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Saving memories on videocassettes

THE HOLIDAY season is a special time when relatives gather from the far corners of the country, an event that generates memories people often want to preserve. One way to preserve precious memories is with a custom-made home videocassette, according to Bob Burnett, a videotape expert with 3M in St. Paul, Minn.

A little preparation will ensure a visually interesting tape you will want to keep, he said. Following is some specific advice from Burnett: Write a shooting script that outlines the kinds of shots you want to tape — then stick to it.

Professional filmmakers know there are just three kinds of shot composition: the long shot, the medium shot and the closeup. Combine these shots, Burnett says, and your tapes will be crisp and exciting.

BE SURE to use all three shots, he said. Consider the long shot first. It's used to establish the action that will take place. So holiday home-movie makers might begin their tapes with a long shot of the Christmas tree or of the festive holiday table. Or try beginning outdoors, with a long shot of relatives arriving by car.

The next shot should be a medium shot. Tape your child sitting at the tree unwrapping a present or the lighting of the Hanukkah candles. The medium shot frames the subject from the waist up and gives more specific information, Burnett explained.

Then move into a closeup, he said. This shot is framed so that the head and shoulders of your subject appear in the viewfinder of your video camera. The closeup is like an "optical window to the soul," he said. So move in to catch the excitement and wonder on your child's face as he finds a special gift.

You then can pull back to another medium shot and cut to a closeup, perhaps to the relative who presented the toy or the head of the house making a toast. Cutting from one sort of action to another is called cross-cutting, Burnett said. This technique sets up visual tension to keep your tape interesting.

When shooting indoors, you might not have enough light to get a good exposure when the scene is lit only by candles or tree lights. To correct this condition, Burnett suggests:

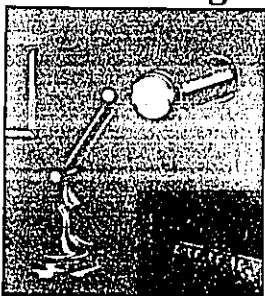
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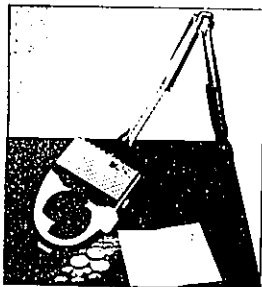
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