**10 More Ways to Improve Your Multimedia Right Now**

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Here are ten more ways to improve your work right now, no matter how challenging your original assets may be.

**1) Make edits with purpose.** Always ask why you are making an edit at a particular place. Is the cut motivated by action? A musical beat? A pause in narration? If you don’t have a reason, you need to find a new location for your edit. Every edit must be motivated.

**2) When editing your visuals, don’t cut in the middle of a word.** Doing so is confusing.Edit between words, or even better, edit according to written grammar: at a comma, a period, or to emphasize a word. Cutting after words like because and however is also effective.

**3) Edit rhythmically.** Make the first cut at the beginning of a spoken phrase. Time the first phrase so it ends right before a musical beat. Cut to another a second image on the musical beat. Pause a few frames before completing the audio under this second. It’s easier to understand once you see the rhythm in action. Check out the “Town Bar” section of Driftless at the 1:37 mark.

**4) Limit the number of times your interview subject is on-screen.** There are three main reasons to show your subject on-screen: 1) To introduce someone so the audience knows who is talking. 2) When the subject is expressing emotion that you want your audience to see. 3) As filler, i.e., when you have nothing else to use as coverage. Avoid situation three whenever possible. For an example of an emotional response, see the end of Kingsley’s Crossing.

**5) Don’t start your project with text.** The first 10 seconds of a project are crucial. It’s where you audience decides whether they trust you enough to stick around. Starting with text says that your work can’t sustain itself without first reading some background information. That’s not dramatic. There’s nothing wrong with using text, just try to avoid it first thing.

**6) Make sure your text slides are long enough to comprehend.** You should be able to read them to yourself at least twice. If not, lengthen them.

**7) If you need to use explanatory text, don’t clump it together in a paragraph.**

Paragraphs are for print. Show one sentence at a time. If you need a second one, wait until you think the viewer has finished the first to bring the second on screen.

**8) Choose your fonts wisely.** Fonts are like attire. Pick one that best represents the

occasion. Of the thousands of fonts available to you, which one best represents the spirit and mood of your work? Use that one.

**9) Always lead with your strongest images.** You may instinctively want to save your best work for the end. But if you don’t grab the viewers’ attention quickly, they won’t make it to the end. See the beginning of Marcus Bleasdale’s Rape of a Nation for an example.

**10) Delete all dissolves between images.** I’ve mentioned this one before but it’s worth repeating. The eye sees cuts. When we look from one object to another, we see a blink. We don’t see one object then dissolve to another. Remove all of your image dissolves and your work will improve immediately. For more on the eye and its relationship to editing, see Walter Murch’s excellent book In the Blink of an Eye.