Screencasting: Tips and Tricks

Planning and Organizing:
- Create a folder on your hard drive for each course to store your videos. It will make finding and editing them much easier if they are all in one location.
- Do not save your recordings on your desktop, it will take a lot of working memory. Save it to My Documents folder or to My Videos folder on your hard-drive.
- It is a good idea to create a brief introductory movie for each unit outlining what the objectives of the unit will be and what students should know and be able to do at the end of the unit.
- Likewise, a brief video summarizing the main ideas is helpful at the end of each unit.
- If you are going to want to re-use e-lectures from semester to semester, make a "root" lecture without any comments on what is happening in the class. Then, for each semester, you can do a brief re-edit of the original root and add a pre and post section to tie the e-lecture to the current semester.
- Make your lectures short and interactive. Try to keep them under 10 minutes if possible but no more than 15. Have students do an activity after watching a lecture: a short quiz, an assignment, a written response to a question (i.e. a discussion board thread). Use activities to help students apply the material presented and refocus their attention.

Preparing to Record:
- Invest in a good microphone. A desktop USB microphone works best but a good quality headset microphone will also work.
- Before beginning a recording, close all other applications. This will make the recordings smoother and prevent other applications from popping up inside your recording. If you are using a Mac, turn off notifications before you start recording.
- Do a test recording before doing a full lecture. Play it back to make sure the quality is what you need and the sound levels are correct. The sound slider should never go into the red.
- Keep the segments short. It’s easier to update the content that way - no need to re-record an entire class.
- Don’t try to be perfect in your recording. It is not necessary to re-record an entire segment for a minor mistake. You can edit out mistakes before final production, even if you do long presentations and flub, you can always edit easily. Minor mistakes might make the movie seem more “human.”
- At the start of each segment, pause a few seconds before beginning to narrate. This will give your audience an opportunity to view the slide and will make editing or splicing pieces together much easier. Do the same at the end of the segment so the audio does not end abruptly.
- Try not to read a script word for word while presenting. Use a conversational voice like you would in a live class.
Recording a PowerPoint:

- Don’t read the text off your PowerPoint slides. Use the slides as a guide to the presentation, not the script.
- If you are recording PowerPoint slides make sure the text is large enough. When you produce the video online, it will probably not be displayed in full screen like the PowerPoint. Use the rule of sixes: Maximum of six words per line and six lines per slide. Even better, use text sparingly and use images to illustrate your point.
- When recording a PowerPoint you might choose not to use `Record PowerPoint` function. It puts the PowerPoint in a slide-show (full screen) mode and decreases the quality of the slides (resolution/sharpness) if you have text on your slides (it might not make a big difference if you are using images). You might prefer to use `Record the Screen` function and select the area that would capture the slide in the editing mode (in the middle of the screen), and then use the side bar in the PowerPoint to proceed to the next slide.

Video Quality:

- Try to record in full screen mode. Make sure that the text size is readable. Test record for 30-60 seconds and replay the recording to make a fair judgement.
- Try producing (using “Produce and Share” if you are using Camtasia) a test movie in different sizes to see which one is best for the content you are presenting.
- Most screencasting software does a good job of compression. It is better to record at a higher resolution and resize the movie smaller than to record a smaller movie and try to enlarge it.

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