



Tips for Recording and Using Instructional Videos

Heather Clayton

Many of us haven't been trained to provide remote instruction, yet with COVID-19, we found ourselves quickly learning new ways to deliver content from a distance. With a new school year upon us, there are many unanswered questions. Our focus needs to be on high leverage practices that will serve us well, whether students are physically in class, learning remotely, or some combination of both.

One such practice is the inclusion of pre-recorded lessons. Recorded lessons are a way to impart information, then give our students the opportunity to apply their learning. These lessons can be watched by our students at any time and used for a variety of purposes. For example, a recorded lesson could be viewed in advance of live remote discussion with students or as a review after a live session. In addition to being powerful pre-teaching and re-teaching tools, recorded videos also serve as a resource for parents or for students who may have missed class. If we find ourselves back in a remote learning situation, the use of pre-recorded instructional videos will allow teachers to focus on the application of learning and assessment of student progress, just as they would in the physical classroom.

The thought of recording yourself on video and sharing it with others can be a daunting, however there are ways to make video lessons meaningful for your students and painless for you. Listed below are some helpful tips to follow!

1. Use what you know about good instruction to make your videos high quality.

Even though the lesson you are preparing is to be video recorded in lieu of face-to-face instruction, it still needs to be designed thoughtfully. Each lesson needs to have a clear learning objective and a way for students to demonstrate what have learned. Students need the opportunity to make meaning, engage with the content, and make real world connections. Additionally, there needs to be built in checks for understanding and ways to assess student progress.



For reference, visit **Just ASK's Resource Center** for the “**Top Ten Questions to Ask Myself As I Design Lessons**” at <https://justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/teaching-and-learning-resources/>

2. Include yourself in the video and be authentic.

There are many educational videos to choose from, or you can create your own. Research shows, however, that in order to boost student engagement and increase motivation, teachers should create their own videos featuring themselves. When your students see you and hear your voice, they will feel a stronger connection to school and an increased level of comfort. There is a greater level of accountability and investment in the learning because they know how important their learning is to you.

When recording, be yourself. Let your personality come through so students see you as the same teacher you are in the classroom. As you are speaking, keep your tone conversational and light. It is also important to pay attention to your speaking rate, as slower is not better when it comes to instructional videos. Keep a quick pace and be enthusiastic.

Lastly, it's okay to make mistakes. While you may choose to re-record your video until it feels polished, know that just like teaching face-to-face in the classroom, it does not need to be perfection.

3. Keep videos short.

Research has shown that video length is the greatest indicator of student engagement. According to researchers, videos should not exceed six minutes. Some studies actually indicate that three minutes is the optimal video length to ensure the highest level of student engagement. If you have more to say, then consider creating more than one short video on the topic.

4. Be prepared.

It doesn't matter if you use a script, outline, or notecards, the bottom line is to prepare. When you know your content well, you will deliver it with ease and in a way that does not seem artificial.

Don't be fooled into thinking that because the video is short, there is less planning involved. Actually, it takes careful planning to be succinct while conveying important instructional information.

5. Focus on essential learning.

Each video you create should focus on one learning objective or task. Keep your instruction focused on what is essential for students to learn, and maintain a narrow focus on the objective you have chosen for the video.



6. Break up video content into manageable “chunks.”

When creating instructional videos, it is important to minimize the amount of information for students to process. Think of sound bites and segments, where students can pause and reflect.

7. Prepare visuals to accompany your video.

To help your students make meaning of the information presented in your video, include organizers or visual cues that will highlight the key information and support students in making connections to the learning. You may also choose to include slides that are clear and simple. Whatever visuals you choose, be sure to use non-copyrighted materials.

Some ideas for visuals to embed in instructional videos:

- A stand-alone slide of the lesson’s learning outcome
- Bulleted summary points
- Graphic organizers
- Photos
- Graphics
- Big ideas/claims
- Key vocabulary
- Example solutions
- Lists
- Handwrite notes onto the presentation

8. Use strategies to keep students engaged during the video.

When designing the video, create places where students can pause and reflect or jot notes. The idea is to make the video as interactive as possible, so students are more likely to watch the video in its entirety and remember the learning.

9. Hold students accountable.

In your instructional videos, include periodic checks for students’ understanding. For example, embed multiple choice or true/false questions, fill in the blank questions, open-ended questions, or places for student embedded questions.

10. Use recorded videos for a variety of purposes.

Using videos to share information opens up an entirely new way of thinking. Listed below are some ideas for ways to use pre-recorded videos:

- To provide directions for tasks
- For back-to-school informational sessions
- To complete a picture book walk with elementary students
- To share a read-aloud
- To maintain classroom routines such as morning songs, morning messages, calendar math, or question of the day



- To share anchor charts
- To explain grading

After three months of remote learning, there were many lessons learned when it comes to pre-recorded lessons. Here are some of them:

- Make sure all of your students have access. Do your students all have a way to view the videos at home? Do your students know how to log in and access the video? Have you provided clear directions for log in?
- Include yourself. Your students want to see and learn from you-this is how they feel connected.
- You are a teacher, not a producer. The purpose of your video(s) is to enhance student learning, not wow them with bells and whistles.
- Don't try to cover too much; keep videos short and focused. If the video is too long they won't watch it, and if they do, they are less likely to complete any tasks at the end of the video.
- Be succinct and communicate clearly. Pre-recorded videos should be to the point and not include an abundance of language.
- Be clear about your expectations when it comes to videos. You expect your students to watch the video (at least once) and complete questions related to its content. These expectations should also be communicated to parents so they can reinforce the learning from home.
- Allow enough time for students to watch and process the information presented on videos, recognizing that they are balancing other assignments as well.
- Even though videos need to be simple, there are still a couple of basic production considerations. For example, if using a Smart phone to record your video, hold it horizontally for the right aspect ratio. Avoid having light behind the subject (you!) in order to avoid shadows. Record a test video to make sure lighting and volume are appropriate. Lastly, watch your completed video to check for any problems before sending it out to students/parents.

There are many apps and online resources for creating your own instructional videos. For example, videos can be created in **Photos**, **iMovie**, **Zoom**, **Explain Everything**, **Screencast-O-matic**, **Green Screen**, or **Screencastify**. The first step is to choose one and give it a go! Summer is a great time to practice and create a bank of instructional videos that can be used either in our out of the classroom when school resumes.

**“Tips for Recording and
Using Instructional Videos” was originally
published in July 2020 as an issue of Just ASK’s *Making the Standards Come
Alive!* <https://justaskpublications.com/msca>**

