Videos

Producing effective online educational videos

Outlines and scripting

Writing a script can be an effective way to create concise, focused educational videos. By following a script, redundant and extraneous information can be weeded out, and you can be sure to not forget any lecture points. Scripts can reduce the stress of “being on-camera” and minimize “uh” and “um”. Furthermore, writing a script makes it much easier to incorporate effective teaching techniques such as clearly summarizing key ideas and signaling section divisions in the lecture.

Writing a script does require an investment of time and can be a daunting task. One approach is to make an audio recording of the lecture and use Panopto’s ASR (automatic speech recognition feature) to create a draft script which can be then edited.

If writing a script is too time-consuming, or if reading from a script feels too artificial, at least prepare a lecture outline to refer to during recording. Outlines can help to keep things on track and avoid tangents. You may already have lecture notes included in their Powerpoint presentation, which can be accessed during recording in Presenter view.

The ideal maximum length for educational videos is 6-9 minutes. As videos go longer, student engagement decreases, this is especially important as current research indicates the widespread use of smartphones and social media reduces cognitive capacity and attention spans.

One method of shortening videos is to carefully prepare a script or outline that minimizes redundant and extraneous information. Often, however, lectures cannot be shortened without sacrificing lecture material. In such cases, it is best to find natural break points in the material to divide the lecture into chunks of about 6-9 minutes. Each chunk can be separately recorded, uploaded, and placed in a sequence in MyCourses or in Panopto playlist.

Visuals

When making video presentations your slides and graphics (or lack of them) can be an important element in helping you tell your story or express your idea. Your job as a presenter is to build your idea step-by-step in the minds of your audience members. A key rule to building up your presentations slides for video is “Less is more”. You should aim to have the fewest number of diagrams, photos, the fewest words per slide, the least cluttered slides and the most white space on your slides. This is the most violated slide rule, but it is the secret to success. A slide with too many images may be detrimental to your presentation. The audience will spend more mental energy trying to sort through the clutter than listening to your presentation. If you need multiple images, then put each one on its own slide. Many of the viewers might watch video on small mobile devise screen. Rather have multiple slides with little content per slide and change them in fairly fast paced speed to keep the viewer engaged. Slides that work on lecture hall screen rarely work in video format, so chunk your material for multiple clear slides.
Recording

Well-recorded audio is an essential, but often overlooked, part of creating effective videos. Using a decent microphone instead of a computer’s built-in microphone goes a long way toward producing professional-sounding audio. It is also important to consider background noise when creating videos. Look for good recording equipment from TakeOut, use on-campus facilities like Self Service Studio and A Pod, and if you record on home make sure that any background noise is addressed, as poor audio quality can distract your students from your message.

When possible, try to record multiple videos in a single session. This can help you to develop rhythms in your content and to manage your time as an instructor well.

Use a conversational, personal style when speaking. This does not mean watering down the content or avoiding technical terminology, but avoid a formal, impersonal style of speaking. In general, using first and second person pronouns (e.g. “I”, “you”, “we”) creates a more personal style. Personalization encourages the student to try harder to understand you by creating a sense of social partnership.

While it may seem counterintuitive, research indicates that students are more engaged the faster the instructor speaks in a video. This is true up to a point, of course. Speech should not be so fast as to be awkward or unintelligible. Just remember that slower speech does not equate to better engagement. Along with good recording equipment, make sure to pace your videos well, using intonation and enunciation to make your messages easy to understand and engaging, while speaking roughly 10-15% faster than in daily conversation so that topics do not drag on.

Editing and captions

Panopto’s cloud-based online video editor makes it easy to accomplish the most common video editing tasks, right from your browser. Editing in Panopto is non-destructive, so no matter what edits you make, you’ll always have your original recording you can revert back to. In Panopto editor you can add and sync additional slides and video feeds, embed quizzes, polls, and surveys or embed YouTube videos and any web page in your own recordings.

Learn how to edit videos in Panopto.

Meeting accessibility standards is easy as Panopto automatically indexes every word spoken and shown in every video uploaded to your Panopto library. You can choose to make this machine-generated transcript available for use as closed captioning and thus improving accessibility.

Because no machine-generated captions aren’t 100% perfect, Panopto makes it easy for you to make edits. Just open your recording in the Panopto video editor, select your captions, and type in any changes the same way you’d make them in a document or email.

Learn how to caption your videos in Panopto.

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More demanding and creative video editing requires professional editing software like Adobe Premiere Pro from Adobe Creative Cloud.

Aalto Staff and Faculty get a full Creative Cloud license which is tied to the users Aalto-federated Adobe ID. As Adobe Premiere Pro is designed to cater all professional video editing tasks it can be overwhelming and it requires some time to get started and learn the basic functions.

Educational video production playlist

- Develop More Impactful Asynchronous Course Material (Harvard edu)
- Asynchronous Learning Explained: Examples, Benefits, and More (Panopto)

Record lectures with Panopto
Zoom in teaching

Service links:
- Media production services (aalto.fi)
- AV production service (Aalto Studios)
- Self service studio at Learning Centre