

The Back Door to Hollywood

Learning Module 4

**by Beth Rosen
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Green Screen Do's and Don'ts

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Getting Started



Benefits of Using a Green Screen: If you shoot on a green screen, you can change the background in post production with proper editing software. It gives you the ability to place the subject anywhere, real or fantasy, and create the illusion of performing superhuman feats such as flying. You can also add special effects in the background. News and weather shots are typically done using a green screen. The newscaster points to something on the green screen while watching a monitor so that it matches what he or she is pointing to. There are even programs that create virtual news rooms which you can add yourself to using a green screen.

Types of Green Screens: A green screen can be created using a green sheet, a green screen or by painting part of a wall green. If you use a green sheet, make sure to tape it securely with green gaffer tape on the edges to either a wall or the poles that hold it up to eliminate the wrinkles which will cause unwanted shadows. The size of the green screen depends entirely on your preference. For wider and long

shots, you will need a larger screen but for head and mid shots, you don't need as big a screen.

Green Screens vs. Blue Screens: Most people use green screens when delving into this advanced film technology but sometimes you will see blue screens used instead of green screens. It is the same technology. Blue screens are appropriate if you need to wear green. Just make sure you eliminate all blue items from your clothes and props if you will be using a blue screen instead of a green screen. In either case, make sure it's a bright fluorescent blue or a bright green color that is clearly distinguishable and easy to remove with editing software.

Dressing the Part: When you are filming with a green screen, be sure you do not wear anything that has green in it or it will present a problem during the editing process. Make sure to eliminate all items that have any shade of green, whether solid or a pattern. That includes jewelry, hats, ties, shoes and props.



Shiny Objects: Be careful of shiny objects that reflect the green light such as an instrument because in post-production editing, you will be eliminating the green from the clip. If you do have something that picks up the green light, don't panic. First try to adjust the lighting on the object. If that doesn't work, you can still continue to film

because you can fix it in post-production. You can create magic in the editing room. To address the problem, you can always duplicate the clip and place a filled clip that shows through the green parts that

were eliminated right below the original clip. Since it is a moving picture, you will need to use key frames and track the object's motion path to build the color back in frame by frame where needed. Simply turn off the chroma key or green screen filter on the second clip (layered below the original clip) and crop the clip so that it only fills in the spots that were removed by the green screen which you need put back in. You can always apply a color corrector filter to get the right color of the item that picked up the green light so that when you add it back in, you will not see the green. This is very advanced green screen editing so if you're just getting started or have very little patience in the editing room, avoid shiny objects that reflect the green light. It can be very tedious and time consuming.



Green Screening the Floor: If you are using a green sheet for your green screen as opposed to an actual screen, make sure you eliminate all wrinkles on the floor as well as on the backdrop by taping down the sheet securely or when the subject moves, they will pull up the sheet and you will have a hard time eliminating the dark green/black creases in the sheet. A good

green screen should extend outward onto the floor as well to give you creative room to film full and long shots.

Filming Dancing or Movement on the Floor: It's best to use a painted green floor if you will be walking around quite a bit or dancing to avoid the wrinkle problem. You can also use a securely taped green screen that is not a sheet or larger than life poster boards to dance on so you don't have to worry about dragging the cloth with you when

you move. You will also need to have the backdrop green screen set up behind the person as well as on the floor.

Combining Green Screen Clips: The great thing about doing green screen filming is that you can have a scene with 2 or more people in it and they don't actually have to be on the set together to film. In the editing process, you can place two separate green screen clips together. This is great for music video editing and hi-tech science fiction movies.

Getting More Advanced: Green screening opens up a world of possibilities to you. The more advanced you get, you can start using green screen suits, green furniture, green treadmills, etc. To learn how to do special advanced green screen techniques, do a Google search for what you want to learn how to do. The quickest way to learn is to watch "How to" video tutorials. That goes for just about any special effect in movie making. Support is now at your fingertips. It's usually just a click or two away. So play!

In the Editing Room: When you edit your green screen clips, you want to place the green screen clip in the first layer in your time line and the background clip below it. There are a few types of video filters that generally can be applied to a green screen clip to eliminate the green background: (i) green screen/blue screen filters, (ii) chroma key filters and (iii) spill suppressor. Use the ones that work best for you.

Proper Lighting



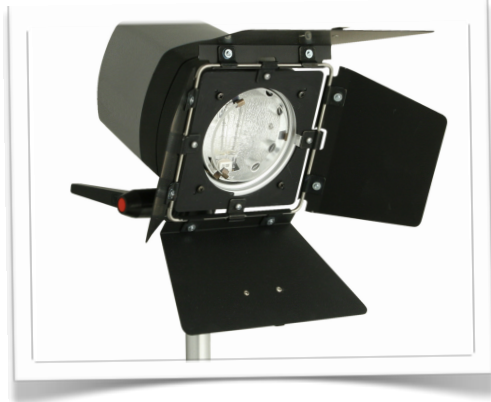
Proper lighting: Ideally you should have diffused back lighting on either side of the subject which lights up the screen and one light directly on the subject matter right behind the camera you use to film.



Diffused Soft Light: To use diffused light, face the light away from the subject and place a diffuser (which looks like an umbrella) in front of the light with the white part facing the light so that the light is diffused over the subject matter being filmed. See the photo to the left. That's how it should

look to the person standing in front of the green screen and being filmed.

Hard Light: If you do not have a diffuser to soften the light, you can still use the lights that you do have. Just make sure the lights are facing the green screen and the person being filmed. See the photo to the left. It should look something like that.



Natural Light: If you do not have proper lighting equipment, don't panic, you can always use natural sunlight whether indoors or outdoors. Just be careful to eliminate shadows on the green screen.

The poor man's green screen is just a cheap green sheet taped up on a wall behind a tripod or webcam. You may not know this but many computers come with built in photo booth green screen software which allows you just to sit in front of your computer's webcam and take pictures and videos with preloaded still and moving green screen backgrounds. Explore your options. Get started any way you can and start having fun with it.

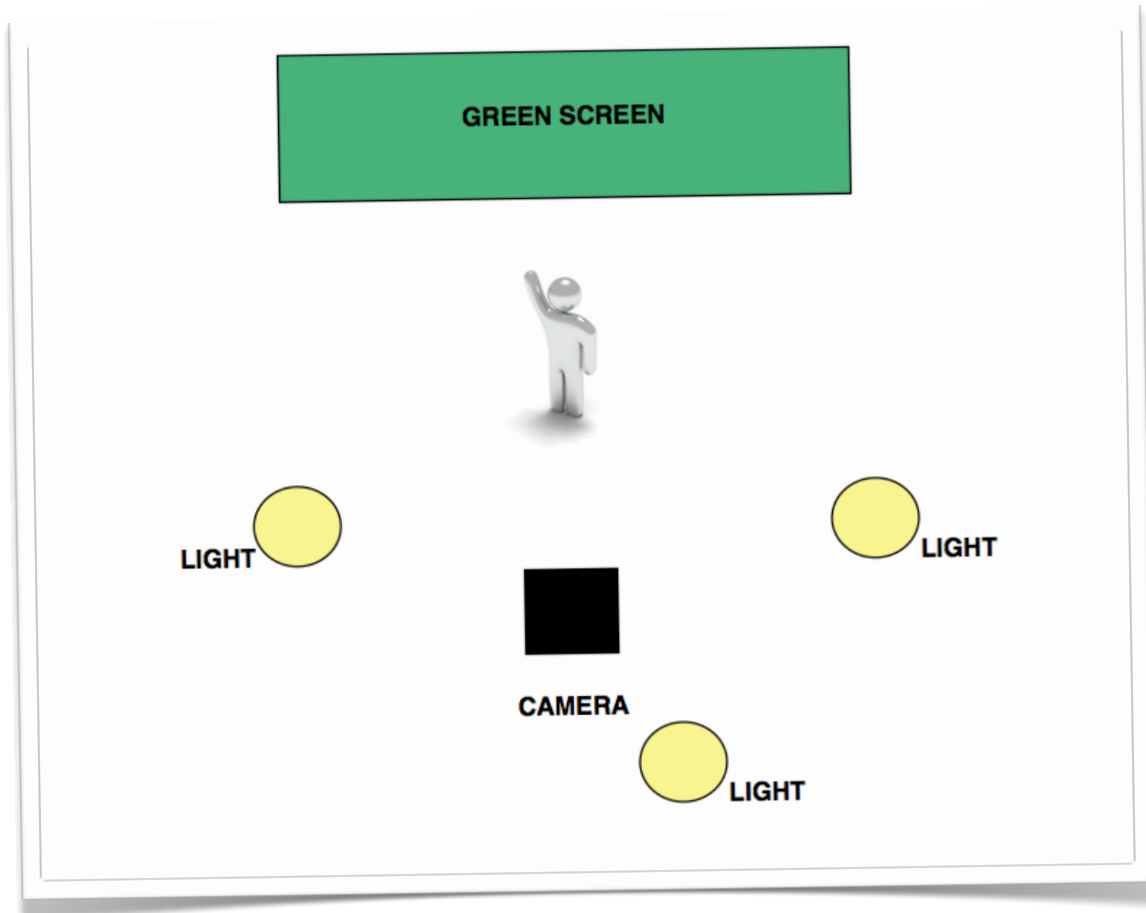
Where to Stand: Ideally, the subject should stand at least 4 to 6 feet away from the green screen to avoid the casting of shadows and green light spill effect on the face, hair and clothing. But don't panic if you go into post-production editing and discover your green screen clips are not perfect. You can always add a spill suppressor, luma adjustments, edge thinner, edge feather and softening to deal with extra unwanted green light. It's not the end of the world even though it could be tedious and time consuming to edit. The good news is by repetition and tackling difficult green screen editing issues, you will become an expert at it very quickly.



Notice in this shot I am standing too close to the screen which is why there is a shadow cast on either side. The shadows can be eliminated by adjusting the two side lights and moving the subject matter further away from the screen. A third light cast on the subject matter would eliminate the green glow around the person.

Filming Yourself: Set up a tripod to film yourself and take short test shots. Mark where you were standing and then play the camera back so you can check to make sure you and the green screen are properly lit. Make sure you get long shots, medium shots and close-ups as needed and adjust the lighting each time to eliminate unwanted shadows and green spill effects.

Green Screen Set-up



The Green Screen Set-up: This is the typical green screen lighting set-up. You can do great green screening with 3 lights but 2 lights on either side will also work though it may involve a little more time and effort in the editing room. The two lights on either side of the subject should be pointed at the screen at a 45 degree angle to ensure a brightly lit green screen without shadows. The third light behind the camera should be used to light the subject. As discussed earlier, sunlight and natural light can also work, depending on what your budget can afford.

Sample Green Screen Clips

