

# How to Create a Course Overview Screencast

## Introduction

A screencast is a video recording of actions performed on a computer screen, such as navigating a website, creating a document in Microsoft Word (e.g. works cited page or annotated bibliography), or submitting an assignment in Blackboard Learn.

Creating a short screencast that demonstrates how students can navigate to content areas in the course, use essential course tools, and access important course resources can be extremely beneficial. Regardless of how experienced your students are with online learning, a short course orientation screencast can help alleviate feelings of anxiety, as well as develop confidence in their ability to successfully navigate your online course. It can also significantly reduce the number of emails from students (especially those new to online learning). Use the advice below to plan and record your course overview screencast.

## Recommended Tools

**ScreenCast-O-Matic** <http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/>

Tutorials: <http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/channels/cXhI3EVTh>

ScreenCast-O-Matic (SOM) is a web-based service that can run on Mac and PC computers. It records on-screen actions, audio, and even video (if you have a webcam). SOM has basic editing features, and can highlight cursor movement and mouse clicks in your recordings. The free version of SOM has a 15 minute time limit. Users are provided with recording storage, shareable links to their recordings, html embed code, and an HTML5 player for mobile browsers.

### **Logitech USB Headset H530**

This Logitech USB headset is a great option for recording audio. If you intend to record several screencasts or videos for your course, you should strongly consider investing in a headset microphone. While built-in microphones on most laptops are serviceable, they were designed for consumer uses (low quality video chat, online gaming, etc) rather than academic recording. A dedicated USB microphone will measurably improve the quality of your recordings.

## Use Accessibility Features

Most operating systems come with Accessibility features that can be used to improve your screencasts. Microsoft Windows has a feature that will flash a circle around your cursor to call it out, which is useful for drawing attention to areas of the screen. Apple's Mac OS X has a zooming feature that will enlarge certain areas of your screen (useful for highlighting certain actions). Both will show up well on a screencast.

Information on Accessibility tools in Windows 7: <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/products/windows7/default.aspx>

Information on Accessibility tools in Mac OS X: <http://www.apple.com/accessibility/macosx/vision.html>

## Planning Your Screencast

### Step 1. Create an Outline

Chunking information is a great way to build an outline of specific topics and actions to cover, as well as identify the focus for your recording. Behind the scenes, chunking also allows you to stagger the recording of your screencast by breaking it into smaller pieces. This cuts down the time you'll need to edit your recording if you make a mistake (you won't have to re-record the entire video, or single out a tiny section to be removed). It also simplifies future updates to the recording if a section needs revision.

Select some or all of the following topics, and use them to chunk the outline of your screencast:

- A quick walk through of where to begin the course, the START HERE folder
- A quick walk through of the lesson modules/weekly folders so students understand how the course is organized
- Where to find your instructor information
- Where announcements will appear in the course
- How to access the discussion board tool
- Which tool to use to submit assignments
- Which tool to use when sending email
- Which tool to use for virtual office hours
- Where to find support information and technical help
- Other tools or course content areas that are essential components of your online course

### Step 2. Script out what you will say

Once you've created an outline of your recording, you can plan and write your script. A script is the fleshed out version of your outline. This should literally be exactly what you plan to say while recording. Be sure to include action cues with your script, which are defined as any action you'll perform on-screen. These action cues may include advancing a slide, loading a web page, or switching between open applications. These action cues don't just keep you on track during the recording process, they also ensure your narration will match the actions occurring on the screen.

**TIP:** Federal law requires multimedia content to be compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Essentially, this means that text transcripts should be made available for any enrolled students. Additionally, accessible course content is a requirement of Quality Matters Rubric standard 8.2. Therefore, it's a good idea to write out your script word for word so you'll have a transcript already prepared when you're done recording.

## Recording Your Screencast

### Step 1. Prepare the Recording Environment

#### *Find a quiet place*

You will likely have to perform a recording multiple times. It is essential that you find a quiet and distraction-free location to record in. Public spaces rarely make good recording locations. You should also consider potential distractions at home. Are the kids home? Does the dog need a walk? Is your partner vacuuming or doing the dishes? All of these factors can affect the overall quality of your recording, or distract you from being able to successfully deliver your content.

### Step 2. Set Yourself Up for Success

#### *Use your voice*

Vary the tone of your voice, as well as your rate of speaking to avoid sounding too monotone. But try not to go overboard; it's easy to push a microphone too far. If you're using an external microphone for your audio, try to find and use a Pop Filter. A Pop Filter is a small screen that rests between you and the microphone. It dampens "pops" from sounds like the "t" and "p" in the word "type." These sounds can create "pops" that go outside the normal range of the audio recording, and decrease the quality of your audio.

#### *Be prepared*

Keep your script nearby. If you can, keep it open on the screen in front of you. Doing this will make it much less noticeable when you're reading your script (since you won't have to look away from the screen to do so).

Keeping a glass of water nearby will also help any issues. If you're recording a lot at once, your throat may go dry and affect your ability to speak with consistency. Remember to frequently drink water, use hydrating cough drops, and take frequent breaks between recordings (every half hour or so, if possible).

#### *Record in chunks*

As a general rule: The longer you're recording, the more likely you are to make a mistake. Most screencasting tools, including Screencast-O-Matic, have the option to pause a recording. You can also use your script, which should be in chunks based on your outline, to record sections of your screencast as individual videos. These can later be "stitched together" in a video editing program.

### Step 3. Process Your Video

### *Save your video*

This is one of the most overlooked areas of video creation: Where to save your file, and what format to save it in. Ideally, you'll want to save your video as a .MOV or .MP4 video file. Both file formats will reduce the size of your video file without reducing the overall quality, and meet file type requirements for uploading to video sharing sites such as KSUtube and YouTube.

### *Upload your video to Blackboard Learn*

The best way to share your video with students in your course is to upload your video to KSUtube. Once the video has been uploaded to KSUtube, you will be provided with a choice of the Embed Code for the video or a URL link. Using the Embed Code, you can insert the video directly into a content item. However, this requires using the HTML editing tool in the WYSIWYG text editor in Blackboard. An easier solution is to create a URL content item in your course and copy / paste the URL from KSUtube. When students click on the link they will be taken directly to the video hosted on the KSUtube website.