Free internet resources to support your video work

Introduction

These days there are so many online communities developing image- and video-editing programs, creating sounds and music, and offering them to the world free of charge. These are great resources, and you can use them to make your video even better.

But before downloading anything from the internet, check the type of copyright licence that applies to it. Many materials can only be used for non-commercial purposes, though some are fine for commercial use too.

Last but not least, think about the things you can create yourself. Ok, so you're not very good at developing computer programs – but you might be able to find local musicians to play and record music for your film, or produce sound effects yourself.

Vision *in action*

1. Always check the licence on programs, sound effects or music before you download anything from the internet.
2. Use keywords that are relevant to what you're searching for, so you can find it quickly.
3. Decide if you really need to download all those materials from the internet, or if you can produce some of them yourself with the help of friends. This can be a lot of fun, and really helps to make the video your own.

Main section

Good editing, music, sound effects and graphics are important if you want to make an interesting film that looks professional.

You can source all of these online – from film-editing programs to atmospheric tunes – and often absolutely free. But it may take you a while to find exactly what you're after. And at the same it can be really rewarding to create things like sound effects yourself.

Editing programmes

There is a range of free editing programmes online – from simple packages you can use for stop-motion animation and video collages, to more advanced ones.

Free applications are usually more useful for beginners. Even the professional ones have limitations, for example not being able to export to FullHD format. If you're planning a complex project, you may want to invest in a professional editing program with a wide range of tools and functions.

When you're choosing an editing programme, decide what's more important to you: a variety of easy-to-apply effects and transitions, or advanced features that are more difficult to use but give you creative space and allow you to be more precise; a simple interface or a detailed timeline for editing large amounts of material. Your choice will depend on your priorities and the type of projects you are planning to work on.

If you are a primary-school teacher or a youth worker and you want to work on projects with young people, find a program suitable for their age. Also think about your own availability. If your time is limited, start with simpler projects and programs.

> *When you buy a video camera, the manufacturer usually offers their own editing program as an additional product.*

There are also film-editing applications for smartphones and tablets. These are usually easy to use, and they are free or very cheap.

Free editing programs for computers include:

- Movie maker – for simple films and video collages
- Monkey jam – for stop-motion animations
- HitFilm – for more advanced video work
- Lightworks – for more advanced video work

Graphics

Photos and graphic material are often included in videos. They can include special effects, illustrations, or text like titles and captions.

It's better to create graphics in a separate graphics editor. This will have more relevant features than the video-editing program. Depending on what you need, both types of program might come in handy when you're creating graphics.

> *Remember to produce your graphics in a format appropriate for your video. The resolution of the image material (including video clips, graphics and stills) should ideally be the same as that of the video format. For example, if you are making a video in FullHD (1920×1080) format, set the size of the graphic to the same resolution.*

Free graphic editors include Picasa, for simple graphics, and Gimp – similar to Photoshop and useful for more complex projects. There are many more – simply search for ‘free online graphics editors’.

Many other websites offer graphics and photo material free of charge. You can find them by searching for key terms like ‘free photos’.

Sound, music and sound effects

You should be able to do most of your basic sound editing in the video-editing program itself. Or you could browse the web for sound-editing programs.

One thing to be very careful about when using music is copyright. Some DVD duplication services won’t copy DVDs with music that you don’t have the copyright for. Uploading video with copyright-protected music to platforms like YouTube may be blocked because of harming copyright regulations. Obtaining copyright permission can be expensive, and in some cases permission isn’t granted at all.

But you can look at the situation positively too. It forces you to be creative and to include other people in your project, who will also now get the chance to express themselves creatively.

There are several ways to get around the problem with copyright. Think about these at the planning stage:

- There will almost certainly be people in your film project group or among your friends who play an instrument. Record original music by them, or have them play songs out of copyright. Classical-music pieces and folk songs work very well in movies. Improvisation can achieve fantastic results too.
- Contact local bands or musicians and ask them for permission to use their music. Explain what the project is about and offer to show them the film before you publish it. This creates trust and gives them the chance to leave the project if they no longer want to be involved.
- Find free internet sound banks (for example, dig.ccmixter), try to compose music yourself, or download music that’s being offered free of charge. Always note the condition of use, even when the material is free. For example, you will almost always need have to attribute the work – mention the musician and the title in the end-credits of your video.
- Search online using the following terms: free loops, free sound, free audio effects.

> *A lot of music on the web is free for non-commercial use. This means you can use it as long as your aim isn’t to distribute your video widely and make money from it.*
>
> *Remember that copyright restrictions can be very complex. There may be stakeholders of the copyright on the composition or interpretation of the original composition; separate stakeholders of the copyright of the lyrics; and yet other stakeholders of the right to use the actual recording.*

Copyright restrictions also vary from country to country. What is allowed in one country might not be allowed in another; you may already have come across the message “This video is not available in your country…” on video platforms like YouTube.

Related topics and links to external resources

Read more about free licences here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyleft#Applying_copyleft

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons_license

Methodology

If you’re working with young people, start a discussion about intellectual rights and licences.

Terminology

copyright, copyleft