

DIY Digitising Video



Examining Your Tapes:

Before you get started, it's a good idea to check what kind of tapes you want to digitise and what kind of condition they are in. Over the past forty years or so, there have been many different types of video formats which have been used for amateur filmmaking.

Some of the most common formats for home videos are:



VHS

VHS, which stands for 'Video Home System', first emerged in the 1970s as a commercially popular format for amateur filmmakers to use. One of its main competitors during this time was a format called 'Betamax'.

8mm (also known as Video 8 or Hi-8)

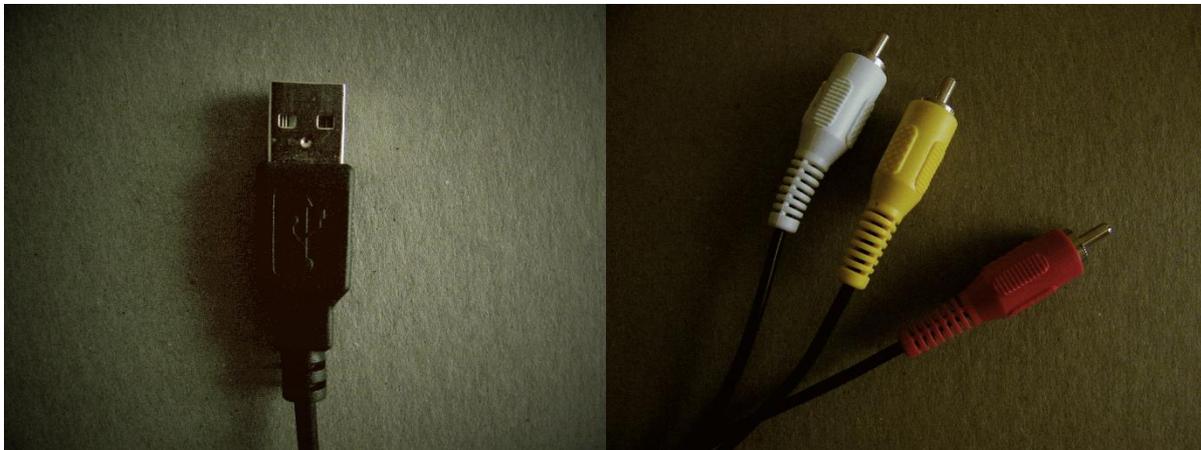
This kind of tape first emerged in the 1980's and became a popular alternative to VHS and similar formats, due to its much smaller size. The '8' in title is a reference back to Super 8 and Standard 8 film formats.

Digital 8 & Mini DV

These later formats, which emerged in the late nineties and were even smaller in size, utilised both analogue and digital technologies and acted as a bridge to purely digital technologies we are more familiar with today.

Equipment:

To digitise your tapes you will need a functional video camcorder that matches your tape format, a USB video transfer lead to link your camcorder to the computer and also video capture software. USB video transfer leads and video capture software can be purchased easily online together as one set. Make sure that when you are searching for your lead, one end of the cable has a USB connection and the other end has an A/V connection (**see the pictures below for examples**).



A USB Connection

An A/V Connection

Setting Up:



Once you have the necessary equipment, you're ready to begin! It's important to make sure that the camcorder you are using matches the format of tape you want to digitise, otherwise they may not be compatible. As seen in the picture above, the A/V connection usually has three different plug ends – on most camcorders, a corresponding or similar set of A/V sockets can be found. Some equipment may only have two sockets – these will only require two of the provided plug ends.

The A/V sockets on your camcorder will most likely be located on the side of the machine, as pictured above. Often the different sockets will be clearly labelled as 'video output' and 'audio output'. Simply connect the plug ends to the matching sockets. Some camcorders

may have different set ups, such as less sockets, but the A/V cable will still function effectively on these camcorders with only two of the outputs attached.

To plug the USB end into a computer, you will need to find a socket which matches your cable. USB portals can often be found on the front of a computer, as well as in the back of the machine itself.

Digitising Your Tape:



The way your tape is transferred onto a computer may vary, depending on the type of camcorder you are using and the specific software you have chosen. By using the capture feature on the software that came with your transfer cable, you will be able to record the playback from the camcorder directly onto a computer as a new video file. As video tapes were in use before the modern widescreen format, your captured video will appear in the older 4:3 aspect ratio format.

Useful Tips:

- Sometimes video tapes will have become undetectably damaged over time – if the image appearing is blurry and features moments of static, this is most likely from gradual deterioration and not from any software or cable error.
- When transferring your footage onto the computer, make sure the camcorder is set to playback mode and not record mode!
- When setting up your capture software, it's a good idea to double check the region code it will record your footage into. If this is not set to PAL or Region 2, your final digitised footage may not playback on your computer.

Further Information:

If you are interested in creating DVD copies of your digitised tapes or editing together your own montage videos from your footage, there are several free and simple editing tools available online:

- Windows Movie Maker for PC users
<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows-live/movie-maker>
- iMovie for Mac users
<https://www.apple.com/uk/mac/imovie/>