

From the Desk of Mr. Myers

EAST PRAIRIE R-2 BUSINESS EDUCATION

Priorities for creating Instructional Video

Shooting Video for a Virtual Classroom & Live Meeting Complications

Objective:

Let's face it, pointing a camera at ourselves with the intention of replacing our trademark, face-to-face, in-person instruction, is not a natural act for most of us. The almost inevitable necessity of preparing yourself to become a combination of a one-person videography team, plus an effective teacher (*in a very unfamiliar virtual-school environment*), probably leaves you with many questions as you try to decide what constitutes a successful instructional video. Are there a few pointers that I can use as a guide as I



prepare to shoot my first instructional videos? Yes, the following tips are intended to help you plan your first series of instructional videos, and hopefully take some of the anxiety and

mystery out of your first video production.

Incidentally, this is the perfect opportunity to state the obvious. No one expects you to create a cinematic masterpiece. You are a talented

instructor who is preparing to make the best of a difficult situation. You are a subject matter expert, classroom manager and instructional specialist, and so the immediate task before each of us is to simply prepare ourselves to capture your day's instruction, and your passion for your topic, on video. Expect your video production process to evolve and improve slowly over time. To take some of the pressure off of you, and begin the school year with an above average quality instructional video (*should virtual school become required*), let's discuss the fundamentals of video production, beginning with the single most important component of video.

Video Production Priorities and Tips:

1. Audio:

- a. Regardless of thoughts to the contrary, the most critical component of any successful video is capturing rich, clear and distinct audio. Producers of video universally agree that even professionally produced, cinematic quality video that lacks excellent audio quality will not hold viewer interest, and in the case of instructional video can become a frustrating form of distraction in and of itself, if the sound quality is poor.
- b. Whether your concern is only recording your spoken voice, or the capture of specific sounds necessary to communicate a concept in a demonstration, in every case the close-mic'd,

rich-sounding audio is an absolute necessity to both capture and hold your audience's attention.

- c. Separate microphones, such as a wired or bluetooth wireless cell phone mic, a 25ft. long wired lapel mic, a 'snowball mic,' or a 'shotgun mic' enables you to record close-mic'd, rich-sounding audio. Examples follow.



Movo Photo GM100 Omnidirectional Lavalier Microphone for Cameras and GoPros

B&H # MOGM100 MFR # GM100

Key Features

- For Vloggers, YouTubers & Videographers
- For Cameras & GoPro HERO3, HERO3+, HERO4
- Omnidirectional Polar Pattern
- 3.5mm TRS Male Mini Plug

i.



Blue Snowball iCE USB Condenser Microphone with Accessory Pack (Black)

B&H # BLSBUSBSIB MFR # 988-000067

★★★★★ 402 Reviews

Key Features

- Cardioid Pattern
- USB Connectivity
- CD-Quality Audio
- Includes Stand and USB Cable

Add to Compare

ii.



Rode VideoMicro Compact On-Camera Microphone Kit for Smartphones

B&H # ROVIDEOMICPC

★★★★★ 435 Reviews

Key Features

- VideoMicro Compact On-Camera Microphone
- 3.5mm TRS to TRRS Cable for Smartphone
- WS9 Furry Windshield
- Lyre Shockmount



Add to Compare

iii.

- iv. Last point on audio: Enunciate your words carefully, and resist the temptation to talk too fast. Remember, students may be listening to you over the minimal quality, tiny Chromebook speakers, so careful enunciation will help students understand what you are saying.

2. **Lighting:**

- a. Great lighting for video doesn't have to cost you any money, but well chosen lighting is a critical component to high quality video, and must be planned in advance to be achieved.
- b. Effective lighting delivers optimum exposure levels on your face, and/or main subject(s). Automatic lighting adjustments made by computers inside a video camera will attempt to average the lighting levels in the entire scene (*light to dark*), which may image quality, but also can also result in underexposed lighting on your face or the main subject, leaving a lifeless appearance. Good lighting is intentional.
 - i. To achieve effective lighting, examine the scene in front of your camera, and notice where there are very brightly lit areas, the quantity of them, and then notice the very dark areas of your prospective scene, and the quantity of them, and then make adjustments in the proximity of the lighting source to your face or main subject(s) as needed, until your face or your main subjects stand out from the background. Also, recognize that your camera will exaggerate the sense of contrast (*dark areas look darker*

than your eye perceives them to be, and the lightest areas will appear brighter than you will expect). It is important that your face or main subject stand out distinctly in overall brightness relative to the background, yet not become overexposed. Experiment and verify.

- ii. If at all possible, reduce the extremes of background lighting (*of dark and light*) to ensure optimal exposure values on your face of the main subject(s). Beware of overly bright backgrounds. Bright backgrounds will cause the camera's automatic exposure computer to make the main subject too dark, and is very distracting and irritating to the viewer. Likewise, a very dark background will usually result in an automatic exposure that causes overexposure on your face or main subject(s).
- iii. Test each of your scenes by making a short test recording, playing it back, and then make lighting adjustments as necessary.

- c. Natural light coming through a day-lit window (*but not direct sunlight*) is some of the most even lighting possible, and usually delivers the most flattering type of light for video. If possible, position your camera in front of a full size window, similar to the example that follows. Notice the soft, even



light that falls on the subject's face and eyes. This type of optimal exposure works for all skin complexions and tonalities, and it communicates a positive and cheerful vibe.

- d. Artificial lighting can also work well, if correctly chosen and arranged. A 'daylight' temperature light bulb(s) (4000 - 5000 kelvin) that is bounced off of one or more pure white walls, or bounced off of one or more large white foam-core boards can produce a flattering substitute for natural daylight. Additionally, when one or more lamps are placed close to the subject, but not so close as to overexpose your subject, you can end up with good lighting for your video.
3. **Camera orientation & position:** Students will watch your lesson presentations on their Chromebooks.
- a. Therefore, it is important to remember to record your video in **landscape** orientation (***NOT selfie-oriented portrait mode***), as seen in the example that follows.



- b. Also, and very important, consider placing your camera at, or even just above your eye line, if at all possible. In most



cases this camera position will require you to elevate your camera using an arrangement of very stable props, such as a stack of textbooks. An elevated camera placement results in a more aesthetically pleasing appearance, as compared to when the camera is looking up at you (*and the ceiling*) from below.

4. **Rule of Thirds:**

- a. One of the most common (*and very ugly*) rookie mistakes when shooting video is to position your head in the middle of the video display, as seen in the example that follows.



- b. Instead, following the rule of thirds, it is more visually engaging to your viewer if you position your head (*or your main subject*) at the intersections of the upper $\frac{1}{3}$ of the video display to deliver the most natural, most aesthetically pleasing composition, as seen in the example that follows.



Framing shots of subjects other than people should be composed with the rule of thirds in mind, but it is not always possible or reasonable to use this technique. The 'rule of thirds' is actually less of a rule, and more of a guideline.

- c. Failure to compose your shots following the rule of thirds may not always be a disaster (*and may be an absolute necessary in some situations*), but realize that a poorly composed shot has the potential to unconsciously create a form of distraction to your viewers, distraction from the main point you are trying to make in your instruction.

5. **Create video with a partner:**

- a. **Cons:** Takes twice as long to produce your own video, because $\frac{1}{2}$ of the time you are delivering instruction to the camera, and the other $\frac{1}{2}$ of the time you are the videographer, as illustrated in the image that follows.



b. Pros:

- i. The teacher can concentrate on just one job at a time; either teaching and providing instructions, or fulfilling the role of a videographer and sound technician.
- ii. A videography partner can follow your action, when action is necessary, or push-in on a subject by walking up close, if the subject matter benefits from these techniques.

6. Tripod and/or camera/cell phone holding apparatus:

- a. Shaking and wiggling video cameras has a place in modern dramatic filmmaking, however steady cameras are considered more effective for instructional purposes.
- b. To achieve a steady shot, some form of camera mounting apparatus (*phone mount*) and tripod are necessary, unless a steady videography partner is available, a partner with reasonable skills, steady hands, lots of time, and one who will cooperate with your creative vision.



c.

7. **Background content:** Everything included on your video camera's display screen must be a deliberate choice. Distracting elements in the background (*and foreground for that matter*) will succeed in distracting your distractible students. Inspect your scene's background for distracting or private elements, and remove them before recording your segment, if at all possible.
8. **Pre-production planning & organization:** Creating effective video begins with pre-production planning. Plan each step. Good video is rarely created by just winging it. Visualize the whole process, each item you will need as a prop or a reference, and have it close at hand. Rehearse, and make adjustments to your plans as they come to mind. Create cue-cards that you can use to stay on plan during 'filming' one continuous scene. Be prepared. If you forget an item while recording, make that a cut in your video, shoot the remaining instruction in one or more additional 'takes,' and then edit it together.
9. **Focus:** Modern video cameras do a good job of maintaining focus on your subject, but if movement is planned, ensure that your camera can maintain focus on the subject(s) during the motion.

10. **Multiple 'takes'**: Do yourself a big favor, and consider breaking up one long scene into multiple 'takes' (*recording sessions*) if at all possible, unless an incontrovertible sense of continuity is required to communicate an idea convincingly. Re-position the camera between takes, significantly changing the proximity to, and angle between the camera and you or the main subject, to maintain viewer engagement.
11. **Reshoot as necessary**: Goof-ups are more common than are flawlessly executed takes. If you blow it, record again and again, until you have a good take. Your skill will grow, and results improve.
12. **Exaggerated animation/gestures**: If being animated is part of your personality, or if gestures are needed to communicate a thought with maximum effectiveness, remember that animated moments and bodily gestures must be exaggerated to communicate the desired effect on camera. You may feel silly making large-scale gestures, but subtle gestures that are effective in-person can be all but invisible when viewed in a video format. Make your gestures large and exaggerated. Play back your clips to evaluate each.
13. **Editing**: Editing apps and/or programs are a highly personal choice, and varieties (*and their associated costs, or lack of cost*) are countless. Find an editor that has the feature set you need. With the use of a video editor, you will be able to trim the 'in' and 'out' points of every video clip, add a simple transition from one video clip to the next, and finally export the finished video sequence for use by students. I use OpenShot on a PC. It's totally free. It's great.

<https://www.openshot.org/>

14. **Exporting video:** Once all the edits are completed for your assembled video clips, the sequence is ready to be rendered, or more commonly known as 'exported.'
- a. With many video editing products you must select the format your finished video will take, also known as a codec. The most common codec for online video (*think YouTube, etc.*) is the '**mp4**' format.
 - b. The 'exporting' process begins with what is known as 'rendering' the video. Exporting is a very computer processor intensive job, and frequently requires several minutes to finish the exporting process, so patience and advance planning is required. A five minute long video may require 15 to 30 minutes of 'rendering' to complete the job, depending on the age and build of your computer.
 - c. Once the job is exported/rendered/finalized, you can upload your video file to your Google Drive, and then insert your new video into an assignment in Google Classroom, along with your accompanying objectives, instructions, prompts, assignment point value, due dates, and etc.

15. **Text and Captions:** Consider the advantages of adding text to some of your video, as seen in the example that follows.



16. Examples of the general process of recording yourself (*not literal recommendations of products, or every technique represented*):
- [How to record a great video of yourself](#)
 - [Recording yourself on videos](#)
 - [Self-Recording videos - How to look and sound your best](#)
17. Live broadcasts: **Google Meet** is a new tool available to GAFE schools, and with it you can schedule a live meeting (*think ZOOM meeting*) with your students (*again, assuming the necessity to hold virtual school for a period of time*). Though at this writing this author has not used Google Meet, it is likely modelled after the features in other online meeting tools such as Zoom. One teacher from a metropolitan area school district of 18,xxx students, a district that

transitioned to a virtual-school environment for the entire 4th quarter of the 2019-2020 school year, stated that their teachers learned the following things during live (*online*) meetings with their students.

- a. When conducting live broadcasts, students should **remain on a 'mute' setting** (*a teacher controls this setting*), otherwise students will be tempted to chatter with each other while you are trying to teach a lesson, give instructions, etc..
- b. Another significant concern with a group of students being connected to a live meeting will be their ability to hear distracting background sounds from one or more homes, such as TVs, yelling and screaming, inappropriate activities, etc.. Imagine the chaos that type of unscripted content would inject into your online meeting, and fodder for community gossip enthusiasts. **Muting student microphone inputs** to each of your live meetings will prevent this distraction, and the very real potential to hear inappropriate 'things' coming from a home.
- c. Similarly, some online meeting apps have a **'chat' function**. A chat function may be helpful in certain settings, and you may decide to permit your students to 'chat' with one another during a session, but in the case of the meeting software used by the aforementioned large school district, the 'chat' function had to be turned off by the teacher at the end of the session. If the teacher did not remember to turn it off, students were able to chat with each other without any adult supervision, until one or

more pairs of students were discovered to be chatting with one another a full 2 weeks after a live meeting was concluded.

Some parents seem to thrive on fault-finding opportunities, so let's try to not give them any.

- d. You need to create and communicate a plan (*in advance*) that your students must follow in the event that Internet problems disrupt a live meeting session you have scheduled.
- e. Realize that online school has the potential to significantly slow, or completely crash a local Internet Service Provider's network backbone in town. Why and how, you might wonder? The local area Internet providers have built their networks in town to support a historically predictable amount of bandwidth demand by businesses and homes in the community. If one or more district buildings were ordered to close for a period of time, and students are disbursed to their homes, the Internet bandwidth load of all those Chromebooks are no longer supported by the Internet connection in our school buildings, but will be shifted to the ISP networks supporting their neighborhoods. In those cases, shifting hundreds of devices onto neighborhood ISPs for video watching, Live meeting participation and such, from the hours of 8am to 3pm, may cause significant disruptions to student Internet access. Only time will tell for sure. Having a contingency plan in place, pre-communicated to your students, may have its own reward should Internet problems beyond our

control actually develop, and your students are able, and have the responsibility to follow your pre-defined contingency plan with no further communication from you, while full Internet access is gradually restored.

- f. Your contingency plan might begin with a statement like, “*If we have the Internet crash on us during a scheduled, live class meeting, here is what I want you to do: _____.*”



Don't wait until you have problems maintaining connection with your students in a live meeting, to try to figure out what you want your students to do in place of the interrupted live meeting.

18. **Chromebook problems at home:** By the time school starts, shared with parents/guardians via our district website will be a copy of “*Common Chromebook Problems - At-Home Solutions to Common Chromebook Problems.*” Hopefully, this resource will help.