

# Installation Guide

## ***SteadyTracker Xtreme***



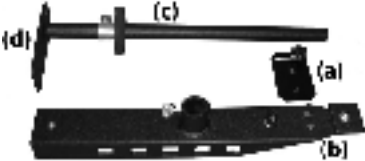
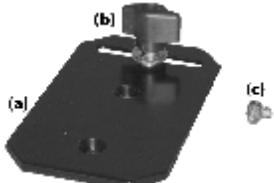
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# Getting Started

The CCUSA SteadyTracker Xtreme is shipped from the factory in the most secure packaging available. Please inspect the contents of the package and make sure to call your retailer if you find any shipping damage or missing components in your package.

## The CCUSA SteadyTracker Xtreme should include:

<p>(a) Mounting Plate (b) Base (c) Fuselage (d) Camcorder Mount</p>	<p><b>Figure (1)</b></p>  <p>(a) Mounting Plate (b) Base (c) Fuselage (d) Camcorder Mount</p>	<p>(a) Mounting Plate (b) Wing Nut (c) Mounting Screw</p>	<p><b>Figure (2)</b></p>  <p>(a) Mounting Plate (b) Wing Nut (c) Mounting Screw</p>
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## Packing Material

Please store all original containers. CCUSA will not take responsibility for any products shipped to CCUSA without the original shipping material. Without the original package the SteadyTracker Xtreme may be damaged beyond repair when being shipped using FedEx, UPS, or other freight companies. Please make sure to keep the packaging in a safe location for future use.

## For your convenience, an online installation video is also available:

<http://www.cobracraneusa.com/setup>

## Setup Instructions



<p><b>Figure (3)</b></p> 	<p><b>Step 1 - Adjust Foot on Base - Figure (3)</b> To adjust the foot (3a) on the base (1b) loosen the wing nut and turn to resemble <b>Figure (3)</b>.</p>
<p><b>Figure (4)</b></p> 	<p><b>Step 2 - Mounting the Fuselage -- Figure (4)</b></p> <p>Mount the fuselage (1c) through the hole of the base (1b) and tighten thumbscrew. (1d) When finished it should resemble <b>Figure (4)</b>.</p>

Figure (5)



### Step 3 - Mount Camcorder to Mounting Plate - Figure (5)

Remove mounting plate (2a) from SteadyTracker Xtreme by loosening the wing nut (2b).

Attach the mounting plate to the bottom of the camcorder with mounting screw (2c).

When mounting make sure the wing nut is opposite the camcorder lens.

### Step 4 - Mount Camcorder to SteadyTracker Xtreme –

**Figure (6)** Mount the camcorder by sliding the mounting plate (2a) through the camcorder mount on SteadyTracker Xtreme (1e).

Tighten wing nut (2b).

When mounting make sure the camcorder lens faces the same direction as the SteadyTracker feet (The front of the SteadyTracker) and the washer is on the bottom side of the camcorder mount (1e).

Figure (6)



## Balancing

### Rough Balancing

Pick up the SteadyTracker Xtreme under the handle by making a "V" with your index finger and your thumb. Let it hang freely in this "V" grip. If it is out of balance it will not hang plumb. If the camera hangs to the right, slide the camera a bit to the left. (If it hangs left, slide right). If the camera leans forward, slide the camera back a bit. (If it hangs backward, slide forward).

### Fine Balancing

Tighten the camera knob firmly. (Because you will be holding the unit horizontal and you don't want the camera to slip off). Hold the unit horizontal with 3 fingers, at the middle of the fuselage. If it is out of balance it will consistently rotate on its own, to the heavy side down. To precisely balance, loosen the knob and slide camera slightly the opposite direction it hangs out of balance. Repeat as necessary until satisfied with the cameras levelness.

## **"Z" Axis**

Again hold the unit horizontal with three fingers so that the fuselage is parallel to the horizon. Loosen the handle and move it down to your top finger. This is the exact center of gravity on the "Z" axis. Repeat rough, fine and "Z" axis balancing after adding or removing any accessories, or if you want to recheck, or confirm that it is level. (It's really not too critical, because it still works fine even if a little out of balance).

# ***SteadyTracker Techniques***

## **Practice Makes Perfect...**

Practice before an important shoot by maneuvering the SteadyTracker through hallways, starting, accelerating, maintaining a constant speed, turning, stopping, backing up, and stepping up or down curbs. Careful walking is just as important as an extended arm. Use the heel toe, heel toe method for smooth forward locomotion. Gently plant your heel, shift pressure to the ball of your foot, then push off with your toes. Bend your knees slightly at all times as if walking like "Groucho". For walking backward, just reverse the process. Toe heel, toe heel.

An alternate method of walking backward when preceding an actor is to walk forward but point the camera backward. Twist your upper torso enough to keep the monitor in view. This will allow use of your peripheral vision to avoid obstacles, and lets you walk much faster.

## **Beverage Delivery**

A good way to program your arms muscle memory is to practice with a plastic cup filled with water. Remove your camera and place it on the camera stage. Practice with the "V" grip and the full grip methods. The less water you spill, the smoother your footage will be. By watching the water surface you are actually training your muscles how it feels when it is hanging truly level. Five to ten minutes of this specialized training can really improve on perfecting your style. This will train you to keep the shot level without constant viewing of the image on the monitor.

When angling the becomes necessary in the form of a Dutch angle or tilt, use the full grip method (like holding a hammer) and rely on the monitor for accurate framing.

## **There are three things to be aware of and divide your attention to when shooting.**

### 1) Visuals Inside the Monitor

The framing of your shot, headroom, foreground objects and levelness.

### 2) Visuals Outside the Monitor

What action is developing outside the frame. Where you are going, and trip hazard awareness (Peripheral Vision Awareness). Visual confirmation of the SteadyTracker for levelness or its intended angle. Watching the base for unwanted erratic movement (Direct Viewing).

### 3) Feel

Awareness of external bumping. Muscle memory feedback confirmation of levelness and smoothness.

## **The Framing Window**

Good framing includes making the best use of any negative space. As the frame changes, analyze the top and bottom and compare the sides. This requires constant attention and requires great presence of mind. It is one reason why shooting is such a great challenge and rewarding when done well. Comparing the sides is simply asking yourself "more right?" Or "more left?" A wise choice replaces the unused negative space with more visual information. Step back to include anything happening outside the frame. Comparing the top to bottom is analyzing headroom. More headroom or less? Can I show more of what I need to by Dutching the SteadyTracker at a diagonal? These are some simple guidelines for developing your framing style. Carefully studying your shots in the editing room helps you to shoot better video the next time out. Practice and develop your skills before a really important shoot. Since tape is cheap, overshoot and use only the prime footage.

## **A Short Story from the Wild West**

Shooting from the hip requires accurate guessing of what is in the framing window without the benefit of a monitor. The old cowboys were good at this, quickly drawing and firing their guns with deadly accuracy. A walk and talk is dependent on accurate framing, and usually necessitates monitoring for the proper amount of headroom. Whereas artistic fluid moving shots can be done "from the hip" or without diverting your attention to the monitor.

## **Advanced Training:**

### **Moving Shots without Walking**

Hold the SteadyTracker at about chest level and pivot at the waist without taking a step. Now add an upward or downward booming move together with the pivot. For a longer shot add one large step as you pivot. This can yield a 5-7 foot outside trucking arc, (which is a very impressive shot), and for you perfectionists out there, will consistently produce your smoothest work.

Ninety percent of the moving shots we see at feature films are done on dollies or cranes. These are the tools to use if you're looking for perfection. Every stabilizer on the market today, including the \$40,000 kind, are susceptible to horizon rock or roll, depending upon operator skill. So don't look for absolute perfection.

### **Revealing and Concealing**

Starting at the feet and rising adds interest to a walk and talk shot. We call it "revealing a subject". It can also be used to reveal or conceal perspective, giving more importance to the dominating subject. This also works well on a lateral move. Start your scene on something totally irrelevant to the main subject. Audio should be strong as you slowly reveal the main subject. Look for the various ways you see this technique being used on big budget productions.

### **Arcs**

Circling stationary objects looks good because you are giving the frame a three dimensional sense of depth with near and far objects. It's always good to come around to some sort of frontal shot and hold it for a moment before cutting.

### **Passbys**

These require some practice but yield nice results. Think of it as a circling move stretched out along a straight line. Or it can be modified at any point. If you're hyper critical of any un level footage, try purposely shooting off axis. With good framing and moving composition, these can be the most potent pieces in your production.

### **Post Production to the Rescue**

Slow motion can be used to lengthen a scene that is too short. During post production editing, you'll develop an eye for interesting moves. Slow motion will stretch it out and even make it appear smoother. If it's totally radical, use the cut several times in your piece. Even some quick, short, unintentional moves become gems if you slow them down during editing.

### **Pack a Secret Weapon**

Most professional videographers use their auto focus (if they have it) sparingly because of its tendency to have a mind of its own. A photographic trick used to hold proper focus is increasing your depth of field. A wide angle lens adapter, added to your camera, allows the auto focus to be disabled. With proper light they can hold focus from a few inches out to infinity. Buy a true .5 lens that will fit your camera. Popular sizes are 37mm, 46mm, 49mm, 52mm, and 55mm. It is usually printed on or near the end of your lens. Carefully thread it on, turning in a clockwise rotation. Disable your auto focus and set focus to about the middle of its range. Or preset it for each shot. For dramatic impact on action shots, you really should try a wide angle lens adapter. This allows in focus action to happen much closer to the lens of the camera, intensifying the scene. Frame filling close-ups are much easier to execute. Surprisingly, it also seems to make moving shots smoother. A .7 or .6 lens will have less curvature than a true .5 lens, but we've found the wider the better for action shots. To reduce curvature, zoom in a tad or until satisfied. Remember, zooming in also increases that nasty tunnel vision effect associated with televisions narrow 4:3 aspect ration.

### **Shooting Real Estate**

A wide angle lens adapter is a "must have" accessory if you are taping indoor shots of real estate. The true .5 adapters come closer to the humans enormous 170 degree field of view. It will make rooms look bigger as compared to shooting with the standard wide angle setting on the camera. Before shooting a video walk through, predetermine all your key frames. Locate all the features of the house, and plot your camera path, just like setting up a camera path for a 3D animation sequence. Have your narrator speaking on or off camera, and slow down your moves on the key frames allowing the viewer to appreciate its features.

### **Tradition Zooming while Body Supported**

When you can no longer move toward your subject, or you want to stay back from the action, bring the eyepiece up to your eye for traditional zooming. By bracing the base or the fuselage against your body, it greatly stabilizes the image even on 12 to 1 zooms.

### **Shooting Over Crowds**

By raising the SteadyTracker up to where the base rests on your shoulder, you can easily shoot over peoples heads. You'll want to keep the zoom near the wide end and adjust the monitor angle for easy viewing. This is called the periscope position.

### **Self Supported Shooting**

When you get tired of holding up the SteadyTracker, or need a static shot, set it on the ground or any nearby table. Check out the parameters of your framing window, and get in the shot yourself, noting the safe area zone. You may also rotate the monitor 180 degrees for direct viewing of the monitor and yourself. Use some books under the rear leg to tilt down, and use a sandbag for safety to keep it upright. To pan or tilt in this resting mode, lean it back on its rear leg, like a monopod. These low angles are used extensively during feature film-making and is nice to have these low angle shots so accessible for home or professional use.

### **Shooting Yourself**

Here's another way for the "unknown camera man" to get himself out from behind the lens and out in front of it more often. Do your own walk and talks and amaze your friends! Simply extend your arm away from your body, pointing the camera at yourself. Use clip on wired or wireless lavalier for that crisp sound. You can pan to or away from yourself during the shot, narrating the whole time. This is a surprisingly effective shot, and unless you know the secret, it is very hard to figure out or duplicate. Turn the monitor so you can see yourself, or look at the reflection in the lens. Using your edit search can tell you exactly how these shots are turning out. Try high angles, low angles, profiles, straight on, off axis, trailing from the side, or any combination of these "self got" shots. It also allows you to do a "two shot" of you and your companion.

### **Shooting Inside a Car**

Resting the base of the SteadyTracker on the seat between your legs turns your whole car into a giant dolly. Rotate the camera on the stage for shooting out the side window. (Passenger Seat, Drivers seat may not be legal, obey local laws)

Rest the SteadyTracker on the floorboard to shoot yourself doing a drive and talk. It may also be used in the back of a truck. This is another one of those incredibly stable shots.

### **Shooting from a Bike**

Hold it out away from the spokes at all times. Grip the upper thumbscrew with your index finger to keep the wind from turning it. Or hold it directly under the stage. If you get tired, rest it on the crossbar or handle bar.

### **Straight Up or Down**

Rotate the camera forward, backward, or either direction sideways, smoothly to an upside down shot. Use two hands like a baton twirler for quicker moves. Or pre-grip upside down for the best form.

### **Shooting on Stairs**

Shooting yourself on stairs is surprisingly smooth. Doing a walk and talk of others on stairs is a very difficult move and should be practiced several times to coach the actors on staying within the frame. Preceding the actors down a

steep narrow stairway is extremely complicated to do and should only be attempted by expert operators. Its a lot easier to follow from behind or from the side on double wide staircases.

### **Running**

Full speed running should only be attempted when safe to do so, and by well seasoned operators. This is the time to be shooting from the hip, watching your path and occasionally checking the base for erratic movements. Your main attention should be on using your sense of feel to be not adversely affecting the stability of the rig.

### **Creative freedom**

All moving stabilizers can fly, pan, boom, and tilt but how well you can control the device during these moves is what sets the SteadyTracker apart from the others. Try acceleration and deceleration when panning, quickly starting, stopping, and reversing directions while flying, smooth tilting at the start or end of a boom, or dutching off axis during a flying move. Or try just holding the camera still. Balance means nothing without control. Level shots quickly become boring when that's the only option you've got. Check out the moves on our You Tube Channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/CobraCraneUSA>) and you be the judge. The SteadyTrackers have several examples of smooth rotation dutch angle shots, which are some of the most beautiful shots imaginable.

## ***Thank you for your purchase!***

We appreciate your business and trust that you will get many years of service form your new CCUSA product. We welcome your comments or questions.

Please contact us [info@CobraCraneUSA.com](mailto:info@CobraCraneUSA.com)

***CobraCraneUSA Team***