

Green Screening Live People into Your Video

"Green Screening" is how you insert a live person into a photo still or short video clip. It's the hardest video editing task I've encountered! Yet still I try...

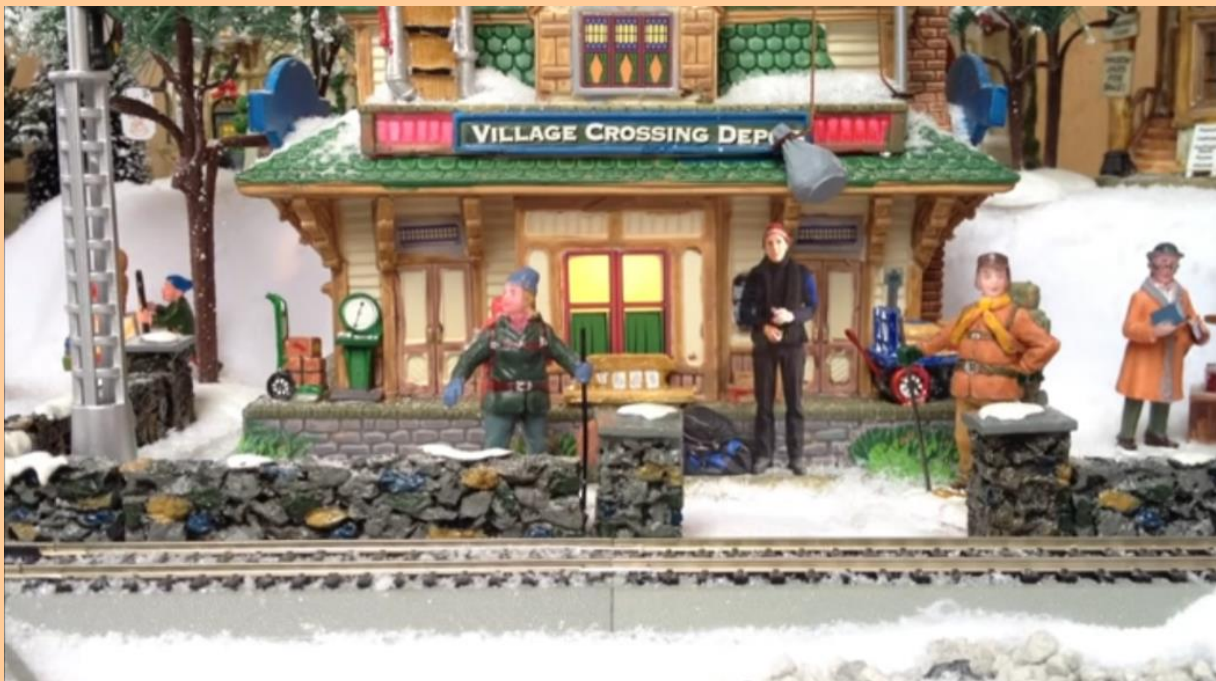
The first time I saw green screening inside a Christmas village video was:

Steve's Xmas Village 2013 (8:27)

Steve F

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkU-4AA3xXU&t=150s>

Steve put himself in his own video at the 2:18 mark, waiting for the train at the local train station and welcoming us to view his village.



The video that ignited me with green screening ideas and whet my appetite for trying to put it into my next video was:

The Benevolent Dictator of the Christmas Village (2:47)
Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmwKlZogpWc>

It even has a double green screening scene!

Be sure to check out all the other topnotch and timely columns on TheVillageCollector.com – "*Just So You Know (JSYK)*" by David Spears, Brian Vaill's "*The Train Station*," Thea Heyink's videos in "*The Creation Station*," "*Phil & Sue's Village*" construction (from England!), and "*Coach is Here*" by webmaster Bill Channell. Please keep visiting the Village Videos page and watch, watch, watch. There is a new batch of village videos on the 15th of each month. So many ideas, so little time... and not enough money.

Green Screen: Technically, this term refers to the colored background you want to make transparent and remove from your shot. This is usually a single-colored backdrop, which can be any color, but ***is usually bright green because this is the color furthest away from human skin tones***. Blue screens were frequently used in the early days with film and might still be used in certain cases.



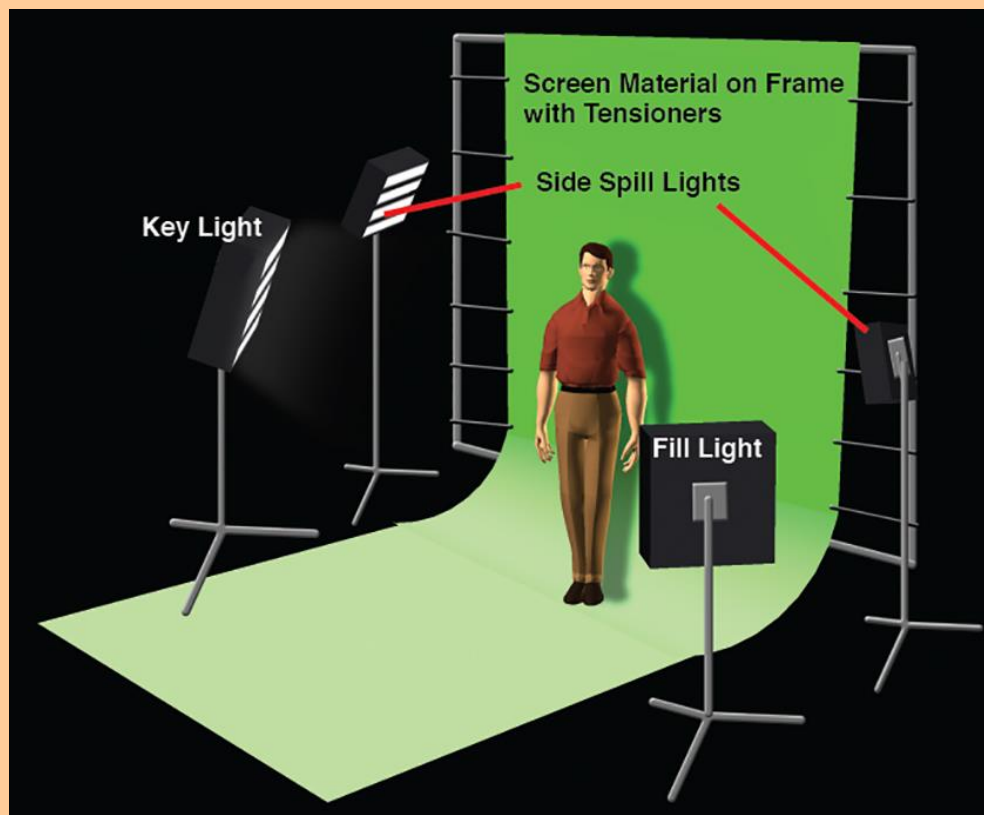
Chroma Key: This popular term goes together with **green screen**. It's the actual technique of layering or compositing two images based on color hues. Every color has a chroma range, hence where the terminology comes from.

Keying: This term is used to describe the process of removing the color (typically green) screen background in post-production using video editing software. When the green screen background has been keyed, it will be fully transparent. Then you can fill in that transparent area with a different image or video. The goal is to get the cleanest key possible, meaning there are no digital artifacts left on your image where the green screen was originally.

Spill: This often refers to the colored light that reflects onto your subject from the green screen. When a green screen is brightly lit, the light can reflect that color back onto your subject.

1. Start with the right green (or blue)

Use a non-reflective green screen material and look for colors such as "chroma key green" and "digi green." These colors are toned to be ideal for use with green screens. Alternatively, blue screens can also be used, especially for replicating night scenes.



2. Separate your subject from the background

Keep your subject at least six feet away from the green screen. This helps minimize spill and unwanted shadows appearing on the green screen background.

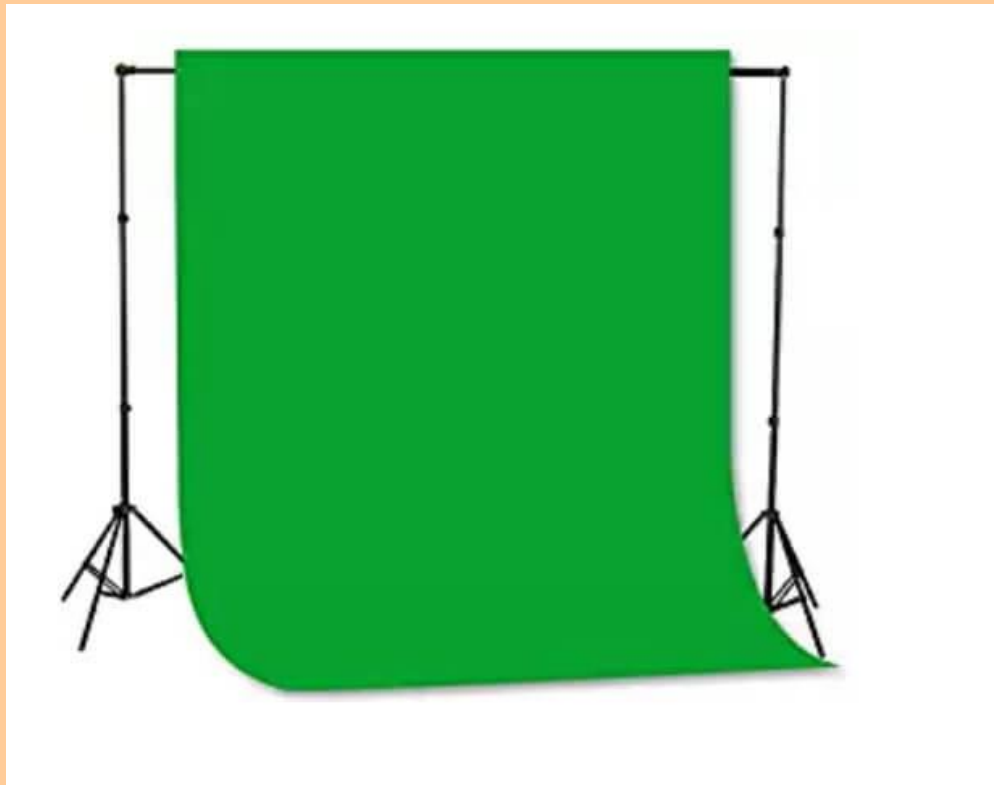
3. Expose the background properly

Light your foreground and your green backdrop separately. It is also important to light your green screen backdrop evenly. Proper lighting exposure helps to avoid excess green lighting spill. Be sure to use proper lighting. Three-point lighting is the industry standard. This involves placing lights in a triangle around the subject, providing illumination from the sides and rear. The purpose of this is to reduce shadows cast against the green screen.

4. Let the software do the work

Utilize chroma keying specific software. Be prepared to learn a difficult new skill.

Green Screen Kits: Kits are the fast, easy option for those who want to skip the customization and get right to filming. There's a variety to choose from, like small, portable screens to full-size set-ups for a more permanent installation.



Many of these kits are made with small productions in mind, like YouTube content. Perfect for talking head segments, these screens have just enough coverage to get a transparent background around the subject's face. Certain kits are also incredibly useful if you plan to film on the go. With easy assembly, breakdown, and streamlined storage in mind, these kits are perfect for the traveling filmmaker.

There are three non-negotiable rules to lighting a green screen:

- The lighting must be **even**
- The lighting must be **soft and diffuse**
- The green screen must be **lit separately** from the subject.

When lighting your green screen background, the goal is to get the lighting as even as possible. This helps ensure that the green coloring is even, with no hot spots or shadows, which will help with the chroma key process in post-production. You will also need to light your actors and the green screen separately, preferably with the actors and the green screen background at least six feet apart. Remember to match the lighting on your actor to the scene in which they'll appear once the green screen is composited.



The placement of your lights also matters. If you are only using two lights to illuminate your background, place one light on each side of the green screen, a few feet back on a 45-degree angle. You can fine tune/adjust the angle of each light to make sure they're not overlapping too much in the center. Make sure you are using the same lights on each side of the green screen for consistency.

While a professional green screen can be purchased for as little as \$50, if your production is on a tight budget, it is just as easy to create your own green screen.

How to Make a Perfect Green Screen for \$6 (Super Cheap)
iLuvTrading (4:03)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wySe_NqfEU

Another way to do green screen and an excellent discussion on lighting is in this YouTube link:

CHEAPEST GREEN SCREEN SETUP FOR YOUTUBE CREATORS
Drone Film Guide (8:43)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJhS-wdjyCE>

You can go to Amazon and get for \$19.99: Emart 6 x 9 ft Photography Backdrop Background, Green Chromakey Muslin Background Screen for Photo Video Studio, 4 x Backdrop Clips.



There is a bigger green fabric for \$29.99: Mountdog 10 x 12 ft Green Screen Backdrop, Polyester Fabric Collapsible Backdrop Backgrounds for Photography, Video, Studio and Television with 4 Backdrop Clips and 4 Spring Clamps.

You can purchase a "Green Screen Stand" system for \$40 to \$75.

Amazingly (YouTube seems to have nearly every kind of "how to"), I found a short video that covers our exact topic. He makes it sound much easier than it is:

How to Shrink Yourself Into a Miniature Village (5:25)

Rickvanman – Variety Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdgapJA8Xhg>

I've shown you this before, but one of the best Christmas village video examples using green screening is:

Christmas Village Tour 2018 (6:36)

The Flores Flock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc7D9cXoESI&t=16s>



For those of you that would rather read than watch to learn about green screening:

Best Video Effect Green Screen Apps for Android & iOS:

<https://gadgetstouse.com/blog/2020/07/03/5-best-green-screen-apps-for-android-and-ios/>

Free Chroma Key Software and How to Use It:

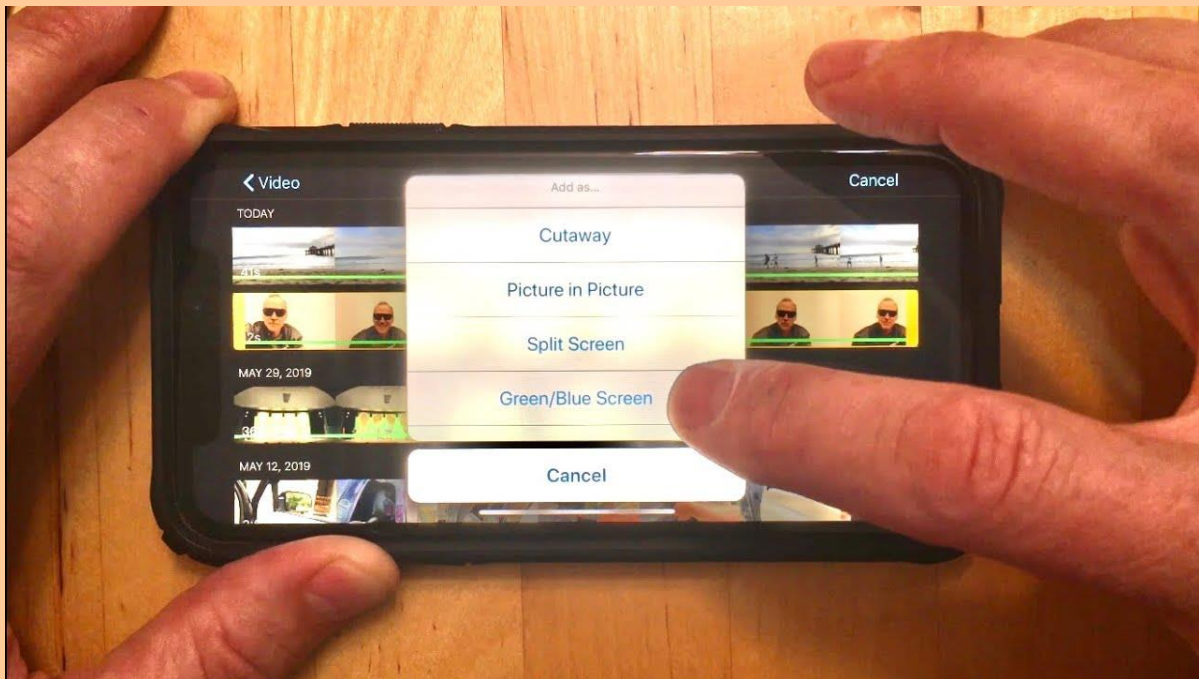
<https://turbofuture.com/graphic-design-video/free-chroma-key-software>

If you have the app iMovie on your iPhone or iPad you can play around with a simplified version of green screening. It will **take some practice to learn** to do what you want inside a village.

How To Green Screen in iMovie (2021 iPhone Tutorial) (2:31)

Collin Michael

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2XeRf4zJbY>



You can also download pre-made short green screen movie scenes. For instance, I placed a scene of Santa struggling to drive his reindeers and sleigh inside a still photo in my 2019 video (Claire's Christmas Village 2019 at the 12:29 mark).

How to Use & Move Green Screens in iMovie (iPhone Edition)

Kayla's World (7:03)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kjk2T0Zf3Q0>

Another good explanation of green screening in iMovie is in this video:

7 iMovie Special Effects for iPhone You May Have Missed (at the 12:55 mark)

VideoZeus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydDpR7y_9GU

On your Windows laptop or desktop computer the simplest green screen program is probably in HD Movie Maker Pro (cost is only \$14.95). Again, you'll need to play around with creating a short scene to educate yourself and start your way up the learning curve. To borrow an old phrase from golf instruction, "If this was easy, everybody would be doing it."

A very simple video is:

Green Screen HD Movie Maker Pro Windows 10 2020 Quick Tool Tutorial (6:02)

Peppy Techie

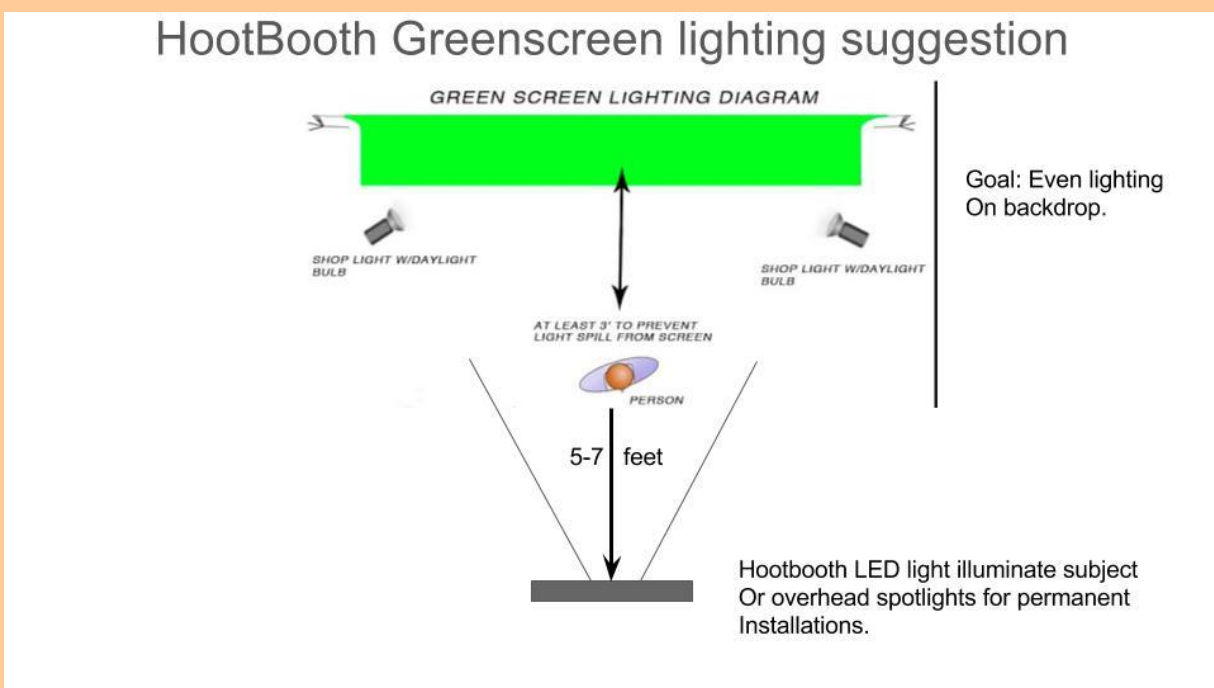
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WurXiiQrMA&t=14s>

Also watch how to best light your green screen background.

Green Screen DIY Video Lighting for Less than \$100 (7:06)

Peppy Techie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=898TTzwPytw>



In my next column on The Village Collector, we're going to list the all-time most watched Christmas village videos on YouTube. I'm out of words and I'll try to do better next time.

Questions, comments and/or suggestions are always welcome. You can contact me at: jpetersgolfpro@gmail.com, 419 Washington Avenue, Newport, KY 41071.



Photo by Brian McKnight



Photo by Faten Ghantous