

THE

# Noob

TO

# Ninja

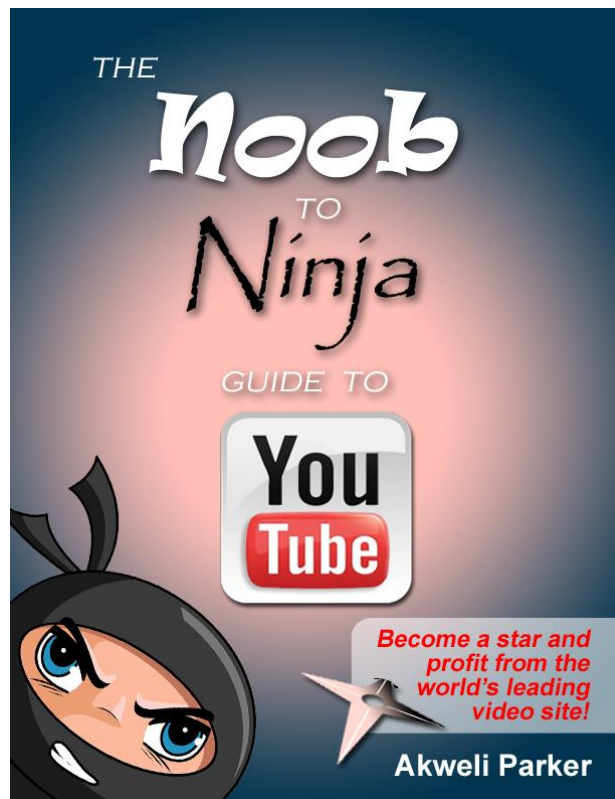
GUIDE TO



*Become a star and  
profit from the  
world's leading  
video site!*



**Akweli Parker**



*The Noob to Ninja Guide to YouTube™:  
Become a Star and Profit from the World's Leading Video Site*

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## Who You Callin' a Noob?! (About Noob to Ninja Guides)

All of us, at one time or another, started out brand-new to a hobby or skill. Chances are that we weren't very good at it initially.

But in most cases, with practice, we gained competence along a fairly predictable curve. That's exactly how it is with online skills such as learning to get the most out of social media sites, using free and paid online services, and learning Web programming.

Yet, in the sometimes caustic culture of the Web, experienced users can have a tendency to belittle newcomers, right down to the label used to describe them – newbies, or **noobs** for short. (Extreme online elitists will even substitute zeroes for the double-“o” – offering the spelling as n00b.)

The *Noob to Ninja Guides* are written with the belief that the chance to learn something new represents a fantastic opportunity. Instead of embarrassment at being a beginner, we should embrace our chance to accept novel, mind-expanding possibilities often not conceivable to closed-minded “experts.” The only thing an inexperienced person needs to be embarrassed of is being too stubborn and pigheaded to learn (and obviously that doesn't describe you reading this).

In other words, we should embrace the Zen Buddhist concept of *shoshin*, or “beginner's mind.” As Zen teacher Shunryu Suzuki put it, “In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few.”

The *Noob to Ninja Guides* also believe that learning should be fun. It's conclusively been proven that people learn the best when they're having a good time. So while this guide might not replace your Sunday night cable TV comedy lineup, every attempt possible has been made to keep the tone funny and upbeat.

Whether you're a beginner to Web 2.0 or you're a veteran looking to brush up your knowledge of YouTube, I trust you'll find this guide to be a helpful reference. May you enjoy abundant success in your journey toward mastering the many exciting possibilities of which you're about to read.

***Akweli Parker***

[www.digitaldeltamedia.com/](http://www.digitaldeltamedia.com/)



## The YouTube Opportunity

The cost of running a 30-second television ad during the Super Bowl, the most-watched event annually in the United States with an estimated 111 million viewers tuned in, is \$3 million. The cost to run a video up to 15 minutes in length on YouTube, (which gets more than 2 billion video views a day) as many times as people choose to see it (sometimes in the tens of millions), is ... free.



With leverage like that, is it any wonder that Web users big and small are flocking to YouTube?



### Ninja Tip: YouTube No 'Idol' Waste of Time

OK, so everyone "wants to be a millionaire." But who *needs* to subject themselves to cattle call-like auditions for shows like The Apprentice or American Idol when anyone can create his or her own darn show on one of the most democratic video platforms of all? YouTube's brief history is rife with true stories of unknowns who parlayed viral video success into full-time careers. Ever hear of a kid named Justin Bieber? Or Rebecca Black? Yep, started on YouTube. And the site is minting new online and crossover stars every day who translate their fame to fat paydays.

Here go some more eye-popping stats:

- YouTube has about **500 million** unique users worldwide per month to its main site alone
- People spend about **2.9 billion hours, or more than 325,000 years, per month**, on YouTube
- People send more than **400 tweets on Twitter per minute**, containing a YouTube link

What all that means to you is that here is a free, heavily trafficked platform where people go every day to seek out information that's important to them.

What if you own or operate a business? Lots of serious business owners (mistakenly) dismiss YouTube as an online toy: a site you go to for diversion through videos of skateboarding bulldogs and flaky folks delivering Webcam monologues. While you can and will find those types of digital junk food in spades, YouTube also serves as a repository for countless how-to videos, documentaries, and yes, tips for and by business people in every industry. In fact, it's a powerful way to get people interested in you and your offerings without spending a fortune on conventional advertising. We'll talk about that more in depth later in this guide.

Stumped as to exactly *how* YouTube could help you get ahead? Consider these examples of how people and entire organizations are using it to move their agendas forward:

- ✦ A church uses it to reach out to current members and to provide a welcoming, human face that invites prospective members – in other words, it's a retention and recruitment tool
- ✦ Speaking of recruitment ... armed forces branches use it to show the more adventurous aspects of their work to young people considering military careers
- ✦ An up-and-coming comedian uses it to showcase his chortle-inducing chops, eliminating the need to send out expensive packets of demo DVDs to secure bookings
- ✦ A graphic design firm showcases the logos it's made for previous clients by laying music over a hypnotic animated slideshow video – that's *advertainment*.
- ✦ A personal trainer demonstrates a fat-burning workout and provides a link to her Web site for viewers interested in learning about complete programs or individual coaching.
- ✦ A school teacher “performs” a math lesson in rap format – and links to a personal Web site that offers custom-made lesson plans for sale.
- ✦ A marketing firm creates an entertaining cartoon that explains a current event, such as an economic disruption ... funneling viewers to a landing page where they

are prompted to provide their emails in exchange for regular updates on similar content.

- ✦ A self-published author takes to YouTube to circumvent the super-exclusive club of conventional publishers, instead moving books by reaching out directly to consumers.
- ✦ *You* focus on the thing you're extremely good at, experienced in, or passionate about (even if it's playing video games), and offer your insights, wisdom, and humor to the rest of the YouTube-viewing community. Post enough videos that are helpful and entertaining, and you could become a Web celebrity!

And lest the point has not yet been made quite abundantly clear, many ways exist for you to turn YouTube exposure into real, hard cash, either directly or indirectly. It's well-documented that video is a top conversion device on the Web, and we'll talk about how you can take advantage of that as well.

For now, you should be pretty amped up about all the possibilities open to you with this incredible tool. This virtual tool is just entering into maturity as an array of physical tools – video equipment, software, and accessories, are dropping in price and complexity to make video production cheaper and easier to do than ever before in history.

Put it all together and you have what we're experiencing now: an unprecedented moment to make memories, make friends with people around the globe, make money, and to make a difference.

## A Quick YouTube Tour

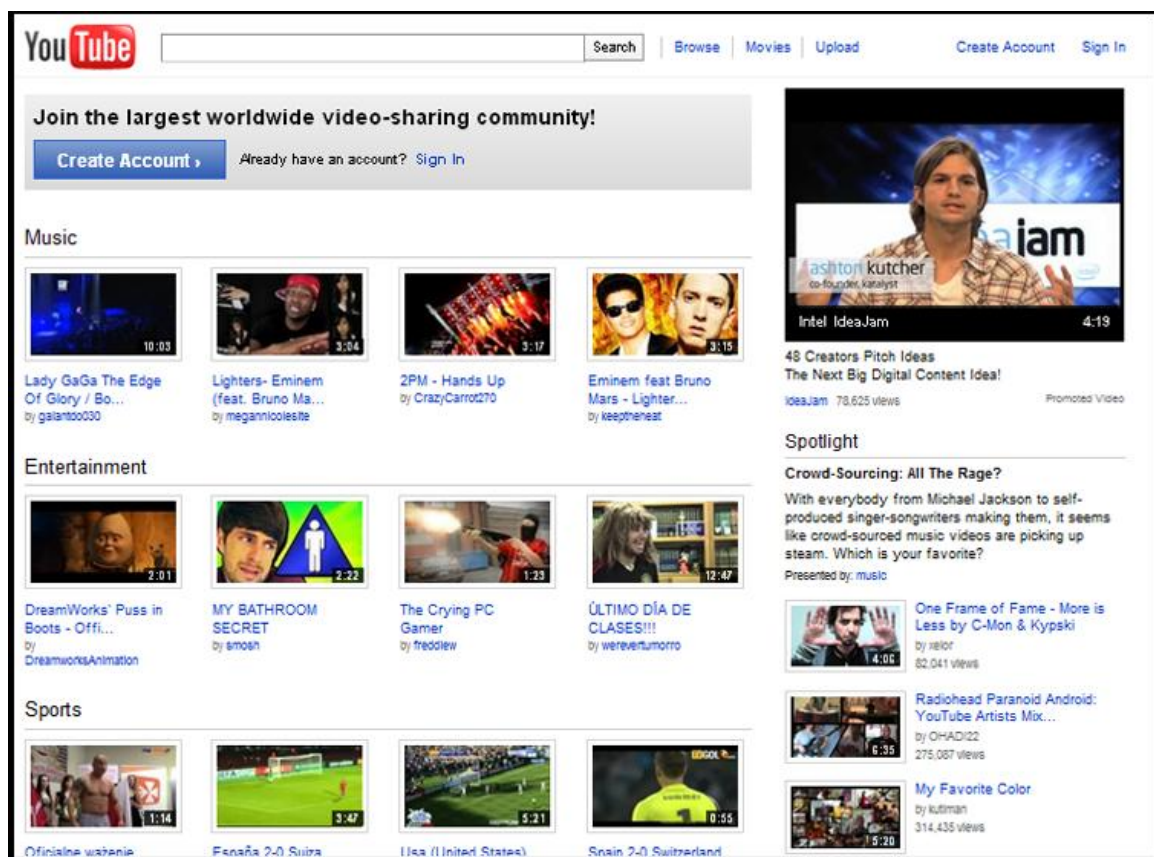
So you're ready to dip your toes into the waters of the world's biggest online video site. How do you get started? This chapter will walk you through the process step-by-step. Since YouTube is now a subsidiary of Google, the owners are always monkeying around with some aspect of the site or another. Not long prior to this writing, they made it mandatory for users of the site to have a Google account.



So whether or not you actually use Gmail, Google's free email service (by the way, I recommend that you do), membership in the Google family will be coming with your free YouTube account whether you like it or not.

Please keep in mind that the screen shots and some terminology might not be precisely the same as what's on the site by the time you get to experimenting with it. But every effort has been made to show the site and its processes as accurately as possible.

## The YouTube Home Screen



Here's what the front page of YouTube looks like. If you're a repeat visitor, YouTube will even suggest videos for you to watch based on your previously viewed videos.

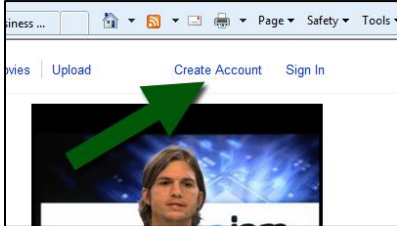
## The Channel Page



The channel page on YouTube. You automatically get a channel when you sign up for a YouTube account. Shown here: the channel page that filmmaker DreamWorks has set up for its animated films.

- 1 Custom background
- 2 Name of channel owner
- 3 Subscribe button (click to receive notice of new videos from this user)
- 4 Other videos from this user
- 5 Featured video and description
- 6 User profile
- 7 Channel comments

## Signing Up



Click on “Create an Account” in the upper right of the home screen to open a YouTube account that you can post to. Then just fill in your user details on this “Get started” screen, and you’ll be on your way ...

## Get started with your account

Email Address:

Username:   
Your username can only contain letters A-Z or numbers 0-9  
[Check Availability](#)

Location:

Postal Code:

Date of Birth:

Gender:  Male  Female

Let others find my channel on YouTube if they have my email address

I would like to receive occasional product-related email communications that YouTube believes would be of interest to me

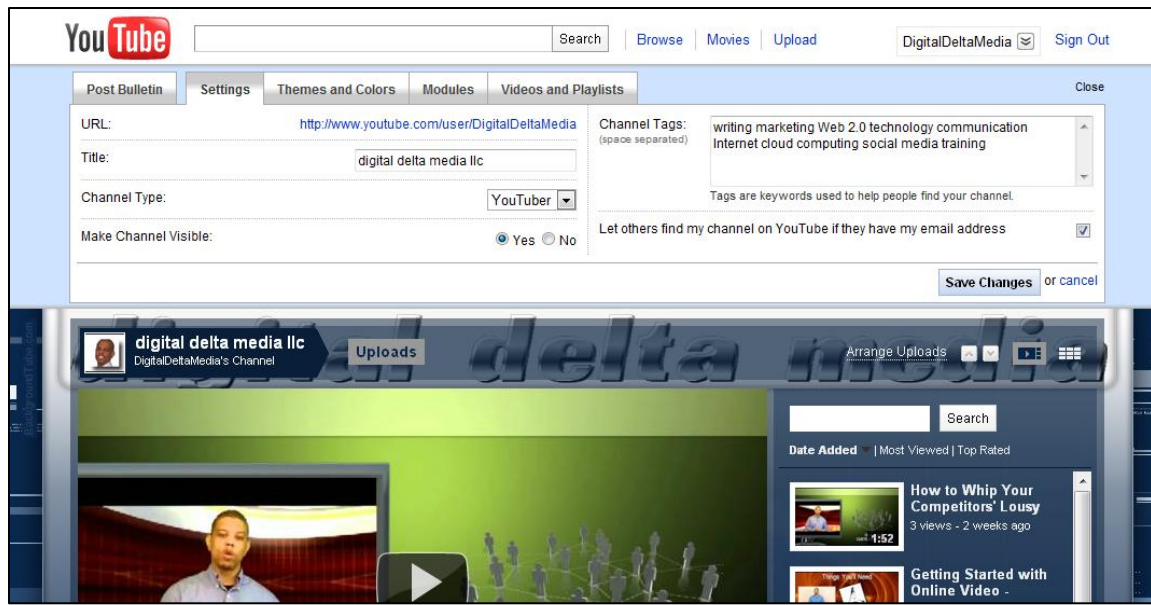
Terms of Use: Please review the Google Terms of Service and YouTube Terms of Use below:  
  
1. Your Acceptance

Uploading materials that you do not own is a copyright violation and against the law. If you upload material you do not own, your account will be deleted.

By clicking 'I accept' below you are agreeing to the [YouTube Terms of Use](#), [Google Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

## Customizing Your Channel

A screenshot of a YouTube channel page for 'DigitalDeltaMedia'. The page shows 'My Playlists' (Favorites, Watch Later, Liked, History), 'My Account' (Channel, Videos, Subscriptions, Inbox, Settings), and 'We've found some channels you might like' (Machinima, RayWilliamJohnson, HSHedotcom). A video player for 'Intel IdeaJam' is visible. Two green arrows point to the 'My Account' menu.



Click the “Settings” tab to adjust basic settings for your channel, such as whether or not to make it visible to other users.

The “Themes and Colors” tab allows you to use pre-existing color schemes or create your own by choosing colors *a la carte* for different channel elements.

You can change the background image of your channel by selecting and uploading one from your hard drive (see arrow). A jpeg image of 1700 pixels by 1200 pixels works well – just make sure that it’s beneath YouTube’s 256K file size limit.

What kind of YouTube guide would this be without me invoking the cliché, “A picture is worth a thousand words”? I dredge up that not-so-original gem because here it really applies: You’ll be doing yourself a major favor by checking out the online tutorial series **YouTube 101**. Created by the fun-lovin’ yucksters at YouTube themselves, these playfully instructive vids give easy-to-follow advice on how to pimp out your vids, YouTube style.

In the next section, we’ll cover some of the nuts and bolts – or pictures and pixels – of creating your own videos to post online.

## Makin' (Mini-)Movies

When I casually suggest to some people that they simply crank out a few instructional videos as part of their marketing strategy, I often get stares as if I'd sprouted a spiraled horn from my forehead. I can read the thought bubble forming over their heads: *Make videos?! Who do you think I am, Peter Jackson? Steven Spielberg? Spike Lee?!*



If you're a multimedia native like many younger people are these days, you might be able to skip this chapter. For everyone else, and especially my fellow wordsmiths who might feel more comfortable behind a keyboard than they would behind a camera lens, pay attention to this chapter.

First off, you don't need a degree from film school to shoot quality, compelling videos. In fact, in YouTube land, viewers typically consist of what are called "content grazers." They come to snack on an entertaining or informing upload for just a couple minutes (literally, two minutes) before taking flight to enjoy the next video stimulus. You're certainly welcome to make longer videos – up to 15 minutes for most categories of users on YouTube. But the statistics show that visitors drop a lengthy video faster than a smuggler dumps cargo when pursued by the Coast Guard. In other words, shorter is better.

But what if you're a novice to shooting, lighting, sound, and editing? Don't worry, that's what this section is all about. For the sake of organization, we'll cover each aspect of the movie-making process as its own sub-lesson. If you're already familiar with some of the concepts, feel free to skip around. And if you forget how to do something while you're out in the field, you can always come on back to this guide for reference.

### Equipment

Given the rapid pace of technology, this category will certainly change quickly in time. You can spend a tremendous amount of money on cameras, microphones, lighting and editing software and get stunning results. Or you can spend a little and get still get

great results. I'm guessing that for most people reading this, including many entrepreneurs and small business owners on a budget, "great" is good enough.

At the time of this writing, the setup I used was a Kodak Zi8 pocket video camera, along with an entry-level diffuser lighting kit, 60" tripod, wired lavalier microphone, and optionally, a green screen kit for "keying" in custom backgrounds. For software, I use a combination of Windows Movie Maker, which is free on Windows-based machines, and Sony's Vegas Movie Studio Platinum – that's the cheapie version. In addition, I sometimes use assorted other programs to add special effects and transitions to my videos.

Altogether, I probably spent about \$400 between software and hardware to get my own video production facility (a.k.a., the spare bedroom) ready to shoot. You can see examples of what I was able to produce with this spare setup and my limited technical knowledge by visiting my company's YouTube channel, here:

[www.youtube.com/user/digitaldeltamedia](http://www.youtube.com/user/digitaldeltamedia)



**Clockwise from top left: clip-on lavalier microphone purchased from Radio Shack (approx. \$25-30 with extension cord), Vista 60" tripod (\$25), Kodak Zi8 pocket camcorder (\$110).**

While you obviously don't have to buy the exact same things as me, I will share with you some common video considerations that guided my purchase decisions:

The Web is going high definition, or **HD**. With the advent of Internet movie rentals, people are coming to expect HD image quality online. So it's a good idea to future-proof yourself somewhat by buying the camera with the best image quality you can afford. For the Web, 720 pixels in width is considered pretty good. High-definition is 1080 pixels or higher.

People will put up with less-than-optimal video but have little tolerance for crummy, hummy, or echo-filled audio. And that's just what you get when you use the on-board microphone of any video camera. Therefore, that's why you must have a camera with an external microphone, or the ability to plug one in. OK, so what if you're on a really tight budget, you already own a Flip camera, and can't justify right now spending the \$130 on a Zi8 plus a memory card to stick in it?

Well, you could purchase a high-quality audio recorder and use it in conjunction with your video camera. When it's time to edit, you could simply substitute the recorder's audio track for the original audio track on your video footage. Even still, you're looking at a hefty chunk of change for a top-notch audio recorder, such as the Zoom H2, which bands, audiophiles, and seminar leaders (including myself) swear by.

### **Planning a shoot**

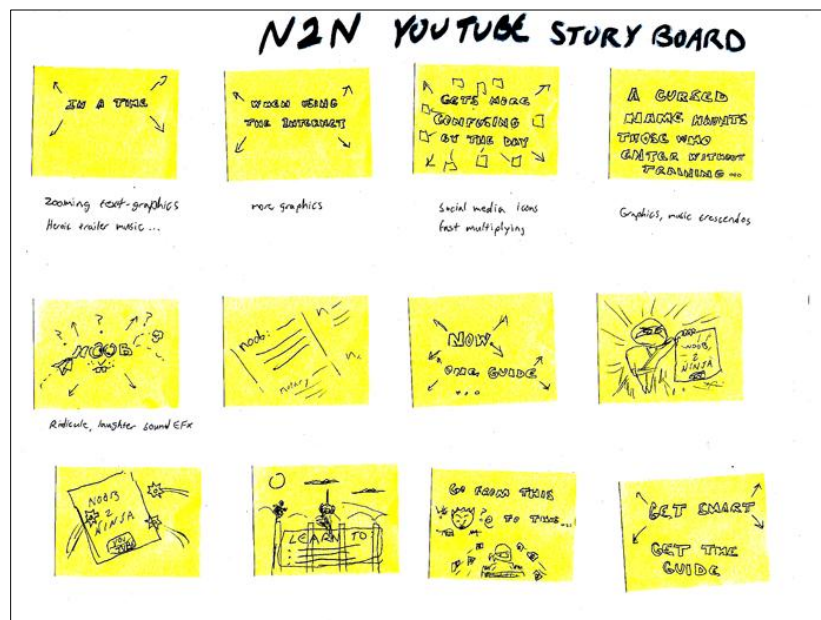
One of the most important rules of thumb from project management is that every hour you spend planning will save 10 hours of doing. There's roughly similar math reflected in the saying, "A stitch in time saves nine." Likewise, you'll spare yourself hours (if not days) of frustration and flailing in the editing process if you map out your video shoot in advance.

The most helpful way to do this is to write a script and then sketch out a storyboard.

For the script, you don't need to be an in-demand Hollywood screenwriter. You don't even have to be a good writer, period. All you need is a good idea of what it is you're trying to convey or what response you want to elicit from your audience. Whether you're reviewing a new product on your blog, recording a how-to video, or actually shooting a story with a plotline and narrative, a script will save your sanity. How complex it is depends on the complexity of your message. For the informational types

of videos most small to medium-sized businesses will be doing, a straightforward approach works well and is easy to do.

For the storyboard, no significant artistic skills are necessary. If you can draw stick figures and write captions to accompany them, you can make a storyboard. All it consists of is a series of drawn squares or rectangles, similar to the way a comic book is laid out. In each panel you draw a representative picture of the setting, characters/actors, any action taking place, and a descriptive written line or two of what that scene depicts. Together, these two steps of scripting and storyboarding will give you direction to shoot and edit your scenes quickly and efficiently.



**Example of a storyboard for the promotional video that markets this *Noob to Ninja Guide*.**

### Video Shooting Quick Tips

Countless books and instructional videos exist on how to shoot the best-quality video. Rather than regurgitate all of those techniques in full here, I'll share a few of the major tips that will help your vids look more professional, even if you're a novice.

**Use an external microphone.** You can use a handheld mic, like the kind you often see used in sports interviews; a boom mic gives your video a more cinematic quality, if you can find a helper to hold it just out of view while you operate the camera; and a

lavalier, or lav mic, clips to your clothing so that you can move and gesture freely and still be heard crystal clear.

**Light it right.** Avoid shooting with your subject's back to a light source, such as a window. Otherwise it will look like one of those "anonymous source" silhouette interviews on *60 Minutes*. Use a lighting kit to illuminate your subject's front from two angles, and if you can swing it, cast light behind him as well (without pointing it at the camera) to reduce shadows.

**Shoot a 30-second "sound bed"** of room silence that you can splice with any voiceovers, so the transition from live footage to **b-roll** is aurally seamless.

**Shoot b-roll** to break up the monotony of talking heads and lend visual interest. "B-roll" is industry lingo for secondary footage that supplements the main video. B-roll can be spliced into a video on its own, or you can record a voiceover as narration. Next time you watch your evening news, notice how the reporter in the field breaks from talking directly to the camera to the pre-recorded b-roll, over which he or she has also recorded narration. Good ideas for b-roll include shots from the factory floor, people working together in an office, products being used, and so on. Keep in mind that with today's litigious society, you need to get signed releases if you use someone in your footage and they are clearly identifiable. You can also purchase royalty-free, hassle-free stock footage online from sites such as iStock.

**Leave room to edit.** Make sure to let the camera record several seconds before and several seconds (like three to five) after each shooting segment so you'll have room for cutting and transitions when you edit.

### **Editing your footage**

A lot of people, especially those born prior to say, 1980, get a bit freaked when it comes to this part, and needlessly so. If you've ever spliced together a mix tape of your favorite songs using a cassette tape deck, you can edit video. And since you can actually see where your cuts and fades will take place, editing video (and audio, for that matter) digitally on a computer is actually much simpler. This section will deal with editing digital movie files, rather than tape, since files are what most DIY, non-professionals will be using anyway. While purists swear by the wonders of tape, I believe it's just a matter of time before tape goes the way of all physical

storage media such as CDs and cassettes. For archiving purposes, they're wonderful, but for ease of use, speed and portability, they can't beat completely digital files.

To begin editing, transfer the captured video from your camera to your computer. These days, that should be a simple matter of plugging the camera into your computer using the supplied USB connector. Typically, you'll then have two choices: you can open the files with a particular piece of software, or open the folder where they reside. Use your computer's file folder management system to look inside the hard drive of the camera and find the video file(s) you want. Select the files you need by clicking on each one and holding down the "Ctrl" key if you need multiple files. Once you have all the files selected, "Copy" them.

Open another folder (and create a New one if necessary) on your computer's hard drive to place the raw video files. With that folder open, "Paste" the files to begin the transfer.

The latest versions of Windows Movie Maker for Windows PCs and iMovie for Macs are sufficient for creating the simple types of videos I encourage in this guide. For more sophisticated effects, you can upgrade to programs such as Adobe Premiere, Final Cut, or Sony Vegas. Keep in mind that these programs come in consumer-grade versions, which are well-stocked with capability; and professional versions, which permit you to achieve broadcast-quality results.

As with any pursuit, the sky is the limit as far as how much you can spend and what you can achieve. ...But my point in this section as throughout this book is that you don't need to spend a lot. The consumer versions of the programs listed above might run you anywhere from \$60 to \$100, depending on where you buy. Expect the pro versions to cost three to four times as much, but you can get steep – and I mean *steep* educational discounts if you can prove that you're a student or an educator at an accredited school.

The mechanics of editing vary from program to program, but the basics remain the same.

Your video is like one long locomotive. You can split the locomotive into individual cars which you can then move around and place wherever you please. You can also import cars from outside and insert them into your train. And finally, you can shorten cars if you think they're too long.

## **Video editing**

(Think of each video as being divided into “tracks”)

### **Video track**



### **Audio track**



### **Music track (on some software)**



On a parallel track (to continue the metaphor), you can manipulate the sound. Most programs even allow you to add another sound track alongside the first one – so if you want music to accompany your video, you can add it.

The most powerful of editing programs allow you to lay multiple audio and video tracks alongside one another. This is useful if you’re doing special effects such as green-screen shots with custom backgrounds or laying down lots of sound effects along with the voice and music tracks.

Unfortunately, the instructions that often come with these programs (in the form of a “Help” section) are enough to put even a champion Starbucks grande-guzzler to sleep. So you may be best perusing the Quick Start guide, if there is one, then consulting YouTube itself for user-generated instruction on how to perform certain tasks. In fact, I love YouTube for this purpose and have picked up countless great tips from my fellow users’ videos – for free!



**A free movie-editing program for the Mac, iMovie.**

Of course, some YouTubers can be deadly dull teachers as well, so once you find someone whose instructional style you like, subscribe to the person and leave plenty of encouraging comments so he or she makes more videos!

## Make “Webisodes”

We humans love stories. As a form of communicating, storytelling is a preference that is literally built into our DNA.

So once you get the hang of making basic instructional videos, you might consider getting a bit creative, using videos that tell a story. In fact storytelling is one of the key elements for making a piece of content go *viral*, according to Chip and Dan Heath, authors of the book *Made to Stick*.

Unfortunately, it’s beyond the scope of this guide to teach someone how to “be creative” and come up with stories that keep audiences on the edge of their seats. But it can offer you some examples of YouTube content producers who’ve used episodic storytelling, or “Webisodes,” to attract large followings and even boost business.

- ✦ [HubSpot](#), an online marketing company, produces a series of comedic skits that put a (usually) hilarious spin on what could otherwise be a downright deadly vanilla topic, Search Engine Optimization techniques.
- ✦ [IndyMogul’s Backyard FX](#) is an online show for do-it-yourself action, sci-fi and horror filmmakers. Following each “build” show that explains how to make an effect, the producers create another video to go with it. This “test reel” has a brief (4-5 minute) storyline and demonstrates the effect seamlessly. These reels are fun to watch and addictive – subscribers to the channel are known to make a huge stink when the test reels are delayed even a day later than promised.
- ✦ [Ford Motor Company](#) – yes, *that* Ford – created a series of viral Webisodes around a felt puppet named Doug. The purpose was to sell the new Ford Focus, although hawking the car was never the central theme of the videos. Instead, the Focus was more of a product placement, with the action centered around the politically incorrect (and I must admit, entertaining) antics of Doug.

Creating this type of “short-form” entertainment isn’t easy, but here go a few pointers that should serve you well:

Write (a script), then draw (a storyboard) before you shoot.



Remember that good stories feature protagonist(s), a central conflict, tension, and resolution.

For a good “cliffhanger” style serial that keeps people tuning in to find out what happens next, create each episode’s conflict so that it’s part of a larger drama. (Think of the tension that ties together individual episodes of long-running series like *Law & Order* or *24*.)

You can use actors (staff, friends, and family who will work cheaply are nice), animated cartoon characters, claymation – the key factor is the story, and whether it will resonate with your audience.

Whatever you do, don’t make it a blatant commercial that tells viewers to buy what you’re selling. Viewers will regard this as crass and insulting. Go on many ad-supported YouTube videos and check out the profanity-laced tirades that ensue in the comments pit below. More often than not, it ain’t pretty. What you can do instead is product placement (not-so-obtrusively make your product or logo visible in a few scenes without directly mentioning it).

As with anything, the more things you try and the more practice you get, the better you’ll become. So go to that log cabin, Fortress of Solitude, or maybe just a quiet conference room; or perhaps if you work with lots of people it’s actually a *raucous* conference room, with flip chart pages rustling and sticky notes flying – wherever you do your most creative and inspired thinking, go there, and make some Webisodes.



### **Ninja Tip: Go to Film School ... Sort of**

Storytelling for film is an art and a science in and of itself. If you don’t have the money to hire a creative firm to come up with stories for you, take some classes at your community college or pick up some books. One little gem is *The Portable Film School: Everything You'd Learn in Film School (Without Ever Going to Class)* by D. B. Gilles.

## It Takes a Village ... to Raise a YouTube Star

One of the coolest things about YouTube is that it actually is a community, and a global one at that.

For the most part, users support, encourage, and respect one another and other people's work. The occasional jerk will chime in with sexist, racist, irrelevant, or generally classless remarks. Be prepared for it, and be mindful of the online phrase, "don't feed the trolls." In other words, don't reward jerkwads with that commodity they seek most, attention. Ignore them.

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, YouTube provides an exciting path to interact directly with fans of your work. You can engage with people in the comments section; you can also mention people by their YouTube handles in follow-up videos – that one's ever-popular method with viewers and a way to create fans for life.

### Share and share alike

You can share videos in not one, not two, but three ways from YouTube!

Here's the first way: if you've created a video and uploaded it, the service allows you to send it to your contacts on social media networks to which you belong: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Google's +1 and others.

Method two is to share someone else's video. Directly from that video's "description" section, you can share with your contacts on other social networks, through email, or through simply copying and pasting the link and sending it. Unless the owner has turned off the embedding feature, you can also copy a snippet of code that will allow you to place the video on Web pages you control, such as your blog.



## **Making Friends**

Once you subscribe, you'll be issued an Inbox within YouTube that will contain direct messages to you from other users, as well as requests to become friends with other users. Since the whole premise here is to gain viewers by being social, it's often a good idea to honor friend requests. You will get friend requests from some spammy folks, however, so check out other users' channels and use appropriate discretion.

## **Getting Subscribers and Subbing Back**

The ultimate goal on YouTube is to gain as many subscribers as possible. Subscribers are to YouTube what Nielsen ratings are to television channels. If you see a channel you like, subscribe to it (also called "subbing"). In addition to letting the conspicuous "Subscribe" button that appears above all your videos speak for itself, you can ask point blank in your videos for people to subscribe. One of the cardinal rules of marketing is that if you want people to take an action, you must ask them – don't make them guess what they're supposed to do next. So while you certainly don't want to grovel, also don't be shy about asking for those subscriptions.

## **Comment on Other Videos**

Very few people leave comments online. It could be that they're shy, that they're not moved enough to lift their typing fingers, or maybe they're just lazy. In any event, in order to position yourself as a leader online, it's good practice to leave encouraging, helpful, or constructive comments. This is true not just of YouTube, but all over the Web. The benefit is twofold – first, you gain goodwill of the person who owns the video; and you increase the probability of visits to your channel, since your username is hyperlinked to your channel when you leave comments!



## To 'Tube or Not to 'Tube? Answering the Question

If you hadn't picked up on it yet, YouTube gives small-fry users like us lots of reason to cheer. YouTube bears the brunt of massive storage and bandwidth costs so that we, the video watching/making public, can edge ever closer to our fellow human beings as a connected, global community. Ah, it's a beautiful thing.

But YouTube has a few drawbacks that make it a less-than-ideal video platform for every situation.

For one, despite its name, "You" don't really control it. Make no mistake, YouTube is Google's world, and the rest of us just live in it. Google can yank the plug on your video channel, or on YouTube entirely, any time it wants and for any reason. YouTube routinely suspends and revokes people's accounts for violating its terms of use. For their sake, I hope they kept backup copies of their uploaded videos (that's a hint).



For another, it's hard to restrict viewing to just the people you want, on a large scale. True, you can make videos private, but it's too difficult to do efficiently with a large number of people – for instance, a base of paying customers.

And finally, you're stuck with YouTube's format whether you like it or not. You can customize your channel with a great-looking background and widgets, and you can add captions and annotations to your videos. But you don't get much leeway in customizing the player, the HTML code of the page it plays on, or adding powerful CTA's – calls to action – such as email sign-up forms or Buy Now buttons (though you can prompt viewers to visit a separate landing page that you control). This is where you need to look at paying for video hosting on another platform.

Now before you go investigating all manner of exotic, expensive solutions, let me tell you what I use. Then you can investigate what's out there and make your own decision. Amazon, the gigantic Web retailer, sells more than just physical stuff. You can also buy Web storage space for incredibly cheap prices. That means you can host your videos, audios and other big files on Amazon (the service is called S3, short for [Simple Storage Service](#)) for peanuts. So while it isn't free, you do have infinitely more control and flexibility than you do with YouTube.

### Storage Pricing

Region: US Standard		
	Standard Storage	Reduced Redundancy Storage
First 1 TB / month	\$0.140 per GB	\$0.093 per GB
Next 49 TB / month	\$0.125 per GB	\$0.083 per GB
Next 450 TB / month	\$0.110 per GB	\$0.073 per GB
	\$0.095 per GB	\$0.063 per GB

### Request Pricing

Region: US Standard	
Pricing	
PUT, COPY, POST, or LIST Requests	\$0.01 per 1,000 requests
GET and all other Requests †	\$0.01 per 10,000 requests
† No charge for delete requests	

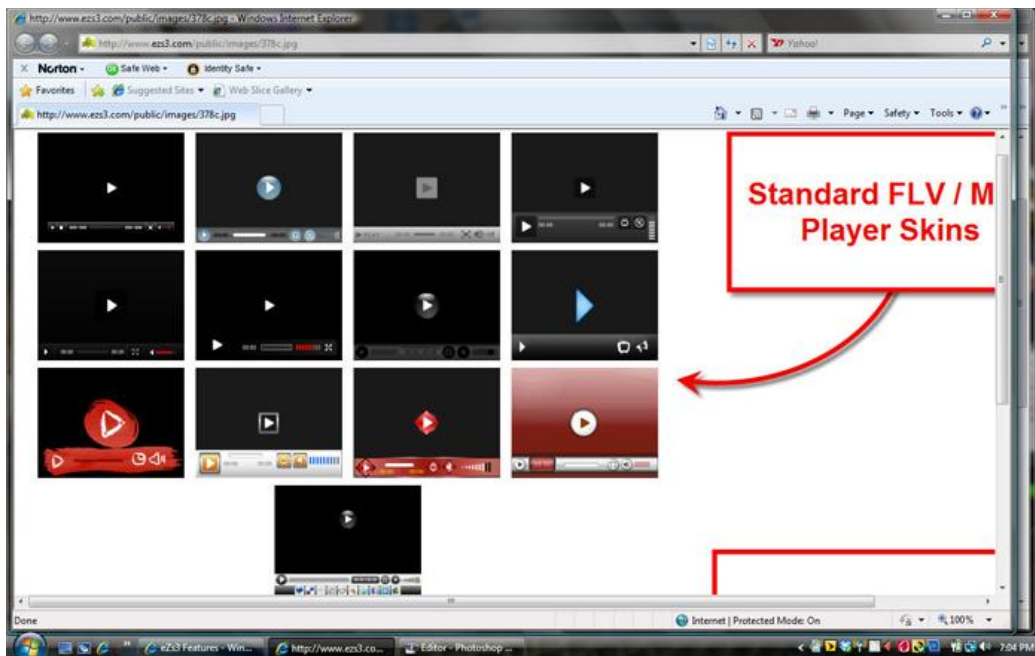
**Screen shot shows how ridiculously affordable storage is using Amazon's S3 service.**

That said, dealing with S3 is not necessarily for noobs. Even with your stuff hosted on Amazon, visitors to your own Web site need a way to access it. For this, I turn to a service called [ezS3.com](#). This subscription service lets you create customized video and audio controllers, or players, for your content, and embed them on your own Web site. You can even set them so that a video will only play on your Web's domain (so someone can't grab the embed code of your proprietary video and run it on their site). This is ideal if you offer a paid service and one of the features of that service is customer-only access to videos you create.

Having trouble picturing it? OK, here's an example of how you might use it:

Let's say you're a BMW enthusiast and you've stored in your brain an encyclopedic knowledge of its high-performance line, the M-series. You could develop an ebook, a series of downloadable audio files and a series of how-to maintenance and repair videos of M-series-specific tips and offer them for sale using any of the many online e-store options available to Web site owners.

A customer visits your site and clicks on a "Buy" button. Once the customer's credit card payment was approved, they'd get an email with instructions for the links that would allow them to download all the electronic products from your Amazon S3 server space. The beautiful thing about S3 is that it is not indexed by Google or other search engines. So would-be freeloaders are much less able to find and download your products for free than if you hosted them directly on your own site.



**EZS3 lets you choose from a number of video and audio player “skins” to put directly on your Web site as an alternative to YouTube.**

So as you can see, your choice of whether to host your content on a publicly available platform or someplace where it's hidden depends really on your purpose. Both methods have their place, and you'd be smart to consider ways of taking advantage of both.

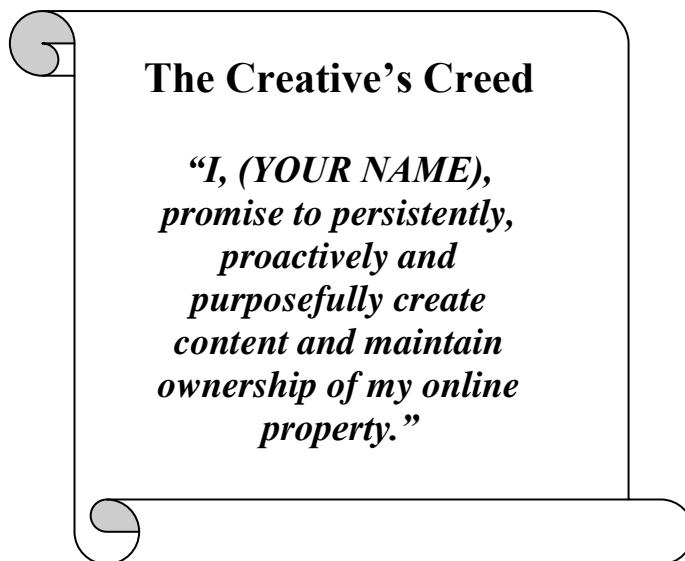
All that said, if you're just starting out or if you need a way to funnel traffic to your own Web site, blog, or landing page, you'd be ludicrous not to leverage the muscle of YouTube.

## The Creative's Imperative

What will you decide to do with all this information? Will you use it – experiment with it and reap the benefits of being able to attract, entertain, inform, and persuade with the power of video?

One of the world's biggest problems is the perception that there's not enough to go around – not enough jobs, not enough money, not enough food, not enough opportunities. And yet the online world provides an unprecedented opportunity to create more of what's needed. YouTube is an opportunity to switch positions, to in essence give yourself a massive promotion: from a consumer of information to a producer/owner. And it's the producer/owners that enjoy the greatest rewards in life, because they are the ones who provide the greatest value.

It's with this in mind that I strongly encourage participants in my seminars to repeat the following short oath:



If it seems a bit over-the-top or silly, consider Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook. The company refused multiple buyout offers over the course of its life, including one for \$1 billion in 2006. Today, with more than 500 million users and still growing, the \$2 billion Zuckerberg wanted in '06 is starting to look like a steal.

I'm not advocating that you turn your nose up at several million dollars if such a "liquidation event" opportunity presents itself. What I'm suggesting is that even with such a robust and versatile platform as YouTube, make sure you have alternatives and contingencies lined up to ensure your success. Make sure you have your own blog or Web site and that you don't become completely dependent on YouTube. Choice equals control equals power.

That said, YouTube makes your job as a creator infinitely easier than it was in the early days of online video – a dark period known as the Time Before the 'Tube. It gives you the technical tools and the traffic to leverage your creativity into huge success. Now, don't simply read this guide and put it on the shelf – sign up for your own YouTube channel and put your newly acquired ninja skills to use. And oh, be sure to friend me: I'm user **DigitalDeltaMedia!**



## Additional Reading

Lastufka, Alan and Dean, Michael W. *YouTube: An Insider's Guide to Climbing the Charts*. O'Reilly, Cambridge, MA. 2009.

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Verdi, Michael; Hodson, Ryanne; Weynand, Diana; Craig, Shirley. *Secrets of Videoblogging: Videoblogging for the Masses*. Peachpit Press, Berkeley, CA. 2006.

## About the Author

Akweli Parker is founder and managing director of marketing consultancy Digital Delta Media LLC. Through his writing, speaking and direct consulting, he helps organizations of all sizes to unleash the power of their own expertise using the unparalleled reach of the Internet. For a free consultation or to learn more, visit [www.digitaldeltamedia.com/](http://www.digitaldeltamedia.com/), send an email to [aparker@digitaldeltamedia.com](mailto:aparker@digitaldeltamedia.com), or call toll-free, **855-4-DDMEDIA (855-433-6334)**.



