

12.

Educational Films and Slides

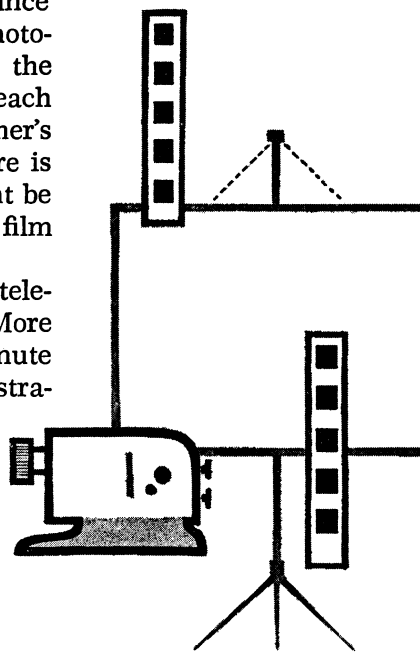
Pointers on planning
and producing them

IN THE FIRST EDITION of this book (1949), more attention and more pages were devoted to educational slides and motion picture films as teaching aids than to filmstrips. Since then, the filmstrip has become increasingly important. And more and more business home economists find themselves working on the preparation of this type of visual aid.

Homemaking supervisors and teachers appreciate a good filmstrip for several reasons. Since the film consists of a series of close-up photographs ("frames") which are enlarged on the screen, everyone in the classroom can see each operation as if she were standing at the teacher's elbow. And since the pictures are "stills" there is time for everyone to observe details that might be lost in a platform demonstration or a movie film presentation.

A lot of action and information can be telescoped into small space and short time. More ground can be covered effectively in a 20-minute filmstrip than in a 40-minute "live" demonstra-

*The filmstrip spotlights
practical homemaking
information, setting it aglow
with life and color.*



LENGTH

To make the showing of an educational filmstrip really educational, it must be introduced by the teacher, and the showing must be followed by discussion to clinch the points made. To fit all this into a 40 to 50 minute class period, running time for the filmstrip itself should not exceed 18 to 20 minutes.

CAPTIONS

In some filmstrips each photograph (i.e., frame) has a brief caption lettered on it, which helps the students get the point of the picture clearly and quickly. Such captions must fit the space allowed, and still say something!

The filmstrip does lack one advantage that a good platform demonstration has — the personality and enthusiasm of the “live” home economist. This lack must be made up for in the quality of the pictures and the wording, and in the enthusiasm of the teacher presenting the film.

tion. Sharply focused, the filmstrip can omit non-essentials, emphasize essentials . . . bright with color and light, it gives a touch of excitement to unexciting subjects . . . simple to transport and to show, it can be worked into a school homemaking program at the most suitable and convenient time . . . and — highly important from the education standpoint — it can be previewed before being shown to classes, in order to make sure that desirable techniques are demonstrated.

Where Do You Begin?

When you, a business home economist, are first confronted with the responsibility of planning and producing a filmstrip, the assignment seems formidable. But when you realize that it is after all a matter of presenting a demonstration in pictures rather than in person, you’re ready to go to work.

If you haven’t been assigned a specific subject in advance, you will probably proceed somewhat in this order.

Since this is to be a teaching aid — or, rather, a learning aid — you ask yourself, “What would homemaking teachers and supervisors like to have their students learn about using the product that I am concerned with?”

You jot down several possible subjects that could be presented in pictorial lessons. Some of these you realize are too broad in scope to cover adequately within the limitations of 40 or so frames and 18 to 20 minutes running time that is recommended. (“Salads,” for example, would be entirely too inclusive; but “Bowl Salads” or “Molded Salads” would be quite possible. “Making a Dress” would probably be too broad as a subject for a filmstrip — but “Buttons and Buttonholes” might make sense.)

Even while you are considering subjects and titles, you are mentally running through the possible steps that should be shown under each one, and estimating how many frames would be needed.

Having come to some conclusions and outlined them on paper, you discuss them with your own executive director. (Isn't it amazing what good ideas and judgment men have about home-making subjects?) Then you are ready to ask a few representative homemaking supervisors and teachers in your territory if they will give you their frank opinions on your tentative plans.

Guided and fortified by the generous suggestions of your consultants, you are ready to work out a more definite and detailed outline of the projected filmstrip. You decide on the subheads that belong under your general title. Under each of these you list the series of steps which you feel should be given and can be pictured under each subhead. While you are visualizing those pictured steps, and the occasional glamour display shots that may be called for, you'll be wise to "rough out" tentative captions for them, and make notes of points that should be covered in words in the accompanying voice commentary.

You have to do all of these more or less simultaneously, weighing, juggling, mentally struggling, until finally everything falls into an orderly and logical arrangement. And, to your amazement, you'll find you come out with just about the right number of frames! Now more conferring will probably be in order, to make sure that you are still on the right track.

Once the job is defined and the action steps visualized and organized, the hardest part of the work is actually done. True, there still remains that small matter of setting up 40 or more photographs. But it is a concrete job to do, and if you have had any experience in photography you

SHOW OF HANDS

Most filmstrips are smoother if only hands, rather than full-figure models are used. Hand pictures can be shot faster, make better close-ups, and are less distracting to the viewers. A filmstrip for use at high school level should feature young-looking hands.

know how to approach it. If you haven't, an experienced home economics consultant will probably be called in to work with you.

Sketch Out Those "Frames"

ON WRITING SKITS AND SCRIPTS

In both, the big thing is to get across one central idea, play up one central character. First decide what these are to be, then build your story step by step. Work it out simply and directly, keeping the central idea always in mind. See those steps as pictures. When you learn to *think* pictorially you can *write* pictorially!

You will probably find it helpful and time-saving if you make a rough sketch of just what is to be shown in each frame. Suggest the action. List supplies, utensils, and other props that may be needed. Note what colors are to be featured in each sequence. Figure how to heighten and brighten the color impact.

A conference with the photographer at this stage will help settle such problems as best order of shooting, choice of model, table tops and wall backgrounds, etc. He will show you just what the working space — the photographic field — will be. (Incidentally, since he will be working on a budget of both time and money, it may be necessary to plan to do 10 or more setups a day.)

When it comes to actual shooting, avoid showing the package or trade name of your product too obtrusively or too often. Omit confused backgrounds and extra accessories. Get the camera right down into the action. Let the hands tell the story. Think twice before showing more than hands — faces and figures tend to distract. Avoid apron designs that carry the eyes of the viewer away from the action. Keep the pictures clean and "lean."

When the photographing has been completed, forget it for a day or two. By the time the photographer has a finished set of slides to show you, you will be ready to appraise them. Now your work narrows down into writing the captions and commentary. Yes, you will probably have written preliminary copy for both, but more writing and rewriting will be necessary to put the important points across in the space allowed.

If it has been decided that titles and captions will be lettered on the frames, a skilled typographer will be called on to set the words in type so that they can be transferred to the slides. But first *you* have to write those words! That requires arithmetic as well as writing. You'll be given a sample of type showing the exact character count (letter count) for those words in the one or two lines of caption space allowed — and you must write to fit that space.

Eventually — if not sooner — you must do the finished commentary. This may be handled vocally on a sound track; or it may be printed, for the teacher to read aloud as she operates the projector. In either case, the comment on each frame should be brief. If the remarks accompanying one frame run long (that is, much over 30 seconds), an extra frame should probably have been included.

Here again it's well to get the advice of your teacher-consultants before the commentary is printed or recorded. You will want to get their views, too, about the material to be distributed to the students.

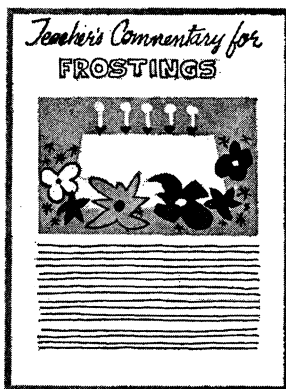
Educational Motion Pictures

Although many educational motion pictures based on homemaking material are used on television and in classrooms, most of them are written and produced by film companies. Whatever the home economist does is done under the direction of the producer. Aside from utilizing her technical skills, she has few responsibilities other than to follow orders, to make suggestions when they are pertinent to the success of the picture, and to cooperate in every way possible.

When and if you, a home economist, are involved in planning, writing, and following through on a motion picture, a good rule to fol-

FILM FOLLOW-UPS

Most educational films and slides need a follow-up — something tangible that students can see or read or use after the film is finished. That follow-up can be in the form of posters, charts, displays, leaflets, or booklets. In the commercial home economics film, material of that sort is prepared by the business home economist. If such a task falls to you, make that follow-up a clincher or condensation of the central theme of the film. But make it a unit in itself, so that it is usable with or without the accompanying film.



FILMSTRIP COMMENTARY

The teachers' commentary illustrated here is a 12-page folder, done in notebook size ($8\frac{1}{2}$ " x 11"). On cover of folder (see layout sketch) space has been allowed to set forth aims of filmstrip. On subsequent pages each frame is reproduced with a paragraph of discussion for the teacher to read aloud while that frame is being shown. Note that some paragraphs are quite brief, others longer — but none run longer than 70 words. (Reproduced by permission of C and H Sugar Corporation.)

low is to keep plot, plan, and pictures as simple as possible.

Looking To the Future

What will be the future of educational filmstrips? Will those to be used in television call for new techniques? How about preparing such visuals for use in foreign countries where home economics is just being established? Will the time come when a homemaker can take out filmstrips from the public library just as she now takes out books? Will supermarket home economists use filmstrips to show shoppers how to use new household products?

Do not tune in five years from now to see what has happened. Instead, tune into tomorrow right now! Project your own thinking into the future, and have a part in its making.

