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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO VIDEO IN THE CLASSROOM

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Introduction

Student video assignments have become commonplace in public speaking, teacher preparation, language training, nursing education, sales, and performing arts programs—even more so when these courses are taught online.

Students learn skills faster when they see themselves on video. The research is clear about that. Here are a few examples.

4 Surprising Ways Video Is Changing Education
The Science of Calming Down an Anxious Presenter
Harvard's Best Foot Forward Project

If you're considering video in your courses, this guide will help you get started.

Getting Permission

In the United States, Various privacy and data protection laws may apply to your students' videos.

FERPA, COPPA, and HIPAA laws all require the right kind of permission before hitting record. These guidelines apply to many different educational settings, such as videos of student teachers in a class of school-age children, videos of nursing students interacting with real patients, or videos of graduate students conducting therapy sessions in psychology programs.

Asking for permission instead of forgiveness will help your students avoid any legal stumbling blocks. Make sure your students have the permission of everyone appearing in their videos, especially if they plan to share that footage publicly, with colleagues, or with an entire class.

To find out more about permission and privacy laws, take a moment to review *FERPA*, *COPPA*, and *HIPAA* requirements. Note that GoReact is compliant in all three of these areas.

Tips for student teachers

- Student teachers need written permission from each and every child's family before that child can appear on camera. Districts or schools may already have releases for their students, but this needs to be confirmed before your student teachers record.
- Sending home written permission slips is an easy way to get permission to film an entire class. If you don't have a permission slip template, *try this one from the edTPA organization*.
- If parents express uncertainty about recording their child's classroom, make yourself available to answer questions in either one-on-one meetings or a general meeting after school.
- If a parent or guardian requests for their child not to appear on camera, be sure these kids are placed off camera in a place where they can still interact with the class easily.
- After filming a class, never circulate that footage publicly or publish it on any kind of social media. You're better safe than sorry.

Pro Recording Tips

Whether you're recording the video or your students will be filming themselves, here is a great list to run through before hitting the record button.

1. **Position the Camera**
   - For in-class presentations, make sure you're capturing ALL of the presenting space. On-screen slides are notorious for coming through poorly on videos, so you may consider asking students to send their slides to you separately. If you're using GoReact, you can use our Slide Sync™ feature to upload and view the slides side by side along with the presenter.
   - For teacher observations, position the camera to capture the widest classroom angle while still picking up quality audio (see the audio tips below).
   - For self-recording, be sure your head, shoulders, and elbows are in the frame. You should allow a little space above your head, below your elbows, and on each side. If you're using any form of sign language in your video, be sure that the shot includes your entire signing box so your hands don't disappear off camera.

Other tips
- Keep the camera steady. Shaky or zooming cameras can really distract from the subject of the video.
- Secure your camera to a tripod, mount, or a stable surface. The camera should be a quiet observer.
- If you're filming with a smartphone, be conscious of whether a landscape or portrait view on your phone will create a better video for your purposes.

2. Choose the Background
If possible, subjects should stand in front of a solid, light-colored background. Be aware that some cameras don't record bright white backgrounds very well, and definitely avoid filming against a sunny window or a busy, distracting background. Before you hit record, remove all clutter and make sure nothing inappropriate is in the shot.

3. Use Adequate Lighting
Lamps do wonders for a recording. Just be sure to have more light in front of you than behind you, otherwise you'll be a shadow in the shot. If you're recording in a classroom setting, turn on all the lights you have and consider closing the blinds over your windows.

4. Check Clothing & Appearance
Subjects should wear contrasting clothing in solid colors for the best appearance on camera. Advise students to keep hair away from their face and lose the gum.

5. Make a Test Video
This may be the most important tip of all. Making a test video first

before the real thing will ensure that everything is working well, that any technical hiccups are ironed out, and that you have a chance to tweak your lighting and environment. You'll want to record in standard definition (SD) video size so you don't create an unnecessarily large file. This speeds up editing and uploading quite a bit. Don't record in 1080p or high-definition (HD) or above unless you have a specific reason. Using GoReact will automatically compress your video during recording or upload.

6. **Record Your Video**
   And have fun while you're doing it!

Recommended Equipment

Whether you're recording in class or students are recording themselves, you need some way to capture students' videos. Here are some options:

Mobile Devices
Smartphones and tablets can be great recorders. If students are recording themselves out of class or traveling to do student teaching, this is likely the easiest camera for them to use. However, long videos can drain battery life and fill up storage space quickly on a smartphone. Instruct students to always have a charging cord on hand and sort out their resolution beforehand. You don't want to deal with enormous files because the resolution on a student's phone was set to HD or 4K. (Note that GoReact video can be captured directly in the mobile app or recorded and uploaded later from a device.)

Webcams
External and laptop webcams should produce adequate recordings in a classroom or conference room. If you are recording a full classroom (such as a presentation day or student teaching scenario), be sure to check the focal length of the webcam since some are designed only for shots less than six feet away.

Camcorders

Camcorders may allow you to capture even higher-quality recordings. Depending on your laptop and software configuration, a camcorder may limit your ability to stream the video, which just means you'll need to upload it later. Note that GoReact cannot stream a live recording from a camcorder.

Classroom/IP Cameras

Some built-in classroom cameras can be used for recording videos onto a classroom computer or your personal laptop. Your IT staff can investigate if such an option is available to you.

Invest in a Tripod

If you use an external camera, consider mounting it on a tripod. Whether the tripod sits on the floor or a table top, the extra stability will improve the quality of the recording.

Charging Cord or Extra Batteries

Many video assignments have been saved by double-checking that you have full batteries or a backup. Whatever device you use to film, be sure you have the charging cord with you just in case.

Audio Basics

Poor sound quality can make an otherwise wonderful video impossible to understand. Explore your audio options and use whatever works best for you. Keep in mind that good microphones don't have to be expensive. Try an external mic for best quality audio, and try to minimize background noise.

When recording yourself, be sure to sit an appropriate distance from your camera. Being too close can lead to garbled or poor-quality audio.

For in-class presentations, be sure the presenters project their voices well and turn toward the mic source. You might try a remote mic they can hold or clip to their clothes to allow speakers to move around easily and use their hands as they speak.

For student teacher observations, using a camera designed for full room recording will usually be better than a desktop webcam for audio. Student teachers can also use a remote mic to capture consistent audio as they move around the room.

Try GoReact

Here are some of the ways GoReact video software makes student video assignments so much easier:

- Easy video capture
- Automatic compression of video files
- All videos stored securely in the cloud
- Time-coded text, audio, and video feedback
- Works with a smartphone—no extra equipment required
- Slide Sync technology for side-by-side video and slides
- Customizable rubric builder
- Simple, 5-minute setup

For more information, visit us at GoReact.com