
Topic: Course Video Creation

Videos can be an effective tool for student learning. They can come in many forms such as a course welcome video or course tour to help orient students to your course site. Sometimes a demonstration or tutorial video is in order. Other times they can serve as a helpful way to reinforce course readings by presenting a mini-lecture or commentary on the salient points of a course topic. Should you choose to create your own course videos, keep these best practices in mind.

Best Practices

- Keep videos short & focused. 3-6 minutes is ideal. Under 10 is good. Under 20 is critical.
Recent research on videos in online courses has found that attention wanes considerably after 6 minutes. Should you not be able to address all of the critical points in a single, short video, create multiple short videos rather than one long video. Plan ahead – segment topics into chunks 6 minutes or shorter. *(Bonus: shorter videos are easier to edit or remake should the need arise!)*
- Write a script or notes.
Staying on track with your narration is important to keep students engaged. A script or notes will help you keep your videos short and focused. This also comes in handy later when it is time to caption the videos.
- Avoid recording classroom lectures.
Online students want videos created for their course, not videos of lectures given in a face-to-face class. You may be tempted to achieve two objectives with a single effort, but research has shown online students engage less with recordings of classroom lectures than they do with lectures by their instructor targeted to them.
- Ensure your slides are readable.
If you use PowerPoint or Keynote slides in your video, make sure they are clear on screen:
 - Limit the number of words on a slide – choose only those that will make an impact
 - Use large font (24 point or larger)
 - Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background (dark text on light background is often best)
 - If you use images, make sure they are large enough to see clearly in the video (test if necessary!)

- Speak naturally, and use some enthusiasm.

The more videos you make, the more comfortable you will become and the more natural you will sound. Make sure to add some inflection and expression to your voice. Talk at a natural rate of speed. Generally, do not talk slower than your natural cadence.

- Smile.

Smile before you begin recording, whether you are on camera or not. Trust us. Just do it.

- Pause.

Short pauses between topics and use of transitional phrases make the video more “watchable” and also allow you some wiggle room should you need to edit the video.

- Practice! Practice! Practice!

Sounding natural and extemporaneous, yet polished, will make your videos more engaging. Do not expect the first video you make to be a work of art. Make a few practice runs before capturing the real deal.

- Avoid references to dates, times, chapters, whenever possible.

Consider the shelf life of your video. Sometimes you can use a video over several semesters. Save yourself time and the need to constantly edit/recreate videos by leaving out timesensitive information, like “Welcome to week 2...” or “Since next week will be spring break...”. Also, if you use a textbook in which topics and chapters may be reordered from one term to another, avoid referencing a specific chapter or page number.

- Show your face – at least for several seconds.

Some do not mind the camera, but some of you are shy. If you are reluctant to show yourself on camera, consider a quick cameo at the beginning of the video. Students love to put a face to your voice.

- Camera should be at eye-level.

If you are recording with your laptop webcam, you may want to elevate it so that you are not looking down into it. In this instance, your student sees you hovering over him/her with a background of the ceiling. With your camera at eye-level, you are looking at your students face-to-face. Be aware of what is in your background.

- Lighting matters!

If you are recording at your desk, there is a chance that you are facing the wall with the light source behind you. Instead, you will want your primary light source to be illuminating your face. Also, no windows or light fixtures in the background. That causes a Darth Vader-looking silhouette.

- Record in a quiet setting with minimal distractions.
It is okay to film in an informal setting. Students do not expect a studio-produced video – while polished, it feels less authentic. However, make sure to consider lighting (do not have your camera facing the sun) and ambient noise (put Fido outside) to lessen distractors.
- Use a quality microphone.
A quality microphone is essential! Not only so your speech is intelligible, but also to allow for accurate captioning. A headset mic is recommended.
- Caption your videos.
Captioning your videos is crucial. Not only do captions support students who require captions for accessibility and accommodation needs, it also benefits students who learn better by reading along, students for whom English is not their primary language, and for students who may need to study in a noisy environment (bus ride, dorms, etc.).
The process by which you will caption your videos will depend on the tool(s) you have chosen to create & share your videos.

For More Information

MSUM supports [Kaltura MediaSpace](https://www.mnstate.edu/instructional-technology/MediaSpace.aspx) for video creation (<https://www.mnstate.edu/instructional-technology/MediaSpace.aspx>).

Please contact the Office of Online Learning at support@mnstate.edu or 218.477.2603 (option 3) if you have questions or would like to visit with one of the instructional technologists regarding this material.