# Editing for Vlogs

Twenty-five years ago or so, a single editing station could cost more than $250,000. Today you can get real editing power for free with programs like Windows Movie Maker and Apple's iMovie. The award-winning documentary "Tarnation," for example, which is kind of like a 90-minute videoblog, was edited entirely in iMovie and was the first such movie to gain theatrical distribution.

Whether you're editing a feature film or a vlog, the basic principle of editing holds true: You want to choose the best shots to tell your story or convey your concept, then arrange them in an order that holds meaning for you. In this chapter, we cover the editing process as it relates particularly to vlogging, no matter what your story is or what application you use. You can find step-by-step instructions for using iMovie or Movie Maker in their built-in Help tools, various online resources, and books like Peachpit's Visual QuickStart and Visual

QuickProject Guides. This chapter guides you through the overall process of telling a story with video.

# Getting Started

We talked in Chapter 4 about framing shots. Wide shots are usually used to establish context, because they show more information about where your subject is physically located than close-up shots. Close-ups, on the other hand, are good for revealing something about your subject's character or emotions. Sometimes you need a variety of shots to tell a story, but sometimes you don't. If you choose to capture your whole story in one shot, for example, your editing workload is going to be pretty light. The videos shown in **Figures 5.1** and **5.2** illustrate the extremes of video editing. Though they're very different, the story of each video is clearly defined.



**Figure 5.1**   Eric Nelson is a professional basketball player. In "The Knee Year," he uses footage shot over the course of a year to explore his journey from knee surgery, through rehab, to playing in a game again. You can find it at http://bottomunion.com/blog/?p=117



**Figure 5.2**   "Brooklyn Snow Storm," at http://www.scratchvideo.tv/scratch/2006/02/brooklyn_snow_s.html began as a single 30-minute video shot, which was then speeded up in editing so that it all elapses in one minute.

The first step of editing is to view your footage and decide which portions define or shape the story. If you started out with a plan, when you edit you will arrange your shots according to your notes, script, or

storyboard. Sometimes the story that you shot is not exactly the story that you planned. Either something completely unexpected happened or things just didn't quite turn out the way you thought they would. This isn't a bad thing. Editing is a magical process. It's often the unexpected shot that turns out to be the gem of a piece.

Videos for vlogs are generally pretty short, so part of the shaping process is trimming material you don't need so your audience sees just the good stuff. Review your footage with several questions in mind. Does a particular shot move the story forward or give the audience important information? If not, you'll want to set that shot aside. Are there two shots that tell viewers the same thing? Maybe you can cut one out to move the story along more quickly. Remember, you're not making *The Godfather*; you don't have 10 minutes to establish the setting, time period, and main characters before getting to the main story.

As you trim the fat and focus your story, you'll be selecting and organizing specific shots into a sequence that flows together. This is where you'll use wide shots, close-ups, and medium shots to tell your story in a way that makes sense. All the while, especially if you're new to working with video, you'll notice how things might fit together better if they'd been shot a little differently. There's a symbiotic relationship between shooting and editing. Learning how to edit will make you a better shooter, and becoming a better shooter will make editing easier. The really great thing about this process is that you're constantly learning and becoming a better storyteller.

## Unlimited Editing Options

Computer-based editing software allows for nonlinear, nondestructive editing. This means you can position your video clips in any order and rearrange that order at any time, giving you virtually unlimited editing options. If you're not happy with the way your video is turning out, you can easily try another approach.

# Preparing Your Footage

Before you can actually begin editing, you have to import the video footage from your camera into your computer. You can capture one long chunk of video and break it down into smaller bits within the editing application. Or you can view the footage but choose to capture only those shots you know you want to use. Once the footage has been imported, you'll need to collect any other material you'll want to add to your video, such as music or still images. But before you do anything else, it's a good idea to get organized.

## Organizing Your Files

Since video files take up a lot of disc space, it's important to get organized before you import footage to your computer. We recommend keeping all files related to a particular video project together in one folder (**Figures 5.3, 5.4**). Once you've finished a project, you'll find a single folder easy to back up and easy to remove from your hard drive to free up more space for the next project (See "Backing Up Your Files").

**Figure 5.3**

Simplify your videoblogging by using one folder for all the files related to a single project. If you use a Mac, put the folder under Movies to make it easy to find.
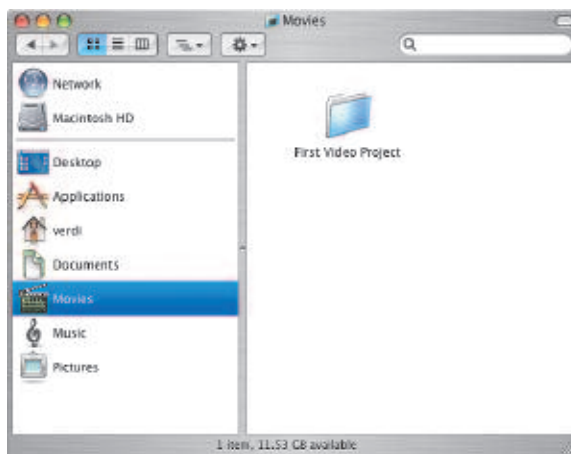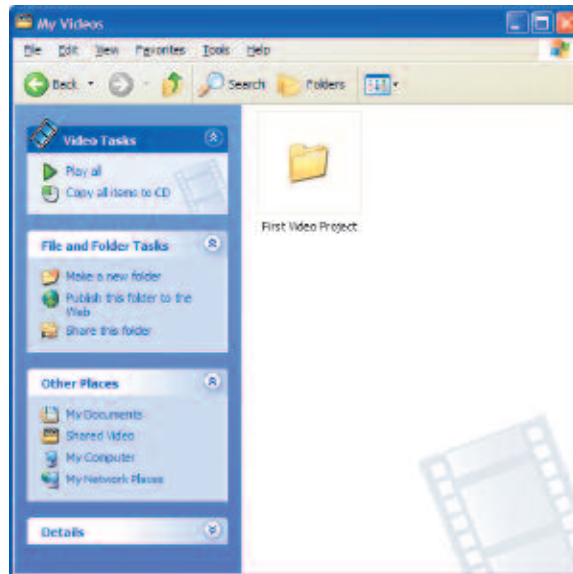
**Figure 5.4**

If you use a PC, put your project folder in the My Videos folder so it won't get lost.



# Backing Up Your Files

The problem with video files is that they're huge, and while hard drives are getting cheaper all the time, space doesn't grow on trees. Sooner or later you're going to need to delete finished projects from your drive to make room for new ones.

If you are using a DV camera, your best bet is to keep your original source tapes and don't reuse them. Also, exporting a copy of your edited project back to tape is a good idea. This way you'll have a pristine copy of all of your hard work.

Obviously, if you are shooting video with a digital still camera, you have to do something else. Instead of exporting a copy back to tape, you can save a DV version of your edited project to your hard drive as a file. You can then take that DV file and your original camera clips and burn them to a DVD. This archive DVD won't play back the way a DVD that you watch in your living room will. The files will be stored on the DVD in the same format as on your hard drive. A single-layer data DVD can hold 4.7GB of information, good for about 20 minutes of DV video. Many new DVD burners use dual-layer discs, which, you guessed it, store twice as much.

For more information on exporting your project back to tape or as a DV file on your hard drive, see your editing program's Help files.

If your computer doesn't have a DVD burner you might consider purchasing an external one that connects via FireWire or USB 2.0. A DVD burner will set you back $100 to $150.

## Importing Video from DV Cameras

To capture DV video from your camera, you will need to connect it to your computer with a FireWire cable. (Some cameras come with these cables, but if yours didn't, you'll need to buy one separately.) As we mentioned in Chapter 3, the smaller 4-pin connector plugs into the port on your camera and the larger, 6-pin connector plugs into a desktop computer (**Figure 5.5**). Many Windows-based laptops have 4-pin connectors, so be sure to check first before you buy.

Once you have the cable you need, connect your camera to your computer. To save yourself some frustration, make sure you turn on your camera (in VCR mode) before launching your editing software. Otherwise, the software may not recognize the camera is connected.
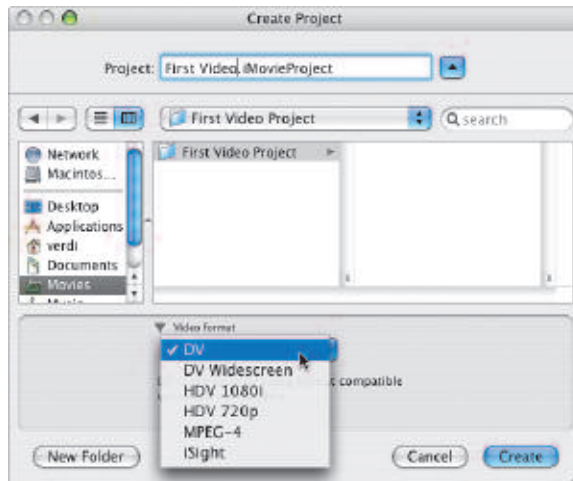
**Figure 5.5**
The 4-pin FireWire connector.

When you have everything connected and turned on, it's time to create your first video project. If you're using iMovie, choose DV when the program prompts you to create a project with a specific video format (**Figure 5.6**). If you're using Windows Movie Maker, the Video Capture Wizard will walk you through the capture process. Simply select DV-AVI as the Digital device format when it prompts you for a Video Setting (**Figure 5.7**).

**Figure 5.6**

If you're using iMovie, choose DV as the video format for your project.
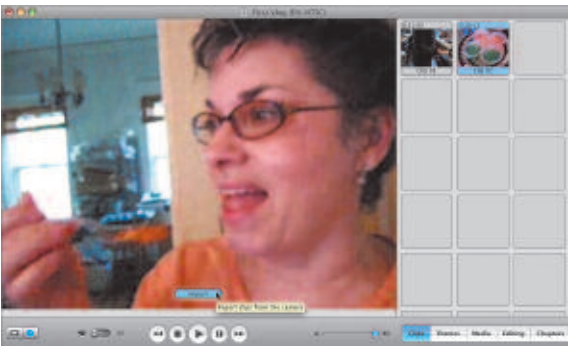


**Figure 5.7**

If you're using Windows Moving Maker, choose Digital device format (DV-AVI) when prompted for a Video Setting.
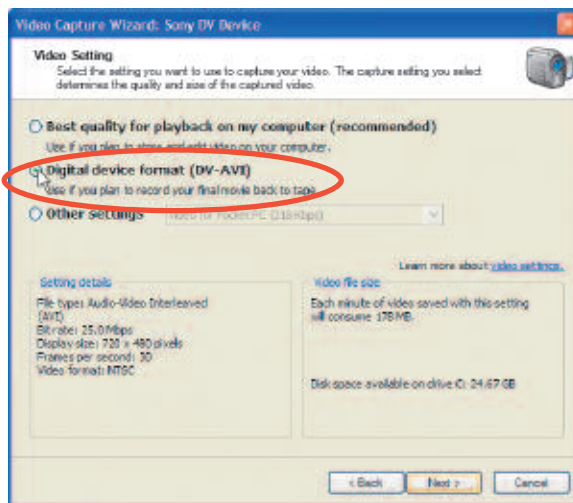


Like most other editing programs, both iMovie and Movie Maker have a capture tool with VCR-like buttons that control your camera remotely. This allows you to view footage from your camera and cue the tape to the location where you want to begin capturing. You can capture one clip at a time or an entire tape. (When deciding how much to import, keep in mind that about four and a half minutes of DV footage takes up about 1 GB of hard drive space as a digital file.)

As you capture footage, make sure you include a few seconds on either side of the shots you plan to use in editing. These extra seconds, called *handles,* may be needed during editing to create transitions in or out of shots. Once you finish capturing all the shots for your project, you'll see that files called clips have been placed in a *bin* for you. The bins used by iMovie and Movie Maker (**Figures 5.8** and **5.9**) look different but accomplish the same task by breaking the footage into smaller, more manageable chunks.
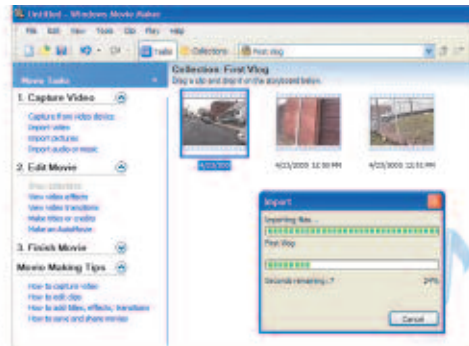


iMovie                                    Windows Movie Maker

**Figures 5.8 and 5.9**  Both iMovie (left) and Movie Maker (right) can place individual clips in a bin as they import footage.

In traditional film editing, the good takes of a scene were literally cut out of the film and hooked on a rack that hung over a canvas-covered bin. Computer-based editing involves a similar task of choosing and organizing selected clips, and the term bin has been adopted by video editors.

# Importing Video from Digital Still Cameras

One day soon importing video from digital still cameras will be a snap—at least, we hope it will be. Today the process can be a little time consuming, depending on the video format your camera saves and the computer and editing application you're using. But don't let that scare you. For many vloggers, the small size and nifty memory cards of these cameras make up for any video-capture quirks. Keep reading for details.
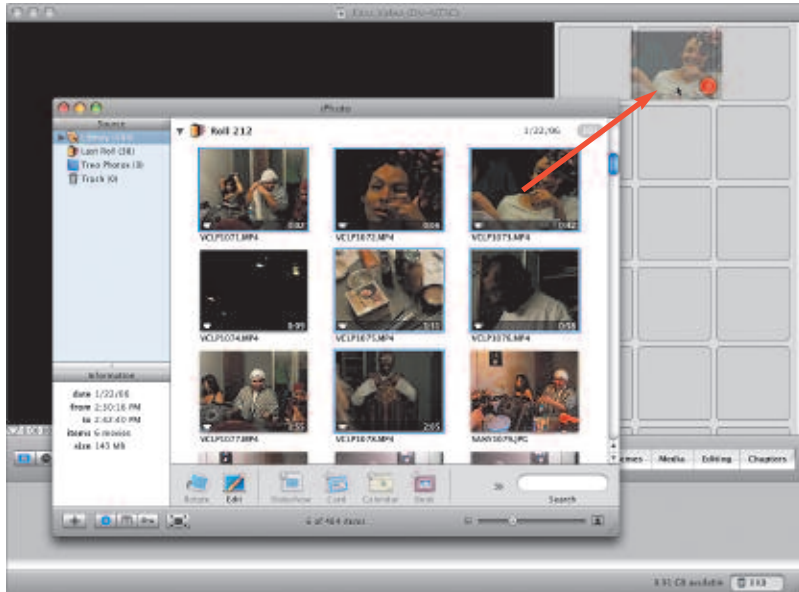
## Importing to a Mac

If you use a Mac, connect your camera, and either the software that came with your camera or iPhoto will launch. If you are using iPhoto, click the import button and it will transfer and organize both the photos and the video clips from your camera. Then all you have to do is launch iMovie, create a new DV project and just select all the video clips that you need in iPhoto and drag them to the iMovie project window (**Figure 5.10**). No matter whether your camera saves video in, .mov, .avi, or .mp4, iMovie will convert them all to DV so you can edit them. The downside is that this conversion process can take a long time. The good news is that you can go get yourself a sandwich while this is going on.

**note** **If you're not using iPhoto, check the camera's software documentation for specifics on how and where your files will be transferred.**

**Figure 5.10**

If you use a Mac, you can drag-and-drop video clips from iPhoto to iMovie to edit digital still camera clips. Just don't expect to do it in a hurry.

## Importing to a PC

When you connect your camera to your PC and turn it on, the software that came with your camera or the Windows Scanner and Camera Wizard will launch and provide a way to transfer your clips to your computer. Please see the camera's software documentation for specifics on how and where your files will be transferred. If you're using the Wizard be sure to click the Advanced Users Only link (**Figure 5.11**) and drag the clips manually to your video project folder, otherwise the Wizard will skip all of your video files and import only your photos.
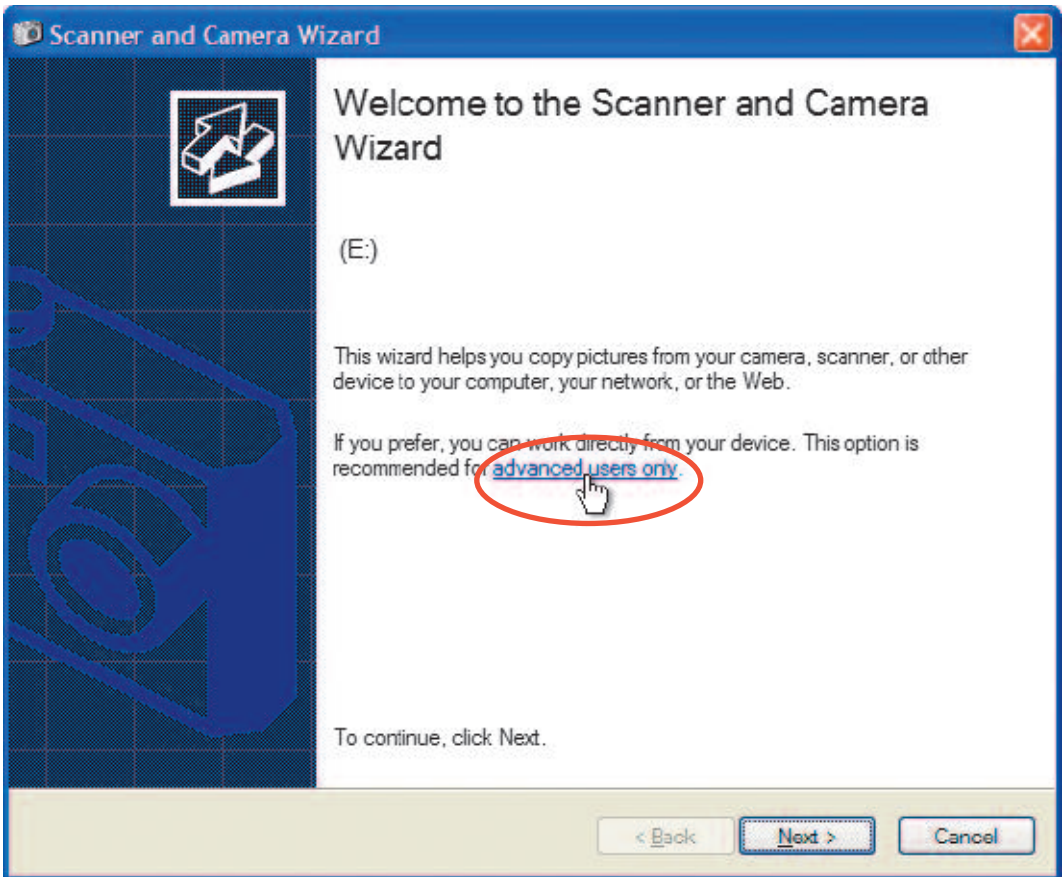
**Figure 5.11**  Clicking the Advanced Users Only link will open up a folder where your clips are stored on your digital still camera.

With your clips in your video project folder, you are ready to get started with Movie Maker. If your camera saves clips as .avi files, you've got it easy. You just import the clips directly from your project folder using the File > Import into Collections command—no conversion necessary (**Figure 5.12**).
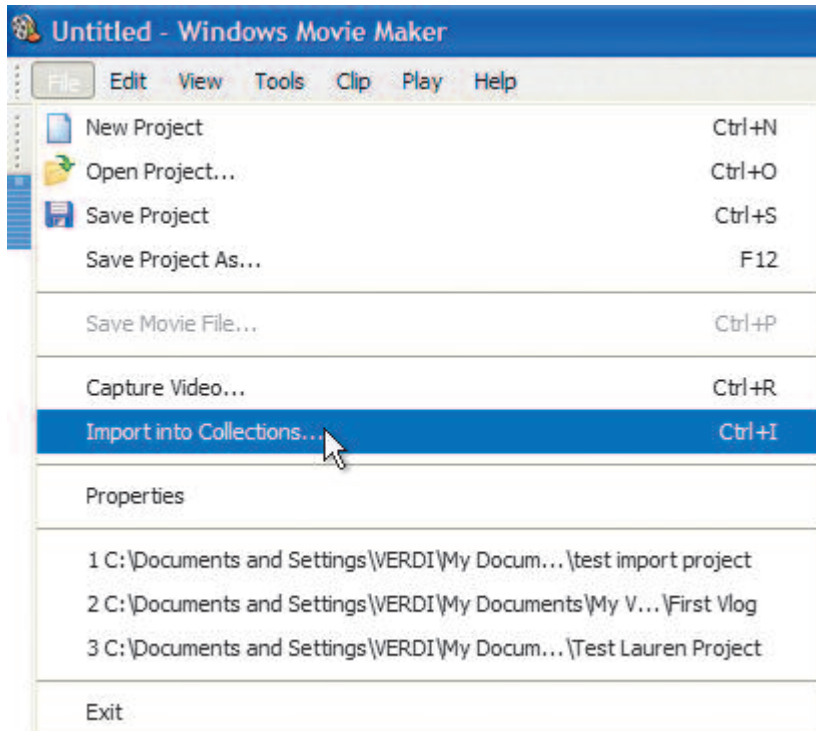
**Figure 5.12**   Import .avi files into Movie Maker by choosing File > Import into Collections, or by using the keyboard command (Ctrl+I). Then just choose the videos you copied to your project folder to import them.

If your camera saves clips as .mp4 or .mov, you need to convert them to .avi before you can import them. You can download a free program to do this for you called MP4Cam2AVI Easy Convert at http://sourceforge.net/projects/mp4cam2avi/. It's an extra step, but it only takes a few seconds for each clip.

Once you import your digital still clips into Movie Maker, click the Collections Button to see all of your clips (**Figure 5.13**).

**Figure 5.13**

Clicking the Collections button allows you to browse the clips imported from your digital still camera.
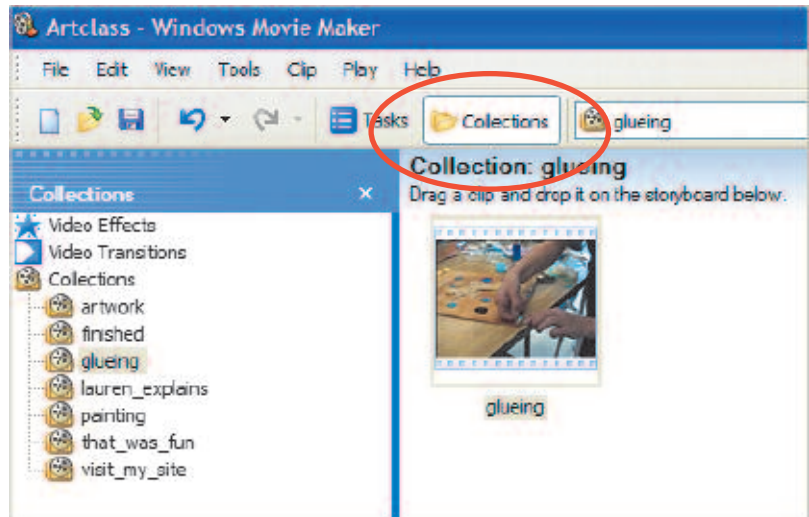


## Splitting Your Clips

If the imported footage is in fairly long clips, you'll need to split them into shorter clips before you start editing. To do this, choose a clip and review it. Decide where in the clip you want the next clip to begin. In iMovie choose Edit > Split Video Clip at Playhead (**Figure 5.14**). In Movie Maker choose Clip > Split. Now choose the next clip and do it again. This will turn your big clips into smaller, discrete clips that you'll be able to arrange in any order you want in the timeline.

**note** In some editing applications, the process of identifying the usable part of a clip is referred to as marking a clip.

**note** As you go through the process of splitting clips, you might be tempted to delete things you don't think you'll use. Instead, set them aside because there's a chance they could come in handy (see "Don't Delete Potential Gems").
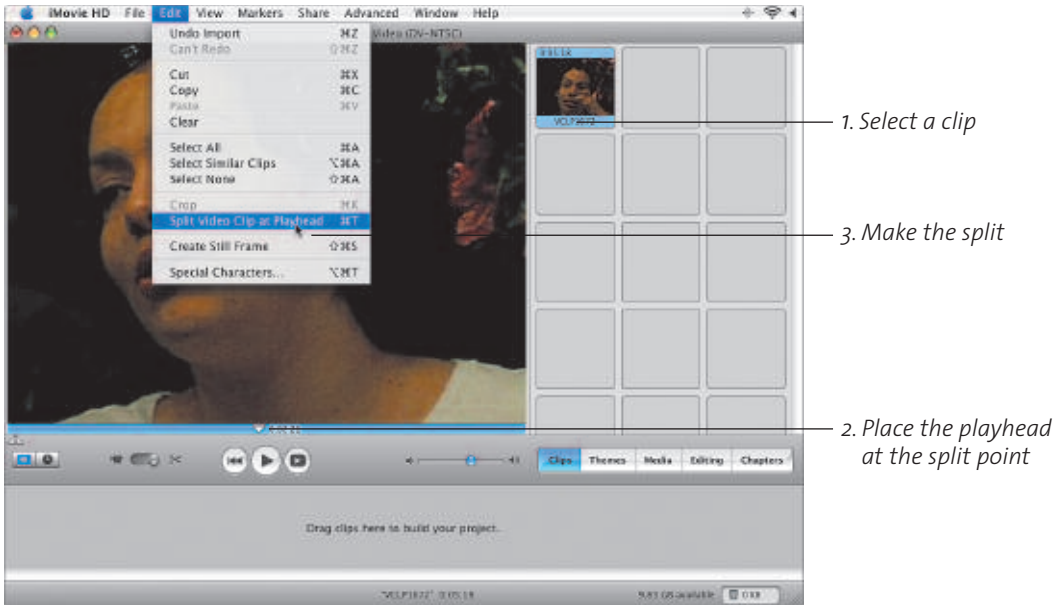
1. Select a clip

3. Make the split

2. Place the playhead
   at the split point

**Figure 5.14**  Splitting a clip follows the same process in both iMovie (shown here) and Windows Movie Maker.

Before you start the actual editing, it might be helpful to give your short clips descriptive names instead of the generic ones assigned by your editing program. This is especially useful if you're editing an interview and all of your clips have nearly identical icons (**Figure 5.15**).

**Figure 5.15**
Give your clips names that will help you remember what part of the story they tell.



*thoughts on performing*

*mic didn't work*

*it all worked out*

## Don't Delete Potential Gems

When splitting, renaming, and organizing clips, remember not to delete your extra footage. At times you'll need a little something extra to add to a sequence and, odds are you'll find it in the leftover footage. In her first video, for example, Michael's daughter, Dylan, gives a virtual tour of what it's like to be her. The video was originally intended to end after Dylan looked into the camera and said, "This is Dylan…Goodbye!" But just after she finished the scene, the 11-year-old caught a glimpse of herself in the camera's viewscreen. She wrinkled her nose and said, "Aw, I hate my smile" (**Figure 5.16**). That unexpected moment of self-scrutiny turned out to be the real ending of the video and definitely worth saving!

**Figure 5.16**
Leftover footage provided a charming and unexpected ending for 11 year-old Dylan Verdi's first video.



# Crafting a Rough Cut

Now that you've got all your clips collected and organized, it's time to put together a rough cut. A rough cut is just that—a rough assembly of the shots you want to use sequenced together. You create a rough cut by dragging each clip into the timeline in the order you want it to appear (**Figure 5.17**). Now watch what you've created and ask yourself three questions:

- Is the story all there?

- Does it make sense?

- Are the clips in the best order?

If the answer to any question is no, adjust your rough cut until the answer is yes.
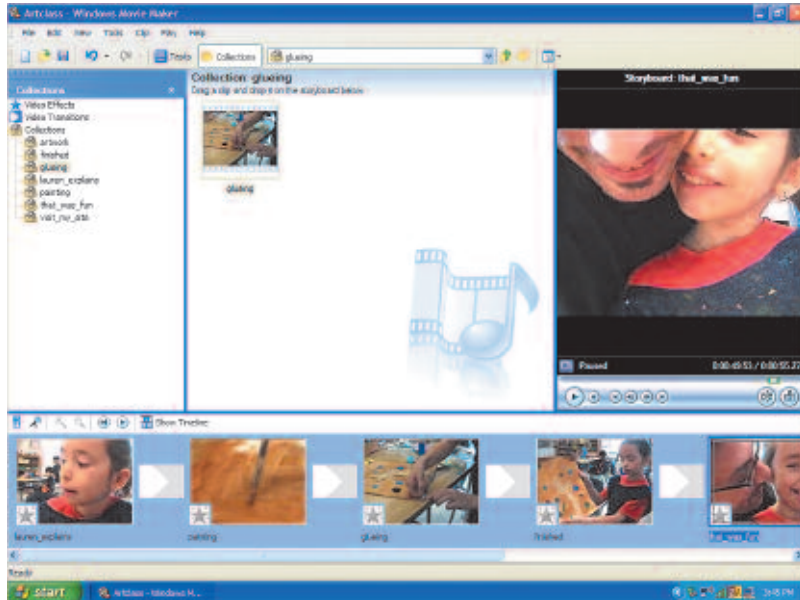
Once your basic sequence is together and the clips are in the right order, you can start to refine it. This is the stage where you do things like trim off that unnecessary footage at the beginning or end of each clip (the handles) or reorder the sequence of clips. This is the real work of the editing process, and there's no one way to do it. You can place all the clips in the sequence you want, then adjust the length of each clip. Or you can edit an individual clip and refine it, then edit and refine another clip, and continue to edit and refine as you go. Along the way you might ask yourself some of the following questions:

- Is the story clear?

- What can I add or take away to make the story clearer?

- Is this section of video necessary?

- If I remove this shot, will it help or hurt the story?

- Is this edit too distracting? What would be better?

- Where does the sequence drag?

Editing is the process of slowly circling in on your story. You will cut, watch what you have, make notes about what to change or fix, then do it all over again. When you're happy with the order and length of your clips, you might want to add transitions and titles, and then music and voice-over to complete your video.

# Editing Styles

Understanding the editing process is one thing; developing a personal editing style is another. Editing style refers to the approach you take to string your shots together. There are a few different editing styles vloggers can choose to get started. By familiarizing yourself with different styles, you have some ready-made approaches to draw from when you sit down for your first edit. As you continue to create videos for your vlog, you might decide to mix things up a bit, depending on your subject matter, your intentions, and your mood.

## The Single Take

A single take is simply a video that consists of one continuous shot. The camera may be stationery or it may move, but it's still just one shot. This style is used frequently and quite effectively by vloggers (**Figure 5.18**). The major challenge in editing a single take is choosing



**Figure 5.18**  Jay Dedman's "Looking at Things" from the Momentshowing vlog (www.momentshowing.net/momentshowing/2004/07/videoblog_16_lo.html) is artfully captured in a single take—including the unexpected ending. Pay attention to the pace toward the end, which gives viewers time to absorb the change in setting.

exactly where to start and end the video. If you're editing a video that you planned ahead of time, you've probably rehearsed and worked on the beginning and ending in the shooting process. If, on the other hand, you're editing a video of something you just happened to catch on camera, you'll probably have a number of choices about where to make your edits. If you're not sure where to start or end, ask yourself this question: What is the shortest section necessary to tell the story? While you should aim for brevity when editing footage for your vlog, don't go overboard—it still should be as long as it needs to be to tell your story.

## Using B-roll and Cutaways

Let's say you're editing an interview or a shot of someone talking directly to the camera about gourmet coffee. You can use the shot in its entirety if it's the right length and says what you want it to say. But let's say you want to cut out the off-camera questions. Do that and you'll end up with a jump cut, which gives you a splice between two very similar but not identical frames. It's called that because the results can be, well, jumpy. After the cut, the person on camera may appear to "jump" into a different position. One way to visually smooth over a jump cut is to insert a piece of video between the two interview cuts that shows something else that's relevant to the story, perhaps a close-up of a steaming hot cappuccino. This extra footage is referred to as B-roll.

B-roll provides extra visual information that you can use to illustrate what someone is talking about or to provide an additional detail about someone or something. When you're shooting, remember to shoot some B-roll footage so you'll have extra material you can use to cut away from the person speaking to show a different piece of video, while the person's audio continues underneath. These edits are referred to as cutaways (**Figure 5.19**).

**Figure 5.19**
In Chris Weagel's "The Haberek, Pt.2" from the Human Dog Laboratory vlog (www.human-dog.com/lab/?p=180), B-roll footage was used for cutaways that give us insight into the man being interviewed.
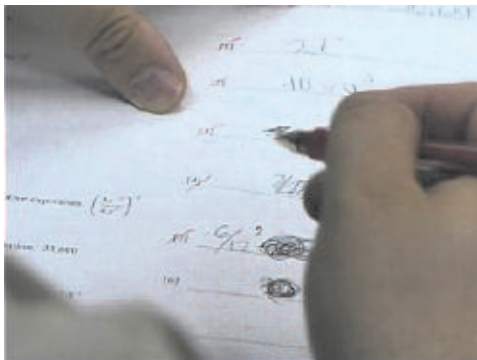
## Quick Cuts

Quick cuts let you visually compress the time span of a long sequence by including just enough brief glimpses of the action for an audience to follow the story. Let's say you've filmed a woman walking out of her apartment, waiting for the elevator, riding the elevator down five floors, people entering the elevator along the way, and finally the woman exiting the elevator and the building and walking out to the street. In real time the whole experience took maybe three minutes. If the footage was intended only as a set up for the story that actually took place on the street, those three minutes is probably much too long. Using quick cuts to compress that sequence, you could simply show the apartment door being pulled closed, the elevator door opening in the lobby, and your subject stepping out onto the street. Viewers would still have the facts—that this woman left her apartment and went outside, but they would get them in ten seconds instead of three minutes. This video entitled "Cut" takes the idea of quick cuts to the extreme and transforms what could be a pretty uneventful video of a haircut into a work of art (**Figure 5.20**).

**Figure 5.20**
Tom Laczny's "Cut," from the Fast Moving Animals vlog (http://fastmovinganimals.blogspot.com/2006/01/cut.html), condenses a 15-minute haircut into a fast-paced barrage of clips that clock in at less than 60 seconds.



# Applying Transitions and Effects

Once cutting is complete, you can consider adding transitions and effects. These are valuable tools in the editing process. Some effects add a certain style or pizzazz to a sequence, while others help you solve problems by polishing a rough edge, changing brightness, or making a two-minute clip play in just a few seconds. Some effects are added to

the point between two clips, which is called the edit point. Others are added to an entire clip or group of clips. Let's take a look at applying effects to your sequence.
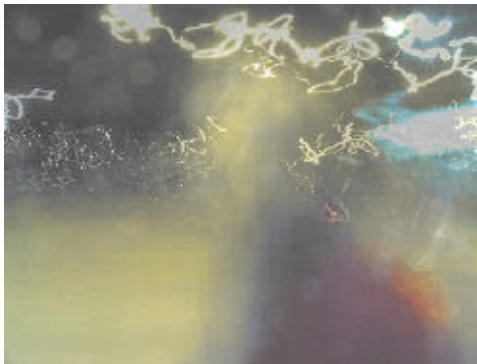
## Transition Effects

The purpose of transitions is exactly what the name suggests: to provide a shift from one shot to another at an edit point. Transitions can give your videos a little extra spunk, a professional look, or a smoothing effect. You can also use them to just add fun to a simple sequence.

There are different types of transitions. The most popular is the *cross dissolve* (**Figure 5.21**). Dissolves blend the end of one image into the beginning of another and are often used to smooth an edit point that's jumpy, jarring, or confusing to viewers. A *fade* transition, which dissolves an image in or out of a blank screen (usually black), can visually imply the passing of time without literally announcing, for example, "one hour later." Other types of transitions include wipes, which use a geometric shape such as a circle to replace one image with another, or some type of push effect that moves an image off the screen revealing the next image in the sequence.

**Figure 5.21**

In Laczny's video "Heat," long cross dissolves are used to fade one image into another, creating a separate, third image in between. Find it on his vlog at http://fastmovinganimals.blogspot.com/2005/06/heat.html.



Editing applications come with a variety of transitions. You can usually preview a transition before applying it to make sure it creates the effect you want (**Figures 5.22** and **5.23**). Depending on your editing software, you may be able to change the speed of a transition to make it a specific length.
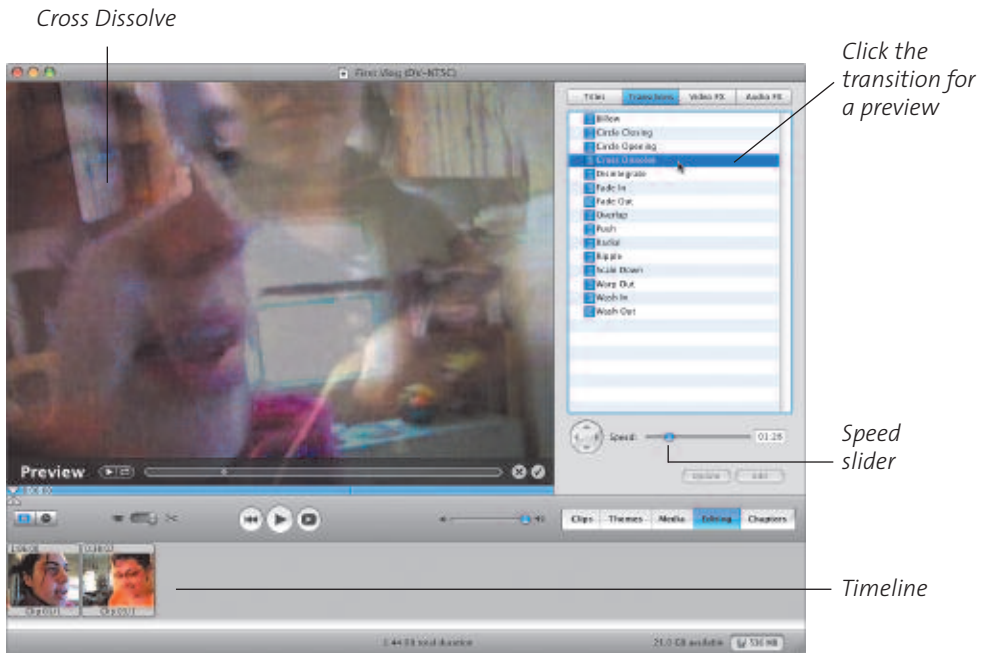
*Cross Dissolve*



*Click the transition for a preview*

*Speed slider*

*Timeline*

**Figure 5.22**   iMovie lets you preview a transition while it's selected. To apply a transition, in this case a cross dissolve, drag the transition between any two clips on the timeline (at the bottom of the window).
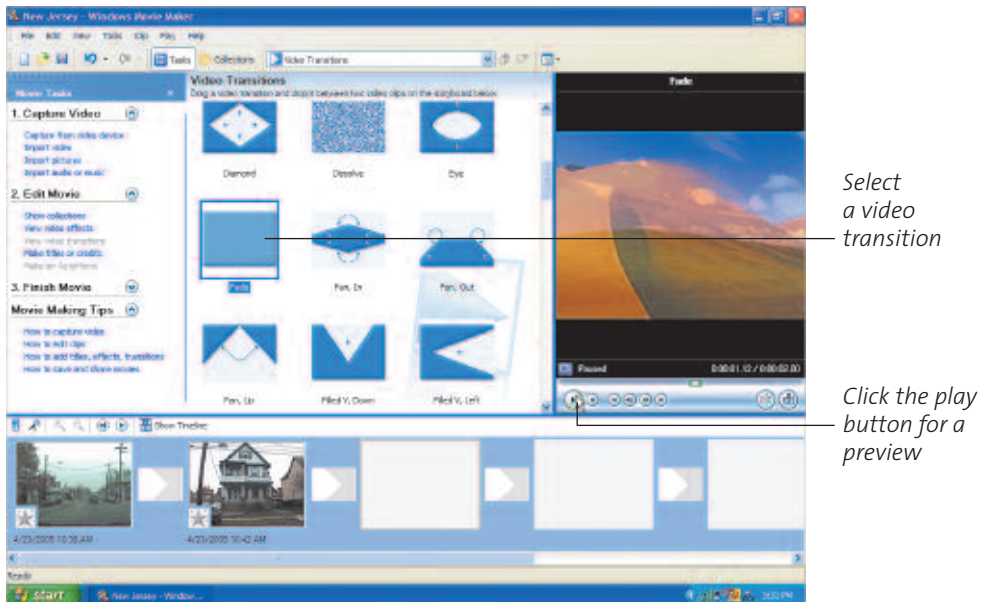


*Select a video transition*

*Click the play button for a preview*

**Figure 5.23**   Windows Movie Maker uses two stock images to give you a quick preview of a transition.

## Working with Handles

Remember handles, those extra few seconds before and after the primary action you captured with your clip? Here's where they come in handy. If you don't want a transition to cover important action, add a second onto each end of a clip. Then the transition effect will go from a handle at the end of one clip into the handle at the beginning of the next so the main event will be visible in all its glory.

## Motion Effects

Motion effects change the speed of your clips by either slowing down or speeding up the video. Speeding up a clip can condense a long clip into a much faster "time-lapsed" type of shot. Slowing down a piece of video can add emphasis or a dramatic effect. Most editing programs have options for changing a clip's motion or playback time (**Figures 5.24, 5.25**).



**Figure 5.24** In Bottom Union's video Dance Dubuffet, http://bottomunion.com/blog/?p=98, a speedy motion effect is used to give a stop motion animation feel to a dancer "sliding" through French artist Dubuffet's public sculpture at Hoge Veluwe National Park, The Netherlands.



**Figure 5.25** In 29fragiledays' "Shelter," http://29fragiledays.blogspot.com/2005/04/ shelter.html, motion effects are used to slow down and emphasize a single moment that passed too quickly for the eye to fully appreciate at regular speed.

## Visual Effects

Visual effects can change the overall look of one or more clips. For example, you can change the style of an image by giving it an "old movie" look complete with scratches and graininess. You can create an artsy look by making it black and white or sepia toned, or give it an action-movie look by shaking it up with an earthquake effect. You can also use a video effect to correct or improve a clip by adjusting the brightness or color of the image (**Figures 5.26, 5.27**).

**note** **Depending on the effect, your computer may need a significant span of time to render it. Rendering is how the computer applies or attaches a video effect to a clip, and some effects take longer than others to render.**
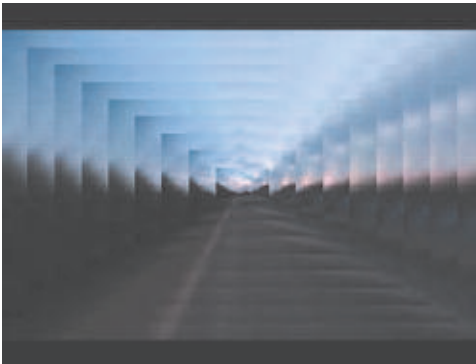


**Figure 5.26**  In "Blur" (http://www. nearlyenough.com/?p=3), posted on Almost Always Is Nearly Enough, visual effects are used to manipulate the image into layers of blurred landscape, creating a very different video than if the clips were used as they were originally recorded.
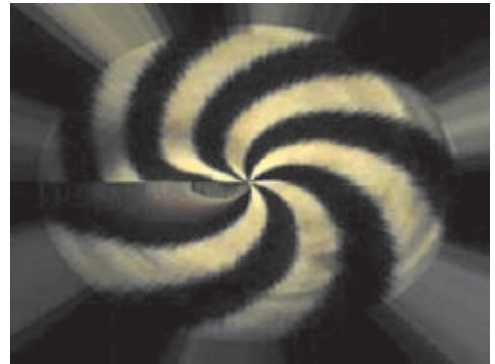


**Figure 5.27**  In the vlog::banal video "The Belt," http:// x.nnon.tv/vlog/2006/01/the_belt.html, footage from Scratch Video is remixed with motion effects to create a Cheshire Cat quality that may not have been intended in the original video.

Effects are fun, but use them in moderation. Try not to go overboard with visual effects, which can overwhelm your audience. In most situations, subtlety is a virtue. If you find that your video truly demands heavily saturated effects, by all means go for it, but be prepared for long render and export times.

# Adding Titles

Titles can be used for a variety of purposes in videos. The most obvious application of titles is at the beginning and end to show the name of your video and Web address. It's so easy to copy and post things on the Internet that videos can end up in several places on the Web. Put a Web address on any video you create, and people will be able to trace the origin of your amazing masterpiece and find its creator (**Figure 5.28**). Typically, videobloggers add Web addresses to the final three to five seconds of their videos. Some vloggers create a custom opening sequence with the name of the videoblog, its URL, and the video's title (**Figure 5.29**).

**Figure 5.28**
Jay Dedman ends each video by showing the Web address of his vlog.



**Figure 5.29**
Sara Weagel opens every video for Sara's Corner (http://human-dog.com/sara) with a shot of herself under the title of her videoblog.

Titles can also help add context to a story. Who, what, where, when, why? These questions can be easily and artfully answered with the help of titles such as those shown in **Figures 5.30** and **5.31**.





**Figures 5.30 and 5.31**  In "The Haberek, Pt.1," http://www.human-dog.com/lab/?p=163, Chris Weagel uses simple titles to unobtrusively answer questions about who, where, and when.

Many a vlogger has posted videos with noisy background sound that makes the recorded speech inaudible. Titles can be a great supplement to poor audio recordings as well (**Figure 5.32**).



**Figure 5.32**  In "Vaccuming," Tim Babarini captured amazing footage of his nephew vacuuming out of boredom. Fortunately for us, Tim used titles to supplement the roaring audio from the vacuum before he posted the video to his vlog, Reality Sandwich (http://realitysandwich.typepad.com/blog/2005/07/vacuuming.html).

Titles can also be used to express the thoughts of a videoblogger. Use them to pose questions or simply add comments along the way (**Figure 5.33**).

**Figure 5.33**
In "Hey, Let's Go To Harris Ranch!,"
http://schlomolog
.blogspot.com/2005/
08/hey-lets-go-to-
harris-ranch.html,
Schlomo of Echoplex
Park allows us to peak
inside his brain and
listen to his innermost
rants.



Adding titles to your video is easy. Most applications have a lot of preset title animations to choose from. Just type your text, pick a font and size, give it some color, and add it to a sequence (**Figures 5.34, 5.35**). Depending on the editing program you use, there may be options for animating text as well.
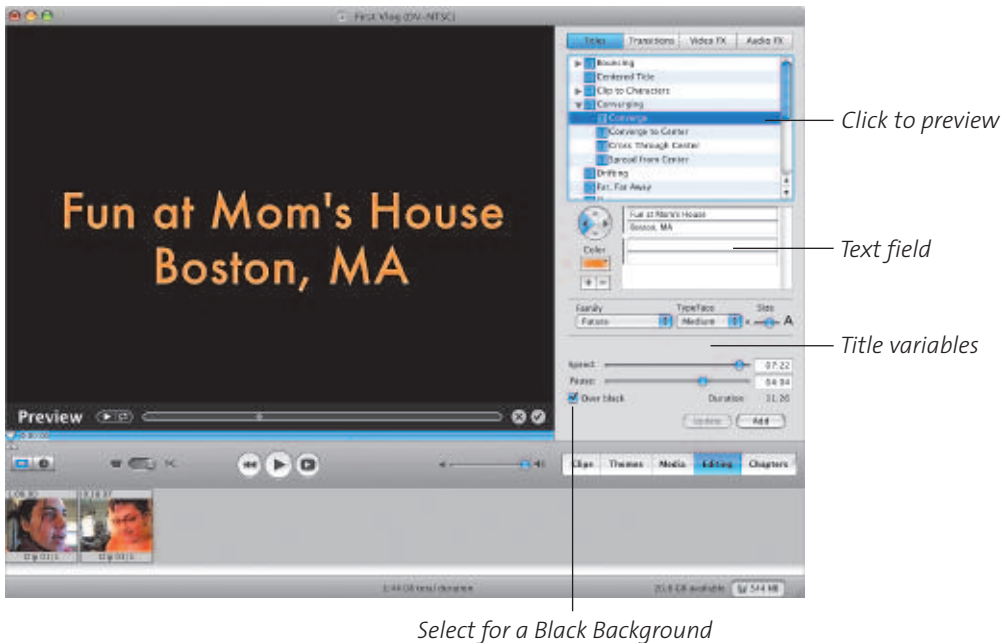


*Click to preview*

*Text field*

*Title variables*

*Select for a Black Background*

**Figure 5.34**  To create a title in iMovie, click on the Title option, type your title, choose your options, and drag and drop the title onto a clip in your movie. Titles will appear over video unless you select the Over black box for a black background.

**Figure 5.35**
There's no dragging and dropping titles with Windows Movie Maker. Instead, you select the location from a menu.
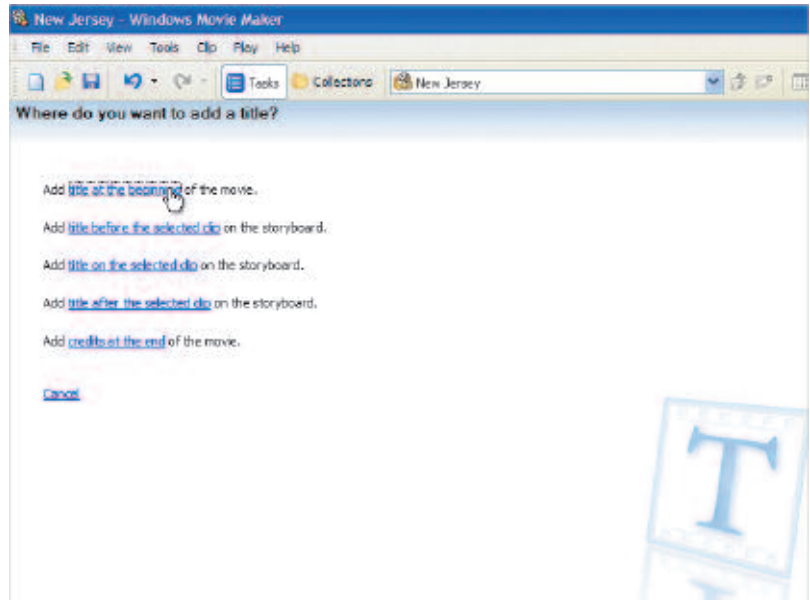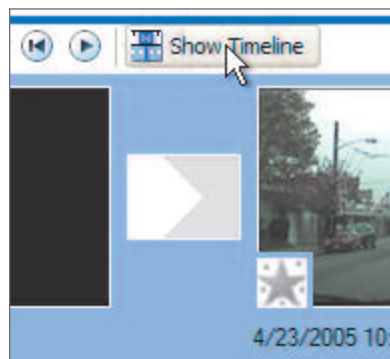


# Adding and Mixing Sound

As we've mentioned before, sound is as important to a video as visuals. Music, sound effects, and narration can change the emotional content of your video. It can create the perfect mood, add the right finishing touch, or mix intensity with humor to create a unique perspective. Adding audio files to your project is easy in both iMovie and Movie Maker. You can simply drag your audio files to the bin or in iMovie, use File > Import, or in Movie Maker, File > Import into Collection. Then make sure to switch to the timeline view to work with audio tracks (**Figure 5.36**). After you add individual audio tracks, you'll need to mix them together to create a good, balanced sound (**Figure 5.37**).

**Figure 5.36**
The Show Timeline button in Movie Maker does just that—shows the timeline.

**Figure 5.37**
The clock button in
iMovie will switch you
to timeline view.
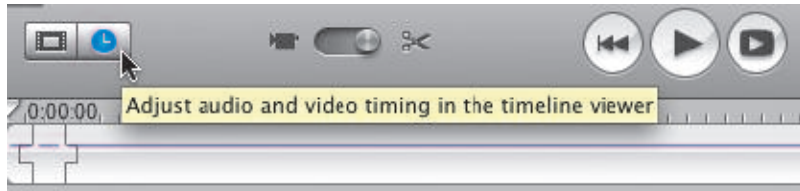
# Creating Voice-Overs

Sometimes the visuals you choose for your vlog can stand alone. But in some videos, the visuals are not enough. They may need a narration, or *voice-over,* to add editorial comment at specific moments (**Figure 5.38**).

**When adding a voice-over to your vlog, a good rule of thumb is to add extra information with the voice-over instead of simply describing what's happening.**

**Figure 5.38**
In Pouringdown's
"Theory: Practice,"
http://pouringdown.
blogspot.com/2006/02
/theory-practice.html,
a voice-over provides
insight into the
creator's thoughts
about his process for
creating videoblogs.



Most editing programs, including iMovie (**Figure 5.39**) and Movie Maker (**Figure 5.40**) have options for recording voice-overs directly into your



**Figure 5.39**   Because Macs have a built-in mic, you can add a voice-over in iMovie by simply pressing the Record button and talking.

**Figure 5.40**
You can access the voice-over tool in Windows Movie Maker by clicking the Narrate Timeline button.
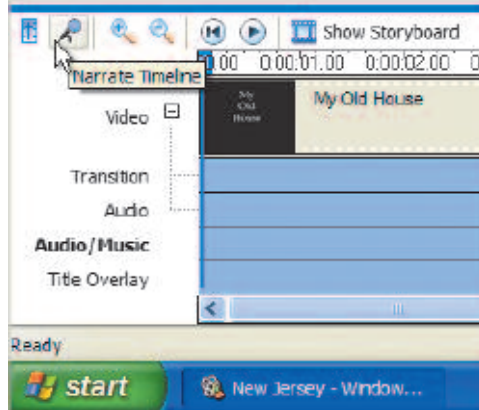


sequence. This allows you to record your voice-over while watching the video, rather than having to sync your audio to your video.

Macs and some Windows laptop have built-in microphones. Desktop PCs tend not to have built-in mics but makers often include external mics with their machines. If you have a PC without any mic, or if you have a Mac but you don't like the sound from its built-in mic, consider buying a USB microphone. Logitech (www.logitech.com), for example, offers a desktop microphone for less than $30.

## Adding Music

Working with music is another magical element of the editing process. Add the right music to a string of dull images and suddenly they're full of

**Figure 5.41**
In "Highway of Life," http://dianasallin .blogspot.com/2006/ 02/highway-of-life.html, Diana created a music video by cutting a collage of traveling-down-the-highway images to illustrate her own song.



life. Music can add depth to a scene by underscoring the emotion you've captured in your visuals. It can also add complexity by adding a different mood than what the visuals suggest. You can make music the main event in your video by selecting it first and then editing the visual images to create your own music video (**Figure 5.41**).

If you're a songwriter or simply like putting tracks together using a music-creation program, you can use your own music—and only your own music—however you like (see Chapter 2, "Using Other Material"). Don't forget that Creative Commons has links to free music resources at http://creativecommons.org/audio.

## Adding Sound Effects

Sound effects can be a fun element to mix into a soundtrack. But like visual effects, they can be overused and make your video project sound like a Saturday morning cartoon (**Figure 5.42**).
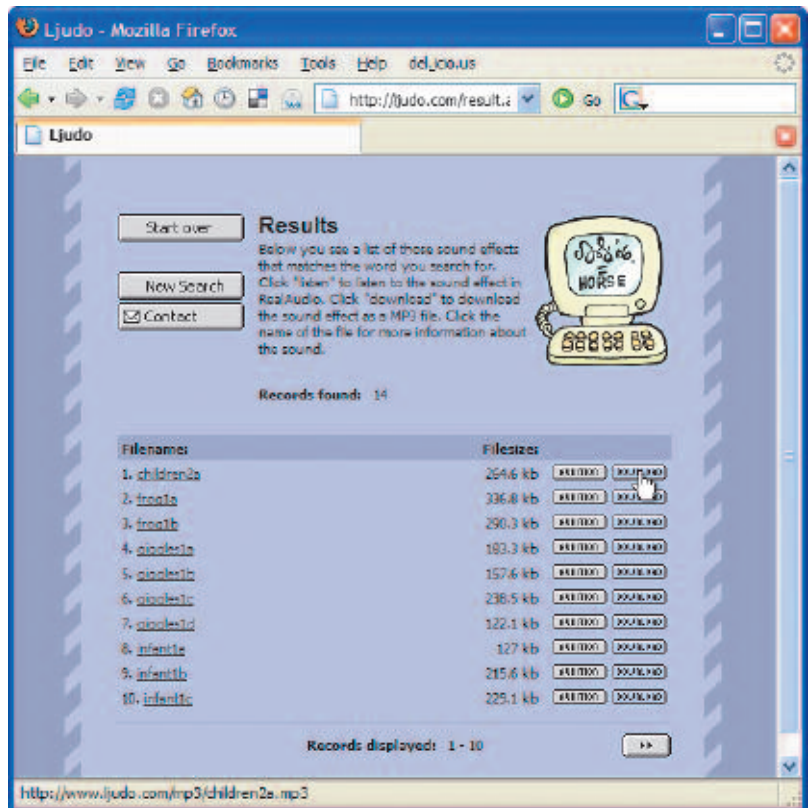
**Figure 5.42**
iMovie provides a variety of sound effects that you can add to your videos. Simply drag and drop the sound effect from the list to where you want it in your Timeline.
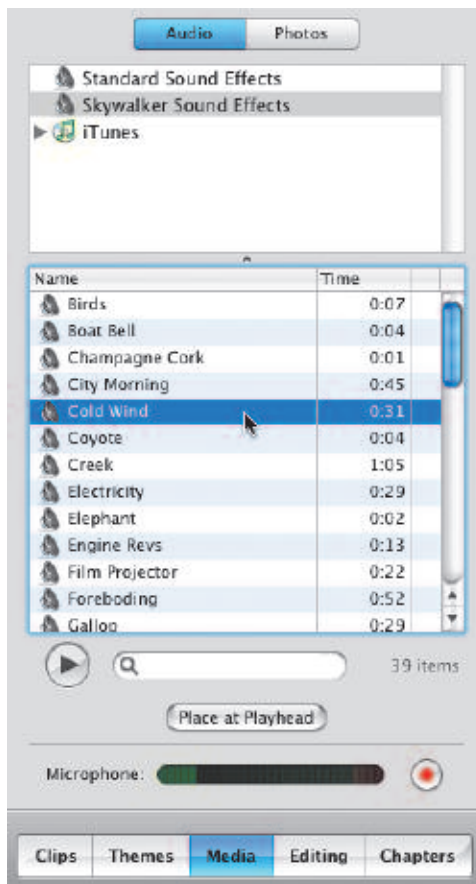
There are plenty of places on the web to find and purchase royalty-free sound effects. However, licenses for the use of these files might not always extend to cover their use in your videos on the web. To be free and clear, we recommend using sites like Ljudo, at http://ljudo.com, where all the sound effects are Creative Commons licensed (**Figure 5.43**).

**Figure 5.43**

You can search Ljudo for Creative Commons licensed sound effects. These are the results of a search for "laugh."

Many videobloggers like to mix sound effects into a soundtrack with a light hand, adding audio flavor so carefully that the audience isn't immediately aware that the soundtrack includes one or more sound effects. **Figure 5.44** offers one example.

**Figure 5.44**

In Scratch Video's "Collection: QuantumMatter" at www.scratchvideo.tv/scratch/2005/10/collection_quan_1.html, the sound effects are so subtle a viewer can hardly tell what might be effects and what might be part of the video's original sound.
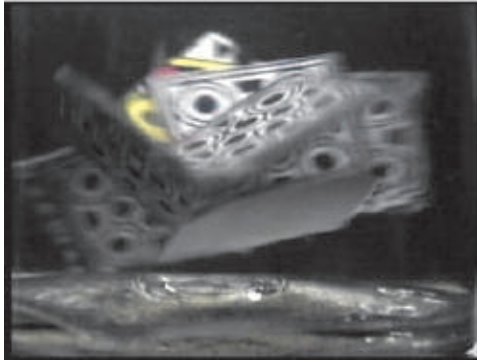


## Mixing Audio and Smoothing Cuts

Now that you've added more sound to your video, it's important to make sure that your soundtrack transitions smoothly from one cut to the next, in the same way that your video does. It may be as simple as fading the audio in at the beginning or out at the end. Other times it can be more complex.

The story you are telling helps determine your approach to editing the soundtrack. If your soundtrack includes a conversation, for example, you can smooth an audio transition by making a cut at a natural pause in the conversation. This keeps the audio cut from seeming too abrupt and allows the visuals to keep flowing.

Sometimes cutting from video to a title can sound abrupt and jarring because the video had ambient sound, or *room tone,* and the title was an audio vacuum that had no sound at all. This type of audio jump can be smoothed over by adding a piece of room tone to the title so that the soundtrack is continuous. It's a good idea to record a few seconds of room tone in each location where you shoot video. If you forget, don't panic. After a shoot, there's nearly always a few seconds of footage in which no one speaks that you can use as audio filler if needed.

Pay attention to the visuals in your video and how they interact with any music you've added. For example, be sure to lower your music tracks when people start talking so viewers can actually hear your subject speak. It's fine to keep music underneath an interview, just make sure the sound levels are balanced. The smoother the audio sounds, the smoother the video will seem to your audience.

# Polishing the Final Version

After you've added all the bells and whistles to your video, there's one final editing step. Sit back and watch your video straight through. If you're feeling brave, get a friend to watch too and give you feedback. Try to get a feel for the video as a whole. Does it move smoothly? Does the story make sense? Does it feel too long or too short? At first viewing, you may feel the video is complete. But watch it repeatedly, and you may notice a few rough spots that need polishing. You might notice a jump cut that you didn't see before or hear snippets of abrupt sound that need a smoother fade. Take this opportunity to see if every video element fits together and tie up any loose ends.

If you've watched your video 20 times or more over the course of editing and you're not sick of it yet, that's a great sign! Watching sections of your video, cutting or adding effects to it, and then watching it again is the repetitive nature of editing and helps you shape and sculpt your story to perfection.

Get comfortable with editing, because editing is your friend. Every time you edit a piece for your blog, you learn something that prepares you for the next time you shoot. You'll be on the lookout for extra B-roll, ambient sound, and anything else you might have missed the first time around.