

FIELD GUIDE · STUDIO DESIGN SERIES

HOME STUDIO QUICK-START GUIDE

From Blank Room to Broadcast-Ready
in 30 Days

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YOU DON'T NEED A \$50K STUDIO

I've walked into a lot of "home studios." The pattern is almost always the same: someone spent three months researching cameras, dropped \$2,000 on a mirrorless body — and then they're filming in a bare room with a window behind them, using their laptop microphone, and wondering why they don't look professional.

Here's what I've learned after building studios for coaches, consultants, podcast hosts, and brand teams across the GTA: the camera is almost irrelevant. What matters is light, what's behind you, and whether the room sounds like a bathroom. Get those three things right and a \$400 phone will outperform a \$3,000 camera in a bad space.

This guide is for solopreneurs, coaches, consultants, and podcast hosts who want a production setup that looks credible — without hiring a construction crew or spending \$50K on a studio buildout. Two complete kits, clear layout rules, and the mistakes that will quietly kill your credibility before you hit record.

"The camera is the last thing that matters."

— WHAT I TELL EVERY CLIENT BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT GEAR

Everything in this guide is based on real setups I've designed in Toronto, Mississauga, and across the GTA. CAD pricing. No affiliate links. No fluff.

THE 5 NON-NEGOTIABLES

Before you buy a single piece of gear, understand these five pillars. Every studio decision — space selection, budget allocation, setup order — flows from these.

01 LIGHTING

Your single biggest impact on production quality. Period. A \$90 softbox in the right position will make a phone camera look cinematic. Bad lighting will make a \$3,000 camera look like webcam footage. Light is everything.

02 BACKGROUND

What's behind you tells the story before you speak. A thoughtful background communicates taste, expertise, and professionalism. A random bookshelf or blank white wall communicates that you didn't think about it.

03 AUDIO

People will tolerate bad video. They will not tolerate bad audio. If your room echoes, if your fan is audible, if you're three feet from your laptop mic — viewers will tune out in under 60 seconds. Audio is not optional.

04 CAMERA

Any modern camera with manual controls will do the job once the other four pillars are sorted. This includes most smartphones made in the last three years. Start here last, not first.

05 ACOUSTICS

Echoey rooms kill credibility faster than anything. Hard floors and bare walls create slap echo that makes even expensive microphones sound cheap. Budget for basic acoustic treatment before upgrading any other gear.

THE \$500 STARTER KIT

This is the kit I'd recommend to anyone just starting out who wants to look professional without overcommitting. Every item below is available on Amazon.ca. No exotic gear, no tricky setup.

ITEM	NOTES	CAD
Neewer 2-Light Softbox Kit	Key + fill, covers most setups	\$89
Blue Yeti USB Microphone	Plug-and-play, cardioid mode	\$129
Simple Fabric Backdrop + Stand	Muslin or polyester, grey or dark	\$45
Phone or Entry DSLR	You already own this	\$0
Acoustic Foam Panels (12-pack)	Place behind camera position first	\$67
Basic Ring Light (10-inch)	Eye-level fill for tight shots	\$40
Total		\$370 + tax

* Every item links to Amazon.ca in the digital version of this guide.

"Spend the first \$370 on the kit above. Spend the next \$630 on acoustic treatment and a good chair. You'll thank me."

THE \$2,000 SERIOUS KIT

This is the kit I spec for clients who are producing content consistently — at least 2–4 times per week — and need a setup that performs reliably shoot after shoot. This rig will outperform most agency setups I've walked into.

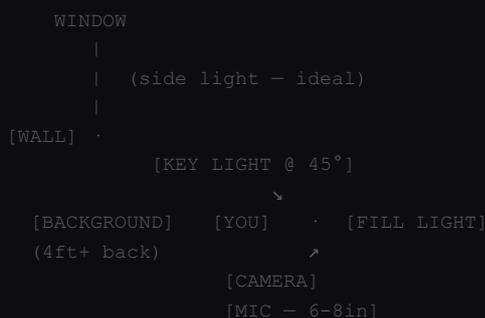
ITEM	NOTES	CAD
Godox SL60W Key Light	Bowens mount, 5600K daylight	\$210
Godox SL40W Fill Light	Softer fill, dimmable	\$140
Elgato Key Light Air	App-controlled rim/hair light	\$120
Rode PodMic USB	Broadcast-quality, cardioid dynamic	\$179
Sony ZV-E10 II Body	APS-C, vlog-optimized AF	\$799
16-50mm Kit Lens	Included with ZV-E10 II	\$0
Acoustic Panels + Bass Traps	Corner treatment + wall panels	\$180
Backdrop Stand System	Heavy-duty, adjustable width	\$95
Total		~\$1,723 + tax

* This kit will outperform most agency setups. Remaining budget goes to acoustic treatment and cable management.

WHERE TO PUT EVERYTHING

Gear placement matters as much as the gear itself. Five rules that apply to almost every room layout:

- 01 **Window to the SIDE, never behind you.** A window behind you creates a silhouette. A window to your side creates beautiful, free natural light. If you only have a window behind you, hang a blackout curtain and use your softbox instead.
- 02 **Key light at 45° angle, eye level.** Position your main light roughly 45 degrees to one side, at the height of your eyes or slightly above. This creates depth and dimension — the difference between looking "filmed" and looking flat.
- 03 **Background at least 4 feet behind you.** Distance between you and the background allows it to go slightly soft, adding separation and depth. Too close and everything looks flat and cramped.
- 04 **Microphone 6–8 inches from mouth, just out of frame.** The closer the mic, the better the sound and the lower the room ambience. Position it just below your chin or to one side, angled up toward your mouth.
- 05 **Nothing shiny behind you.** Glass, mirrors, glossy frames, and screens will catch your key light and create distracting reflections. Check your background on a monitor before every shoot.



THE 5 MISTAKES THAT KILL CREDIBILITY

I see these on repeat. Every single week. Fix these before you touch anything else.

01 **Filming with a window behind you**

Your camera exposes for the bright window, turning you into a silhouette. It looks like a witness protection interview. Move so the window is to your side, or blackout the window entirely and use controlled lighting.

02 **Laptop microphone**

The echo, the keyboard noise, the fan, the distance — it's all there. Viewers may not consciously notice bad audio in the first ten seconds, but they will feel the friction and click away. A \$39 USB mic is infinitely better than built-in laptop audio.

03 **Messy or generic background**

A shelf of random books, a blank white wall, or a visible pile of boxes communicates one thing: you didn't think about it. Your background is set design. It should be intentional. Even a simple dark wall with one plant beats chaos.

04 **Wrong white balance**

Mixing daylight (blue) from windows with tungsten (orange) from desk lamps creates color cast that no amount of editing fully fixes. Pick one light source type and set white balance manually in your camera. Auto white balance shifts during takes.

05 **Not treating echo**

Hard floors, bare walls, and glass surfaces bounce sound and create room resonance that sounds immediately amateur. Start with panels behind the camera position and in corners. Carpet, bookshelves, and heavy curtains all help.

// NEXT STEP

WANT ME TO DESIGN YOUR STUDIO?

This guide gives you the foundation. But every space is different — ceiling height, window placement, room acoustics, and your specific content format all affect the final design. If you want a studio that's professionally designed for your exact space and goals, here's how we work together:

Studio Assessment

Half-day on-site · Full diagnosis · Layout PDF · Equipment list · 100% credited toward next package

\$997 CAD

Full Studio Design

Complete blueprint + sourced gear list + lighting plan + acoustic treatment plan + 3 follow-up calls

\$2,997 CAD

Build & Launch

We build it, calibrate it, train your team · 90-day support · Monthly check-ins for 3 months

\$4,997 CAD

[BOOK A FREE 20-MINUTE CALL →](#)

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