**TIPS FOR RECORDING YOUR VIDEO FOR STORY SCOOP**

**LIGHTING**

* You want an even coverage so your audience can see you clearly. You can use natural daylight, but I avoid it because it can be too bright, cloud cover can change the light or cast shadows as the sun moves. If you are using natural window light, you can soften it with a light curtain.
* Turn off any bright lights behind or above you and avoid sitting with a window behind you.
* A softlight or softbox is a bare bulb with a covering to soften the light. There are professional softboxes that aren’t too expensive, but you can also use a sheet of paper, cardboard or material or maybe even a shower curtain. Light from a softbox will soften the shadows on your face and allow the light to fall more evenly over your features.
* Another way to soften light on your face is to bounce light from another source eg pointing a light onto a wall or sheet that then reflects back onto your skin.
* Author Tim Harris used 'strip lights' around the back edges of a shelf at the back of his studio. These gently light the back of his image with a soft glow, creating a nice differentiation between him and the rest of the shot. Strip lights can be bought cheaply on a roll and cut to length.
* Ring lights.Many people have been using ring lights of various sizes to create an even soft light on the skin.

**SOUND**

* Your brilliant presentation can be ruined with substandard sound. Microphones can be inexpensive and help direct your sound, cutting out any background noise. Some headsets with mics pick up everything including your breath, and plosives, which can be annoying, so be careful not to have the mic too close to your mouth. An inbuilt computer mic needs you to be reasonably close to the device, which may not suit your presentation, especially if you move around. Consider investing in a USB lapel mic or desk mic.
* **HEADPHONES AND AIRPODS:** can help reduce feedback and echo. They also allow you be hands-free during the meeting and will help eliminate distracting background. Note that AirPods will lose charge after about an hour.
* **DO TESTS:** Check if your presentation is better with or without headphones and you feel comfortable.
* **REDUCE EXTRANEOUS SOUND:** close windows and doors. Make use of soft furnishings, cushions, lounge, curtains, carpets, rugs to absorb extra noise. Avoid bin day, street-cleaning day or ask your neighbours to be quiet if they’re renovating.
* Turn off notifications on your laptop/phone.

**CAMERA POSITION**

* **Shoot in Landscape.** Look directly into camera. Place your computer/phone/camera on some books or a box to meet your eye-line.
* Centre yourself in the frame. Allow a little but not too much headroom. Don’t sit too far back as this will create a sense of distance between you and your audience, but be mindful not to sit too close to crowd your frame.

**Dress your background to match your talk**

* Be mindful to create the atmosphere you want from your talk from the very first frame. For young audiences, you might like to dress in a onesie or character costume and include colour, props and movement. You may like to use the virtual background from Zoom to incorporate a cover or internal image of your book. A word of warning, the virtual background can be good if you’re not going to move too much.

**Declutter Your Background**

* Eyes will wander to what is in the back of your shot. Be deliberate with what you have on display and remove anything that might be distracting or embarrassing. If you have particular items you want to show off, highlight them. Put your latest, or favourite book face out on a shelf or table, or use posters, plushies, prints, props. Be careful about glare on glossy book covers and glass picture frames. If you don’t like your BG, hang a plain sheet as a backdrop. Avoid anything moving, like a fan.

**OTHER practical tips**

1. Make your presentation interesting – in content, tone, facial expressions, props etc
2. Have notes handy as a backup but please don’t read from them – this breaks the connection between you and the viewer.
3. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!
4. Record your presentation and watch it back. Check all the things mentioned here.
5. Get comfortable. Decide if you’ll stand or sit or change positions during the talk and ensure you can do it without tripping over anything or tangling the mic or headset cables.
6. Have everything you need within reach that you may need. Eg: other books, an object that inspired a book, sketches, early drafts. Practice holding these objects up to the camera.

**A FEW TIPS FOR PRESENTING**

* Hold up your book/prop for at least 8 seconds. It will feel long but so many people remove the item before the audience has had a good look.
* Talk directly into the lens of the camera. A smile goes a long way to making people feel welcomed.
* Don’t move around too much, it can be distracting.
* Don’t be afraid to rest on an image.
* Try to avoid rushing or speaking quickly. Allow for pauses, they can be powerful. You don’t have to fill the air every second. Use those pauses to keep your nerves under control.
* Don’t hold things in front of mic to muffle the sound and be careful not to touch it whilst you’re presenting.
* Move your body or face towards the camera for emphasis when it feels right.
* Use your voice. It can be a powerful instrument.
* Choose clothes to suit your talk and you. Generally, solid colours will make you pop from your background and are easier on the eye than busy patterns.
* Remember you’re the expert of your topic, take confidence in that.
* Take a deep breath and enjoy yourself.