Best Practices: Create Engaging Educational Videos

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Whether you are delivering "live" (synchronous) recorded (asynchronous) lectures for your students, here are a few things to keep in mind:

Keep it short

Use visual and audio information well

Segment your content

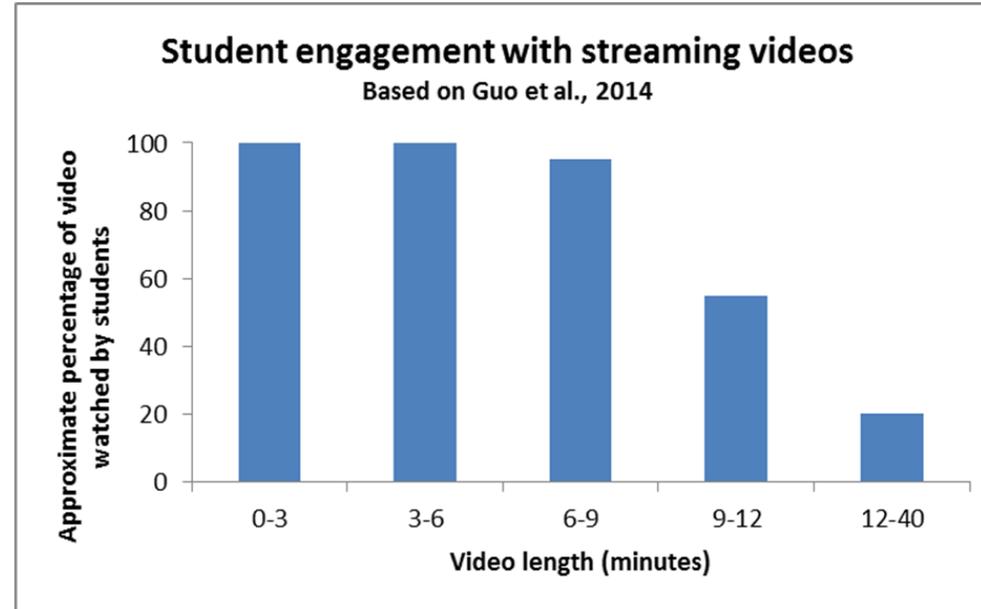Signal important information

Design active viewing

Be present

All videos are not created equal.

Keep it short and focused.

- Research shows that students' focus wanes after 9 minutes of passive observation.

Student engagement with streaming videos
Based on Guo et al., 2014

Approximate percentage of video watched by students vs Video length (minutes)

Video length (minutes)	Approximate percentage
0-3	100
3-6	100
6-9	95
9-12	55
12-40	20

- Keep your videos simple and on-point. Weed out extraneous details, sounds or images that are confusing for students who may not yet know what information is essential.

Use visual and audio information wisely.

Auditory and visual information is processed through different cognitive channels.
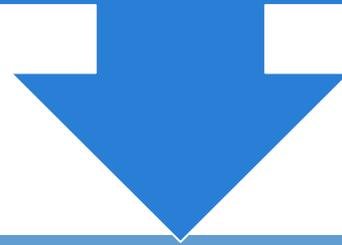
Avoid cognitive overload by:

Refraining from narration, animation and written text on screen at the same time	Reinforcing your audio messages with complementary visuals (like in this video),	Accompanying problem resolution, or explanation of phenomena with graphic illustration (Khan Academy example)

Segment and signal.
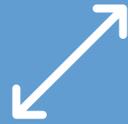
Segment new information into manageable chunks. This will make it easier for students to process and connect it to prior knowledge.

Segment by:

keeping videos short (9 minutes max)

punctuating your videos with questions or activities that require a reflective pause.

Signal important information.

Help students focus their attention on what's important.

To signal, use cues such as:

the appearance of up to 3 important words,

highlighting, changing text colour or

using symbols for emphasize

Design active, not passive, viewing.

Help your students actively process the information and monitor their understanding.

- Give guiding questions to be answered while watching your video.

- Give students control over the video. Making a recording available will allow students to replay and repeat complex passages at their own pace.

- Embed questions or polling at opportune moments to check for understanding and engagement. Here is a video tutorial for doing this in Moodle.

- Use asynchronous videos and follow-up questions as preparation for class.
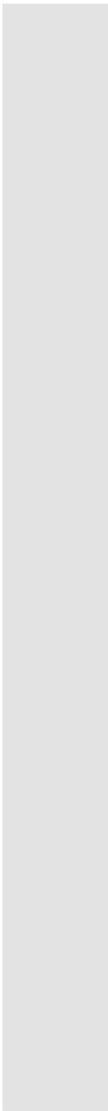
Teacher presence is always important in creating a classroom climate that fosters engagement and success. In remote teaching this is even more important in order to increase student persistence and reduce feelings of isolation.

Whether live or recorded, show yourself speaking, at least at the start, and share your interest and background in the topic.

Speak swiftly and engagingly to keep students' attention.

Use a conversational style rather than formal style in your video lectures.

As much as possible, relate to your students personally. Learn their names and personal situations, when you can. Link content to relevant experiences in their lives.

More tips for creating teacher presence can be found here.

Be present for your students.

Summary

- Keep it short, keep it focused.
- Make the visual and audio elements complementary, not redundant.
- Segment content into short organized chunks.
- Signal to students what information to focus on.
- Embed active learning techniques in your videos.
- Be present, personable, and approachable.

References and further reading

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