

Hollywood in Your Classroom:


Using your digital camera to create **blue screen** effects!

Note: This tip sheet is for using a Sony digital video-camera with memory-stick.

Would you like to turn your ordinary classroom into a "high-tech" Hollywood Studio? You don't need to be a computer genius. All you need is a Sony digital video-camera (with memory-stick), a DVD iMac, and iMovie. With these tools you can use a process called "blue screening" to send your students back in time, into outer space, or under the deep blue sea.


The process is called **blue screening** because the special effects are created by filming your subject in front of a blue background. (*Your Sony manual calls this a blue scheme.*) In Hollywood they use expensive sets, painted a specific shade of blue (or sometimes green). For our purposes, however, bright blue chart paper will do the trick.

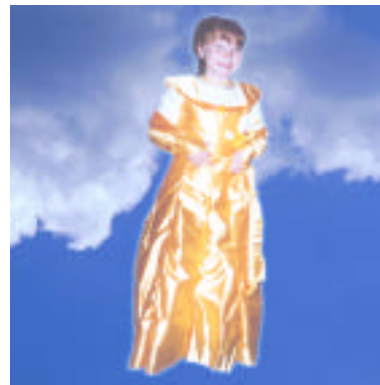
What is it? There are two basic types of blue-screen effects are called *foreground effects* and *background effects*.

 **Foreground effects:** With this special effect you can "float" a still picture on top of your moving image. This can be used to create an underwater effect or to frame your moving image.



Foreground Effect: The subject appears to be inside the castle. The castle is still while the actress is moving and talking.

 **Background effects:** This special effect is the opposite of the foreground effect. Here, you have a still picture behind your moving image. This can be used to create elaborate backdrops for your actors.



Background effect: The subject moves in front of a still picture. In this case, as the actress moves around, she appears to be floating in the clouds.

Here's how...

Step 1: Creating your still picture. Your still picture can come from any source. You can use pictures from the Internet, scanned images, computer drawings, or digital photographs. To make sure that your picture fills the screen, scale it to 800 x 600 pixels.



For the foreground effect: Fill in anyplace you want the movie to show through with bright blue.



For the background effect: Use any picture or photo. The actors will float on top of this.

Step 2: Get your still image onto your memory stick. You can print out the picture and take a still shot of it. However, you may not get a very clear image. A better method is:

1. Import the image into iMovie. (It must be a .jpg or .pct) [Ⓜ I]
2. Move the image into your movie timeline. Make sure the duration is at least 5 seconds.
3. Connect your digital camera to the computer using the firewire port.
4. Turn on the camera and set to **VTR**. Export the movie to the camera. [Ⓜ E] Your image will record onto the tape.
5. Play back the tape. Pause the image. Click the **Photo** button.

Your image should now be stored on the memory stick. You can check by setting the camera to **Memory** and playing back the still images.

Step 3: Filming with Special Effects. Set the camera to **Camera** and turn it on. You will use the following camera controls:

- **Memory Mix:** Push the button to turn on/off the memory mix features.
- **Memory +/-:** Push the + and/or - buttons to scroll through pictures on your memory stick.
- **Sel/Push Exec:** Scroll the dial to change modes. Push the dial to select a mode. Scroll the dial (after selecting) to adjust the level of the effect.

For Foreground effects:

1. Press the **Memory Mix** button to start the effects.
2. Press the **Memory +** or **Memory -** button to select the picture you want.
3. Use the **Sel/Push Exec** dial to choose **M. Chrome**.
4. Push the **Sel/Push Exec** dial select the **M. Chrome** effect.

Your actors do not need to stand in front of a blue screen. The blue area of the still image will be erased and swapped with the moving image. You may have to turn the dial to adjust the level or strength of the effect.

Tips:

- Plan your shots carefully and use a tripod to keep your camera shots steady.
- Remember, the background behind the actors will show up in the video, so make sure it matches your scene.

For Background effects:

1. Press the **Memory Mix** button to start the effects.
2. Press the **Memory +** or **Memory -** button to select the picture you want.
3. Use the **Sel/Push Exec** dial to choose **C. Chrome**.
4. Push the **Sel/Push Exec** dial select the **C. Chrome** effect. You may have to turn the dial to adjust the level or strength of the effect.

Your actors should be standing in front of a bright blue screen. When you start recording, anything that is bright blue will not be captured on film. The still image will show up behind it, creating the effect.

Tips:

- Plan your shots carefully and use a tripod to keep your camera shots steady.
- Actors should not wear blue or colors that are near blue. That will interfere with the effect. You can create "creepy" effects by covering parts of the body in blue.
- In general, shoot above the feet. Your illusion will be diminished if the floor is showing.
- Make sure the entire background is filled with the blue screen. A piece of wall or other object will interfere with the effect.
- Pay attention to proportion and how distance effects proportion.

***These effects
are easy and
fun!
They will convert
your school movie
into a
blockbuster hit!***



*Proportion and distance:
The castle is far in the
distance, so it looks smaller.
The tree is much closer, and
the branches are large and
loom out of the shot.*