

# BEST PRACTICES FOR VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDING

This document is intended to assist those who are creating On-Screen Recordings, also known as Talking Head videos commonly used for instructional content.

## 1. Location

Choosing the right location for your video is the first step to creating quality content. This will likely be in an office space or a quiet area in your home where you typically use your computer. **It's essential that this area is quiet** and has sufficient space for everything you'll need while recording. Avoid sitting directly in front of a window if you wear glasses, as the glare from the window will hide your eyes from the camera. Try finding a backdrop that's not too busy and won't distract your audience. Filming next to a window can provide natural lighting, but the lighting will fluctuate as the sun moves behind the clouds: shifting light will make it more difficult to make smooth cuts in the video if you end up editing it. **Avoid locations with an echo** -- rooms with carpeting and furniture will help absorb external noises including the reverberation from your own voice.



Here is an example illustrating an ideal setup for your on-screen recordings. The camera is at eye level and is roughly an arm's-reach away. The room has plenty of natural light and a lamp placed in front and just off to the side is providing additional light on the darker side of her face.

## 2. Equipment

**Camera** - Filming with a cell phone or a laptop will probably be most common; however, if you have access to a DSLR or HD camcorder, and are familiar with it, take advantage of the increased quality they offer.



**Microphone** – **Using an external microphone** that attaches to your phone, computer, or camera can improve the audio and ensure your audience can hear you clearly. If your only option is using the internal microphone from your recording device, then position yourself closer to it for clearer sound. Using headphones with a built-in microphone will provide better audio than your internal recording device. Wireless headphones can be used when connected to your computer via Bluetooth.

## 3. Lighting

Adding lights to your video makes a world of difference. **Use desk or floor lamps available to you**, preferably ones with a basic shade which will act as a diffuser to soften the light on your face. Place the light in front of you and not beside you, and ensure the light reaches both of your eyes. Lamps will vary in size and brightness; avoid overexposing (hot spots) by moving it further away.



### Lighting Examples

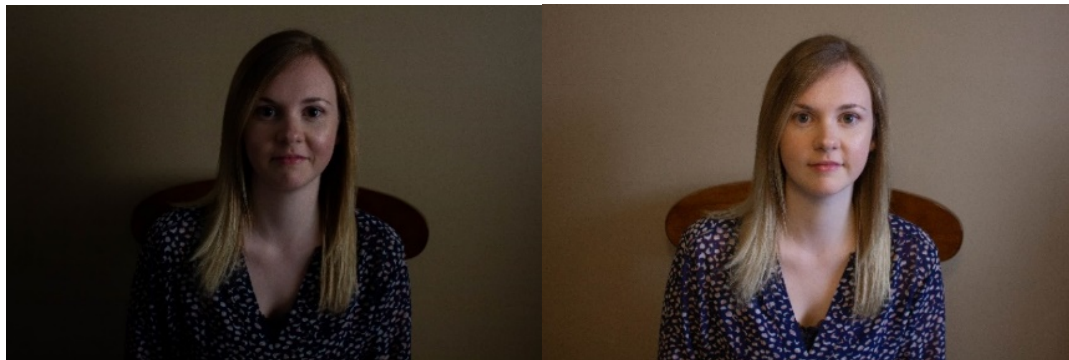
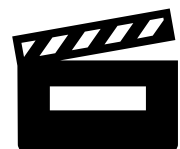


Figure 1: Natural light

Figure 2: Natural light with a lamp

## 4. Recording

**Framing** – Place your recording device at eye level by using a tripod or stack books under your laptop or cell phone. You’ll want to frame a “medium shot” which captures your upper body, approximately arm’s-length away from your recording device. **The top of your head should be just under the top of the frame** -- do not position your head in the middle of the frame. If using a cell phone to record, enable the grid



feature available in the settings to assist you. Always use the back-camera and not your front-facing camera, as the back-camera records in a higher resolution. You'll need to record some practice shots to find the right framing and ensure you have plenty of storage space for your recordings.

**Camera settings** - Auto focus and auto exposure can create problems against a busy background, so disable these and manually ensure things are in focus and exposed properly. **Record at 720p at 30FPS for manageable file sizes.** It's crucial to keep consistency across your recordings, so conduct tests before publishing your content to ensure you're happy with the result.

**Rehearsing** – Rehearse what you are going to do and **be ready to make more than one attempt.** Try not to over-rehearse; allowing students to see and hear minor mistakes and fumbles helps to “humanize” you.

**Outfit** – Recording on a laptop will generally flip your image, so you might want to avoid clothing with logos as these will be reversed. **It's a general rule of thumb to wear basic colors with zero or basic patterns.**

**On camera presence** – Look right at the camera lens. Once you get everything ready, consider taping a piece of paper over your computer screen so you're not distracted by seeing yourself while you record. Remember, you do not need to be perfect! Try not to be overly critical of yourself. **Smiling helps everything.** Whether you're recording a webcast of your face or just your voice, smiling makes you look and sound better.

**Screen Recording and Narration** – There are several options for capturing your screen for video presentations. It's important to approach these like on camera recordings, ensuring you have clean audio in a quiet room. Here are some quick tips to get you started.

1. Keep your videos short, between 5-10 minutes. This prevents overly large files and poor system performance while you are recording/editing and potential corruption or loss of work. Shorter videos can be spliced together later.
2. Test out your microphone levels and video content with a quick 15-second video to ensure you are loud enough, and things are being captured correctly before you record any longer videos.
3. If you intend to post your videos in LEARN or Möbius, your video should be in MP4 format. MOV (Mac) are generally very large (although high quality) and need to be converted to MP4 format for web-friendly delivery.
4. Ensure that the recorded videos you share meet AODA requirements; for example, this might mean having your script in document format for sharing.

Please refer to the following link for detailed information on screen recordings and video compression techniques. <https://contensis.uwaterloo.ca/sites/open/resources/CEL-ORR/toc/modules/screen-recording.aspx>

## 5. Editing

If there is “dead air” at the beginning or end of your recording, make sure you trim it so that your video starts and ends with its actual content. There are many free editing software options such as iMovie (MAC) or windows movie maker (PC).



## Contact:

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