Educational Videos: Best Practices

This document uses learning theory and research to suggest best practices in creating educational videos.

Audio

- **Don't read out loud.** If you want to create a script, do it. Read it a few times. Put it away and try and speak as naturally as possible when you record. You won't (and shouldn't) stick to the script word for word while recording, but it should help you sound articulate without reading from a script.
- **Don't speak too slowly.**
- **Keep language informal.** Speak in a conversational way, avoiding jargon, technical terms, and "academic-speak." Put concepts in your own words. Use first and second person (I, you) to create a personal connection. This is referred to as the personalization principle in multimedia learning theory (Mayer, 2009).

Visuals

- **Change visuals often.** If you are recording a screen-share of Power Point, use more slides and change the slides more frequently, spending less time on each slide. Visuals (photos, images, and diagrams) are better than words.
- **Omit needless words.** Use more images than words because people learn better when they hear the words and see images. This is referred to as the redundancy principle in multimedia learning theory (Mayer, 2009).
- **Include your face? Maybe!** This could help create a connection with learners and help you retain viewer attention by letting you switch between a visual and an image of the speaker. Research shows students may prefer seeing your face, but it doesn't necessarily help them learn (Kizilcec, Bailenson, & Gomez, 2015).
- **Recording via Zoom?** Select options to record both the active speaker and the shared window (Power Point) so that you can edit the video in a way that includes both. You can do this in Zoom Settings by using Zoom Cloud Recording and selecting to "Record active speaker, gallery view, and shared screen separately."
- **Informal settings are fine!** High quality production backgrounds don't engage learners more. Relax and find that balance of professional yet personal (Guo, Kim, Rubin, 2014).
- **Use tablet drawing.** Learners are more engaged by Khan-style videos that show "live" drawing than by static images (Guo, Kim, Rubin, 2014). If you have the tools to do this, great! If not, consider using annotation tools in Power Point.

Content Considerations

- **Leave off speaker intros and objectives.** This type of material can be presented in the description or in the materials preceding the videos. Jump straight into the content. This helps you keep videos short.
- **Keep it short.** Research with MOOCs suggests 6 minutes or less is optimal (Guo, Kim, Rubin, 2014). In addition, it is harder for learners to use a longer video to review specific content. Keeping videos under 6 minutes isn't a hard rule, since context matters, but shorter usually *is* better.

Hosting Considerations

- **Provide background information.** Introduce the topic, the speaker, and tell the learner how long the video will be in the video description or in the material preceding the video.

- **Provide a take-away for more technical content.** An example would be a fact sheet or a fillable PDF form with a note-taking outline that learners can fill out while watching and then download and save.
- **Consider interactive videos.** Camtasia lets you add simple interactions to your videos to keep your viewers engaged. MediaSpace allows for interactions as well.

Before, During, After

- **Frame videos with a task before, during, and after.** If you are hosting the video in an online course, have your viewers do something related to the topic before watching it to activate their background knowledge and build schema. Give them a task to do while watching the video, and then give them a task after to check their comprehension or to relate the content to their life experiences. Some basic examples are below.

Before	During	After
Discuss a question about the topic in a forum	Listen to answer specific question(s)	Transform the material into another form (perhaps write a summary)
Reflect on the topic by considering a question	Take notes	Answer comprehension questions
Read related content	Complete a partially filled-out outline	Discuss the topic in a forum
Take a poll related to the topic and notice how your peers answered	Fill in a chart or graphic organizer relating to the content	Share an experience from your life that relates to the material
Learn related vocabulary	Write down one thing you heard that is new and one thing you heard that you already knew	Apply what you have learned by responding to a posted scenario

Final Thought: Not everything needs to be a video.

Not everyone likes video. Presenting materials in different ways and including variety is important. Some material is better read, or presented as a job aid, a table, or a visual. In addition, making a change to a produced video is much more difficult than updating text. Be strategic in choosing how to deliver information.

Related “All Things Teaching” Videos

Engaging Videos. What types of videos are most engaging?
https://mediaspace.msu.edu/media/Engaging%20Videos/1_phdhmmdx

Words Matter: Language use. What type of language helps learners?
https://mediaspace.msu.edu/media/Words%20Matter%20-%20Language%20Use/1_0rlz9jhf

Power Point. What’s wrong with a wall of bullets?
https://mediaspace.msu.edu/media/PowerPoint%20-%20The%20Wall%20of%20Bullets/1_7kknmigj

Video Length. What’s the ideal length for an instructional video?
https://mediaspace.msu.edu/media/Video%20Length/1_teoymvle

References

Guo, P. J., Kim, J., & Rubin, R. (2014). How video production affects student engagement: An empirical study of MOOC videos. *L@S 2014 - Proceedings of the 1st ACM Conference on Learning at Scale*, 41–50. https://doi.org/10.1145/2556325.2566239

Kizilcec, R. F., Bailenson, J. N., & Gomez, C. J. (2015). The Instructor’s Face in Video Instruction: Evidence From Two Large-Scale Field Studies. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *107*(3), 724–739.

Mayer, R. E. (2009). Multimedia learning (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Simonds, B. K., Meyer, K. R., Quinlan, M. M., & Hunt, S. K. (2006). Effects of instructor speech rate on student affective learning, recall, and perceptions of nonverbal immediacy, credibility, and clarity. *Communication Research Reports*, *23*(3), 187–197. https://doi.org/10.1080/08824090600796401

Favorite Resource: https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/effective-educational-videos/
Vanderbilt University’s Center for Teaching has incredible research-based online resources.