

Best practices for creating online lectures

Quick reference guide

Overview

Many educators are comfortable and experienced when it comes to delivering lectures in the classroom when students are present. Many resources are available for those who are using web conference software to conduct class synchronously when remote teaching.

However, sometimes you may have a need to use a recorded lecture that students can watch independently, at times they choose. In these cases, some educators find that recording lectures can feel unfamiliar and challenging.

Consider the following tips for delivering effective recorded lectures.

1. Prepare in advance

Draft a script or talking points. Choose a quiet location and minimize background noise. Practice until you feel comfortable. Do a short sample recording to make sure your equipment works.

2. Keep recordings as short as possible

Asynchronous lectures are more effective (and more likely to be viewed in full) if they are as short as possible. Several short videos covering content that is chunked into smaller pieces is preferable to one longer video.

3. Shape your message using familiar rhetorical modes

The subject matter itself is important, but if you can communicate the subject matter with a known rhetorical mode, you may be able to communicate more clearly than if you just wing it. Think about the topic you are trying to communicate and determine which mode would be most effective for your lecture:

- **Narrative:** Can you tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end?
- **Cause and effect:** Are you trying to explain how one or more things leads to others?
- **Example or illustration:** Are you trying to help learners understand a broad principle through close examination of an example?
- **Process:** Are you demonstrating the steps of how something works?
- **Persuasion:** Are you trying to get students to change their minds or do something?
- **Comparison and contrast:** Are you trying to help students understand something new by showing how it is similar or different from something they already know?

4. Use effective visuals

Video lectures are an audio-visual medium. Once you know what you need to say, be sure to plan what you want students to look at.

- Pictures should convey meaning and information, not merely aesthetics.
- Use symbols to help convey the relationships of ideas, such as an arrow to help indicate cause and effect, or numerals to identify sequential steps. For example, Microsoft Office products include a SmartArt feature that can help create effective visuals that communicate with visual rhetoric.
- Visuals and audio content should not compete. If a visual needs prolonged attention, allow for that in your presentation, and vice versa. Don't expect students to listen and read carefully at the same time. Slides that are accompanied by audio content should use as few words as possible.

5. Be yourself

Appearing on camera can feel uncomfortable. Because the content is being recorded, it's easy to set unrealistic expectations for perfection. Recording a video lecture is not the same as shooting a major motion picture, though. It is OK if you stumble over a word or sneeze. Resist the temptation to record and re-record until the video is perfect. The purpose is to help students learn, and you can do that while being yourself!



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