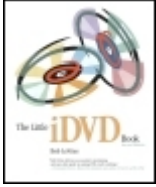
 Add to Project



[Little iDVD Book, Second Edition, The](#)

By Bob LeVitus

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Part 1. Basic Training

Chapter 2. Before You Even Think About Burning a DVD

Before you burn a single disc—heck, before you even launch iMovie or iDVD again, read this chapter. It is my attempt to cover every single thing, small and large, you'll need to consider before you start any DVD project.

Don't get me wrong. I know that every DVD project is different and that some projects require extensive planning and pre-production while others turn out fantastic, even though created "on the fly" with little or no forethought.

Whether your project is big, small, or in-between, when you set out to create a DVD from scratch, there's a lot to consider—and perhaps reject—before you shoot an inch of footage, spend a single penny, or expend one ounce of additional effort on it.

I'm not going to tell you that you have to do every single thing this chapter suggests before every single project. But I am going to suggest that you need to at least *know* about all the things in this chapter. You see, I firmly believe that when you plan a project, if you choose to ignore any of these suggestions, it should be because you choose to ignore them, not because you forgot or didn't know.



Much of the information in this chapter will be expanded upon in upcoming parts of the book. And for your convenience, I've included a handy preproduction checklist at the end of this chapter.

Planning to Start Planning

In [Chapter 1](#), I said that planning might be the most important part of the whole process. You'll hear me say that a lot. But I also understand the human need to just roll up your sleeves and do it.

So, even if you choose to devote only a few minutes to planning your DVD project, this chapter will help you use those few minutes wisely.

I've found that the time I spend planning a project is almost always repaid with interest when I finish on time (or early), on

budget (or under), and without having a lot of "do-overs" (if any) because of poor planning.



*You may notice that much of this book isn't actually about iDVD itself. That's entirely by design. Frankly, iDVD is so easy to use that even if I were at my most verbose, if all I did was explain how to use iDVD, this book would have to be titled *The Extremely Short iDVD Book*. So though the title is *The Little iDVD Book*, it probably should have been called, "*How to Make Good DVDs with iDVD*," which, by the way, requires a lot more than just a copy of iDVD and a SuperDrive.*

One last thing: I'm going to cover items in the order I consider them when I'm working on my own projects. Your style may be different, so feel free to combine steps, change the order, or even omit them. It's your project; this chapter is just food for thought before you fall too much in love with your project to think clearly.

Make Some Notes

I'm an inveterate note-taker. I have note taking utensils on my desk, my nightstand, in my pocket, and in my car. I even keep a pen on my keychain. Once I decide to do a project (or even consider doing a project), I create a new folder on my hard disk for it. (I usually put the folder right on the desktop for convenience, but that's just my personal preference.) The folder helps keep everything, or at least all the digital elements—my notes, materials, files, movies, pictures, scripts, and so on—in one place throughout the production. Some projects also require a physical container, like a file folder or envelope, for non-digital documents, paperwork, and other stuff I can't store on my hard drive.

I know the checklist at the end of the chapter like the back of my hand. Whenever I think about any element of any project, I jot it down immediately. If I'm at my Mac, I type it into my project overview document. If I'm away from the computer, I write a note and stuff it in my pocket. When I get back to my office, I empty my pocket onto the desk and transfer my notes from paper into my project overview document.

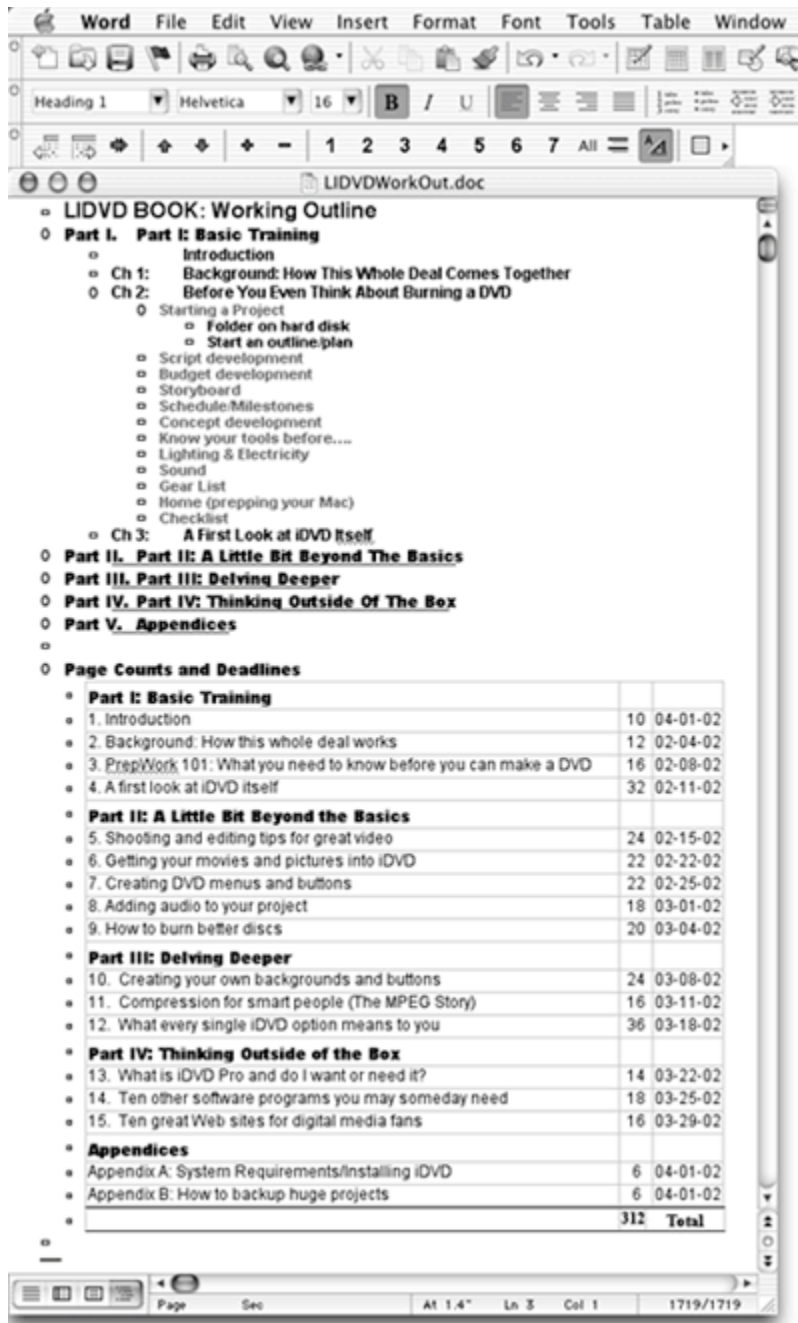
Make an outline

I almost always start by creating an outline for the project. I like outlines. I've been using an outliner on my Mac since ThinkTank 512 for Mac in the late '80s. Almost every project I do—writing, video, DVD, presentation, whatever—starts as an outline.

Outlining lets me easily hide and show levels of detail in my document; move chunks around quickly, easily, and visually with drag and drop; and organize the order and grouping of elements and sub-elements painlessly. The outline metaphor works for me when planning and managing projects and it always has.

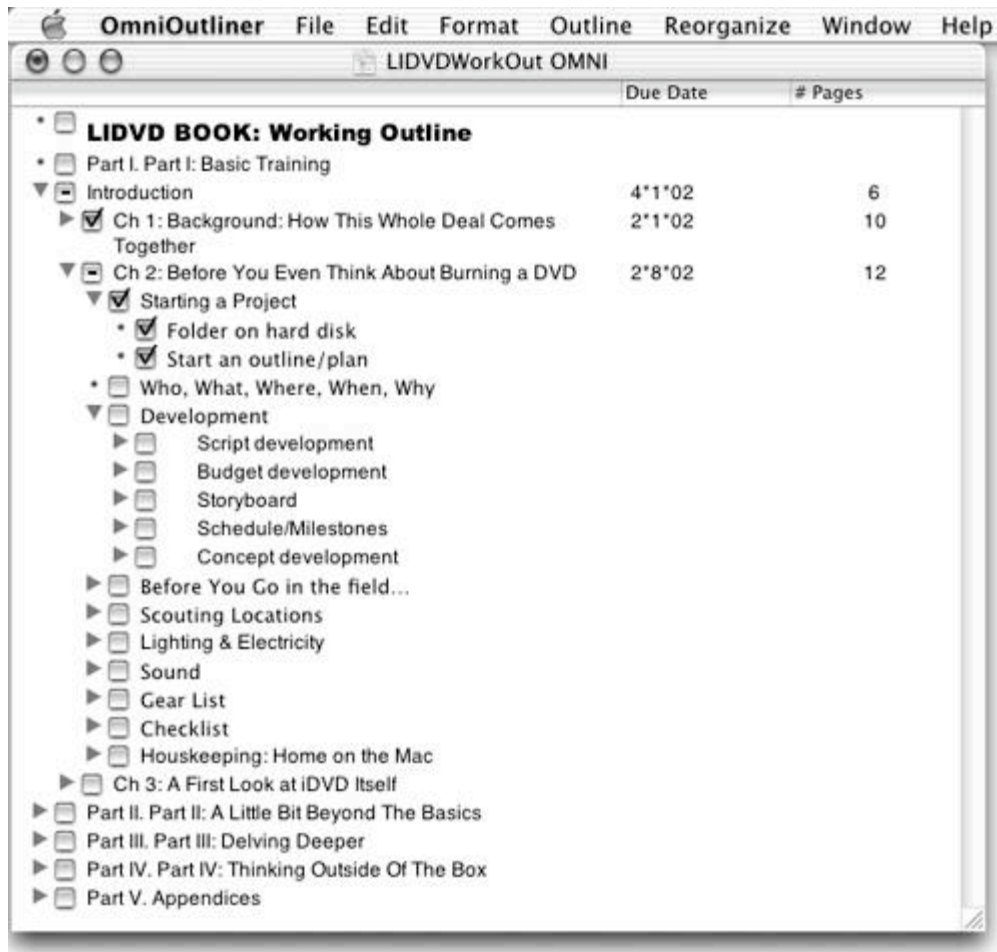
Microsoft Word has an outline mode, and that's what I use to plan most writing projects. It's not the most intuitive outliner I've used, but once you get the hang of it, it's quite powerful. Since I use Word all the time anyway, I use the Word outliner a lot. (See [Figure 2.1](#).)

Figure 2.1. I used Microsoft Word v.X's outliner for the master outline of this book.



If you're not a Word user, another nice outlining solution is the inexpensive (\$29.95) OmniOutliner, a gorgeous and easy-to-use outliner. OmniOutliner was developed exclusively for Mac OS X in native Cocoa, so it takes full advantage of everything OS X has to offer and is Aqua-licious as well. It's well suited to the type of project outlines you might create for a DVD. (See [Figure 2.2](#).)

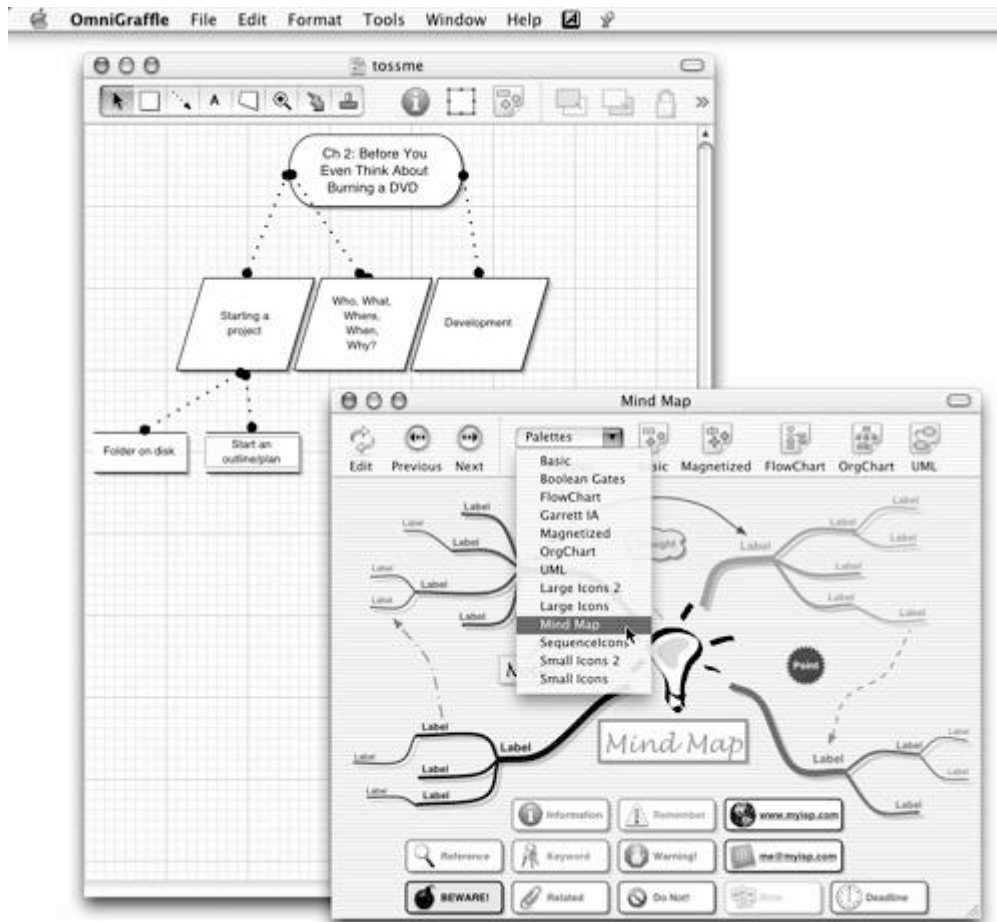
Figure 2.2. The same outline, imported into OmniOutliner.



You can download a free demo of OmniOutliner at www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnioutliner.

Before I leave the subject of outlines and outliners, some people are more comfortable with a visual approach instead of outlining. If you're not hip to outlining, there's another Omni program, OmniGraffle, that you might prefer. It's another Cocoa/Aqua-licious offering for creating diagrams, family trees, flow charts, organization charts, layouts, and graphs, as shown in [Figure 2.3](#). You can download a free demo version of this \$59.95 program at www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle.

Figure 2.3. A small part of the same outline, imported into OmniGraffle.



The bigger the project, the more helpful and timesaving a good planning and tracking system will be. And I've always found that you'll save time and effort later if you organize all the disparate parts of your project in one place sooner.

It really doesn't matter if you use Word, OmniOutliner, OmniGraffle, Stickies, the Finder, or even your memory if it's good enough, to keep track of the elements that make up a project. What's important is that you keep track of them somehow.

Define your objectives

I try to start every project—regardless of its nature—by asking myself the Five W Questions, before I invest any more time in it:

1. **Who** is the audience? Who am I making this project for?
2. **What** is the purpose of this project?
3. **Where** are the production facilities and locations I'll use in this project?
4. **When** does it have to be completed?
5. **Why** am I doing it?

I admit it's a journalism technique, but it only takes a few minutes and it can help define the project more clearly. A lot of

later decisions will be based on the answers to these five Ws, so I usually put this at the top of any project checklist and work through it first.

Next, I create a "one-sentence pitch" for my project. I try to describe what I want to do in a single sentence. This helps tighten my focus even further.

"This DVD will be sent to Mom, Dad, and Aunt Shana so they can see how big the kids have grown since last summer."

"This DVD will contain a product demo for potential investors."

"This is an instructional DVD to be sold through direct-response advertising."

"This is a music video to promote my band's new recording project."

And so on.

Road Mapping (a.k.a. Development)

I think of the development phase as assembling all the road maps you need before you begin production—script, storyboards, shot lists, and so on. (The actual production process—shooting and editing, for the most part—will be covered in [Chapter 4](#), "Shooting and Editing Tips for Great Video.")

Much of what I think of as the development process depends on the purpose of the disc you're making. A project for family and friends requires one kind of road map: I would map out something polished enough to impress them while only taking a few hours of my time to complete.

If the project is for the soccer team I coach, it's a completely different road map. For them, I would do nothing fancy: No editing, no titles, not much time spent; just what the team needs, which is footage of plays worth watching.



This worked great. We shot the entire game as one continuous wide shot. I reviewed the footage, culled out the best plays, and burned the whole thing, unedited, onto a DVD. I had the team over for pizza and plays one night. When we watched it on my cheap Korean DVD player and expensive Japanese big-screen TV, the video was as clear as a photograph and the freeze-frame images, when we stopped the action to discuss a play or player's position, were almost as clear. Everyone loved it: the team (kids love seeing themselves on TV), the parents (who think I'm a cross between Steven Spielberg and Pelé), and me, too. If you have a kid in sports or know one, give it a try. It's a blast.

If it's for a client or for a business pitch, it's another road map entirely. I know I need to end up with a product that is polished, professional, and offers good production values. This road map would be a full-blown production in itself—script, budget, daily breakdowns, screenings for the client, and so on.

Finally, discs I do just for me are another case entirely—their maps can cover almost anything, including all of the above.



Often discs I do for me are parodies. I can't help myself. I like making fake commercials and music videos. To me, that's fun. Your mileage may vary.

So let's say, just for giggles, that you have a crystal-clear conception of your audience, purpose, places, times, and reason. Now it's time to dig in and "develop" the project.

Script

Most projects require a script. Put another way, if anybody on-screen is supposed to say anything, somebody has to write those words for them. And if there's narration, someone has to write that, too.

In a looser sense of the word, just about anything you intend to capture on video ought to be "scripted." Which is why, in some cases, you won't bother with a script and will make do with just a shot list.

Shot list

If you're planning to use video and not use a script, at least make a shot list. It's just what it sounds like: a list of *all* the

shots you need to complete your video (and, by extension, your DVD).

I call shooting this way "documentary-style," and it often results in great video. But I find this style works better if I give some thought to the shots I need to tell the story, before I pick up the camera. I try to always plan the shots I'm going to need before I head off to shoot something. Even a short list helps. At worst, make a list in your head at the last minute.

For example, my daughter and a friend were washing my car in the driveway one day. They looked really cute doing it, so I asked them if they wanted to be in a car wash movie. Of course they were thrilled. I very quickly cranked out a shot list, set up a boom-box playing some funky dance music, turned on the camera, and said to the girls, "Dance, sing, be outrageous, and have fun."

Here's the shot list I wrote in the 2 minutes between deciding to make this video and picking up the camera:

- Master coverage of car washing: Wide to ECU (extreme close-up)
- Footage of girls dancing by car with towels
- Close-up of side mirror with reflections of girls dancing with towels
- Close-up of hands washing license plate, side mirror, wheels
- Shots of soap bucket
- Shots of shiny car parts
- Whatever...

I shot about 10 minutes of raw footage and ended up with a very cute 3-minute ersatz MTV video of the girls, which everyone said was "adorable."

The more complex (and longer) your project, the more important it is to think about what video coverage you're going to need and what scripting needs to be done before you shoot.

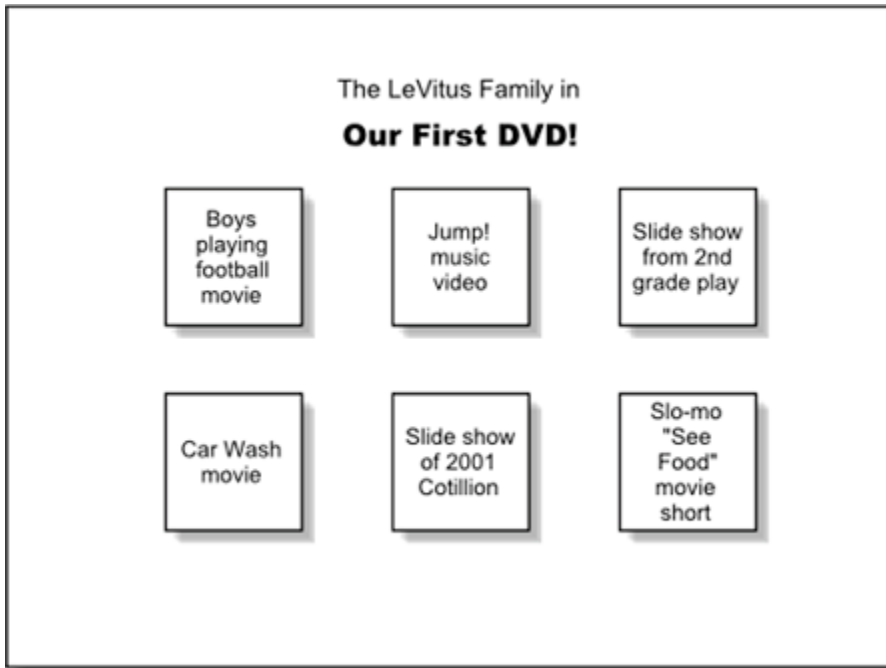
Storyboard

A storyboard is a sequence of drawings that represent what you're supposed to see on-screen. Think of the storyboard (and script and shot list) as the road map of what the viewer will see and hear.

For a television commercial or feature film, there might be dozens or hundreds of professional drawings showing point-of-view, camera angle, and composition for all (or most) of the shots in the work. For a casual video/DVD, it might just be brief text descriptions of each shot.

Storyboarding is a separate step from the script and the shot list for a reason. Regardless of what you choose to do with either the script or shot list, you need at least two storyboards for a DVD project—one for (each) video sequence and another for the DVD menus and control interface.

Here's a quick and dirty interface storyboard I whipped up for one of my famous family DVDs:



And here's how it turned out:



If a video sequence is going to have more than a few scenes in it, you need to think about what will be on the screen at any given moment. The storyboard, shot list, and script can help you figure that out before it's too late. And if your interface is going to go beyond Apple's template (or even if it's not), you need a storyboard for your menus and interface.

Schedule

A schedule is another road map worth developing, particularly if you have time or money riding on the project. The bigger the project, the more important it is to create a workable schedule before you start. How many days will it take to write a script, storyboard, and shot list? How many days of shooting? How many hours or days of editing? How much time will it take to finish the project in iDVD?



For your first few DVDs, everything is going to take twice (or three times) as long as you expect. Don't let it get you down. As you become more familiar with the process, you'll get faster, and better, too.

Budget

Finally, if you need to buy or rent equipment, rent locations, hire personnel, contract talent, clear music rights, or spend any out-of-pocket cash on a project, you should create a budget.

Even if this DVD is only for yourself, little things can cost you during production—extra sets of batteries, the cable you had to have express delivered, the discs you had to throw away because you burned before you should have, and so on. If you're concerned, itemize the costs before you "green-light" the project.

Just make the darned road maps

You can do your road mapping the old-fashioned way with pen(cil) and paper, or use any of the myriad programs for Mac OS X such as FinalDraft for scripts (www.finaldraft.com); Adobe Photoshop, Photoshop Elements, or GraphicConverter for graphics (www.adobe.com and www.graphicconverter.net); OmniGraffle for diagrams and storyboards (www.omnigroup.com); and Microsoft Office v.X for outlines, scripts, presentations, spreadsheets, storyboards, contact database, and calendar.

The whole point is: Every project needs a road map. If you start without one, you're likely to become lost.

If you have a good set of road maps before you set out, you know where you're going and why you're going there, as well as the result you desire. I promise that if you plan your journey well, you won't waste *too* much time getting there.

Further Considerations

But that isn't all there is to planning. No, not by a long shot. There is still much to consider before you roll an inch of tape or put laser to disc. A lot of this section relates to one part of the map or another, and all of it—location, lighting, 'lectricity, and sound—requires at least a passing thought as you plan your project.

Locations

If you have to shoot "on location," you want to maintain as much control over the environment as you possibly can. If you have a choice between shooting a conversation in a crowded restaurant or at your own kitchen table, you're far better off in your kitchen, where you can control external elements such as sound and lights.

If you must shoot in an "uncontrolled" environment, scout the location in advance and see what the challenges are. Some locations require specialized gear—a taller tripod, a shotgun mic, a sun gun, or whatever—and you won't have what you need if you don't scout.



Whenever possible, bring your camcorder and microphone on scouting missions and shoot as much test footage as you can. Check the tape carefully on an NTSC monitor, television, or Mac and the best speakers you have, for any sign of video interference or audio hum or buzz.

Lighting

If you plan to shoot in a low-light situation, particularly outdoors, you're going to need a light or lights. We'll talk more about how important lighting is to the quality of your digital video in [Chapter 4](#). For now, just remember that the better the lighting, the better your footage will look.



If you can, bring a small television set or a PowerBook (and all the cables you'll need to connect them to your camcorder) to your shoots. Use the TV or PowerBook to review your footage. Check the lighting, details, and colors carefully; a TV or PowerBook can display what you're going to see on the final DVD far more accurately than the little 3-inch display on your camcorder.

Electricity

Are you going to need electrical power? If you end up having to rent lighting gear, how much of it will you be able to hook up without blowing a circuit? If you're considering lights, consider your electrical needs, too.

Sound

Location sound recording is extremely hard to do well with the built-in microphone in most camcorders. Built-in microphones are not very good at recording dialog, though they can be used effectively for capturing monolog and ambient sounds under ideal situations.



Consider buying or renting a lavalier microphone or two, or a boom or shotgun microphone if you want to record quality audio in the field.

Beware of street noise, plumbing sounds, birds tweeting outside the window, heating and cooling vents, and things like that. They may not sound loud while you're shooting, but they're often quite audible when you play back your video.



Sometimes you can get away with muzzling a noisy pipe or vent with pillows, carpet,



or other sound-deadening material. And sometimes you can just time your shots between their noises. But be aware of the audio environment if you hope to use audio from the field.

Remember what I said about lighting a few paragraphs ago? About bringing a television to the shoot for reference? You should also bring a good set of headphones (familiarily known as *cans*) so you can monitor the audio for noise during recording and playback.



If a location is extremely inhospitable to sound recording, consider shooting the scene MOS. That's short for "mit out sound." It's an old film-school expression said to have originated with some old director who had a thick accent and couldn't pronounce the word with.

If you have to shoot MOS, think about whether you can cover the noise with music, narration, voiceover, or titles instead of live audio. MOS is often the only way to shoot a scene when using live audio would be impossible.

Housekeeping: Back Home on the Mac

The last piece of the preproduction puzzle we'll examine before playing with iDVD in [Chapter 3](#), "Introduction to Making DVDs," is checking your Mac to make sure it's up to the task before you get started. Not just any Mac is ready to perform feats like authoring multimedia.

Here are some things to consider.

Disk space

You need a massive quantity of disk space available when you work with digital video. DV requires around 3.6 MB of storage space per second. So each minute of DV footage uses 220 MB, 10 minutes uses 2.2 GB, and 100 minutes uses more than 22 GB. But when you take into account all the interim versions, render files, and unused footage, you need three or four times as much storage as the final edited and encoded project will use.

If you don't have enough storage for the project, it's better to add more now than to bring the project to a crashing halt because there's no more disk space available.



I didn't have enough available storage space to write a book on DV and DVDs. So I ordered another 120 GB FireWire drive (7,200 RPM, with the speedy Oxford 911 FireWire bridge chipset), my fourth big external drive. It cost \$239 from Firewire Direct (www.firewiredirect.com) and looks like this:



Now I have plenty of room for any DV projects, and I shoot all the video I want, knowing I have plenty of disk space back home on the Mac. It's a nice feeling.

The rest of your Mac

To run iDVD 3, you need a SuperDrive equipped iMac, Power Mac G4, or PowerBook G4, running Mac OS X v 10.1.5 or later (v 10.2.2 or later recommended) and a minimum of 256 MB of RAM, plus approximately 1.5 gigabytes of hard disk space for iDVD itself.

I recommend at least 512 MB of RAM for multimedia authoring, especially if you want to use iMovie or another video editing program and iDVD at the same time. It can be done and works beautifully, but not on a Mac with a mere 256 MB of RAM.

Mac OS X loves RAM—without enough RAM, performance will suffer. While virtual memory in OS X is an order of magnitude better than in OS 9, it's still not desirable when you're in a hurry. More RAM equals more performance. And who doesn't like that?

If you haven't used them lately, or haven't used them at all, it wouldn't hurt to make sure the software tools you need—iDVD and iMovie, at the very least—are installed and working properly. Save a finished movie or two in iMovie for use with iDVD. Burn a disc or two to make sure they work (be sure to review them on your set-top DVD player, and not just on your Mac).



Sleep mode and DVD burning are mortal enemies. In theory iDVD should keep your Mac awake when it burns a disc, but in reality, sometimes it forgets. When the Mac goes to Sleep mode, many times the burn fails. The workaround—and Apple says so

right in iDVD Help—is that before you burn a disc in iDVD 3, set your Energy Saver System Preference to "never sleep."

Backup plan

All this 220 MB of disk space per minute of digital video is valuable stuff. You don't want to have to shoot it all again, do you? That's why you need to think about how and how often you're going to back up your project—even if the plan ends up being "I don't care about it enough to bother."

Those \$3 DVD-Rs, if you didn't know, can be used to store 4.7 GB of data files in lieu of video. So using the previous formula, a \$3 disc can hold more than 20 minutes of high-quality video. And you can also use re-recordable DVD-RW discs for backup, though you can't use them with iDVD without a bit of sneakiness.

Give it some thought if any of your footage is worth protecting.



I'll talk more about backup options and DVD-RW discs in [Chapter 8](#).

R.T.F.M. (Read the fine manuals)

Last but not least, before you begin the project, read the manual. Which one? Every one. With the exception of iDVD, this book isn't going to show you how to use anything—not iMovie or your camcorder or the new FireWire drive you just bought. So read their manuals before beginning your project, not in the middle when you're feeling pressured.

Whenever I hear someone say, "Mac users don't need to read manuals," I always correct them. Much of the power and elegance of today's Macintosh software is concealed, and if you don't read the documentation, you will no doubt miss out on powerful features that aren't in the menus. Even with simple programs like iDVD and iMovie.

Since neither iMovie nor iDVD comes with a printed manual, check out their tutorials and help systems. A camcorder may work fine in its fully automatic mode, but it could work much better using manual settings appropriately. You'll never know if you don't read the manual.

The better you know your tools, the better results you'll get. So just knuckle down and do it. Read the manuals and get to know your tools before you begin a project with any sort of deadline.

DVD Preproduction Checklist

- **Start Mac folder, notebook, or note file (and/or physical file folder)**
- **Define Five Ws**

Who is the audience? Who are you making this project for?

What is the purpose of this project?

Where are the production facilities and locations for this project?

When does it have to be completed?

Why am I doing it?

- **Summarize project in one sentence**

- **Create road maps**

Script

Shot list

Storyboards

Schedule

Budget

- **Further considerations**

Locations

Lighting

Electricity

Sound

- **Home on the Mac**

Disk space

RAM

Software

Backup plan

R.T.F.M.