

## Guidelines for producing Short Videos and Podcasts for Online Training

Using short videos or podcasts will create a stronger sense of connection between facilitators and event participants in an online environment. This resource was adapted from guidelines for facilitators of CALMet Online, 2014. While focused on short videos, it contains guidelines useful for any instructional video production.

Podcasts and short videos can be used in different phases of training, such as:

1. **Welcome videos** to kick off synchronous/asynchronous online courses, stating the goals and rules of the course, topics of the sessions and expectations of participants. (They should be available as the first resource, before the start of the course, if possible.)
2. **Facilitator introductions** to help participants get to know who will be leading the event. (They should be available just before the start of the event, before the start of the related session at latest.)
3. **Session introductions**, which provide a focused introduction or review of background information to prepare learners for the training. (They should be available at the start of the session and may be included as part of the facilitator introductions if they are not too long.)
4. **Primary content** for asynchronous training, such as in mini-lectures designed for Flipped Classroom approaches or other blended learning modes. (They should be available at least a few days before any planned live sessions so learners have time to view them in preparation for other learning activities.)

Illustrated podcasts, based on a series of still images and audio narration (similar to a recorded PowerPoint presentation), can be a good substitute for higher bandwidth videos, and will be much easier to produce.

### Video Lengths

Short is always better for videos serving the purposes described above. Concise videos will have more impact, and longer videos can require more effort to produce.

A minute of audio is about 150 words, but it depends on the pace of the speaker. The speaker should use a pace slightly slower than normal conversation for video,

especially if audiences of many languages are included. In most cases, so 120 to 160 words per minute is a good guide when preparing narration text, but you can also test with a specific presenter to determine their pace.

- **Welcome videos** should be short and to the point, no more than 2-3 minutes. The introduction should not attempt to explain everything that will be explained in other resources or activities.
- **Facilitator introductions** should probably be less than one minute (consider how you would introduce yourself in a large meeting).
- **Session introductions** should be no more than 2-3 minutes (less than 400 words).
- For **Primary content**, several short and focused videos are better than long lectures. Break the content into meaningful chunks so they are easy to absorb and review. Consider 5 minutes a good rule of thumb for maximum length.

## Video Contents

- **Welcome videos:** Should explain the format, schedule and rules of participation. It should be motivating, inspiring, and invite participants to enjoy the opportunity.
- **Facilitator introductions:** Tell participants who you are, how you are involved in training, your experience, what you will be contributing to the event. Keep is very short, but get across your personality and encourage participants to interact with you. Example introduction of a EUMETSAT team for an online seminar: <https://vimeo.com/88256476>
- **Session introductions:** These would include short summaries of the topics to be discussed and activities that will be conducted. You might include questions to generate curiosity. Be creative. Session introductions might also include screen shots of the online environment as orientation. Podcasts (one or more simple slides plus audio) could be used for session or sub-session introductions. It might be best if they reference visuals used in the content they introduce (see this example from the WMO Course for Trainers: <http://etrp.wmo.int/moodle/mod/page/view.php?id=6727> . Transcripts can be provided to aid those using other languages. Alternatives include: MP3 audio + image, or PowerPoint shared through a SlideShare and embedded into an HTML page, along with MP3 (like here: <http://www.downes.ca/presentation/325>)
- Any of the above techniques can be used for presenting **Primary content**

as well. Of course, the quality of visual and audio content will be even more critical, so planning and preparation will take longer.

### **Tools to use and video formats**

There are many options to choose from, from very simple to complex, depending on your needs and available resources.

- Webcam for simple talking head videos
- Screen recording software for demonstrating online content
- Camcorder
- Studio quality video studio camera
- Quality audio is the key. Microphones built into the camera are usually not as good as separate wireless or wired microphones. Test to see what works best.

Short videos for instruction do not need to be the same high standard as documentary films. A homemade look is fine as long as the message is good and clear.

### **Platforms for sharing video**

Two free options are available for sharing short videos.

- **Vimeo:** This service offers a good platform for sharing. It offers a clean interface for playback, and can be embedded in a Moodle page or other Web page easily. Vimeo videos can include captions and subtitles to facilitate translation.  
Example: <https://vimeo.com/97094412>
- **YouTube:** This is the most common sharing platform. It provides a transcription service that generates a closed captioning file. You can download, edit/fix it and then update it. YouTube also provides analytics for tracking how often videos are viewed. Video can be grabbed for hosting locally or sent via the Training Channel. See *also* guidelines how COMET uses YouTube service  
<http://www.calmet.org/2014/02/using-youtube-for-video-hosting.html>

Supported formats for the most common delivery platforms:

**YouTube:** MOV, .MPEG4, .AVI, .WMV, .MPEGPS, .FLV, 3GPP, WebM

**Vimeo:** suggested format is MP4, but FLV is supported too. Detailed



information about best video compression can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/help/compression>

**Audio formats for Moodle:** MP3, AAC, RA, WMA

## A Practical Example

This is how the video introduction of the facilitators for EUMETSAT (<https://vimeo.com/88256476>) was made, what tools and software were used.

- Video Recording: HD camcorder (Sony HDR•CX730E Full•HD)
- Audio: Build•in microphone from the camcorder, plus a USB omni directional microphone ([Snowball](#)) connected to a laptop with [Audacity](#) software installed.
- Video editing: Microsoft [Movie Maker](#)
- Audio editing: [Audacity](#)

## Lessons learned:

- Find a quiet location. We recorded our video in a hallway, which was tricky for the audio postproduction. That is why the second audio track from a USB microphone was used, otherwise it wouldn't have been necessary.
- If you are doing a podcast (no need to see you speaking), use a headset with microphone and it will give a great quality audio without background noise.
- Test the set up before the recording. It may be disappointing to discover afterwards that the microphone was muted or set very low.
- Have a script ready or just a draft. It is better not to read from paper, especially if you sound like you are reading, but it will help to keep the narration flow smoother if you have some notes to support your talk.
- Not everybody feels comfortable with video recording. If this is the case, use a podcast with a still image of the speaker instead, a screenshot of the content you are introducing, or 1•2 slides to accompany the audio. Low tech solutions are much more friendly for users with modest internet connection speed.
- The idea for the EUMETSAT video was to keep it as short as possible, to let participants hear our voice and get across a bit of personality. Because they might be interested also in our professional background, we added a link to our profiles and external websites participants can browse to know more if they wish so.