets and checklists beside the camera so the whole process repeats in under a day.

