

# The Media Center's Guide to Producing Professional Looking Smart Phone Video

## Turn your camera phone into a camcorder !

These days, most smart phones have video recording capabilities that rival those of many commercially available camcorders. Combine this with wifi connectivity, compatibility with video web conferencing products such as Zoom, and portability, and it is easy to see why many people are choosing to use their mobile device instead of a traditional camcorder to record video for inclusion in educational videos, and for engaging in remote instruction.

Here are a few ways that you can make your mobile phone video look even more like high end camcorder video.

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### CAMERA (PHONE) SUPPORT

One “tell” that a video was not professionally shot is the presence of shakiness when the audience is expecting a static image. The foundation on which most solid shots are built is the tripod, a tool that most consumer and professional video cameras are built to take advantage of by the incorporation of threaded tripod mount screw attachment points. I’ve never seen a smart phone with built in tripod attachment points, but there are adaptors available that can be attached to the phone that will let it be mounted onto a tripod. Prices range widely. Here are a few examples from B&H Photo Video:

Ulanzi U-Rig Pro Smartphone Rig - \$15.95

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1487529-REG/ulanzi\\_0673\\_u\\_rig\\_pro\\_smartphone\\_video.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1487529-REG/ulanzi_0673_u_rig_pro_smartphone_video.html)

Square Jellyfish Jelly Grip Tripod Mount for Smartphones - \$12.95

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1297530-REG/square\\_jellyfish\\_jlygrtm15\\_jelly\\_grip\\_tripod\\_mount.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1297530-REG/square_jellyfish_jlygrtm15_jelly_grip_tripod_mount.html)

***(In this article, examples of accessories available have been taken from B&H Photo Video, but the same or similar items can be found at other retailers as well. The examples are meant to be a starting point for your own search for phone accessories if you think that you can benefit from purchasing them.)***

Although you can use one of these mounts to attach your camera to a traditional tripod that is meant to be placed on the ground to raise the camera up several feet, you can also consider using a smaller, “tabletop” tripod, or even a mount that can grip to objects by using bendable legs or a clip. Some of these mounts even have a holder for your phone built in, so you would not need to buy one of the tripod adaptors mentioned above to use them. Some Examples:

Manfrotto PIXI Smart Mini Tripod with Universal Smartphone Clamp - \$29.99

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1457442-REG/manfrotto\\_mkpixiclamp\\_bk\\_pixi\\_mini\\_table\\_top.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1457442-REG/manfrotto_mkpixiclamp_bk_pixi_mini_table_top.html)

JOBY GripTight ONE GorillaPod Stand - \$28.51

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1321823-REG/joby\\_jb01491\\_griptight\\_one\\_gp\\_stand.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1321823-REG/joby_jb01491_griptight_one_gp_stand.html)

Vidpro MP-15 2-in-1 Mini-Tripod & Selfie Stick with Bluetooth Remote Control - \$19.95

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1411852-REG/vidpro\\_mp\\_15\\_2\\_in\\_1\\_mini\\_tripod.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1411852-REG/vidpro_mp_15_2_in_1_mini_tripod.html)

If you are really interested in using your camera phone to shoot point of view walking, running, moving, etc. video, you can purchase a gimbal device that will, if used properly, make your video look like it was shot with the camera riding on rails. These devices can be found at relatively inexpensive prices, but they are still not cheap.

DJI Osmo Mobile 3 Smartphone Gimbal - \$98.00

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1497924-REG/dji\\_cp\\_os\\_00000022\\_01\\_osmo\\_mobile\\_3\\_smartphone.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1497924-REG/dji_cp_os_00000022_01_osmo_mobile_3_smartphone.html)

### No purchase necessary tip:

No matter how you choose to hold your camera phone, please consider its orientation when shooting video - especially when you are shooting video that will be viewed on a computer or television screen. Many people shoot video while holding their phone in the same vertical orientation used when holding it to the ear. Most of the time, this results in video that is taller than it is wide. Since this completely different from the usual computer or tv screen that is wider than it is high, the video ends up tall and skinny when seen on these screens, with black vertical bars on the side. To make your camera phone video comparable to professional video, be sure to orient the phone with the longest edge parallel to the horizon.

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### LENS OPTIONS

A limitation that many camera phones have is a lack of flexibility when it comes to the lens. Some newer, fancier models may have two or three lenses for photography and videography, offering the user a choice, and they may offer a limited optical zoom capability, but they still don't offer as much control over the camera's field of view as the lens on a standard camcorder.

To address this shortcoming, several manufacturers produce lens attachments that sit on top of your smartphone's lens. These attachments can widen or narrow your field of view by several degrees, and some even let you zoom or perform macro videography. The following kit includes 5 different lenses - but there are other kits available with more or less included, and at different price points.

Apexel 4K HD Mobile Phone 5-in-1 Camera Lens Kit - \$44.95

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1458421-REG/apexel\\_apl\\_hd5\\_4k\\_hd\\_mobile\\_phone.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1458421-REG/apexel_apl_hd5_4k_hd_mobile_phone.html)

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## MICROPHONES

If sound is an important part of the video that you are shooting with your camera phone, you may want to consider purchasing an aftermarket microphone. Take some sample video in the locations that you'll be shooting in. If there is too much background noise for your taste in the recording, or if your voice is not as clear as it should be, an external mic could fix the problem. Shotgun microphones, which are used to pick up clear sound from a distance, and lavalier mics (the kind that clip to your clothes) are available for use with camera phones, at a wide range of prices. If you are thinking of purchasing a microphone, make sure that it can connect to your phone. You may have to buy an adaptor.

Some available microphones:

Audio-Technica Consumer ATR3350XiS Omnidirectional Condenser Lavalier Microphone for Smartphones - \$35.00

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1509307-REG/audio\\_technica\\_consumer\\_atr3350xis\\_omni\\_condenser\\_microphone\\_for.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1509307-REG/audio_technica_consumer_atr3350xis_omni_condenser_microphone_for.html)

Rode VideoMic Me Directional Mic for Smartphones - \$59.00

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1186598-REG/rode\\_videomic\\_me\\_directional\\_mic.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1186598-REG/rode_videomic_me_directional_mic.html)

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## LIGHTING

Video cameras need good quality light to produce good quality video. Your camera phone does as well.

Revo makes a light on a flexible arm that can help you to look good when recording yourself with a camera phone:

Revo Bi-Color Vlog Light with Phone Holder - \$29.99

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1526722-REG/revo\\_vl\\_24\\_bi\\_color\\_vlog\\_light\\_with.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1526722-REG/revo_vl_24_bi_color_vlog_light_with.html)

Westcott makes a light that can be clipped to your phone, and can run for 30 minutes on a rechargeable battery:

Westcott Universal Mini Ring Light for Mobile Phones/Devices - \$16.90

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1577804-REG/westcott\\_4351\\_universal\\_mini\\_ring\\_light.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1577804-REG/westcott_4351_universal_mini_ring_light.html)

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There are many add-ons that can help you get the most out of your camera phone when shooting video for the web. Before going out and buying something, be sure to take some test video with your phone, so that you can get a good idea of what would really be worth buying. Depending on what or where you intend to shoot, you may even be able to use things that you already own to meet some of the needs mentioned above. For example, lights in your home may be repositioned to give you more flattering results when using your cameraphone to video conference with. You may be able to stack crates or books to make a support that puts your camera phone at a good position to let you use it hands-free. Also, if you are interested in shopping for any of the accessories mentioned above, always make sure to check the product's specifications listed by the seller to make sure that it will work with your particular smartphone. Some items may only work with phones with certain exterior dimensions, and some may be specific for Android or Apple devices.

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*Have fun and good luck !*