Studio in a Box Equipment Options & Tips

Introduction

With teaching remotely being the new reality, the majority of instructors will need to be able to create and capture their lectures and content from home; but what's required to do this?

You don't need to make amazing videos to connect, just turn on the camera and be yourself. To make sure you and your videos look your best, make sure to check out the list of resources available on our Remote Teaching – Lectures website.

Reasons to get on Camera

Although many of us don't like the idea, there are plenty of reasons to get on camera

1. **Humanizes your class**
   "More then content, more then course design, you are the factor in an online course that has the greatest potential to help your students succeed" – Karen Costa, 99 Tips for Creating Simple and Sustainable Educational Videos
2. **Build Relationships with your Students**
   Let your students see you, make it more then just reading words on a screen.
3. **Validate and Motivate**
   Offer words of encouragement, mention great comments and celebrate great work,.
4. **Save time**
   Use video to clarify assignment expectations or short explainer videos that answer any frequently asked questions about particular concepts or ideas
5. **Implicit Messaging**
   Videos are a great way to get across the most important lessons of the class, especially concepts that are better shown then said.

Alternatives to Getting on Camera

Although capturing yourself lecturing does humanize your course while teaching remotely, it's not the only option. There are several off-camera methods that can be used to capture your content.

- Use point-of-view videos to demonstrate anything from solving equations to lab techniques.
- Record a compelling narrative by layering it with stock audio and video.
- Add voice-over to a PowerPoint using some of the more advanced transitions to create a dynamic presentation.
- Use screen recording to capture your workflow in an application or an interactive online tool.
- Regardless of which method you choose, the most effective content will always be about the storytelling. This isn't very different than preparing for your in-class lecture where you research, outline, script and then create the content.

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Production Targets

We'll take a deeper look and provide some options for simple and sustainable videos, options to make your video more impactful, and for the truly adventurous, options that go above and beyond.

| Simple & Sustainable | Impactful | Above & Beyond |

Simple & Substantiable

This is the first level of video you should try and achieve as these types of video require only limited technology and know-how. They won't require editing or effects, and because of that you'll very likely be able to keep up with them throughout the semester. Arguably these are the most effective videos, but they will also rely heavily on you, your message, and your content to bring the message to life.

Preparation	• an outline and plan
Video	• laptop webcam • phone camera
Sound	• built in mircrophone • quiet room or environment
Lighting	• well lit room • big window on a sunny day

Make sure to have a big light source. Consider recording facing large window on a sunny day. You will be at the mercy of the weather and although changes in lighting may not be noticeable as your recording it can be very distracting on playback. Smaller lights will cast harsh shadows on your face and not enough light can cause a lot of grain in your video.

Make sure your camera is stable. If using your integrated web cam into your laptop make sure your laptop is fixed and stable, as opposed to resting on your lap where its likely to jostle arounds as you move. Generally, you'll want the camera to be at eye height, unless your looking to create a dramatic effect.

For your audio, remove any background noise such as air conditioners, fans, children, outside noises like a busy street or neighbours mowing the lawn.

If going this route, you'll likely be recording in a single take and either generating a video file, which will need to be hosted, or recording within on of the web conferencing tool available on campus.

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Impactful

With some additional effort and the use of technology you can really add a lot of impact to your video. Things don't have to get complicated its just about adding elements that grab your student's attention and emphasise the content that means the most.
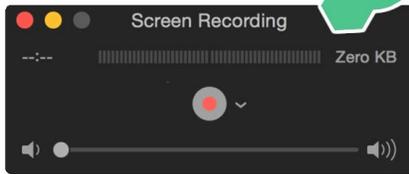
Preparation	• an outline, plan or script • a powerpoint slide show
Video	• HD webcam (external) • screen recording • mounted camera
Sound	• external microphone / headset • quiet room
Lighting	• black out curtains • controlled light sources
Post-Production	• Simple edits to trim pauses

With a variety of web conferencing tools available to the campus, one of the easiest ways to make impactful videos is sharing your screen and slide and recording your meetings. Although recording your live lectures does give value to your students, allowing them to review your material at their convenience, consider going asynchronous and use the same tools to pre-record a lecture with just you in the call. This is an excellent way to add voice over your PowerPoint and interject yourself on cam to highlight the most important pieces.

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Above and Beyond

Most instructors aren't looking to become professional Edu-Tubers, and most are not equipped for capturing and creating content at a professional level. However, using the right tech to solve specific issues can really be a real benefit.

Although buying professional equipment is often the easiest way to solve a problem, its can also be quite costly. Sometimes they can be worth the investment there are often cheaper or DIY solutions available. And thanks to the millions of YouTubers before you many have already come up with some great idea.

Preparation	• telemprompter app • chroma key backdrop
Video	• HD video cameras or webcams • camera mounts
Sound	•external USB headset • lapel micphrophoe
Lighting	• 3 point lighting system • ring light
Post-Production	• editing software • stock audio & video

We'll be updating this document shortly with specific teaching scenarios and the tech that can help you solve them. With each scenario we will continue to provide a solution using the models of simple and sustainable, impactful, and above and beyond so you can pick and choose the solution you think is right for you.

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The Hardest Part

Most would agree that the hardest part of recording is talking with energy to a little glass dot when you are the only one in the room.

1. **Connect, don't perform**
   Think about your recording as connection with your students. It isn't a performance and it doesn't need to be perfect. The recording should be about your students, start off with a welcome and speak to them as if they were right in front of you, because effectively they are. Try being conversational as if it were more of a phone call then a cinematic production. Speaking to the camera, not your screen, as it equates to making eye contact.

2. **Elevate your energy**
   Really crank up the energy way up when you get on camera. The camera will eat your energy, so even if you feel like you're being animated and in the moment, it may turn out looking flat. Try to get excited by centering yourself by thinking about the purpose of the recording. Think about your students and what you want them to get out of it.

3. **Relax and roll with mistakes**
   Do what works best for you. If that means standing at a makeshift lectern, sitting at your desk or taking your video outside, feel comfortable doing so. You can get away with lighting not being perfect and a more conversational tone, as long as your comfortable and able to engage with your students.

4. **Start Simple**
   Starting small is the easiest ways to start. Start off with shorter and segmented videos and get feedback from your students when ever possible. Build your technical skills overtime seeing what works for you and what doesn't.

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Tips for Creating Videos

Preparation

- Make sure your slides are in wide format (16:9) so they cover the entire video frame.
- Record in a quiet room and be aware of any background noise when you start and they may occur while recording (Air Conditioners, fans, fridge, street, hardwood floors, noisy neighbours.)
- Check your audio levels before recording. When you speak the levels shouldn't be too low or two high
- Ensure your devices are fully charged and get additional batteries if necessary (even better to use external power supply).
- Put phone/iPad in airplane mode to avoid any incoming communication that may interrupt recording and to conserve on battery usage.

During the Recording

- Switch between video sources to focus your student's attention. Switch to or overlay your webcam when you are addressing your students directly. Remove it when you want them to focus on your presentation slides

- Recording at 24 Frames Per Second is sufficient, unless your want to use slow motion effects in post-production.

- If you make a mistake, pause, breath and resume from where you left off. It's likely you can fix it in post-production with a simple cut or transition.

- Make eye contact with the camera so your students feel you are looking them in the eye.

- Try to chunk your lectures into smaller segments each with a specific topics or category. Use titles to break and identify the next topic giving students an opportunity to pause and take a break

Post-Production

- Edit out any mistakes, long pauses, "uhms" and "ahhs".
- Add titles to break up your videos and highlight when your moving to new topics or content
- Use a 16:9 Aspect Ratio (1280x720 or 1920x1080) to make full use of modern screen.