

15 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE ON ONLY ONE PAGE



THE CREATOR'S CHEAT CODE

10 CINEMATIC TRIGGERS TO CHECK
BEFORE YOU PRESS RECORD

DRONES | PHONES | ACTION CAMS | POCKET CAMERAS

WWW.DRONEFILMGUIDE.COM

THE CREATOR'S CHEAT CODE

Before pressing record, run through this check list. If a shot doesn't contain at least ONE of these triggers, consider how you could improve it.

01 REVEAL, DON'T SHOW

Ask yourself: What am I revealing?

Tip: Use camera movement to gradually reveal your subject.

Example: Tilt up from grass to reveal a castle or landscape.

02 CREATE DEPTH

Ask yourself: Are there layers in the shot?

Tip: Add foreground, midground and background elements.

Example: Fly past a tree or building before revealing the subject.

03 COMPOSE THE SHOT

Ask yourself: Is the subject always centred?

Tip: Use rule-of-thirds, leading lines and strong focal points.

Example: Leave "looking space" for subjects moving through the frame.

04 ADD CAMERA MOTION

Ask yourself: Does the camera movement serve the story?

Tip: Movement should reveal something new or add depth.

Example: Orbit your subject to reveal where they are and what they're looking at.

05 MOTION IN THE FRAME

Ask yourself: Can something move in the frame?

Tip: Motion doesn't have to come from the camera.

Example: A small moving subject in a large landscape adds scale.

06 LIGHT MATTERS

Ask yourself: Where is the light coming from?

Tip: The best natural light usually occurs during sunrise and sunset.

Example: Subject in front of sun for dramatic backlit effect.

07 CHANGE CAMERA ANGLE

Ask yourself: Can I vary the camera angle?

Tip: Avoid shooting everything from eye level or high altitude.

Example: Low angle = power. High angle = vulnerability.

08 BEST FOCAL LENGTH

Ask yourself: Which focal length tells the story best?

Tip: Wide lens shows environment. Telephoto lens isolates subject.

Example: Use a telephoto lens when orbiting to enhance parallax.

09 FRAME RATE

Ask yourself: Should this be slow motion?

Tip: Higher frame rates allow slow motion in editing.

Example: People look great filmed at 50/60fps.

10 SHOOT FOR THE EDIT

Ask yourself: Are my shots too long?

Tip: Plan shots with the editing in mind.

Example: Most finished shots last 3-5 seconds.

1: REVEAL, DON'T SHOW

CONCEPT

Don't lay all your cards on the table in the first frame.
Give the viewer a reason to keep watching by creating suspense.
Reveal the subject **during** the shot, not at the beginning.

HOW TO APPLY IT

Use movement to reveal information gradually.

- Move the camera to reveal the subject (tilt up, slide sideways, rise, orbit).
 - Let the subject enter the frame (with or without camera movement).
 - If the subject is already visible, move the camera to reveal the setting.
- The goal is to shift the viewer's attention over time and keep them engaged.

MENTAL TRIGGER

"What am I revealing in this shot?"



Reveal, Don't Show: In this shot we start with the camera pointed at the ground and then tilt up to reveal the mountain. Don't lay all your cards on the table in the first frame.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

2: CREATE DEPTH

CONCEPT

Flat images feel lifeless. Cinematic shots feel three-dimensional.

You can achieve this by including foreground, midground and background elements in your frame. This gives the viewer's eye layers to explore and makes the shot feel more immersive.

HOW TO APPLY IT

Look for ways to add layers to your frame by:

- Framing your subject *through* foreground objects (trees, rocks, fences, grass).
 - Moving the camera *past* foreground elements to reveal the subject.
 - Placing your subject in the midground while the environment extends into the background.
- Even subtle foreground elements can transform a flat shot into something cinematic.

MENTAL TRIGGER

"What can I put between the camera and my subject?"



Create Depth: To boost the sense of dimension, we slid the camera left, using the railings as a depth cue. If you look for it, you'll see this all the time in movies.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

3: CHOOSE YOUR COMPOSITION

CONCEPT

Composition is the arrangement of elements within your frame. Strong composition guides the viewer's eye to the most important part of the image and creates a balanced, visually pleasing shot. Techniques like the rule of thirds and leading lines can dramatically improve your footage.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Place your subject using the rule of thirds.
- Use leading lines to guide the viewer's eye.
 - Keep the frame simple and uncluttered.
- Look for natural frames like trees, doors or windows.
 - Ensure your shot has a clear focal point.

MENTAL TRIGGER

"Where should the viewer's eye go first?"



Composition: Alina is framed according to the rule of thirds with some 'looking space' to the right. She is also a strong focal point in the frame.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

4: ADD CAMERA MOTION

CONCEPT

Static shots can feel lifeless. Adding camera movement instantly makes footage more engaging. Motion can reveal new parts of the frame, guide the viewer's eye and add depth to your shot. Even subtle movement can dramatically increase the cinematic feel of your footage.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Use slow, deliberate movement rather than sudden motion.
- If in doubt, less is more, e.g. add a slow push-in or gentle orbit.
 - Slide, tilt or rise during the shot to reveal new information.
- Move the camera past foreground objects to enhance depth.
- ND filters help create natural motion blur when camera movement is fast.

MENTAL TRIGGER

"Can this shot benefit from movement?"



Add camera movement: In this all time favourite drone shot we lower the drone whilst tilting up to reveal this stunning landscape.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

5: ADD MOVEMENT IN THE FRAME

CONCEPT

Movement doesn't have to come from the camera. It can come from the subject or elements within the frame. When something moves through the shot, it naturally draws the viewer's eye and makes the scene feel more alive.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Have your subject walk, drive, cycle etc. through the frame.
 - Allow the subject to enter or exit the shot.
- Feel free to keep the camera static while action unfolds in the frame.
- Combine subject motion with camera motion for stronger impact.
 - Track a moving subject to add energy to the shot.

MENTAL TRIGGER

"What in this shot can move?"



Movement within the shot: Look for interesting moving subjects to film. Some of the best shots are static shots with motion coming from within the frame.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

6: UNDERSTAND YOUR LIGHT

CONCEPT

Light determines the mood, colour and depth of your shot. The position of the sun affects contrast, shadows and how much detail your camera can capture. By understanding where the light is coming from, you can dramatically improve the look of your footage.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Film at sunrise or sunset for soft light and long shadows.
- Keep the sun behind the camera for balanced exposure.
- Shoot towards the sun for silhouettes and dramatic shots.
 - Use side light to create texture and depth.
- Avoid harsh midday overhead light when possible.

MENTAL TRIGGER

"Where is the light coming from?"



Understand your light: Golden hour at sunrise and sunset can provide stunning colours, long raking shadows adding depth and is often the preferred time to film.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

7: CHANGE YOUR CAMERA ANGLE

CONCEPT

Most beginners film everything from eye level. Changing your camera angle can dramatically alter how a subject feels in the frame. Low angles make subjects appear powerful and imposing, while higher angles can make them appear smaller or more vulnerable.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Lower the camera and tilt upward to add scale and drama.
 - Shoot from above to reveal patterns and geometry.
 - Avoid filming everything from eye level.
- Move around your subject to find stronger perspectives.
 - For drones - stop flying high just because you can!

MENTAL TRIGGER

"Is eye level the best angle for this shot?"



Change your camera angle: On the ground, don't film everything from eye level. And in the sky, don't film everything from up high. It's better to be *in* the scene than looking down on it.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

8: CHANGE YOUR FOCAL LENGTH

CONCEPT

Focal length changes how your scene is perceived. Wide lenses show more of the environment and create a stronger sense of depth. Telephoto lenses compress distance and isolate your subject. By changing focal length, you can dramatically alter the feeling of a shot.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Use wide lenses to show environment and scale.
 - Use longer lenses to isolate your subject.
 - Zoom in to simplify a busy background.
- Use telephoto lenses to compress distance.
- Mix wide and tight shots to add visual variety.

MENTAL TRIGGER

“Should this shot be wide or tight?”



Focal Length: This 100mm telephoto gimbal rotation of Alina compresses the background, bringing the palm trees closer and enhancing parallax as the camera rotates.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

9: CHOOSE THE CORRECT FRAME RATE

CONCEPT

Frame rate affects how motion looks in your footage.

Lower frame rates like 24 or 25 fps create the cinematic motion our eyes are used to seeing in film. Higher frame rates allow you to slow footage down smoothly for slow motion.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Film at 24/25 fps for a cinematic look.
- Use 50/60 fps when you want slow motion.
- Slow higher frame rates down in editing.
- Choose your frame rate before filming.
- Match your frame rate to the story you want to tell.

MENTAL TRIGGER

“Will this shot look better in slow motion?”



Frame Rate: Use 50/60fps to provide tasteful slow motion of people. There is no such thing as a 'better' frame rate - just different frame rates for different purposes.

TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

10: SHOOT FOR THE EDIT

CONCEPT

Begin with the end in mind. Every shot should have a clear purpose and help tell the story. By thinking about the final edit while filming, you can shoot more efficiently - capturing shorter, more deliberate shots with less repetition.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Visualise the final shot before you start filming.
 - Keep shots short and purposeful.
- Capture only the moments you actually need.
 - Film extra angles, not longer takes.
 - Ask yourself what shot comes next.

MENTAL TRIGGER

“Is this a shot people will actually want to watch?”



Shoot for the edit: Speed up clips or use speed ramps to squeeze longer shots into a watchable 3-8 second window. Longer shots risk losing the viewer's attention.

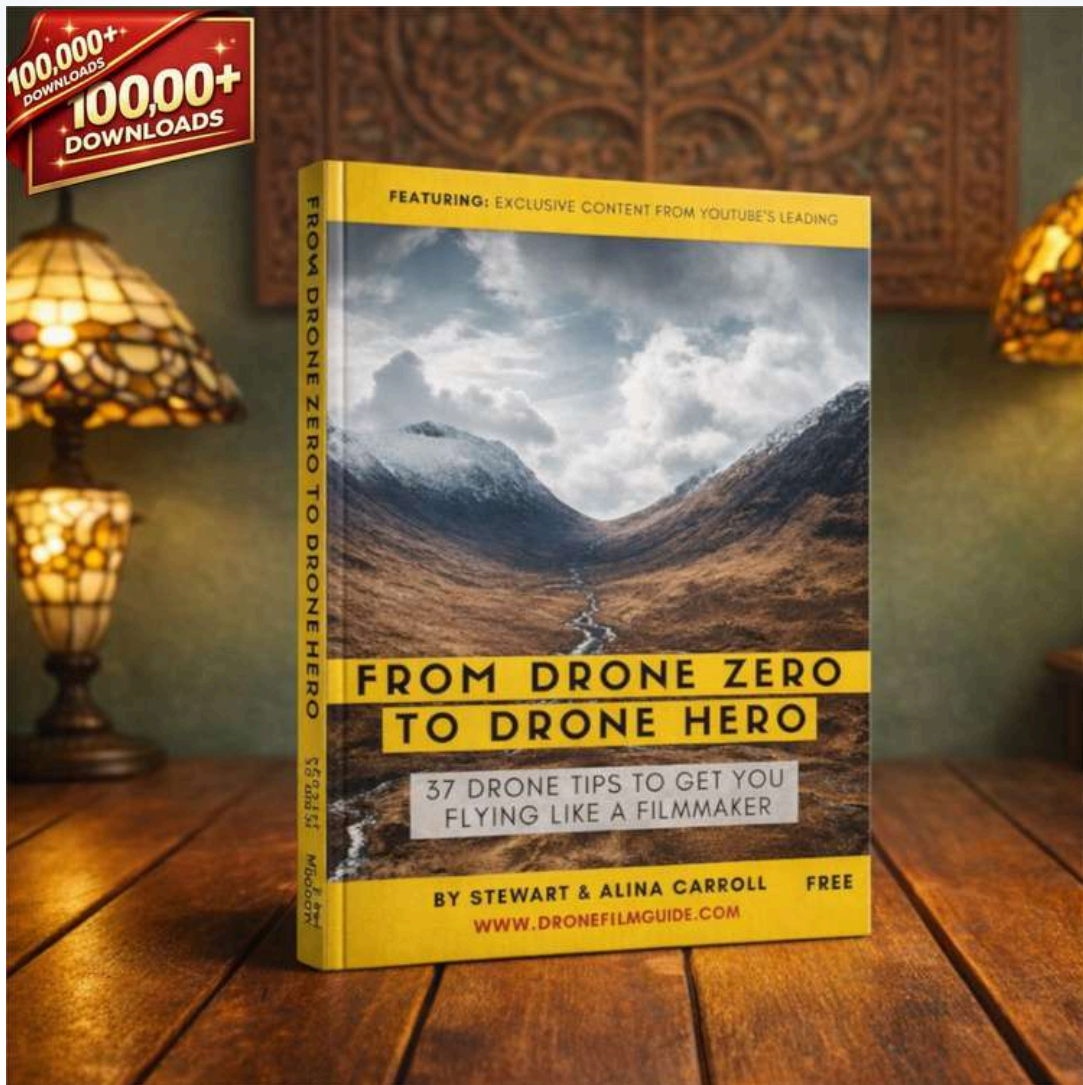
TAP TO SEE IT IN ACTION

READY TO DIG DEEPER?

FROM DRONE ZERO TO DRONE HERO

FREE EBOOK

40 PAGES - 37 DRONE TIPS
OVER A DECADE OF AERIAL EXPERIENCE
OVER 100,000+ DOWNLOADS



TAP OR CLICK IMAGE TO DOWNLOAD

➤ *See All Our Free Resources* ◀