Andrea Keiz, Illustrations by Brynjar Åbel Bandlien

Manual for Video Documentation of a Dance Class

Introduction

In this brief manual, I will address some questions about video documentation. They should help to clarify your intention to document, to set up the space for recording, and to find the best perspective to support your work. This proposal is aimed at teachers who want to evaluate their work. If you want to have recordings that you can use in order to publish your work, you should involve a professional video maker to receive a result that is representative.

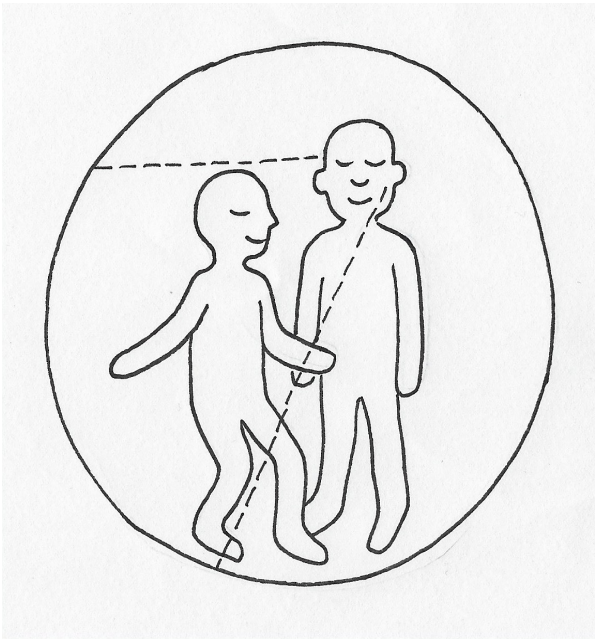
At the end of this contribution you will find a checklist, that you can take along to the studio to remind you of certain steps.

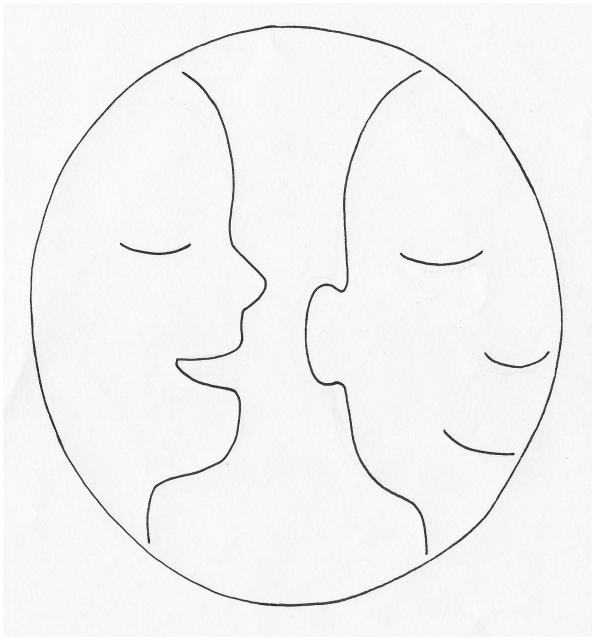
Before you start:

In teaching, documentation can address several aspects:

- What is the teacher doing?

- *What is the teacher saying?*





- How is the spatial organisation?

- What is the relation between teacher and student?

Are you close - are you distant?

Are you demonstrating?

Are you using touch in your teaching?

- What are the students doing?

- How is information transferred, when is the atmosphere changing?

- How to document/catch a very specific issue? How to make it visible?

- How to give a sense of the scope of the class, beginning, middle and end?

Make your choice:

Amongst all possible ways of documentation, video as a time based media makes it possible for you to receive a visual impression of the development in your class over a certain period of time.
I propose three chapters to elaborate on three basic ways to look at your class - the basic questions are repeated in each chapter, so that you can decide to go directly to chapter A, B or C.

You want to document your Class with Video

- because you want to have a reference of your teaching for your own evaluation (Your “performance” as a teacher):

go to A

- because you want to to see how students incorporate your exercises and proposals: (Transmission of knowledge)

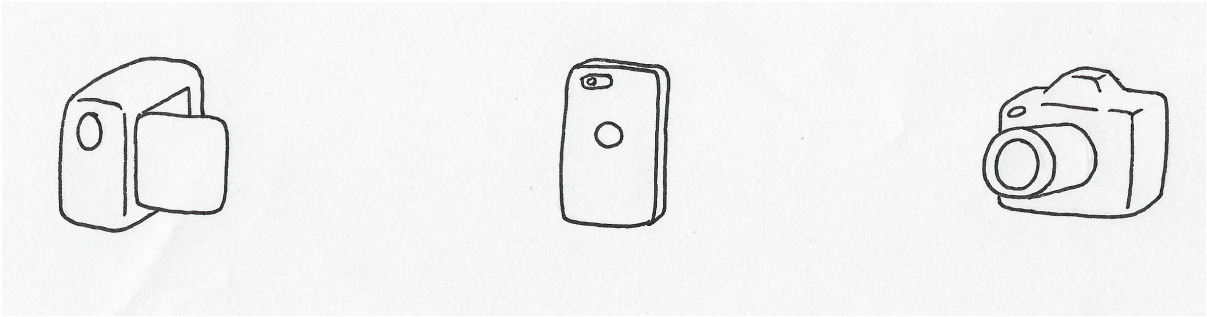
go to B

- because you want to get feedback from a participant as a reference to your work (Individual perception as a source for further inspiration)

go to C

A: You want to have a look at your verbal, physical and vocal input as a teacher along a single class or a series of classes:

For recording, use the tool you have, a computer with an internal or external webcam, a smartphone, an action cam, or a camcorder.

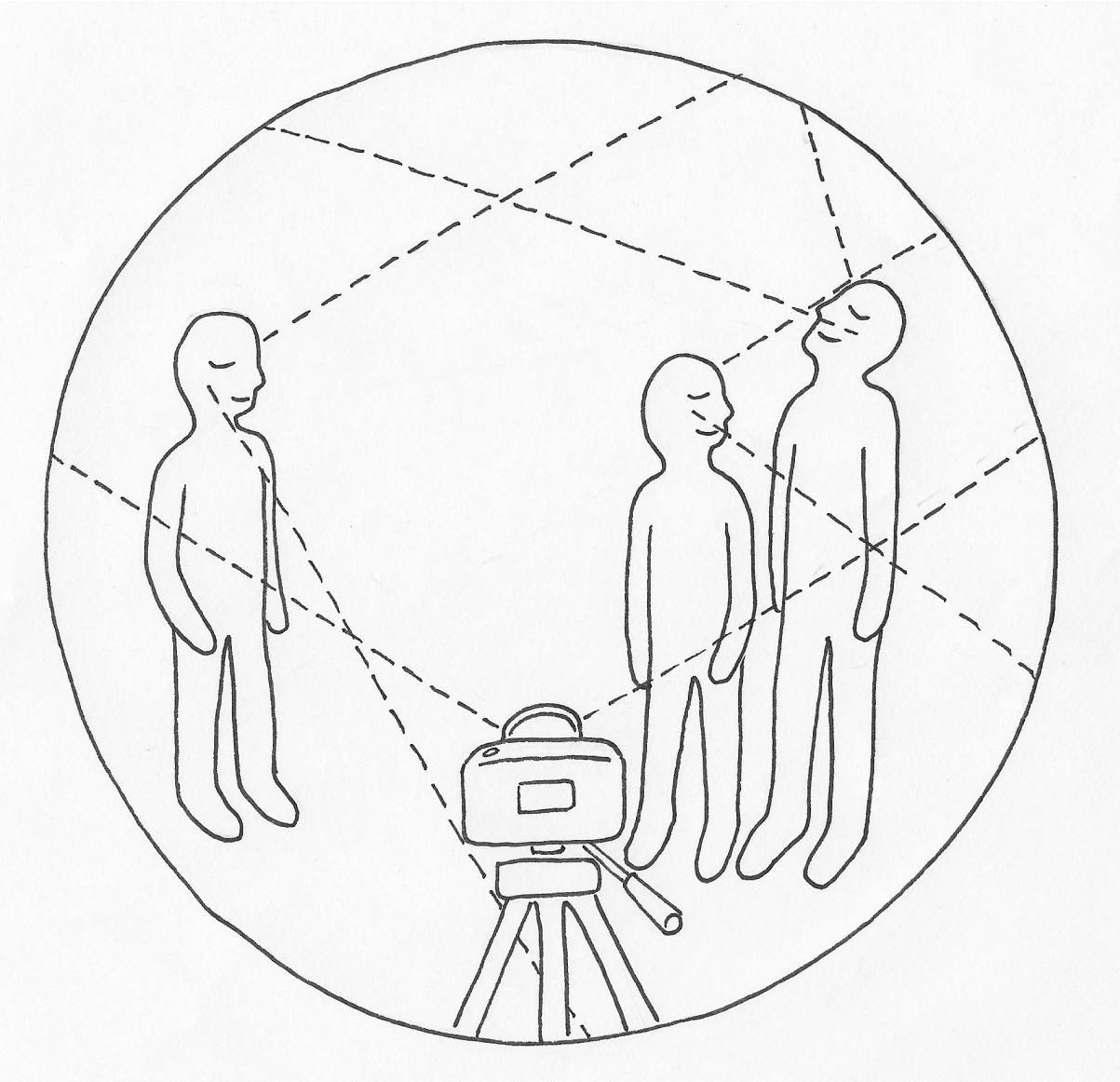


(Watch out if you use a conventional DSLR camera; it might have a recording restriction of 13 min, then you have to restart.)

If you use a camcorder, action cam, smartphone, or a DSLR camera, make sure you have a stand to adjust them so that it is stable and safe. If you want to leave it standing without an operator during class you don't want it to be run over.

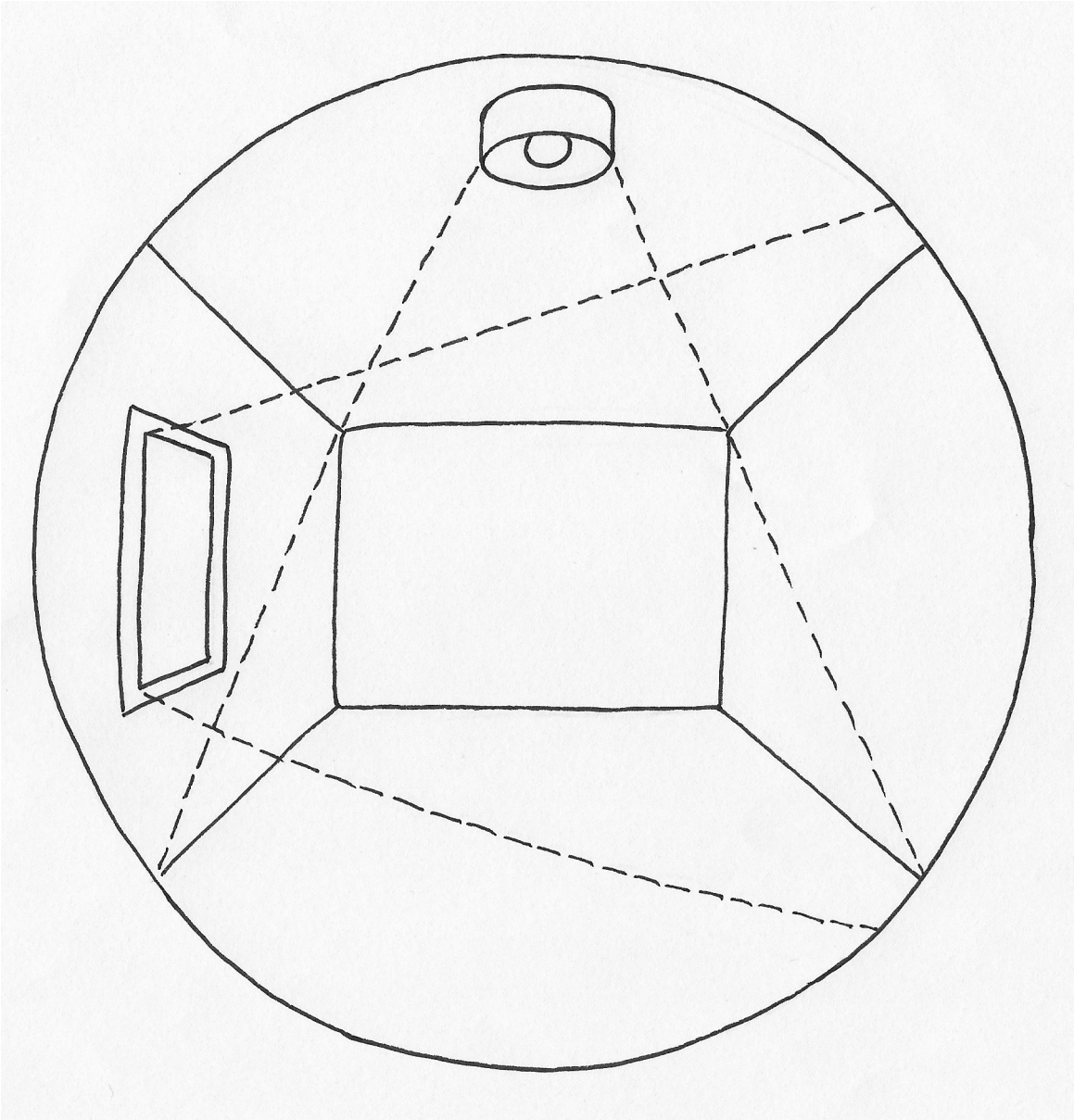
Have a look at the **space** you work in. Use the recording device to look through and check the frame according to the various perspectives.
You want to be visible and audible on the video:

- Do you have a habitual place in space where you are teaching from?
- Are you moving a lot through space?
- Do you want to show the perspective of the students?



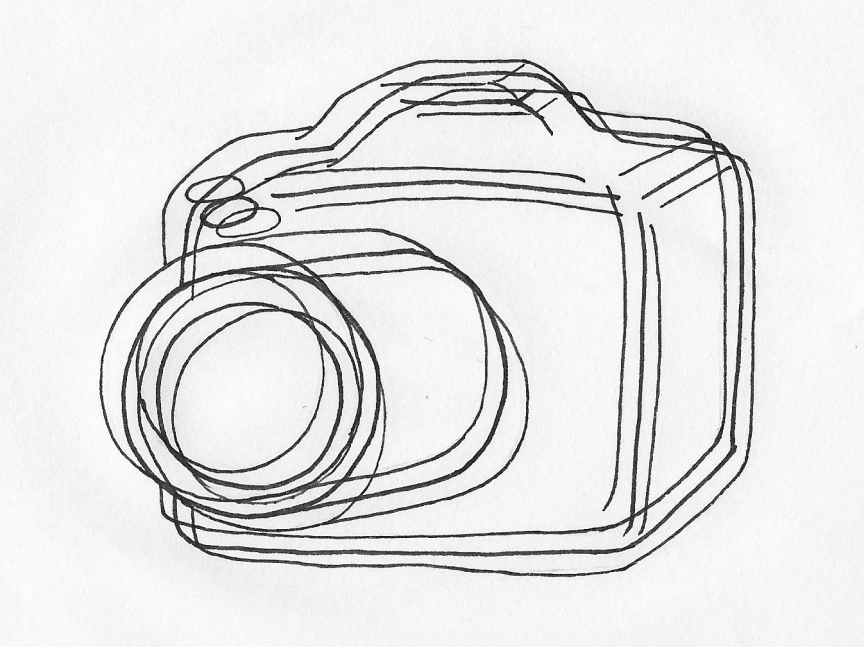
Check the **light**ing situation: Light from the windows or mirrors might affect the way you have to tune the aperture of your camera. The automatic aperture is measuring the average amount of light that strikes the lens. There is no differentiation between an “important” and “not important” part of the image. If there are windows you might need to switch to manual aperture in order to make the space and yourself visible. To do so, place a body in front of the camera, zoom in on the body and switch to manual aperture. Then you zoom out again. Outside of the windows might be overexposed now as a compromise.

- Is there enough light on your body in the space?
- Are there mirrors in space? Do they confuse the image?



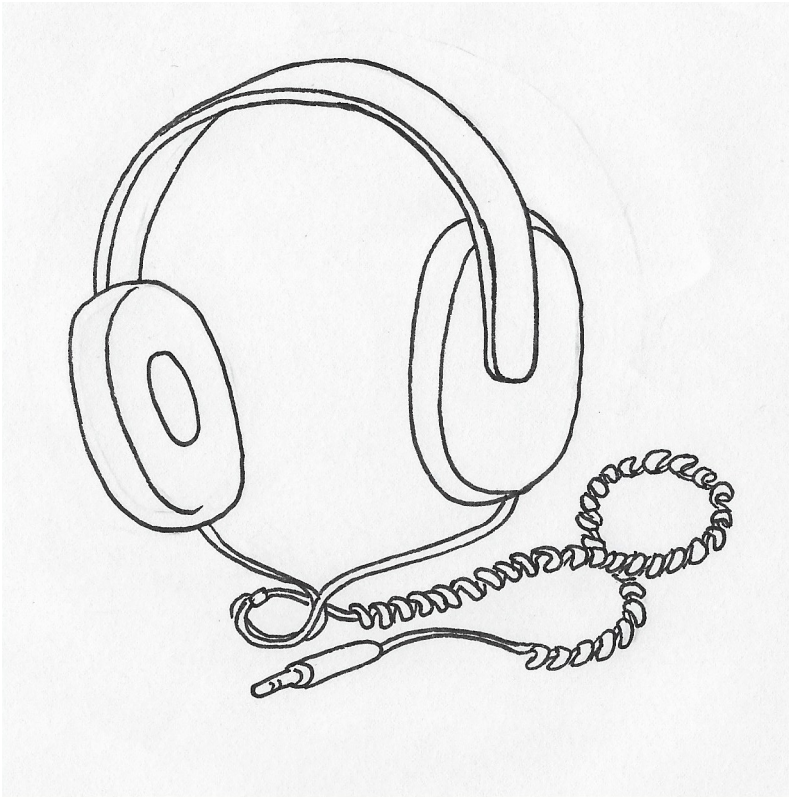
Focus: The quality of the automatic focus of your camera might ask you to switch to manual focus. Autofocus mostly operates on objects in the center of the image. If there is no structure in the space, if you have a plain unicolored wall the autofocus will start to “pump” in order to find a structure to focus on. Furthermore if your class is very dynamic it might be better to choose a manual focus on an average distance to the camera.

- How does the autofocus of your camera react to movement in space or to an empty frame?



Audio recording: The built in microphones of your device might not be sufficient to record your verbal instructions. Make sure to use headphones to listen to the quality and level of the audio recording of your device. Sometimes an additional sound recorder is needed.

- How is the sound in/of the space?
- Is your voice recorded well on the device you use?
- Are you using music? Does this affect the audibility of your voice recording? (If yes you want to consider to have a voice recorder on your body.)

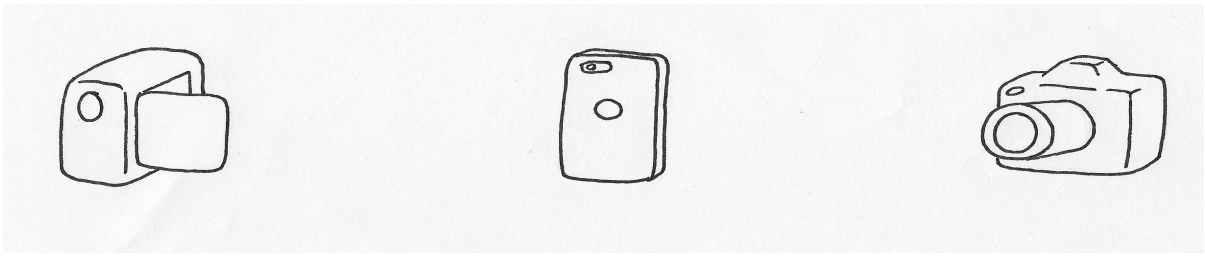


Choose a position for the recording device. When you set it up - be aware of the possible movement of the participants in space. Tell the participants that you record for your own evaluation. If people don't agree to be videotaped, find a way to respect that wish.
Make sure that you start voice recording and image before you start class. If you record on separate tools a clap recorded with all devices can help to align sound and picture afterwards.

If you are planning to use the recording later on your website or a public platform, be aware of the legal rights according to privacy and music rights in your country.

B: You want to to see how students embody and transfer your exercises and proposals:

For recording use the tool you have, a computer with an internal or external webcam, a smartphone, an action cam, or a camcorder.



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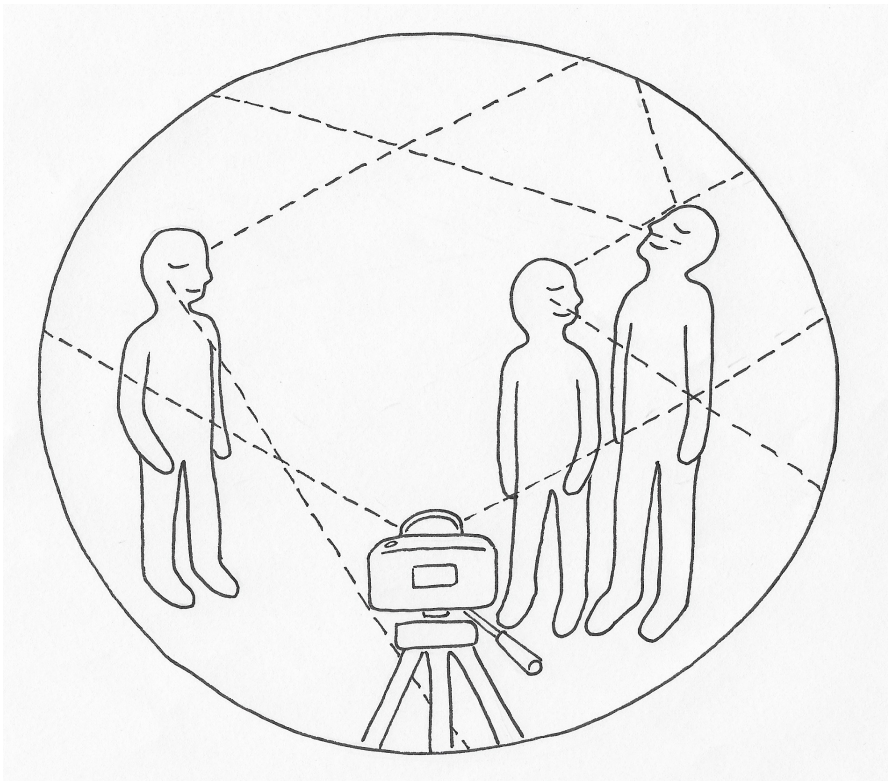
If you use a camcorder, action cam, smartphone or a DSLR camera, make sure you have a stand to adjust it so that it is stable and safe. If you want to leave it standing without an operator during class you don't want it to be run over.

Have a look at the **space** you work in. Use the recording device to look through and check the frame according to the various perspectives. Find the best position for the camera to catch the reaction of the students to your input. Decide if you want to record the whole group or a specific perspective.

- From which place do you have a good view on the space students will occupy?
- Are you teaching frontal, in a circle, or all over the space?
- On the floor, standing, changing levels....?



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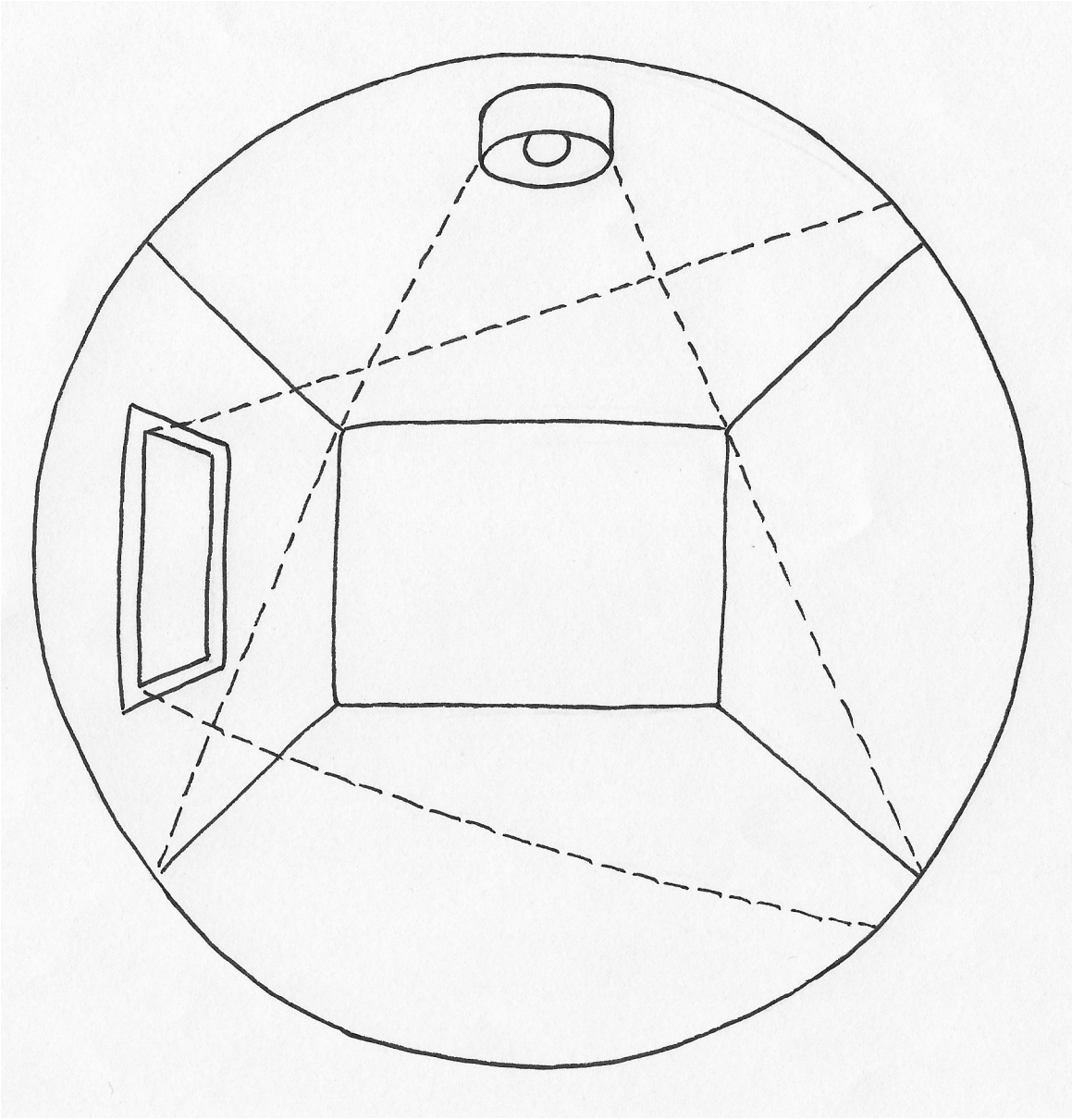

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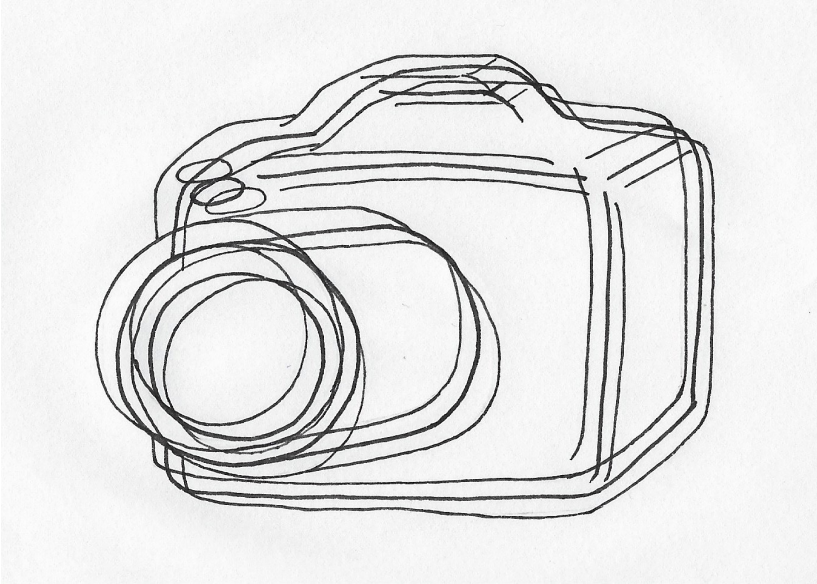
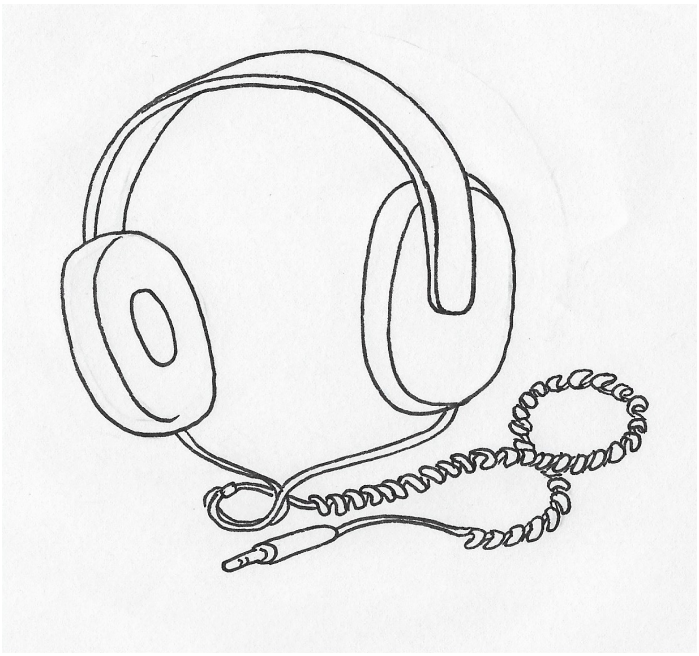


Audio recording: The built in microphones of your device might not be sufficient to record your verbal instructions. Make sure to use headphones to listen to the quality and level of the audio recording of your device. Sometimes an additional sound recorder is needed. If you are interested in verbal feedback of the participants think of using an external voice recorder that you can place close to their voices.

- How is the sound in/of the space?
- Is your voice recorded well on the device you use?
- Are you using music? Does this affect the audibility of your voice recording? (If yes, you want to consider to have a voice recorder on your body.)
- Is verbal feedback of students part of your work? Do you want to catch the content?



Choose a position for the recording device. Set up the device - be aware of the possible movement of the participants in space. Tell the participants that you record for your own evaluation. If people don't agree to be videotaped respect that wish.
If you want to use the material for more than your personal evaluation, take care of the legal rights of the participants and the rights of music according to the laws of your country.

Make sure that you start voice and image recording before you start class. If you record on separate tools, a clap recorded with all devices can help to align sound and picture afterwards.

C: You want to have a documentation from a participant's perspective

Documentation from the perspective of a participant can add interesting information on how your class is perceived. This can feed back to your teaching and create new inspiration.
Ask someone who is comfortable in dealing with technology and movement at the same time to take a camera along during the class. Give her or him the freedom to catch what is of their interest. Encourage the subjectivity of documentation.
The device they take along through the class should be easy to handle. The settings should be done at the beginning and then kept throughout the whole class.

Light from the windows or mirrors might affect the way you have to tune the aperture of your camera. The automatic aperture is measuring the average amount of light that strikes the lens. There is no differentiation between an "important" and "not important" part of the image. If there are windows you might need to switch to a manual aperture in order to make the space and the participants visible. To do so, place a body in front of the camera, zoom in on the body and switch to manual aperture. Then you zoom out again. Outside the windows might be overexposed as a compromise.

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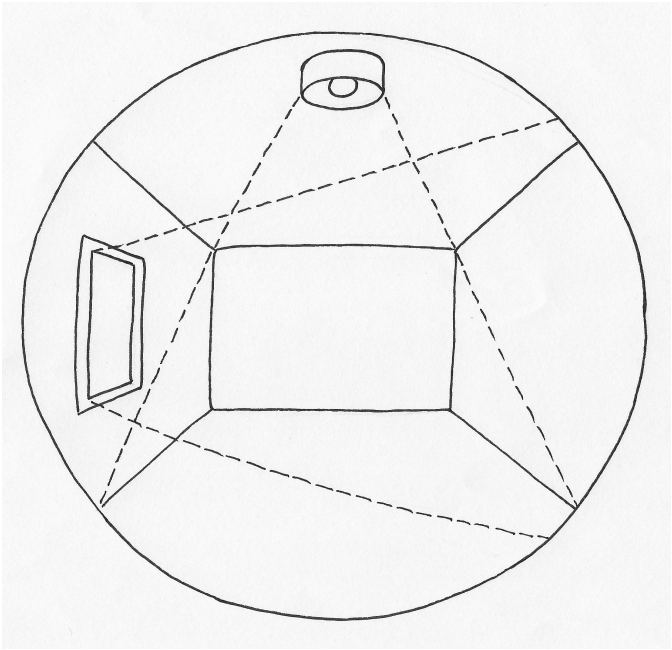

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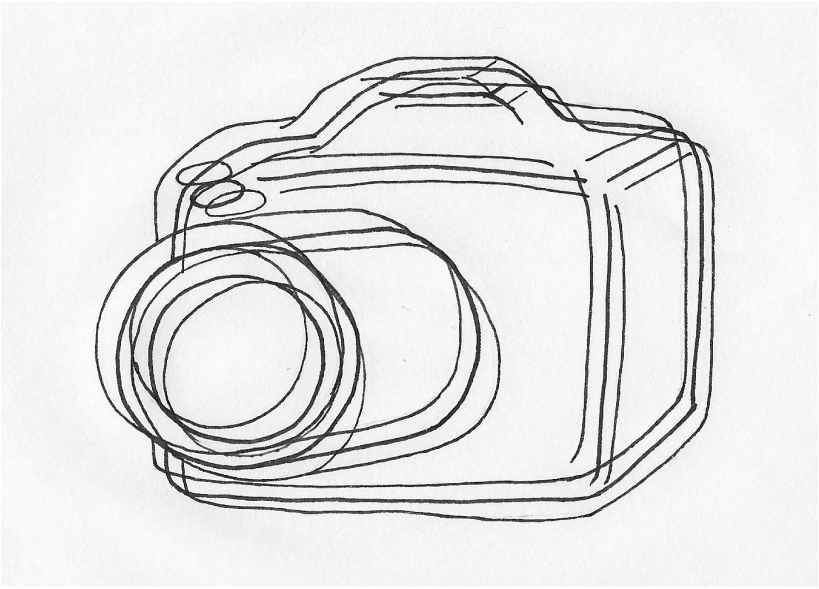
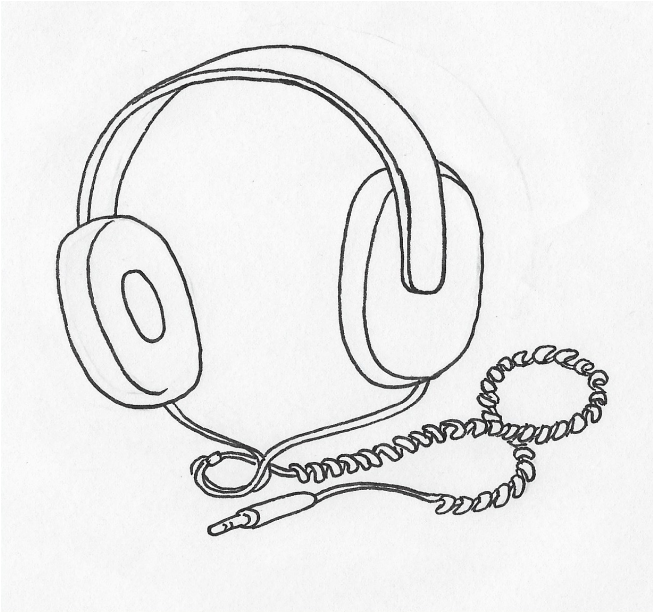


Audio recording: The built in microphones of your device might not be sufficient to record your verbal instructions. As well as in the case of a subjective handheld recording you will hear the touch as noise on the camera. If you want to have a recording of your instruction in addition to what the participant is focusing on, make sure to have a voice recorder on you. That also gives the freedom to the participant not to feel responsible for a “proper” recording of the instructions.

- Are you using an additional voice recorder?



Make sure that you start voice and image recording before you start class. If you record on separate tools, a clap recorded with all devices can help to align sound and picture afterwards.

Before you start recording ask the participants for permission to be recorded for your own evaluation. If people don’t agree to be videotaped respect that wish.
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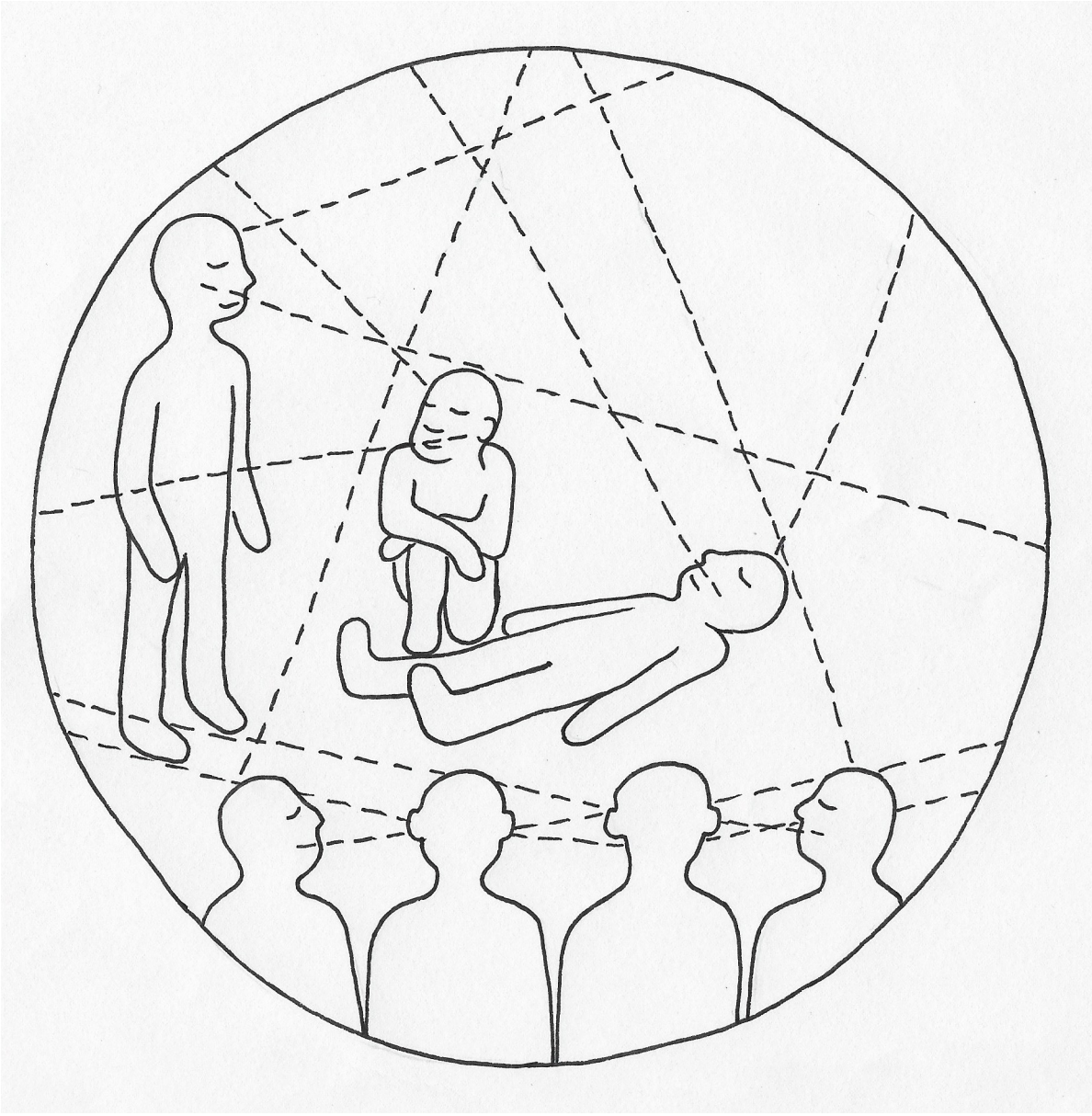

General checklist for video documentation in class

Image:

- Setup of recording device
    - Charge battery or bring cables to plug in (only possible if the cable does not cause danger for the movement).
    - Format card before you start.
    - Reset timecode if needed.
    - Decide on recording format (low resolution – more hours/ high resolution less hours):
        - to be decided in consequence of how the material will be used.
    - Decide on focus:
        - manual/ auto
    - Decide on aperture:
        - manual/ auto
- Save material after finishing on a computer or external hard drive.

Tripod

- A tripod that is used without operator has to be stable and heavy enough not to move when there is dynamic movement in space. For smaller devices you can also use flexible mini-tripods which you can fix anywhere in space.

Sound

- Check the quality of the built-in microphone in your device
- Additional sound recorder:
    - charge battery (at home)
- External microphone:
    - Check if it needs a battery (some microphones use the power of the camera, others have a battery included).
    - Connect the microphone either to the camera or to the sound recorder.
    - Wireless microphone for the teaching person can help, especially if the position of the teacher is changing in relation to the camera during class.
    - If you use an external voice recorder: start recording, make a clap. The peak of the clap helps you to align sound and image in the editing.
    - Always use headphone to test the quality of the sound