
AUDIO AND VIDEO

WHY USE AUDIO AND VIDEO?

The first question you need to ask yourself is why you are using audio and video. Adding audio and/or video to your web site or to your online class can enhance your site and help communicate information to your audience. But poorly thought-out or inaccessible audio and video files can result in more frustration than learning.

AUDIO VS. VIDEO

Video has the potential to add more depth and communicate more complex information than audio alone. However, make sure that adding the visual component actually does add useful content. For example, a video of a “talking head” does not add any more information than audio alone. Because of the significantly larger file size (and therefore longer download time) of videos, use them judiciously.

QUALITY

When creating audio and/or video, record at the best quality you possibly can. While some background noise and other issues can be fixed in post-production, the better the original recording, the better the final product! For example, if you are making an audio recording, make sure you are in a quiet environment, the phone is turned off, and you have a good quality microphone appropriately placed to avoid breathiness. If you are audio recording a classroom lecture, don't just place a digital recorder in your shirt pocket where sound will be muffled and you'll get static every time the microphone brushes the fabric. Instead, use a lapel microphone and make sure you summarize student comments and questions, as their voices will not be picked up well by the microphone.

For video recordings, reduce clutter in the background, make sure you have good lighting, and use a tripod when possible to avoid shakiness.

ACCESSIBILITY

AUDIO

Of course, students with hearing loss will not benefit from audio recordings. The most common way to make audio accessible is to provide a transcript. Transcripts not only benefit students who can't hear the audio, but allow for searching content and provide an easy way for students to scan the content for review or to find a recording they want to listen to again. Sometimes the speaker has an accent or the quality of the recording is poor and the transcript helps ensure everyone gets the correct information. The transcript should be available at the same time as the audio so that students with hearing loss or auditory processing disabilities can benefit from the information at the same time as other students.

VIDEO

Video will need synchronized captions and possibly audio descriptions for the blind. Captions benefit students with hearing loss, but also students who are not native English speakers, students with some learning disabilities, and students who are watching the video in a location without speakers, such as a library or noisy environment.

You may want to include a transcript of the video in addition to the captions for the same reasons as mentioned for transcribing an audio file. However, a transcript alone is not sufficient for access, according to the Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Audio descriptions are necessary when important information is being presented only in a visual format. This is something to consider during the design phase of your video. A speaker or narrator may explain enough of what is going on visually that no additional audio description is needed. Titles, credits and contact information can be read. To see if enough information is being provided without audio descriptions, listen only to the audio of the video and see if a student could get all the information required from the video by only hearing the audio.

ADDING CAPTIONS AND AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS

While typing a transcript of an audio file is not difficult to do in-house, adding captions and audio descriptions is probably best done by an agency that specializes in this service.

Once again, it's important to make the video accessible at the time of release, so planning ahead is important.