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Lights, Camera... Learn! Tips for Making Videos for Remote Instruction

By Scott Watson | July 24, 2020



Many educators have turned to incorporating video in their teaching in recent years—either locating lessons made by others or creating their own. The advent of the Spring 2020 global health pandemic placed unprecedented emphasis on the idea of creating teaching videos and tutorials as a way of conveying content to students learning from home.

Why Use Video in Music Education?

There are several great reasons to use video in your music teaching.

1. **They're effective.** If “a picture is worth a thousand words,” then a video is worth 10,000! You can talk on camera to explain something, while adding on-screen text, zooming in to show detail, highlighting with graphics, and much more.
2. **Students respond to video.** From YouTube to Netflix to a host of other services, today's learners—digital natives—are immersed in and respond to video.
3. **They multiply your efforts.** Videos take some time to create upfront, but in the long run allow you to reach a large audience for a long time. Five years ago I created a six minute video on using a [USB microphone with GarageBand](#) for my high school Music Production students. Today it's been viewed more than 136,000 times!
4. **A blended learning approach.** Blended learning combines face-to-face teaching with digital, online content so students can work at their own pace using a variety of learning modes.
5. **They motivate and inspire.** You don't have to look far on YouTube to find wonderful performers of all kinds. Some have astounding technique despite being as young, or younger, than our students! Some are serious; others hilarious, even zany! Whether you're looking for a performance of the district band audition piece to emulate, demonstration of great vocal technique, or simply something to motivate/reward students, there's sure to be a video that fits the bill.

To Create or Not to Create? That Is the Question!

We're all busy. Here are a few questions I ask when deciding if it's worth the time to create my own video:

1. **“Is this something I say again and again in my teaching?”** Think of how often a band director explains how to oil the valves of a trumpet, or how to use a fingering chart, or how to perform a scale for testing; or how often an elementary classroom teacher demonstrates clapping rhythms, playing notes on a recorder, or how to perform a vocal warm up. If the content will cover something you share often, addressing the topic in a video could be worth your time and effort.
2. **“Has someone already made the video I want?”** I don't need to reinvent the wheel. Before I dive into creating a video, I search the Internet to see if others have already covered the topic and to my satisfaction. For example, I wanted to post videos for my 1st-year band students demonstrating how to assemble their instruments. I had the hardest time finding a video that showed assembling the clarinet mouthpiece, barrel, ligature, and reed in the order that I think is best. I eventually found exactly what I wanted at the [YouTube channel of Dr. Stephen Selfridge](#).

Tips for Effective Videos

Here are suggestions for making the most useful, impactful teaching videos:

- 1. Post ubiquitously.** That's just a fancy way of saying, "Upload your videos so everyone (you'd like) can access them!" Most students are familiar with YouTube. If you have a Gmail account, you can [create a YouTube channel in minutes](#). When you upload a video to YouTube, checking the box that it's intended for kids automatically turns off comments (which is a good thing!). Or, you could upload your videos to Google Drive and share a link to them with your students.
- 2. Keep them brief and concise.** Be mindful of your students' attention span when creating. If your topic goes on past 8-10 minutes, consider breaking it up into two shorter videos. Honestly, many viewers tune out after just two minutes!
- 3. Kids want to see YOU!** Our students want and need to see us. Many of my early videos have me narrating but unseen. After a while, I got over my self-conscious inhibitions and started appearing on screen as I shared, presented, and demonstrated. I think it's made a big difference in how the videos resonate with students.

An Incredibly Abridged List of Apps

You can research the pros and cons of the many apps available for creating your own teaching videos. Here are two of my favorite solutions:

1. [Screencastify.com](#). This web app, available in free and pay versions, runs in your browser. It's fairly intuitive to use, can do a great deal, but you'll realize it's limitations once you get going.
2. [Camtasia](#). This leading app for business and education tutorials strikes a nice balance between expressive power and ease of use. Highly recommended!



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