Pre-production

You do not catch magic by accident. You build a container for it, then put your hero inside it on purpose.

LESSON 1 OF 5

The season bible

The season bible is your map. It is the single document that tells you, on a hard day, where the story is supposed to go. It starts with one line and ends with a spreadsheet you can actually shoot against.

THE SEASON LOGLINE

The logline is one sentence that sums up the whole season's journey: who the hero is, what they want, what is in the way, and what they stand to lose. If you cannot say it in a breath, you do not have a season yet, you have a vibe.

THE 5 TO 10 EPISODE BEAT SHEET

Map your season on a simple spreadsheet, one row per episode, with five columns: **Episode #**, **Main Event**, **Central Conflict**, **Your A-Ha Moment**, and **End Cliffhanger**. Each row is a promise to the viewer and a job for the day.

IT IS A LIVING DOCUMENT

Real life will not read your spreadsheet. The story will evolve, beats will move, and that is fine. The bible is the intended path, not a prison. You change it on purpose, with eyes open, never by drift.

QUICK CHECK

What is a season logline?

A. A list of every episode title for the season.

B. One sentence that captures the hero, the want, the obstacle, and the stake of the whole season. ✓

C. The hashtags and captions you will post under each clip.

ANSWER

A logline is one sentence. It compresses the entire season into a single, sayable promise.

PUT IT IN ORDER

Order the five beats of a single episode arc, from open to close.

▼ THINK IT THROUGH, THEN SHOW THE ANSWER

1. Setup: establish the day and what is at stake
2. First conflict: the obstacle shows its face
3. Rising action: pressure builds and choices get harder
4. A-ha moment: the hero learns or shifts
5. Cliffhanger: a new question that pulls into the next episode

Setup, conflict, rising action, a-ha, cliffhanger. That shape holds an episode together and hands off to the next one.

LESSON 2 OF 5

Legal and logistics

Paperwork is not glamorous, and it is the only thing standing between you and a takedown. Lock the legal and the logistics before you shoot, not after.

RELEASES: SIGNED BEFORE A PIXEL IS PUBLISHED

The **master release form** is a simple one-page contract that grants you the irrevocable right to use a person's image, voice, and likeness in any media. Every recognizable person on camera signs it *before* you publish a single frame. For a home or business you film in, get a **location release form** from the owner.

LOCATION SCOUTING: THREE QUESTIONS

Before you commit to a spot, ask three things. Is it **visually interesting**, so the frame tells part of the story on its own? Is the **audio controllable**, or will traffic and HVAC ruin every take? And is it **legally safe to film**, meaning you have permission to be there with a camera?

THE 300-DOLLAR PROFESSIONAL SETUP

You do not need a studio. You need: a **phone** shooting 4K at 60fps with a clip-on wide and telephoto lens kit; **audio**, which is non-negotiable, meaning a wireless lavalier like the Rode Wireless GO II or DJI Mic plus a

shotgun mic; a **sturdy tripod** with a phone mount plus a mini-tripod; and a **key light**, an LED panel or softbox for confessionals plus a small on-camera LED.

QUICK CHECK 0 OF 1 DONE

QUICK CHECK

A recognizable stranger ends up on camera in a key scene you love. What must happen before you publish it?

A. Blur their face in post and publish, no paperwork needed.

B. Get them to sign a master release granting the right to use their image, voice, and likeness, before you publish. ✓

C. Publish first, then ask for permission if anyone complains.

ANSWER

Every recognizable person signs a master release before publication. That signature is what makes the footage yours to use.

MATCH THE PAIRS

Match each piece of gear to the job it does on set.

▼ THINK IT THROUGH, THEN SHOW THE ANSWER

Wireless lavalier	Clean, close-up audio on your hero
Key light	Properly lit, flattering confessionals
Tripod	Stable, watchable shots
Wide lens	Fits more of the room in the frame

Audio gets the voice, the key light shapes the face, the tripod kills the shake, and the wide lens opens the space.

LESSON 3 OF 5

The daily shoot script

The daily shoot script is not a dialogue script. Nobody memorizes lines. It is a one-page plan for a single shoot day that keeps a real, unscripted moment pointed at your story.

WHAT GOES ON THE PAGE

Four things, every time. The **shoot date and theme**, for example "The Confrontation Lunch". The **primary scene objective**, the one thing that must happen narratively for the day to count. The **approved shot list**, where every shot has a story purpose, a *why*. And the **hero's pre-scene intention**, the goal and the stake they carry in.

EVERY SHOT NEEDS A WHY

If a shot does not move the story, advance a relationship, or pay off a beat from your bible, it does not belong on the list. "It looked cool" is not a why. A shot list with a reason behind every line is what separates a show from a pile of footage.

QUICK CHECKS — 0 OF 2 DONE

CHECK 1 OF 2

On the approved shot list, every shot needs a...

A Story purpose, a clear why it earns its place. ✓

B Matching color grade decided in advance.

C Famous person somewhere in the frame.

ANSWER

Every shot must serve the story. A why is the test that keeps your footage from becoming noise.

CHECK 2 OF 2

You are filming "The Confrontation Lunch" but the conversation drifts to small talk for 20 minutes. What does your daily shoot script give you to fix it?

A. A line of dialogue to read aloud so the scene is scripted.

B. The primary scene objective, the one narrative thing that must happen, so you can steer back to it. ✓

C. Permission to delete the day and reshoot from scratch.

ANSWER

The primary scene objective is your compass. When real life wanders, it tells you what the day still has to deliver.

LESSON 4 OF 5

Casting and releases

Everyone who appears on camera signs a release before you film them. That includes staff, family and customers. No release, no footage of them.

- Tell each person what the show is, where it will be posted and what their part is.
- Get the release signed before the shoot day, not on it.
- Give each regular cast member a short orientation: where to stand, when to talk, what to do if they make a mistake (keep going).

The cast can be just you. Other people can come in through clips, guests and the people you serve.

LESSON 5 OF 5

The shot list, by location

Write one shot list per shoot. Group it by location, in the order you will film. Number every shot so you can tick it off.

Within each location, list the shots in the order they will appear in the edit. Finish one location completely before you move to the next. Moving the crew is the slowest part of any shoot day.

For each shot, write the frame (wide, medium, tight, detail), what happens, and who is in it. Mark the three shots you cannot leave without.

QUICK CHECK 0 OF 1 DONE

QUICK CHECK

Why group the shot list by location?

A. It looks neater.

B. Moving between places is the slowest part of the day, so you finish each place once. ✓

C. Editors require it.

ANSWER

One pass per location saves hours.

Read the whole course free at realityshow101.com. Module 10.