



# TESOL Connections

Keeping English language professionals connected

## Video-Making Made Easy

by [Dana Simionescu](#) and [Kyle Butler](#)

Would you like to make videos for your class or have your students work on video projects, but you don't quite know how to get started? Video is a valuable tool for teaching—be it in traditional face-to-face, flipped, hybrid or online learning—and is becoming increasingly popular as a way of delivering content. Research suggests that using videos for instruction has a number of positive effects because of their multimodality and their flexibility affordance, including improved retention and understanding, increased interest and creativity, and promotion of critical thinking and higher level learning (Brecht, 2012, Kosterelioglu, 2016). Additionally, having students make their own videos promotes creativity, autonomy, multiliteracy, and authentic language use (Hafner & Miller, 2011).

Though having high-quality videos is desirable, you don't need to be an expert or have professional tools to create useful video materials for your students. In fact, one large-scale study on massive open online courses (MOOCs) found that “Videos produced with a more personal feel could be more engaging than high-fidelity studio recordings” (Guo, Kim, & Rubin, 2014, p. 42). These days, teachers not only have the option to make or edit videos for free, but they can also use online tools to add interactive features that provide formative assessment and allow for more active learning.

Here are some examples of videos we made for our classes: [Learning Vocabulary](#) shows students how to study new words, and [Writing an Outline](#) is a screencast demonstrating how to plan and write an outline for an essay. Making these videos required basic video-editing skills, like trimming and merging clips; editing out mistakes and unwanted material; inserting slides; and adding audio, text, or other objects to your video. These skills are not difficult to acquire (we provide some resources and tutorials in the next section), and once you've mastered them, you can teach them to your students, which is in itself an excellent authentic, content-based task.

## Best Free (or Low-Cost) Tools for Creating Videos

### Hardware

So, what tools do you need to make a video? Let's start with the hardware. Though there's no need for professional-grade production value, you do need to ensure good quality video and

especially audio. For recording the video, you could use the camera and microphone on your computer or phone. Alternatively, you can buy a webcam that gets attached to your computer. (With a quick web search, you can find a range of inexpensive options that will solve both your video and audio problem.) A small tripod might also be useful if you plan to use your phone for recording.

## Software

What about software? You will need a video-editing program. There are many online editing options, but most of these will add a watermark for the free version and can be cumbersome to use. We recommend using a reliable desktop program.

- **iMovie:** For Mac users, iMovie comes installed on your computer or can be downloaded for free from the Apple Store. To get you started, watch this [iMovie tutorial for beginners](#).
- **Shotcut:** Another option is Shotcut, a high-performance, easy-to-use, open-source application that runs on Windows, Mac OS, and Linux; [this Shotcut tutorial](#) will show you the basics.

Screen recording is one of the quickest and easiest ways to create an effective instructional video. If you want to record your screen, you will need special software for that. There are many options around, but we recommend the following three because they are free, high quality, and versatile; there is also no software bundle or sign up needed.

- **QuickTime:** Mac users again have a great program preinstalled—[this QuickTime tutorial](#) will show you how to use QuickTime for screencasting, with or without picture-in-picture.
- **Screencast-O-Matic:** Another option is Screencast-O-Matic, which is a really easy, user-friendly application, although your screencast will have a watermark, is limited to 15 minutes, and is slightly lower resolution (with the free version).
- **OBS Studio:** Last, but not least, we recommend OBS Studio, another open-source application that runs on Mac, Windows, and Linux. OBS Studio is a powerful program that can be a bit intimidating at first, but these tutorials demonstrate how to set it up for simple screencasting: [OBS Studio for Windows](#), [OBS Studio for Mac](#).

There are some other tools that can help you create videos: For example, if you are making a presentation, Microsoft PowerPoint can turn it into a video—[here's how](#). Also, [Adobe Spark Video](#) is an online tool that you allows you to combine images, video, animation, text, and audio (including voiceover) in a video—it's a good solution for a quick, simple video, but you cannot make a highly customized one.

## Adding Interactivity

In addition to creating videos, you can use existing ones to develop interactive activities. [This lesson we created for a content-based English class on U.S. history](#) takes an existing YouTube video of a speech by former U.S. President John F. Kennedy and adds questions and other

interactive elements. There are several applications that can help you achieve this, and they differ in terms of number and types of interactions (multiple-choice, short answer, poll, matching, thinking point, links, notes, images, etc.), whether you can upload your own video, what kinds of analytics you can get, and whether students receive instant feedback. Therefore, we recommend that you try them out and see which one best fits your needs.

- [EdPuzzle](#) has the advantage that it can integrate with Google Classroom, so it would be a good option for teachers who use that learning management system.
- [PlayPosit](#) has a great-looking interface, and it lets you add images and audio to your multiple-choice questions.
- [H5P](#) is an open-source platform that helps you create a variety of interactive content; for video, it offers 12 different types of interactions, as well as crossroads and adaptive behavior—meaning that students can move to a different place in the video based on their answer to a question.

## Video Project Examples

We led a video-editing workshop for a colleague’s project-based university-level writing class. The students had to research documentary as a genre, create a short documentary, and write a persuasive paper explaining and defending their film. They enthusiastically took on the project, interviewing experts and producing creative, well-designed videos about

- a former psychiatric hospital,
- the run-down condition of the School of Fine Arts building, and
- traffic safety at Ohio University, among others.

In one of our classes, students who are getting ready to complete the university’s Pathway Program will create videos sharing the “wisdom” that they have gained, such as study tips, mistakes to avoid, and what makes Ohio University such a special place. These videos will be shared with future incoming Pathway students, so that they can benefit from the accumulated wisdom of their peers. Here are some other types of potential student projects, with examples collected from around the web:

- **Digital storytelling:** Students can create nonfiction [narratives about their own lives](#), re-create historical or current events, or write and shoot a fictional story.
- **Newscast:** In groups or individually, students can create a [newscast](#) about a local or national news event, or about a news event in their home country.
- **Book report:** Students can enact and record a section of a book, or they can create a [video trailer](#) for the book.
- **Role-plays:** Students can film themselves role-playing a situation such as [a job interview](#), giving advice, shopping, or ordering food in a restaurant.
- **Video introductions:** students can introduce themselves and their country, or [introduce one of their classmates](#) after interviewing them.
- **Interviews:** Students can interview local people with experience or expertise on topics covered in your course, such as historical events, current trends, or academic subjects.

Alternatively, they can interview people from their home countries and provide translation in English.

- **Online presentations:** Students create a presentation and record themselves presenting, using a screencasting program.

## Conclusion

Producing engaging video content or leading your students in video production projects can seem intimidating. But with the range of free or low-cost hardware and software options available today, creating your own videos is well within the reach of the average teacher and student. So get your camera, get your students, get creative, and get started!

## References

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