

## Technical Tips for Contest Audio and Video Productions

### Pre-Production Tips:

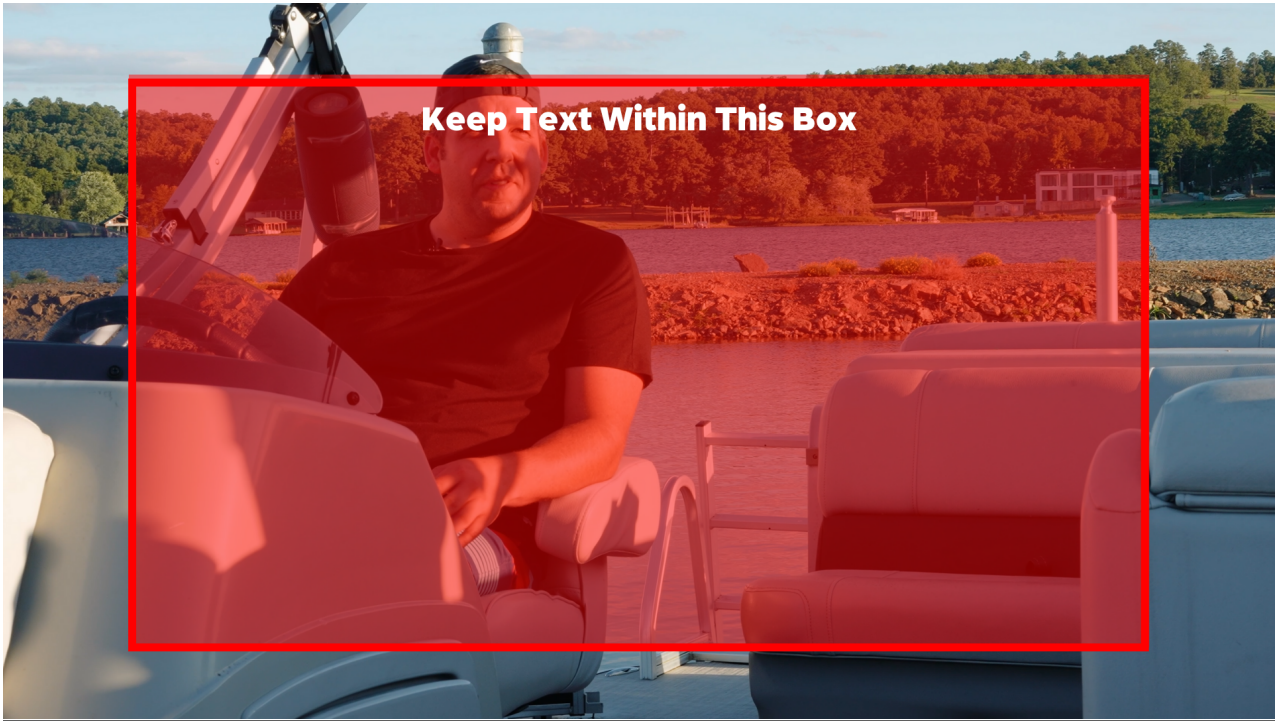
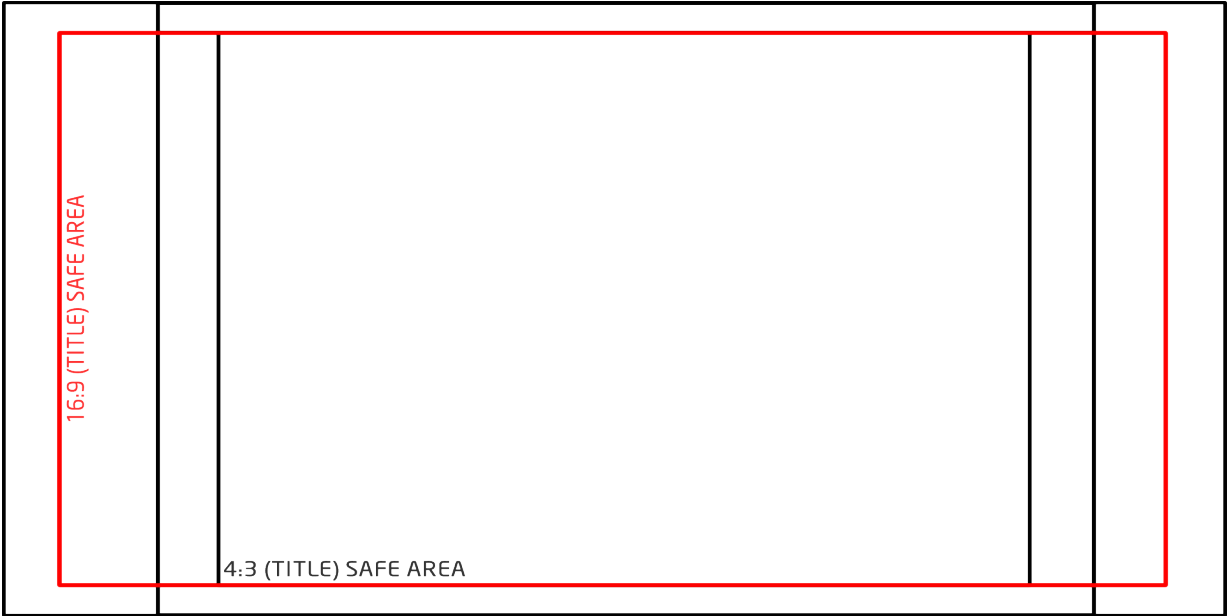
- **Plan your video.** Write a script, draw out a storyboard, and create a shot list before you start video recording to help minimize your time and effort in creating your video(s).
- **Choose actors and/or narrators carefully.** Set high standards when casting actors for your project. Pick someone who can deliver dialogue naturally, who can memorize lines, and who isn't stiff in front of the camera.

### Audio Production Tips:

- **Minimize Audio Narration.** For the purposes of this contest, being short and to the point with any audio narration that may be used is best. Minimal audio narration also makes it easier for contest managers to edit your video and add closed captioning or translate to other languages.
- **Background soundtracks.** Light royalty-free background music can cover any ambient sound and provide tone and emotion to your video that words and images otherwise can't. Carefully watch audio and narration levels. If your video contains both background music and narration, be sure that the music levels are low enough for the narration to be heard and understood clearly by listeners.
- **Be cognizant of sound quality.** Lapel or lavalier (hands free) microphones are good for shooting close shots. Larger microphones and/or boom setups are better for bigger shots. If you're filming a video with a smartphone, you may want to purchase microphones that fit into the phone's headphone input to improve sound quality. When possible, eliminate all background noise to ensure whoever is speaking can be easily heard. Avoid filming on windy days and loud areas if you are planning to capture audio. Whatever microphones are used it's best to not show them in the video.
- **Audio length.** If you are using background music, please allow the audio track to extend an additional 5 seconds past the 25- or 55-second mark. Should we choose to use your submission, we will place a 5-second end card over your audio track. Extended narration or visuals over the 25- or 55-second mark are not allowed. The only narration allowed in the ending 5-seconds is the statement, "Life Jackets Worn... Nobody Mourns."

### Video Production Tips:

- **Stabilize the camera.** A tripod will help keep your video stable and not wobbly. Holding a camera yourself can cause stability problems. If a smart phone or similar device is used, please shoot footage horizontally, not vertically. Please select the highest resolution possible with any camera.
- **Keep Onscreen Text, Images, and/or Graphics in the Safe Areas.** Following the safe zones enables your video to be viewed clearly on multiple types of devices. When editing your video, be sure to turn on "Title Safe" Guides in your editing program. If your text or graphics are not properly in the safe area, important elements of your video could be missed by viewers. Reference the sample below.



- **Optimize video text.** Keep the style of your text and titles simple, classy, and sharp. Choose a clear and bold font, keep words on your video screen to a minimum, and use text animations only to keep the viewer engaged with new additions to the video they watch, but don't overdo text animations. On Facebook, 85% of viewers watch videos without the volume turned on so including brief text, so people can follow along without the sound, may be a good idea. However, be sure you spell everything correctly (e.g. life jacket is two words)! Also, avoid terms like "Jet Ski" and "Puddle Jumper" which are trademark names associated with specific companies. The generic terms for these things are personal watercraft (PWC) and kid's life jacket.
- **Closed captioning.** Entrants are welcome to include their own closed captioning on their videos, but it is not required. Keep in mind that if closed captioning is added that it should be in the title safe area. Also, open captions for all narration is discouraged.
- **Set up lights.** Set up lights in a way that eliminates any unwanted shadows. Three-point lighting setups can illuminate video subjects from a variety of angles.
- **Obey the rule of thirds.** The rule of thirds involves splitting up your shot into thirds, horizontally and vertically, and framing your subject off-center. It creates movement and life in your shot the way a straight-on, centered shot wouldn't.
- **Optimize your video for various platforms.** The preferred video submission method is .MP4; however, .MOV files will also be accepted. In addition to your "unlisted" YouTube link submission, you will need to provide us with the highest quality version of your video via Google Drive.

**NOTE:** Don't forget to read the "Tips for Creating Effective Public Service Announcements (PSAs)" article to learn some of the best ways to encourage adults to wear life jackets under the resources tab on the [LifeJacketVideoContest.com](http://LifeJacketVideoContest.com) website.