

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



# Rules for Conducting Formal & Informal Interviews

by Backpack Journalist Bill Gentile

QUICK GUIDE

**Thank you for signing up and downloading  
Bill Gentile's Rules for Conducting Formal & Informal Interviews.**

## Online Video Journalism Workshops

The Online Video Journalism Workshop with Bill Gentile is an intensive 14-part immersion in the craft of "backpack video journalism," defined as character-driven television/web production with hand-held cameras by a single practitioner.

The workshops cover the gamut of the storytelling craft from the genesis and shaping of story ideas, to shooting powerful images that drive the story, to the capture and use of sound, to script writing, narration, and editing with portable computers and modern editing software. These workshops are appropriate for beginners with some experience as well as existing practitioners who desire to sharpen their skills or acquire new ones. We welcome photojournalists, print and video journalists, aspiring documentarians, filmmakers and independent storytellers.

In this online workshop you will learn to:

- Articulate story ideas.
- Capture powerful images and clean sound.
- Recognize and cultivate dramatic story arcs.
- Conduct compelling, in-depth interviews.
- Write powerful treatments and scripts.
- Narrate stories.
- Edit for maximum impact.

See page 11 for additional details on the **Online Video Journalism Workshop** or visit [www.VideoJournalismWorkshops.com](http://www.VideoJournalismWorkshops.com) for more info.



Learn to tell compelling video stories with real students from Bill Gentile's Video Journalism Workshop. You learn as they learn.

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## Participatory Observation (or) Bill Gentile's Rules on the Interview

I refer to my presence as I practice the craft as, "**participatory observation.**" My job is to observe and to document. But I have to participate to a certain degree because if I do not, then the characters I select will not tell their stories. I prefer, and I think the audience prefers, that my characters tell their own stories, as opposed to me telling their stories for them. So how do I selectively and strategically participate in the production? How do I get my characters to tell their stories? Here's the answer: With interviews, both formal and informal. Here's how I define them:

- **INFORMAL**, or on-the-run, interview. Take another look at my, "Afghanistan: The Forgotten War" piece on NOW on PBS to see good examples of the informal interview. These are questions that I ask (at strategic moments so as not to interfere with the military operation) to get the Marines to tell their stories.

And I do this by asking three magic questions:

- What are you doing?
- What are you going to do?
- What did you just do?

If you ask, and get answers, to these questions, your subjects will tell their own stories, and this is always more compelling than you telling their stories. Audiences prefer to hear the characters tell their stories as opposed to hearing you narrate the stories for them.



I chose a strategic moment for an informal interview with this Marine lieutenant about the military sweep he conducted through an Afghan market.

Here are some rules for the INFORMAL interview:

- Get subject to introduce him/herself as soon as possible.
- Engage your subjects. Elicit comments from them. Ask them the three magic questions:
- “What did you just do?” “What are you doing now?” “What are you going to do?”
- Make subjects speak in whole sentences. “Right now I’m working on ...”
- Get your subjects to talk about each other. This develops and enhances character.





### I define the **FORMAL** interview as:

- Sit-down. This is the classic situation in which you set the camera on a tripod and ask a series of (mostly) prepared questions.
- Where's the light? This is the first thing you establish upon beginning a formal, sit-down interview. How you shoot the interview is almost totally contingent on the source of light.
- Make your subject look into the light, and into compositional space.
- Make eye contact.
- Get subject to introduce him/herself.
- One-on-One interviews.
- Two-on-One interviews. (you and a correspondent or producer).
- Get subject to speak in whole sentences. The audience (normally) will hear only the answers, not the questions.
- Composition and focus.
- Careful with background. (depth of field).
- Get clean sound.
- Save the hard questions for **LAST**.
- Get written releases **FIRST**.
- Get on-camera releases if you can't get written releases.
- Your last questions:
  - "Is there anything I missed that I should be asking you?"
  - "What are your greatest hopes and concerns in relation to the subject matter?"
- In either informal or formal interviews, know what you want from the subject **BEFORE** you engage.
- **NEVER, NEVER SHOW YOUR SUBJECT THE UNFINISHED WORK.**

## Learn How to Make Video Documentaries



### Learn the Secrets of Creating Powerful Video Documentaries with the Online Video Journalism Workshop

We've molded the acclaimed, real-life Video Journalism Workshop by Emmy Award winning journalist Bill Gentile into 14 compelling and informative videos to reveal the secrets of effective video storytelling.

- Want to tell powerful video stories?
- Want to jumpstart/redirect your career?
- Want to join the global conversation on important issues and impact positive change?
- Want to compete with the best video storytellers in the field and stay ahead of the pack?
- Want to increase your income and influence?



### A Camera, a Laptop and an Internet Connection Are All You Need

The tools for instant, global, visual communication now fit in your backpack: a video camera, laptop, editing software and Internet connection. The era of the backpack video journalist is here. It is revolutionizing the worldwide exchange of information and ideas – and changing the way we live.

The Online Video Journalism Workshop is taught by Emmy Award winning backpack video journalist Bill Gentile – a pioneer in his field with over 35 years of experience. He teaches you to produce powerful TV and web productions. Information is power, and he helps you harness that power.

### Learn From Three Decades and Five Continents of Experience

Bill's career spans over three decades, five continents and nearly every facet of journalism and mass communication, most especially visual communication, or visual storytelling. He is a pioneer of "backpack video journalism" and today he is one of the craft's most noted practitioners. He is the founder and director of American University's Backpack Journalism Project.

## **A Unique Approach to Learning**

To produce the Online Video Journalism Workshop we tape one of Bill's live, face-to-face workshops with real students and real, back-and-forth dialogue. This unique feature allows you to share the learning experience in real time.

## **Online Video Journalism Workshop Benefits**

The Online Video Journalism Workshop with Bill Gentile is an intensive 14-part immersion in the craft of "backpack video journalism," defined as character-driven television/web production with hand-held cameras by a single practitioner.

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## **Hear What Others Say**

With our new, online version, you can now join many others from around the world who have attended the live workshops. Now you can learn along with them. What do others say about the live Video Journalism Workshop?



"Hi Bill,  
Attending your workshop was one of the smart moves of my life - it got me to a path that I am fully enjoying."  
– Documentary filmmaker Kirsi Jansa, August 2012



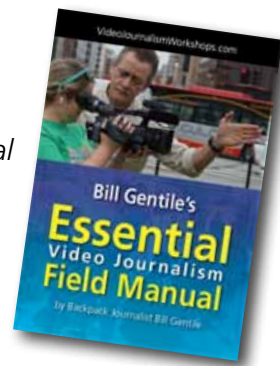
"Bill, I've spent the morning raving about the workshop with colleagues, and I'll certainly make sure to incorporate what I learned into whatever I'm involved in moving forward...You've put together an amazing workshop and I hope many others get to experience what I did over the past four days."  
– Brendan Rohr, World Wildlife Fund, August 2011 -

## **The Online Video Journalism Workshop is for People Who Want to Sharpen their Skills and Acquire New Ones**

The Online Video Journalism Workshop With Bill Gentile is for beginners with some experience as well as more seasoned practitioners who want to sharpen their skills and acquire new ones. We welcome photojournalists making the transition to film and video. Print journalists seeking to expand their skills will find the workshops particularly useful. Broadcast journalists accustomed to the technology and techniques preceding today's hand-held digital cameras will find that the newer equipment delivers a more immediate, intimate version of visual communication than their predecessors. Video journalists, documentarians, filmmakers and independent storytellers who want to expand their skill set and learn from one of the pioneers in the field also will benefit from the workshops.

## **What Do You Get in the Online Workshop?**

The Online Video Journalism Workshop is delivered through 14 videos, all of which have been optimized and can be viewed on desktop, laptop, tablet or smart phone. Also included are audio recordings and printable outlines of all the videos, plus an e-version of Bill Gentile's new and highly acclaimed *Essential Video Journalism Field Manual*.



Includes a PDF copy of Bill Gentile's latest book



## Pre-Production

- Introductions, definitions and objectives.
- The Progression: Clips to Sequence to Scene to Story.
- The alphabet of the Visual Language: XCU to XWA.
- The Six-Shot System.
- Composition: The deliberate arrangement of elements in an image.
- The Rule of Thirds and Multiple Planes.
- Character: A critical storytelling tool.
- Three-point test of character.
- "Chain Gang," a case study.

## Production

- Review student work.
- Proposals, Titles and The Controlling Idea.
- "Echoes of War," a case study two models of "character-driven" documentary.
- Sound: The Heartbeat of Documentary.
- The Conversation.
- Participatory Observation via Informal and Formal Interviews.

## Post-Production

- Review student work.
- Paint with your camera.
- Editing: "The creative treatment of reality."
- Characters as vehicles.
- "Nurses Needed," a case study.
- The Dramatic Arc.
- "Voice of Hope," a case study.
- Scripts: Write to the Pictures!
- Editing: Mechanics vs. aesthetics.
- "Underground Yoga" vs. "Knife and Gun Club."
- Characters as vehicles.
- Narration.
- The third dimension of "three-dimensional chess."
- Deep authorship and connecting the dots of conversation with audience.
- "Afghanistan: The Forgotten War," a case study.
- Final review of student work.

## Bonus PDF Books and Releases

- *How to Stand Out Online: Simple Techniques to be Found Online Using Social Media* by J. Bruce Jones, Independent Video Producer and Social Media Consultant.
- *10 Easy Tips to Get Your Videos Found on YouTube*, by J. Bruce Jones.



14 videos lessons that immerse you in the craft of "backpack" video journalism.



### **30-Day, Money Back Guarantee**

If for any reason you are not completely satisfied with the Online Video Journalism Workshop within the first 30 days after signing up, your money will be refunded.

### **Move Your Career Forward**

Harness the power of video to recharge your career and make money while doing it. Learn to harness the power of video with the Online Video Journalism Workshop and introduce video storytelling skills to your organization.



***Invest in your future – today.***

Learn to create and tell compelling video documentaries with Bill Gentile's Online Video Journalism Workshop. As Kirsi Jansa, Documentary Filmmaker commented, "Attending your workshop was one of the smart moves of my life – it got me to a path that I am fully enjoying."

The Online Video Journalism Workshop is for beginners as well as seasoned practitioners who want to sharpen their skills and acquire new ones. Learn from one of the masters of the video storytelling craft. Invest today. Click the button below to begin the journey.

For More Information on the  
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Click Here

<http://VideoJournalismWorkshops.com>