Getting started with video-based assignments

In this post, we will explore what you need to consider when doing your first video assignment.

# Introduction

If you haven’t done a video assignment before, you may find the idea a little intimidating. Don’t worry, it’s a lot like a normal presentation with a few extra considerations. In this post, we will discuss practical ideas for planning, practising and presenting your video-based assignment.

# Planning your video

Like any assignment, you will need to start by planning what you are going to do. You will need to consider:

* What research do you need to conduct?
* What content will you include?
* How will you structure your content?
* When will you edit and proofread?
* When do you need to submit and how?

However, with video assignments, you will also need to plan for where, when and how you will record and edit your video. Consider the following questions in your planning:

* What equipment/software will you need?
* How much time will you have to learn to record and edit your video?
* When will you record?
* Where will you record?
* How much time will you need for editing?
* Is there a time when your location is too noisy to record?
* Do you need to be on screen, in the corner of your recording, or will you be creating a video made up of narrated slides?

# Practise, then edit, then practise again

As soon as you know how to go about making your video, your next priority is to start incorporating time to practise. When practising, you will learn how to deal with unexpected disruptions. Practise before you finish developing your content, the benefit of this will mean you:

* are more confident when it comes to doing your final recording(s)
* have already identified and mitigated possible issues with sound or visuals
* learn what works for you in terms of setting up your recording area before you do your recording

**Tip:** Try doing a test recording or video call with a friend. Record with different equipment such as a laptop built-in mic and a headphone mic to see which provides better audio quality.

The recording may be the daunting element initially but don’t forget you may want to practise editing in the software you will use to save you time when doing your final video. Learning how to do this will take time, so don’t leave it until the last minute.

**Tip:**Create a rough recording to practise with, then try adding captions and lowering and increasing volume in different parts of the video.

# Creating your presentation

If you are presenting a PowerPoint during your video, design your visuals in ways that remind you where to incorporate more expressiveness in your delivery. Try using bold or larger fonts for emphasis but not colour alone as this will make your text inaccessible.

For advice and help in designing your visual aids, take a look at the resource “[Designing your presentation](https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/presentations/design/story_html5.html).”

Only include information in your presentation that contributes to the point you’re trying to make. You may need to keep to time as, with a written assignment, you would keep to a word limit. Any extra information that would not contribute to your mark shouldn’t be crammed in, instead consider adding this to a further reading or reference list.

# Recording your video

When recording vs. delivering a live presentation, there are a few extra things you might need to consider about your environment.

## Lighting

Try to avoid recording with a light source behind you, as this can create harsh lighting on the viewer’s screen. If you need to add extra light sources such as lamps, ensure that lighting isn’t overhead, this can cause dark shadows to fall across your face. Do some test recordings to help you to find a space with good lighting at that time of day.

**Tip:** Try to have have three sources of light — two in front (front right and front left) and one behind (either back left or right).

## Pace yourself

Make sure to speak slowly and clearly, maintaining eye contact with the camera. Often when we are nervous, we speak more quickly and avoid eye contact. If you can edit the video, you can film it in sections, allowing you to pace yourself and re-record parts that you are unhappy with.

If the video presentation is taking place live, you can use a timer to help you pace yourself — and the benefit of video presentations is that you can even use an on-screen timer; the viewers will never tell that you’re checking your timing as they would if you glanced at a watch or a clock, leading to a smoother presentation.

## Noise and background

Whilst our minds often tune out ambient noise, technology will pick up on, and amplify, distracting sounds.

Try to eliminate ambient noise by:

* closing windows and doors.
* choosing a quiet space where you won’t be interrupted.
* putting your phone on mute.
* avoiding clothing or jewellery that rustles or clinks.

Remember, don’t film the video with a messy background or something inappropriate behind you.

# Making your video accessible

When designing your content and editing your video, consider accessibility for those who may have hearing or visual impairments. Here are some tips to help you do this:

* Add closed captions and/or a transcript of what is said so that it can be read instead of listened to. Remember: captions should be a verbatim account of what is said. Beware the auto-caption generators built into sites like YouTube. Auto-captions do not have a high level of accuracy.

**Tip:**Captions don’t just help those with hearing impairment. They are also very beneficial for those whose first language isn’t English, where there is a lot of ambient sound or if someone has a strong accent.

* Include anything you say on your slide and vice versa. When watching and listening to you speak at the same time, it is hard for your audience to also absorb text-only information.