

HOW TO EDIT A SELF-TAPE (OR ANYTHING ELSE) FOR FREE

INTRODUCTION

This is a quick and most certainly not definitive guide to all the basic skills you will need to edit a professional looking self-tape.

The skills in this document are very simple and targeted to this particular task. The editing software I'll be using is free, but it's widely used by professional editors in the film industry, from freelancers to Hollywood colourists. As such, it's complicated, but the functions you need are easy to learn, and you don't need to understand all of it. I've been editing with it for 5 years and I'm still not familiar with every feature.

I hope you find this guide helpful! Beyond this point, there are thousands of free editing tutorials online if you find it interesting.

Most importantly, remember that the editing of a self-tape doesn't really matter, the content does. If you just want to learn just the bare minimum, focus on 'Importing Footage', 'Cutting Your Footage', and 'Exporting'. The rest is useful, but non-essential. I've added an icon next to each section to let you know if it's essential 🟢, useful 🟠 or an extra skill 🔴.

Good luck!

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BEFORE YOU START

SHOOTING TIPS

Before you start editing, it's important to be able to capture a good quality image in the first place. Many of you will know the following guidance, so feel free to skip to the next section. **Expensive cameras and gear aren't necessary.**

Video

- The best way to achieve even lighting is to sit with a window behind the camera.
- If you're forced to film at night, it can help to use two lamps – both in front of you, one to the left and one to the right, to evenly light your face. For most phones, **the more light you have the better**. If only a ceiling light is available, position yourself so the light is as far in front of you as possible, to avoid it casting shadows below your eyes and nose.
- Try to **avoid having a bright source of light (like a window) directly behind you**, as you will fall into shadow.
- Keep your shot steady with a tripod or by leaning your phone on something sturdy, like a table or pile of books. If you live with someone that can film you, that's fine, but make sure they keep shake to a minimum.
- Aim to have as neutral a background as possible, unless otherwise stated by the casting agent.

Audio

- Your in-phone/camera audio will be absolutely fine in most cases.
- To get the cleanest audio, close any doors and windows.
- Try to avoid recording in large, reverby spaces.
- If recording with an external microphone, clap in front of the camera before each take.

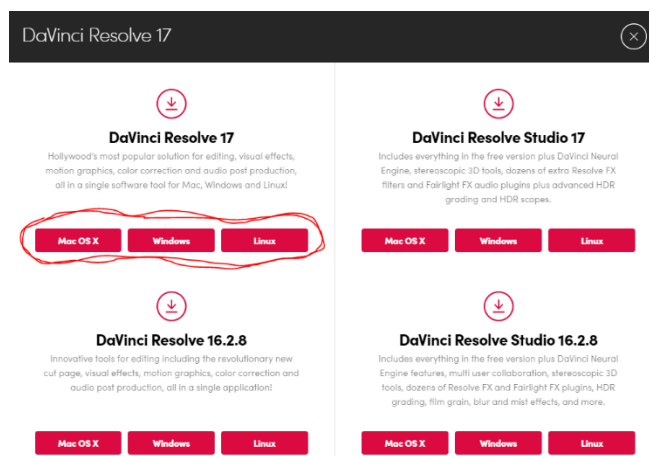
DOWNLOADING THE SOFTWARE

The programme I'm recommending is Davinci Resolve 17, which is completely free, no strings attached. There is a paid version, but it adds very little and is mostly for people to support the company. This won't run well on every laptop, but for most people it should work fine. If it doesn't work for you, other options like iMovie exist, which I can talk about in a separate guide if that will be useful. If you have any technical issues getting it working, feel free to email me at the address included at the end of the document.

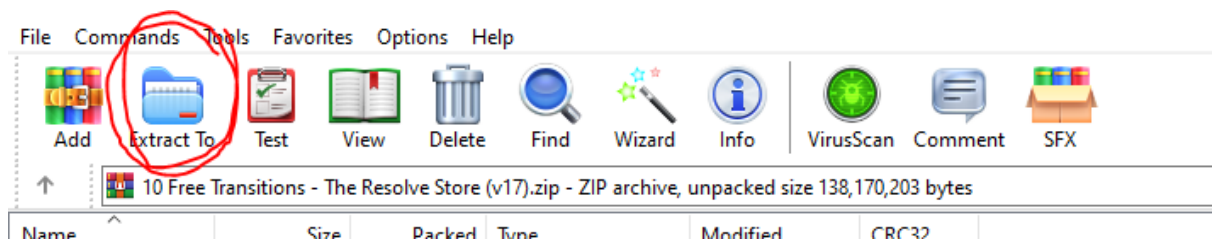
Please note this guide is based on the Windows version, but it works on Mac too, it might just look slightly different to mine.

To get the editor:

1. Follow this link: <https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/products/davinciresolve/>
2. Click 'Download Now'.
3. Click on either 'Windows' or 'Mac' below 'Davinci Resolve 17'



4. Enter your info, then press 'Register and Download'
5. This will download the software, which may take some time.
6. Once it's downloaded, open the file and click 'Extract To'



7. Then extract the file to anywhere you like.
8. Open this new folder and double click 'DaVinci_Resolve_17.0_Windows.exe'
9. This will start the installation process. Click through the installer to finish.

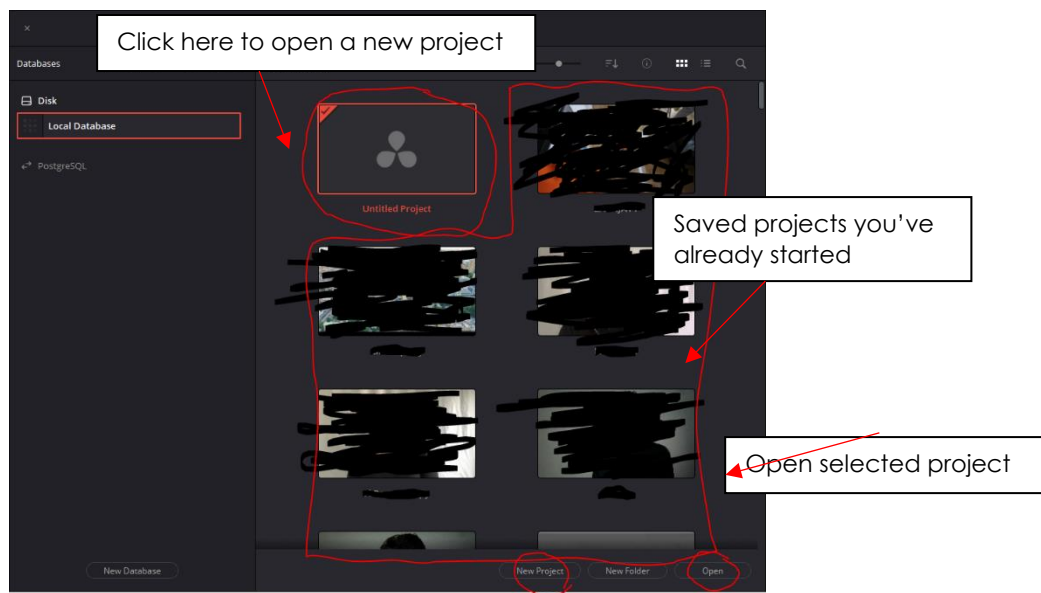
THE BASICS

SOFTWARE TOUR

A basic intro to the main pages used in Davinci Resolve. If you're lost, focus solely on the Edit and Export Pages. You can **switch between pages with the little icons at the bottom of the screen**. The correct icon is next to the title of each page in this guide.

Project Manager

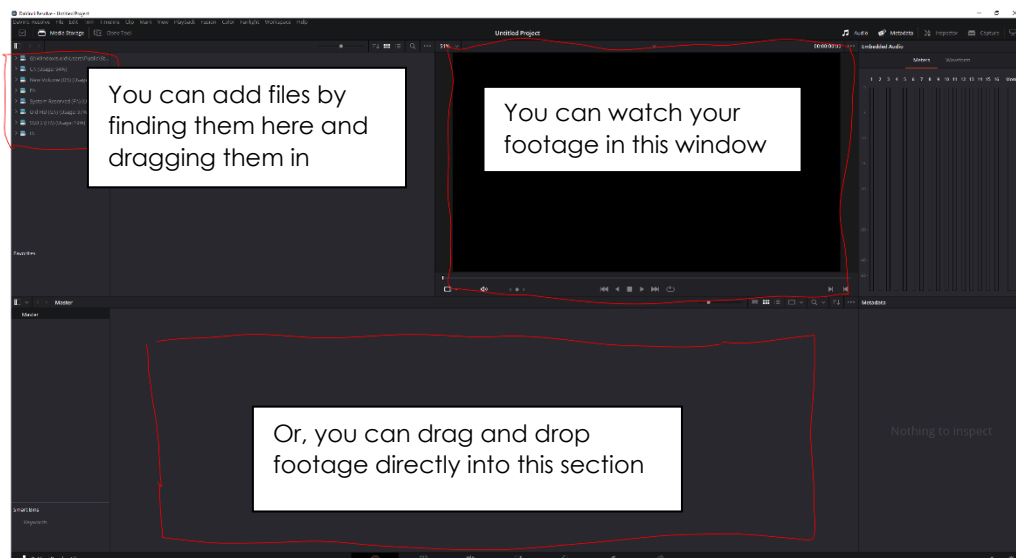
When you open the programme, you will be greeted with this screen. Click on Untitled Project to start a new edit. Other saved projects will also appear here.



Media Page

Click here to open a new project

This is where all of the footage for your edit can be easily managed. This is much more useful for large scale projects.





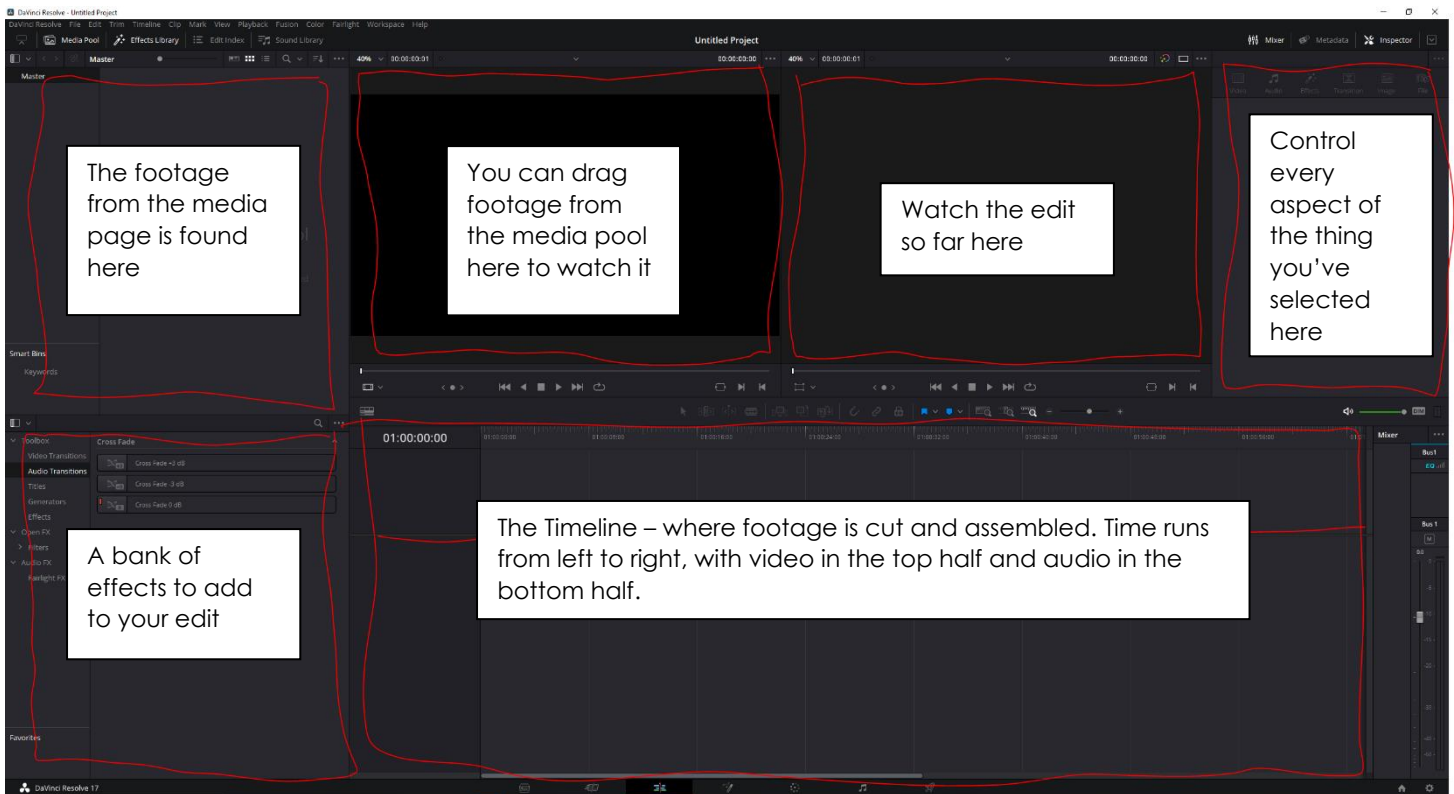
Cut Page

This is a variant of the edit page, but more complex to learn, so don't worry about it just yet.



Edit Page

This is where you'll spend most of your time. It's where all of the actual editing is done and will house most of this tutorial.



Fusion Page

This is a Visual Effects programme, which is insanely complicated and not technically editing, so requires a whole different skillset. Avoid for now.



Colour Page

This is an industry standard colour correction/grading studio. It looks intimidating but is actually fairly easy to learn. This isn't necessary for a basic self-tape but can be useful for giving your video a professional feel, so I'll create a separate guide covering the very basics.



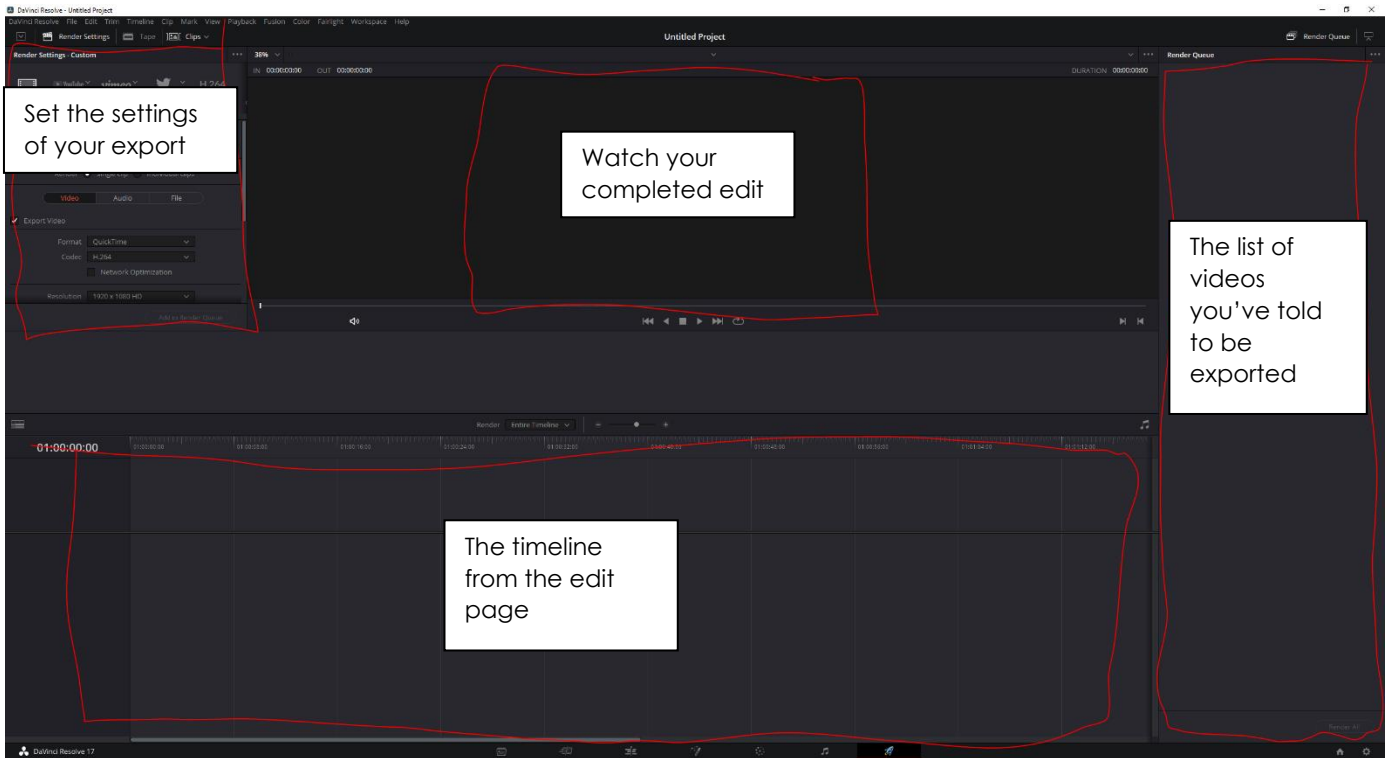
Fairlight Page

This is the audio editing page, which is effectively the same as the edit page, but focused solely on the audio. Almost everything that it can do can also be done in the edit page, so this guide won't cover it.



Export Page

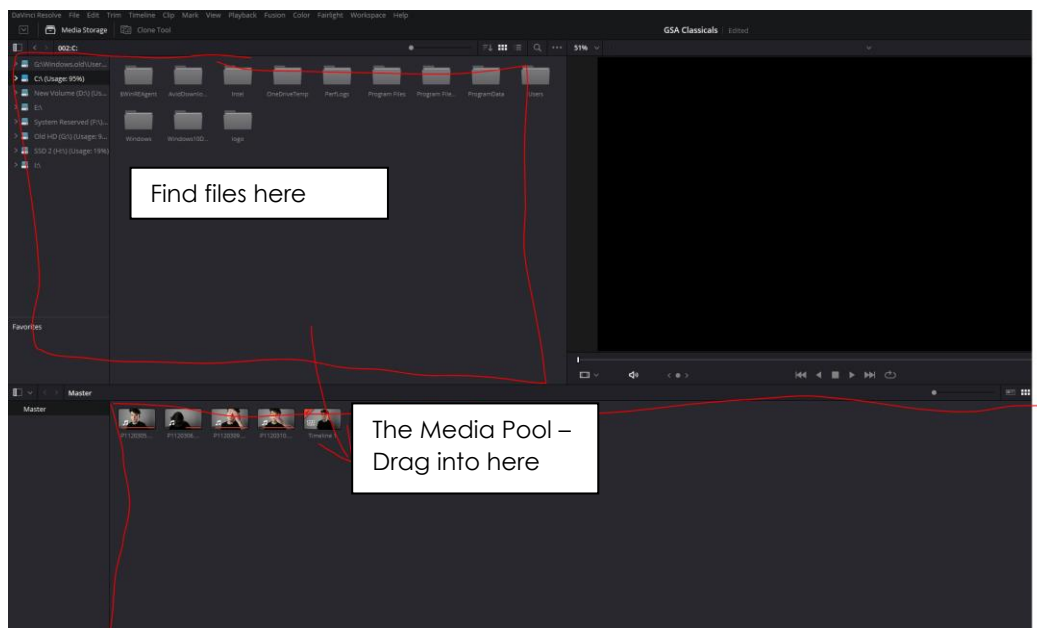
This page is used for exporting your edit into one video file. Again, it looks daunting, but 99% of the time you don't need to change any settings.



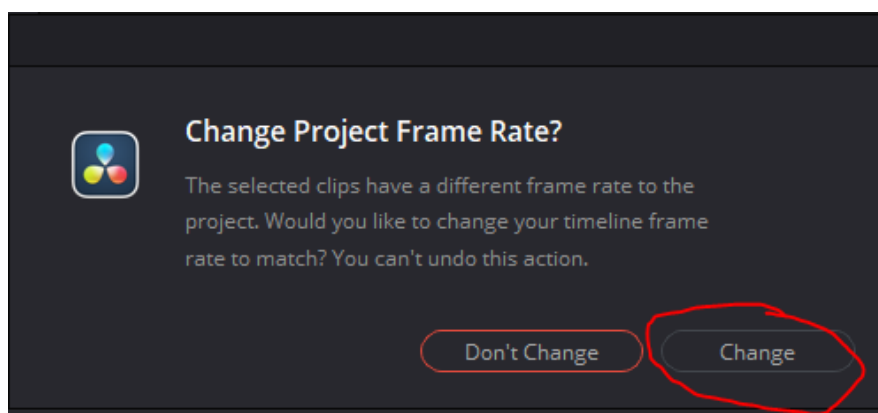
IMPORTING FOOTAGE

 How to bring your footage into the programme.

1. Start a **new project**.
2. You can open your footage from the media page or the edit page.
3. In the media page, you have two options. The first is to use the folders in the top left section of the screen to locate your footage, then click and drag it into the Media Pool.
4. The second option is to drag your footage directly from your files into the Media Pool.

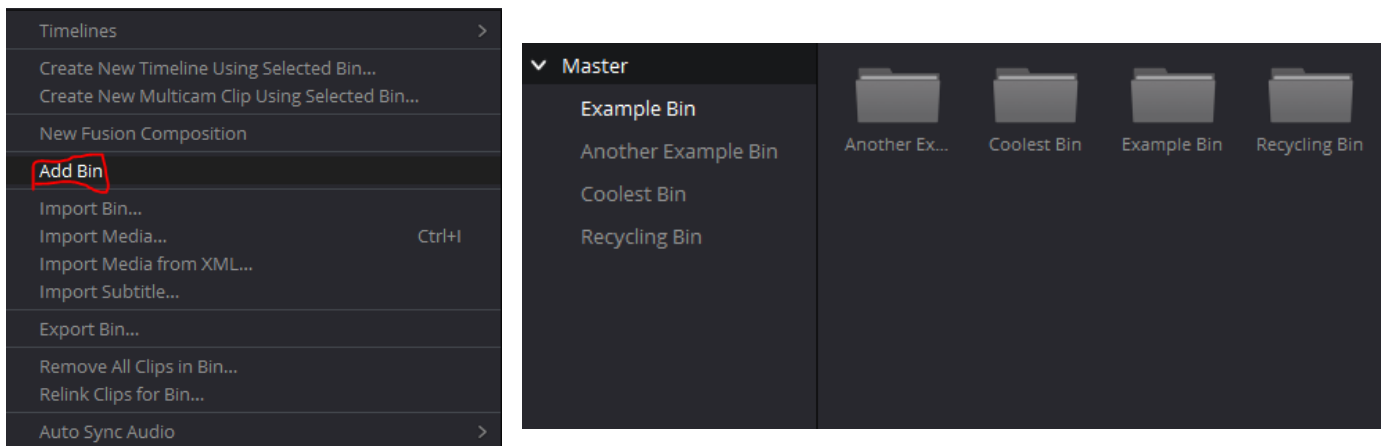


5. You can also achieve Step 4 in the Edit Page, by simply dragging and dropping your footage into the media pool here.
6. **When you drag footage in for the first time in a project, the programme may ask you if you want to change the project settings. Always click 'Change'.**



7. To rename your clips to make them easier to edit, click on them, press **F2**, and then you can change the name.

8. You can sort your footage into folders called Bins by right clicking, selecting 'Add Bin', then dragging your footage into these folders.



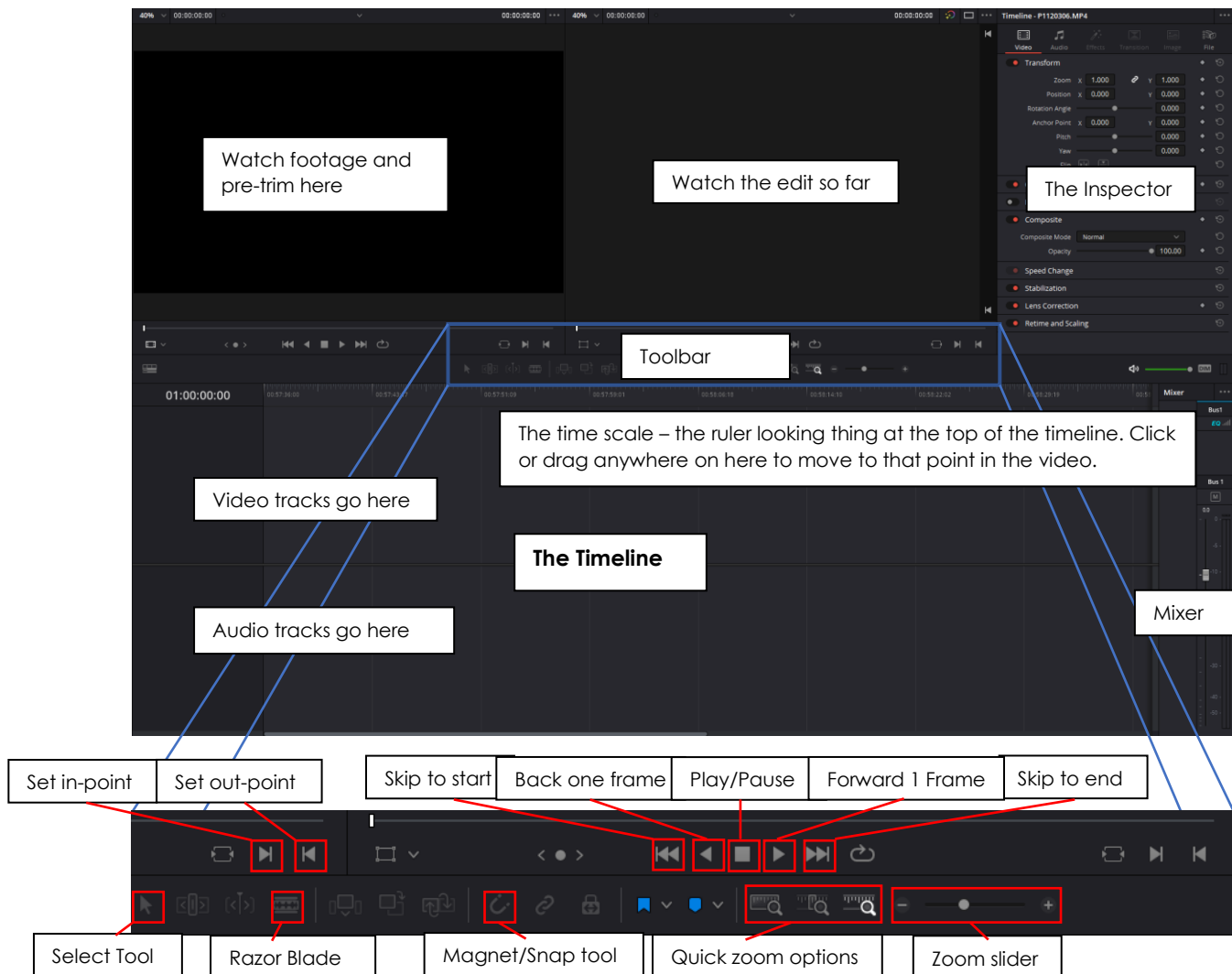
WARNING – Once you've added your footage, **do not** change where on your computer it's saved, or the edit might break.

CUTTING FOOTAGE

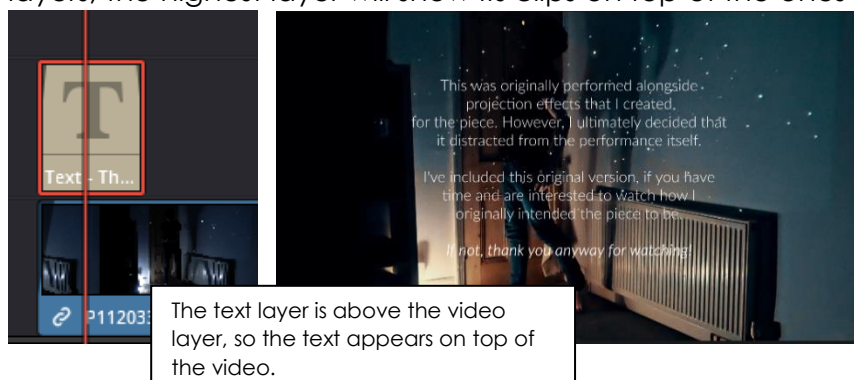
How to edit and assemble your clips.

ADDING TO THE TIMELINE

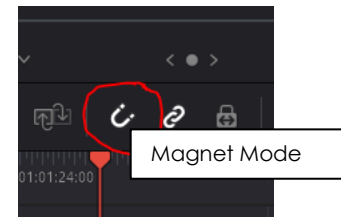
Switch to the Edit Page. All your footage will be assembled in the timeline and cut together. You can refer to this diagram as we go through the guide.



1. To add a clip to the timeline, simply drag it in. It can also be moved around in time and between layers by clicking and dragging.
2. Audio layers (channels) will play at the same time as each other. With video layers, the highest layer will show its clips on top of the ones below.



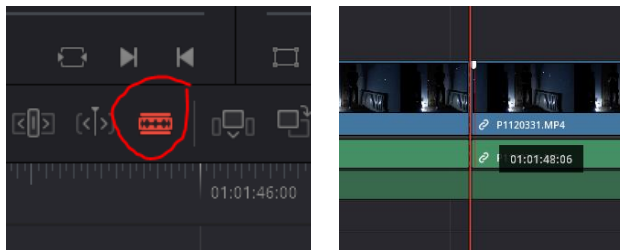
3. You can zoom in and out using the zoom slider at any time and can scroll along the timeline with the slider at the bottom.
4. When editing, you can ensure two clips are placed right next to each other by making sure the **magnet mode** is on, which will mean clips snap together perfectly when you place them together. If you need to be more precise you can turn this off.



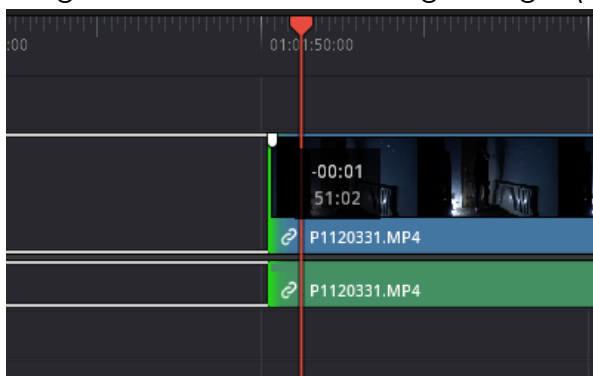
CUTTING

Fundamentally, cutting a video is very simple. How you use it is what makes it skilful.

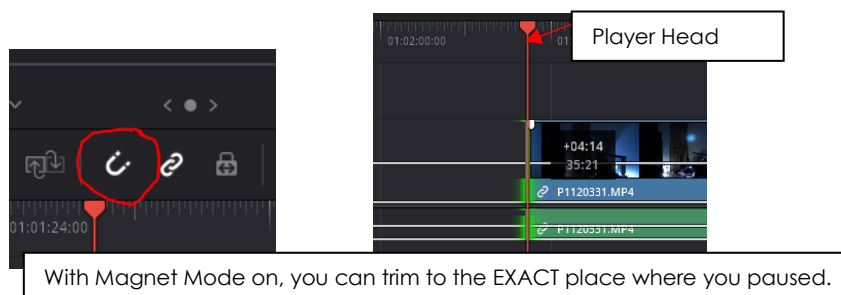
1. One method to cut a clip is to use the razor blade tool to slice a clip in half. (Don't forget to switch back to the normal Select Tool afterwards) Then, you can delete the piece you don't need by clicking on it and pressing **Control+X**. AVOID PRESSING DELETE, IT HAS A TENDENCY TO MESS THINGS UP.



2. The other method you could use is to click on the very end of the clip and drag it in to shorten it to the right length (Trimming).



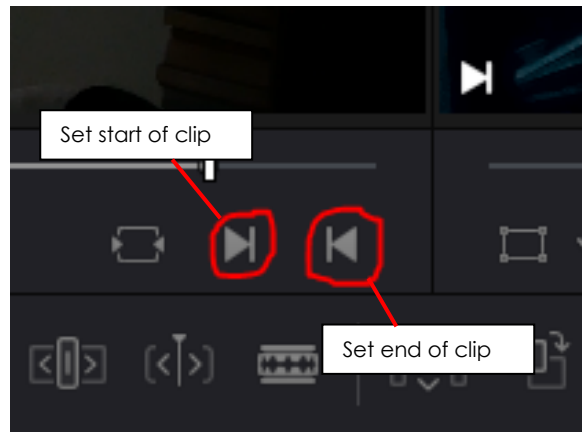
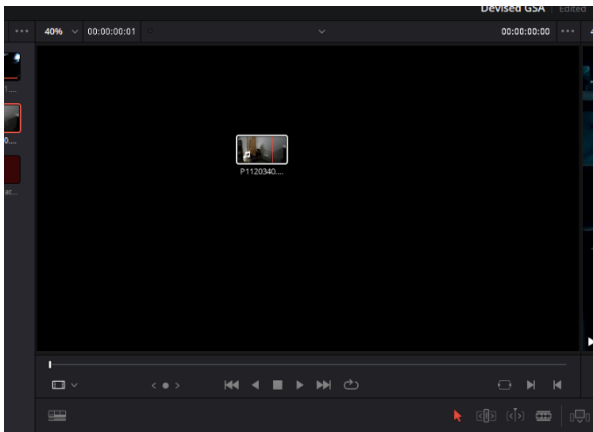
3. A good way to make these processes accurate, is to pause at the point you want to cut, so the **Player Head** (The orange bar that shows where in the video you are) is on it. Then (with Magnet Mode turned on), cutting or trimming to near that point will automatically cut it perfectly.



In the context of a self-tape this will normally only be used to cut out the start and end of your performance.

PRE-TRIMMING

1. When adding a new clip to the timeline, it often makes the process even easier to trim it down beforehand.
2. To do this, drag the clip into the left-hand viewer.
3. Here you can watch the clip. Find where you want the clip to start, then press the In-Point button to set that as the start. Do the same for the end. Don't worry about this being perfect, as you can use the normal cutting methods to finetune it.



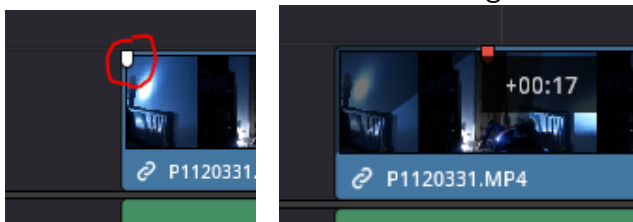
4. Now, when you drag your clip into the timeline, it will already be cut to size.

FADES AND TRANSITIONS

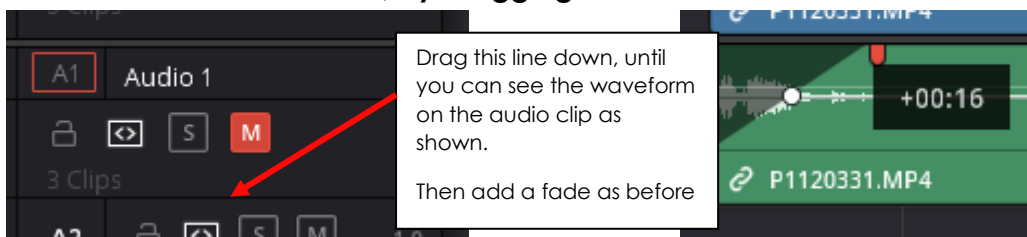
A nice simple way to make your self-tapes flow better is to fade in and out of your clips. If you want to gently change between two clips, you can also use a **transition** to make the cut more interesting.

TO ADD FADES:

1. Zoom in to the edge of the clip you want to fade.
2. Click on the fade handle and drag it to the desired length of the fade.



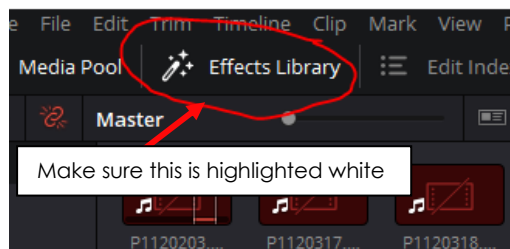
3. Repeat this process for the audio clip below. **You will first have to make the audio channel taller, by dragging it down on the left-hand side.**



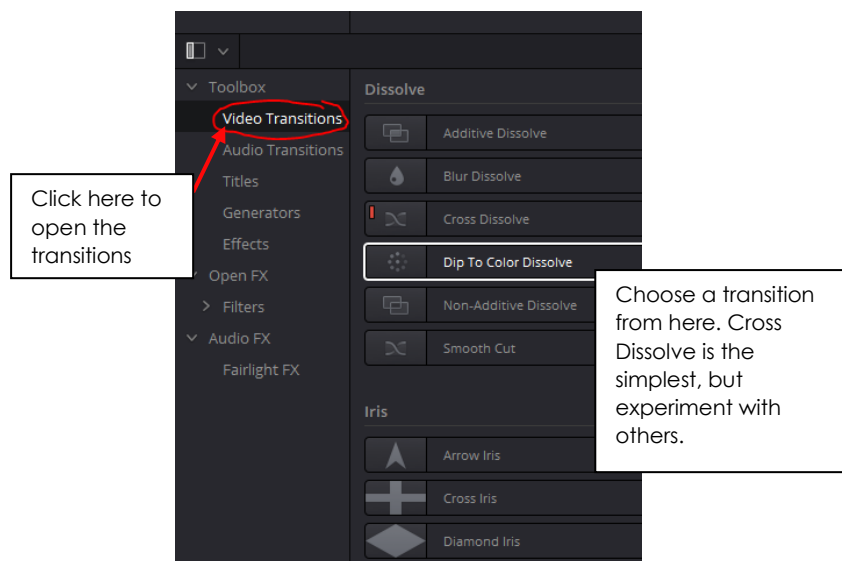
4. Fades can be added at the end of a clip too.

TO ADD TRANSITIONS:

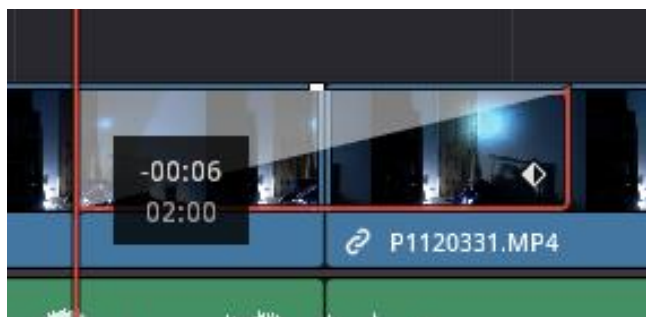
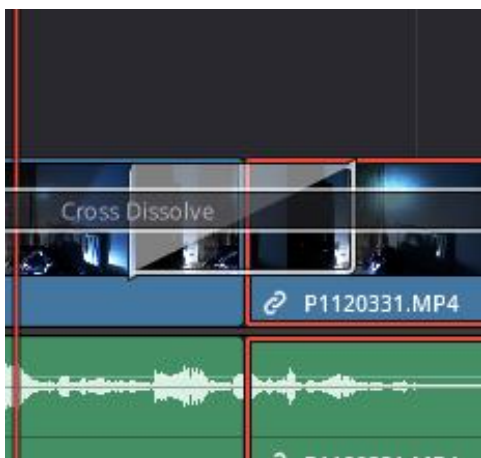
1. Make sure the **Effects Library** is set to on.



2. In the Effects Library in the bottom left corner, click on 'Video Transitions' under 'Toolbox'.
3. Choose a transition. Experiment with others, but simpler is usually better, so I'd use ones in the Dissolve section.



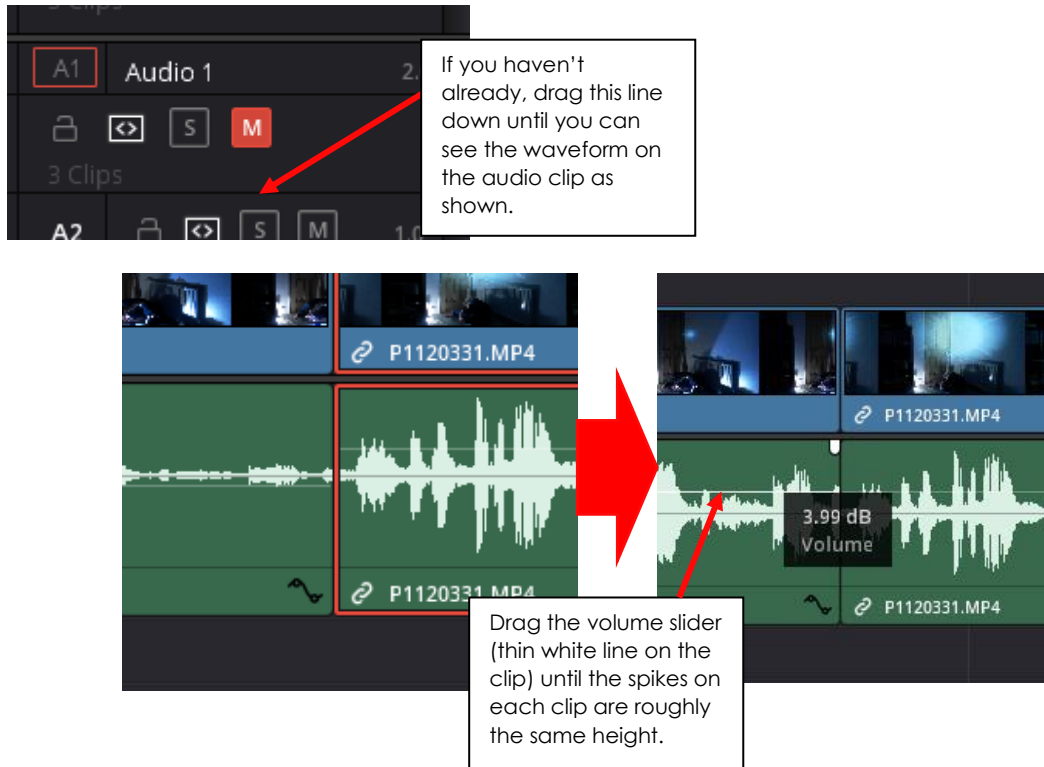
4. **Make sure the two clips are lined up next to each other**, then drag and drop the transition over the cut.
5. Drag the end of the transition to make it shorter or longer.




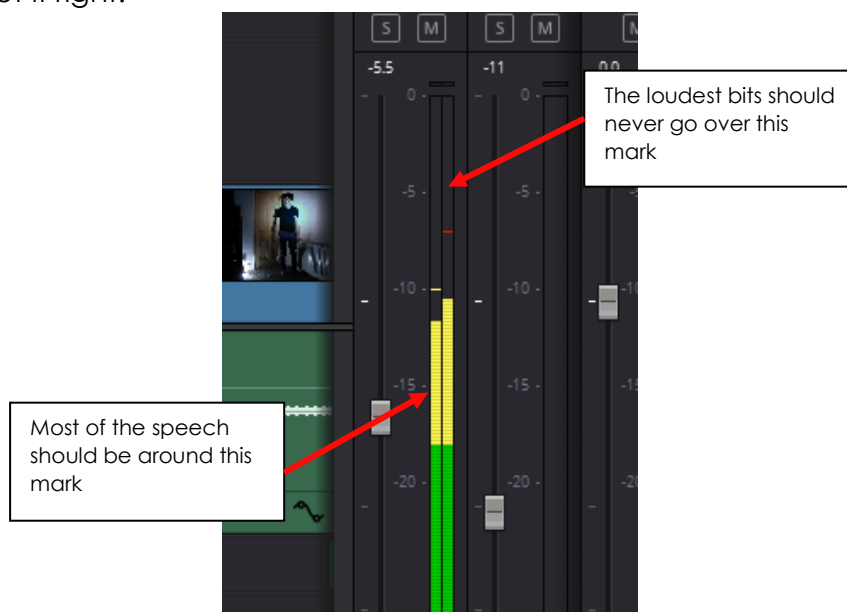
AUDIO LEVELS

This simply means making sure the volume of each clip is loud enough and the same all the way through.

You can change the volume of a clip by simply dragging up and down the volume slider of each clip. To make sure the audio is the same volume in each clip, you can look at the waveform displayed in each audio clip. Make these the same height for each and you're set.



-  For extra accuracy, play the clip, and keep an eye on the Mixer in the bottom right, which shows the audio levels. For most of the speech, the levels should hang out around -15db, with the loudest moments no louder than -5db. Adjust the volume until you get it right.



TITLE CARDS AND TRANSFORMATION

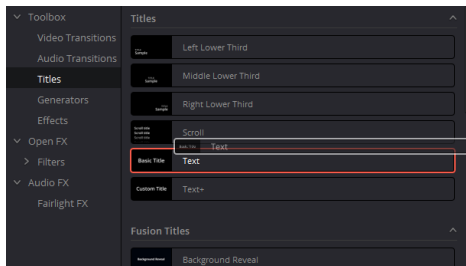
Adding simple optional extras.

ADDING TEXT

In some cases, adding text to a self-tape is essential, whether to add a title card before a performance, or correcting something you say in an introductory speech.

TO INSERT TEXT:

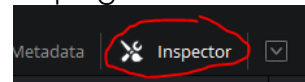
1. Open the Effects Library, then under 'Toolbox' click 'Titles'. Find the one called 'Text' and drag it into the timeline.



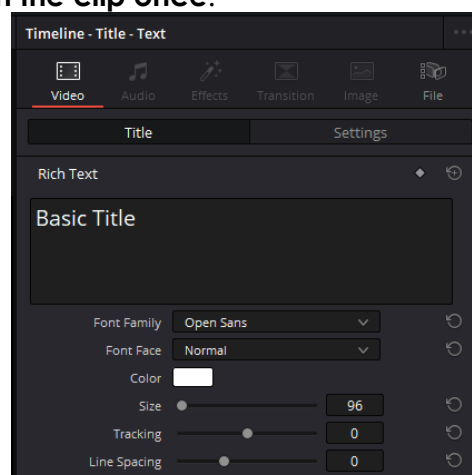
2. This can be trimmed and moved like a normal clip, so place it where you want.
3. To have it display over black, place it in-between video clips. To have it show over the top of a video, simply place it in the video track above your footage.
4. This can have fades and transitions applied to it as usual.

TO EDIT THE TEXT:

1. To edit the text you've just added, look to the top right-hand corner, and make sure the 'Inspector' button is set to on.

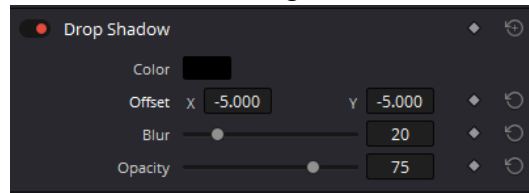


2. The Inspector is a tool which will edit the properties of any clip you click on. To edit your text clip, **click on the clip once**.
3. This screen will be visible:

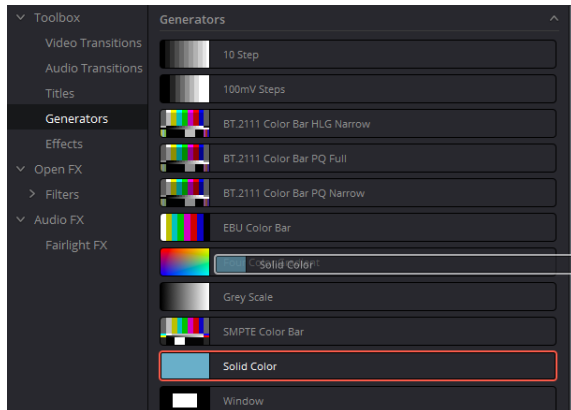


It allows you to edit the text as you would in any text editor like Microsoft Word, as well as change its position on the screen. Play around with these settings until you get it right. A good, professional looking font I use for self-tapes is 'Lato Light'.

4. To make text show up better over video footage, I recommend white text, and adding a shadow. To do this, scroll down to the 'Drop Shadow' section, and change both 'Offset' settings to '-5', like this:



5. To have the text show over a coloured background, click on 'Generators' in the Effects Library, and drag 'Solid Colour' into the timeline.



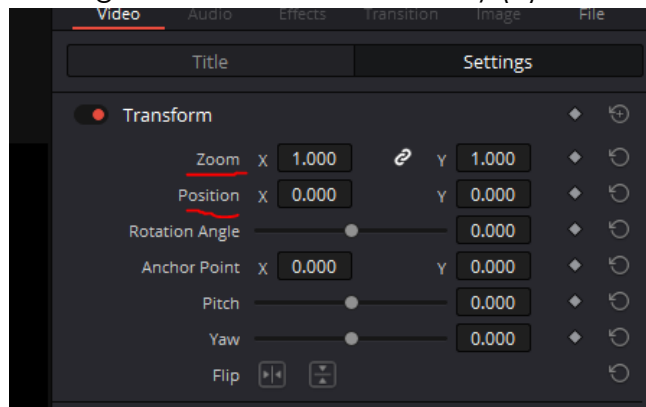
6. Place this layer underneath the text.
7. You can change the colour in the Inspector by clicking on the clip.

Animated drag and drop titles also exist in the 'Titles' section of the Effects Library, so feel free to experiment with these too.

TRANSFORMING FOOTAGE

This simply means moving/resizing footage. This is useful for placing text at a specific point or cropping in video for a closer angle.

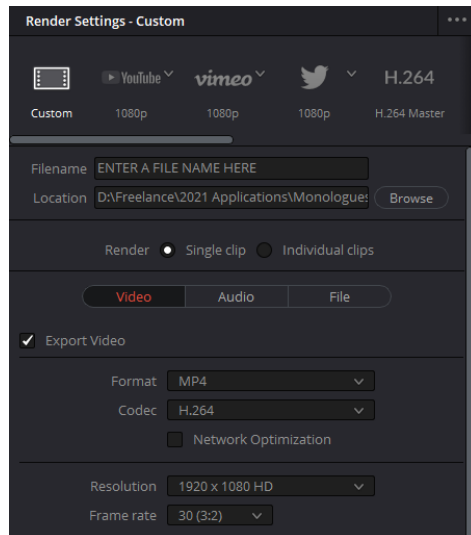
1. For a video file, simply click on the clip in the timeline, and the settings will appear in the Inspector. For anything else, you'll also have to **click the 'Settings' button at the top of the inspector.**
2. The zoom function allows you to change the size of the footage. The Position functions changes the location horizontally (X) and vertically (Y).



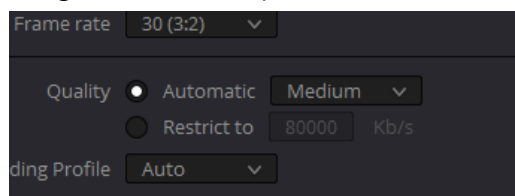
EXPORTING THE FINAL VIDEO

Once you're finished editing, and have checked the video through, you can render it into a single video file. Remember to watch it through first.

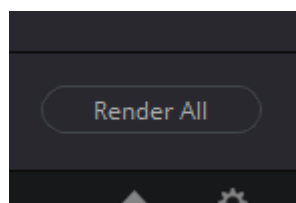
1. Open the Export Page and look at the **render settings** in the top left.
2. There are hundreds of settings here, but most you don't need to worry about. These settings will work in almost all cases:



3. **If you recorded vertically**, you need to change the Resolution setting to 'Custom', and then manually type in the dimensions of your footage.
4. If you're sending your video directly, set your Quality setting to 'High'. If you're uploading to YouTube, you won't need more than Medium.



5. At the top of the settings box, name your file, and choose where to save it, by pressing 'Browse'.
6. Click 'Add to Render Queue'.
7. Click 'Render All' and wait. This may take some time, depending on your computer.



This should be all the skills you need to edit a self-tape! It will take some time to learn, but once you do, it should be an easy process.

EXTRA SKILLS

ADDING EXTERNAL AUDIO

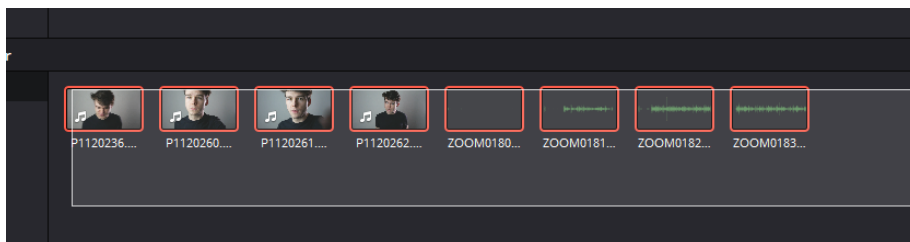
Most casting agents will be satisfied with your phone's internal audio. However, if you have an external microphone to hand, it will be much better quality. This is **especially useful when you need to sing**, as a bad microphone can make your voice sound more nasal and exaggerate any flaws in your singing.

If you do decide to record with an extra mic, here's how to sync it up to the video you record. **This should be done before editing.**

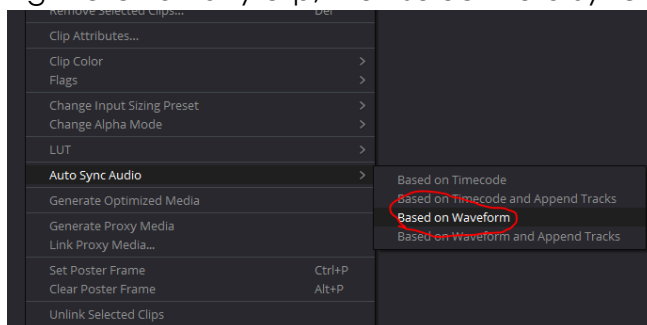
AUTO-SYNC

This is the fastest option and works in most cases.

1. Navigate to the Media Page.
2. Insert all your video clips, and all of the corresponding audio files from your microphone.
3. Select **all of them** by holding shift and clicking.



4. Right click on any clip, then select Auto Sync Audio > Based on Waveform.

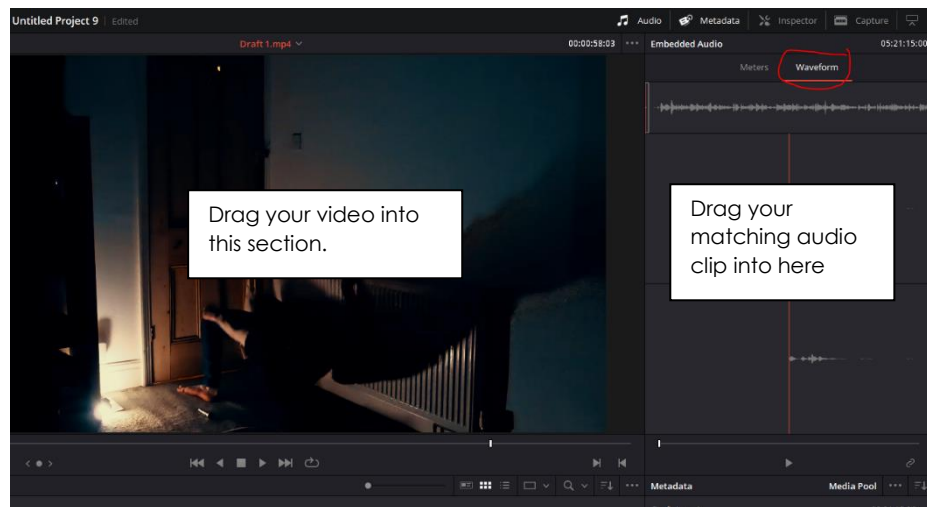


5. This will process all your clips and should sync your audio correctly. However, this can make mistakes so check all of the clips have worked **before** editing.

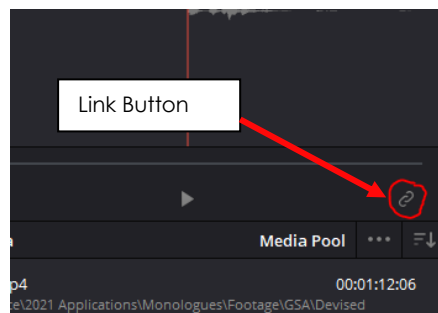
MANUAL SYNC

1. In the event that the Auto Sync option doesn't work, you can manually sync the audio instead.
2. To make sure this is easy, **clap in front of the camera lens before every take when recording.**
3. For this process you need to sync each clip individually. For your first clip, drag the video into the viewer.

4. Then, drag the matching audio into the Audio Viewer, **ensuring Waveform is selected at the top**.



5. Find the clap in the video and pause it at the exact moment your hands connect.
6. Find the clap in the audio, and pause it at the loudest part, which will look like a spike in the Audio Viewer.
7. Press the Link button. Now, when you drag your video into the timeline, it will use the new audio instead.



8. Repeat steps 4-8 for each clip.

SIMPLIFIED WORKFLOW

Once you've been through the guide once, you can use this to jog your memory for future editing.

1. Drag your footage into the Media Pool.
2. Organise and label your footage if needs be.
3. *Optional – sync external microphone audio.*
4. In the Edit Page, trim down your clips before inserting them.
5. Drag your footage into the timeline.
6. Assemble and cut your footage.
7. Add any titles.
8. Add in any fade in/outs or transitions that are appropriate.
9. *Optional – Adjust audio levels.*
10. *Optional – colour correct each clip in the colour page (See separate guide).*
11. Watch through the video to make sure you've not missed anything.
12. In the Export Page, set your export settings to MP4 at Medium Quality, and ensure the resolution matches your video.
13. Choose where to save the file and what to call it.
14. Add it to the Render Queue, then click render.

WHAT NEXT?

Hopefully now you have all the skills you need to create a professional self-tape with ease, as well as the building blocks for any other editing you may need to do in the future.

If any sections of this guide don't quite make sense, or you just want to know more, please don't hesitate to email me with questions on stangaskellfilm@gmail.com. I can then clarify the guide for future editions based on your feedback.

GOOD LUCK!

FURTHER TUTORIALS

For those interested in learning more, I've included a list of links to useful video tutorials/series on the subject.

I'll also be creating a guide on basic colour correction in a separate document if anyone would like to learn that in a self-tape specific way.

DaVinci Resolve Official Lessons

This is a series of video and written lessons with tests you can take too.

<https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/uk/products/davinciresolve/training>

Casey Farris' Crash Course

A training video in the basics of DaVinci Resolve. His channel has tonnes of useful resources.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozj-aQH0kiE>

Waqas Qazi's Colour Grading Tutorial

A more advanced, more comprehensive video in colour correction.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rk6UqegBgF8>