DIY video onlines

We're going to make a big leap of faith and assume you have computer hardware with enough processing power (Chapter 10, "Building a Workstation") and editing software (Chapter 11, "Non-linear Editing Software") to play back full-size, full-motion video. If you didn't capture your video carefully the first time, you'll need to recapture to get the best quality video into your project (Chapter 13, "Preparing to Edit"). If your editing software doesn't offer control of video levels, you should rent a hardware waveform monitor and vectorscope for a day to help you recapture your footage.

If your source tapes were analog and you're planning to transfer to film, you should redigitize the tapes uncompressed to get the best quality possible. Whether you're working on digital or analog video, be sure that all of your digital effects shots are in place and rendered at the best quality possible. Finally, you should rent a DVCAM, DVCPro, or Digital Betacam VTR for a day to record your master videotape. This will set you back about $200 to $900. Refer to Chapter 12, "Editing Hardware," if you have more hardware questions, and Chapter 13, "Preparing to Edit," for detailed instructions on capturing online quality video.

Presentation Values

If you do your own online and dubs, be sure to create professional–looking tape labels for tapes that you are sending out. 3M and Avery create blank laser printable tape labels for all sizes of videotapes. For VHS, get plain cardboard or plastic boxes. Tape labels should include the following information: production company, producer/director's name and contact info, project title, date, total run time (TRT), and format.

Preparing Your Sequence for Output

Before you output your video, you need to prepare your sequence. Make sure you've replaced all temporary footage and proxies with the real thing. If your project is longer than the available master tapes for your videotape format, you'll need to break your sequence into two parts. Be sure to make these breaks at a hard cut, not at a dissolve. You also need to determine whether you'll be outputting your audio or doing it as a separate pass. See the section "The Final Audio Mix" later in this chapter for more about preparing and mixing audio for outputs.

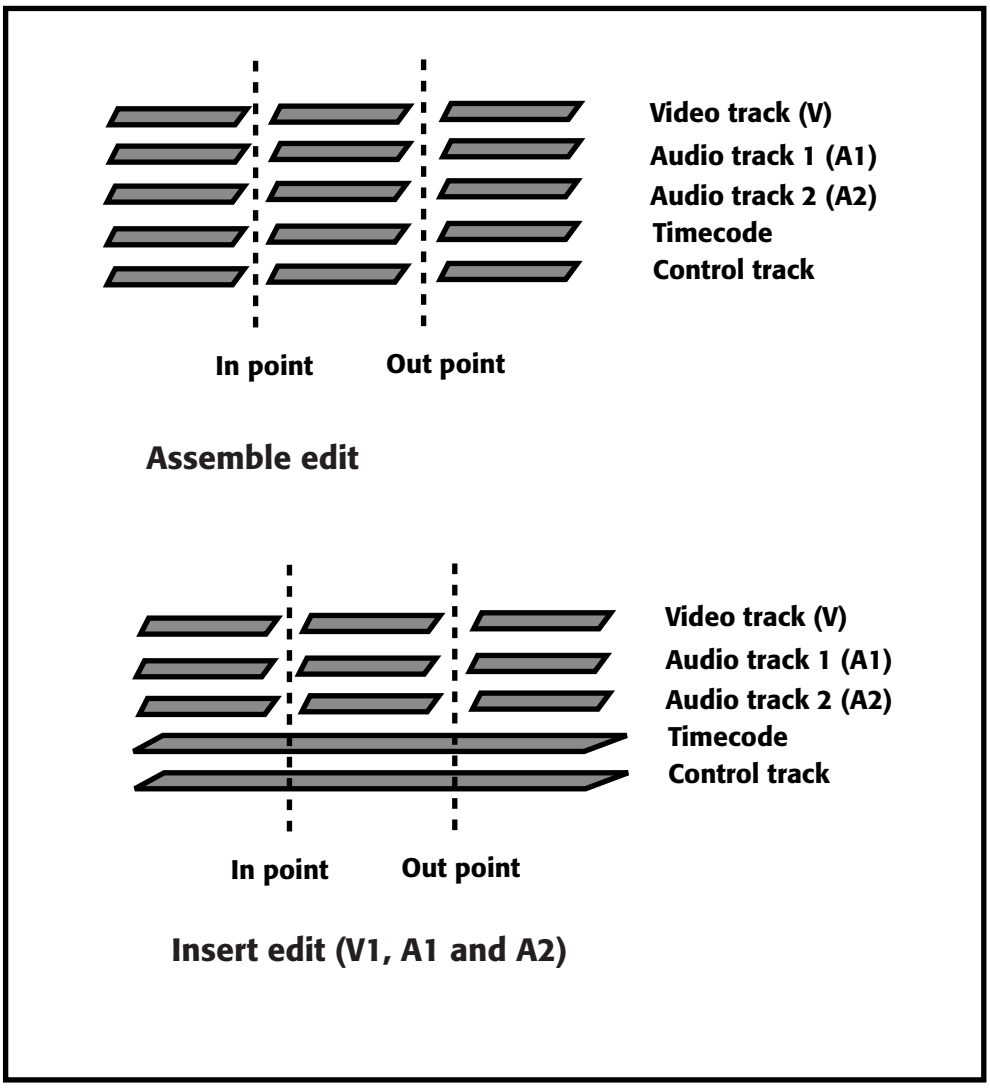
Head Room

Avoid using the first minute or two of the videotape for your project. This is the part of the tape that is most prone to physical damage. Instead, cover the head of the tape with bars and tone followed by a head slate and a countdown. Most videotapes are a minute or two longer than their stated length, so don't worry about wasting a little tape.

Insert versus Assemble Edits

There are two different ways to make an edit onto videotape: *assemble* edits and *insert* edits. A typical piece of videotape consists of several tracks: the video track, two to four audio tracks, an address track for timecode, and a control track. The control track contains sync pulses that indicate where each frame starts and ends.

An assemble mode edit records over all the tracks on the tape including the control track. When you stop recording in assemble mode, a short break results in the control track (see Figure 18.4). In this break or hole there is no video signal, no audio signal, no timecode, and no control track. The result is an image that we've all come to know as "snow" on our television sets. Assemble edits tend to be frame accurate at the in-point, but not at the out-point. If you are planning to lay off your entire sequence to tape in one pass, there's nothing wrong with using an assemble edit. In fact, if you're going out to a DV format, you won't have a choice, as DV decks provide only assemble editing and aren't capable of frame accuracy unless you're using RS-422 deck control (see Chapter 12). However, if you need to lay off your project in more than one pass, you need to be certain that you set the in-point of your second edit *before* the hole in the control track. In addition, be aware that you have to lay off your passes sequentially. When assemble editing, you cannot go back and insert one piece of video *before* another without damaging your control track.



18.4

FIGURE

18.4 Assemble editing versus insert editing.

Black and Coding

Before you output using an insert edit, you should start with a tape that's been "blacked and coded." Set the timecode start at 00:58:30:00 and send a black signal from your black burst generator into your VTR. Press Record and let the VTR record timecode and black video onto the duration of the tape. This process ensures a stable video signal and timecode starting at 1:00:00:00 a minute and a half into the tape.

Insert edits offer much more control than assemble edits do. With insert edits, you can record over any track except the address track and control track. To make an insert edit, you need to start with a tape that's already striped with a control track and timecode (*black and coded* tape). Naturally, you need a VTR that's capable of making insert edits as well. Make a three-point edit by setting an in and out on your edited sequence and an in-point on the record deck. You can choose to output just the video track, just the audio tracks, or all three. If you plan to make lots of short edits onto tape, insert editing is the way to go. You won't have to worry about breaks in the control track, and you can easily make changes to things you've already output to tape.

Watch Your Output!

It might sound silly, but many people don't watch their output as they're recording. By the time you get to the point of outputting your master, you've probably watched your project hundreds of times. This time, forget about story, pacing, and other concerns, and just watch the video images. Look for drop-outs, glitches, and other inconsistencies.

Protection Copies

In addition to creating a textless master, it's a good idea to make more than one copy of your final master. Either you can do two outputs from your computer, or, if your master is digital, have it cloned at a post-production facility.