

**Countdown Project**  
**COM 380 Field Video I**  
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Project Description: Create an original ten-second countdown (numbers 10 through 2) with a common theme. The countdown will be created using numbers recorded in your surroundings and edited using Final Cut Pro editing software. READ AND CAREFULLY FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS BELOW!

Project Purpose : The primary purpose of the Countdown Project is to facilitate students entrée into digital editing, while continuing to develop their project conceptual skills and shooting abilities.

Due: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Discussion: The Countdown Project is designed to introduce students to the Final Cut Pro editing process – from log and capture to project management and timeline construction, by the means of a relatively short and simple production. While the focus is on editing, the project continues to develop students’ creative and videography skills by requiring them to pre-select a theme and shoot to match that theme. The project is a concise means of introducing students to the complexities of Final Cut Pro editing software while still requiring a quality creative and technical effort throughout.

For inexperienced students who continue to underestimate the time constraints of video production and editing, completing the countdown serves as a wakeup call. Students with previous non-linear editing experience are encouraged to push their creativity and technical proficiency by going beyond the basic requirements of the project. All students are encouraged to create two or three extra “experimental” countdowns once their ‘official’ version has been completed. That is, once they have completed their basic countdown sequence, they are encouraged to experiment with alternative transitions and special effects to gain further insight into the capabilities of non-linear editing.

Worth 25 points, the Countdown Project is a low-risk and efficient way of getting students started in non-linear editing. It provides a formative check on student videography skills and on their aptitude for editing. Students having problems with any phase of the editing process are identified for additional work and may be required to resubmit their countdown after correcting any errors.

Objectives:

1. Demonstrate creativity in developing and recording a thematically coherent series of shots that can effectively serve as a ‘countdown.’
2. Demonstrate quality videography skills in the acquisition of appropriate ‘numbers’ with attention to focus, color, white balance and composition.
3. Demonstrate basic proficiency in digital video editing steps and skills: planning a project, organizing folders and bins in Final Cut Pro, setting Scratch Disks, capturing video, assembling a project in a Time Line, saving a project and outputting the project to tape.
4. This project provides a short and simple way of introducing the student to the digital editing process. The short and simple nature of the project provides an efficient means of moving into the basics of digital editing using Final Cut Pro software.

Process:

1. Identify/locate the numbers 10-2 in your surroundings. **The numbers should express a common theme and may be actual numerals or signs, symbols or other ‘visuals’ that ‘indicate’ the numbers.** That is, while Arabic numerals are certainly allowed (e.g., numbers from the jerseys of the UNCW football team), you may choose instead to be more suggestive or symbolic in your theme (e.g., 10 objects, roman numerals, objects in nature which look like the numerals). **The guiding principle is that the items in the shots must be *immediately identifiable as numbers in a countdown.***
2. Brainstorm 2 or 3 possible ideas and share them with the professor. All countdown themes must have prior approval from the professor.
3. Shooting guidelines:
  - a. Record 10-20 seconds of each shot.
  - b. ***Make sure the numbers fill the screen (within the ‘safe area’), are clearly visible and IMMEDIATELY***

*discernable as numbers and that the framing is consistent between shots.*

- c. Shots should be static (no pans/zooms).
  - d. The theme must be unique, creative and **consistent**.
4. Using Final Cut Pro HD/5 and Mac OS X 10 each student will log into his/her own account to edit the project. The Macintosh systems are pre-set so that each user will have a unique log-on procedure and Capture Scratch disks and desktop preferences may be pre-set by the system administrator.
  5. Edit the countdown in the Sequence (time line) with each number appearing on the screen for *exactly* one second. The number two (2) should appear for four (4) frames only. Insert one-second and 26 frames of black after the number two (2) so that the entire sequence lasts exactly ten (10) seconds.
    - a. Black can be selected from the EFFECTS tab in the browser; select the VIDEO GENERATORS folder, select MATTE and set the color to black.
    - b. While the sequence will display black by default if no video is present, you must insert one second and 26 frames of black for the countdown to work properly when printed to tape.
  6. The numbers may be edited with cuts but you are encouraged to choose another type of transition (e.g. dissolve, wipe, 3-D transition) appropriate for your theme.
    - a. To properly apply alternate transitions (other than cuts) and have them end on the '1-second mark', you may need to separate your numbers by 1 frame. This will keep the transition from overlapping with the next number.
    - b. Each number (except 2) should remain on the screen in its entirety for between five (5) and ten (10) frames before the transition begins.
  7. Save your project (Command S) every few minutes (15-20) as you work on the project to make sure your work is saved in case of a power spike or if the computer freezes.
  8. Print to Video/Fax to Video – copy your sequence to tape. When printing/faxing to tape, DESELECT (turn off) the color bars, the first black, and the countdown that is inherent in the computer. DO SELECT the Slate option and type in *your name, 10-second Countdown*, the theme, and the date. Also select five (5) seconds of black between the slate and the countdown.
  9. Submit the tape, appropriately labeled and cued to the slate. Label should include: your name, the project title, the date and the total run time (TRT).