

Using Accessible Videos for Your Online Courses

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Videos seem to be playing an ever-increasing role in the delivery of online course materials. From step-by-step screencasts, to video interviews, to artistic or historical pieces; videos can be an effective way of developing skills or expanding the knowledge base of learners. However, if some learners cannot see or hear the content of the video and audio, there is an accessibility problem that you should address. Video captions and audio transcripts play an important role in providing access to students with disabilities.

How to find videos for your online courses

There are many video libraries that might have relevant content for the subject you teach. As you are searching for media content, make sure you consider two main questions:

- Do you have the right to use the video, based on local copyright laws and/or the video license?
- Is the video properly captioned?

There are many possible sources for videos that you are allowed to use in your online courses. Some of the most commonly used techniques for finding these videos include:

- [Creative CommonsTM search tool](#) provides results from various media sites that are available for reuse and can be modified for your purposes, if necessary.
- Youtube and Vimeo video communities. When searching YouTube, you can turn on the filter that searches for Creative Commons licensed videos. When uploading a video to YouTube, there are only two licensing options: **Standard YouTube license** and **Creative Commons - Attribution**. Therefore, any video on this site that has a Creative Commons license can be reused with attribution to the video owner. With the standard YouTube license, the video owner has retained all rights to the video, except for the rights granted to YouTube by the video owner ([YouTube Terms of Service, Section 6](#))
- Ask your Librarian
 - Librarians are typically highly skilled at finding learning resources that can be legally used in education. There is also a great chance

that the library subscribes to one or more video libraries specifically for this purpose.

The most common licenses that allow reuse without asking for permission are **Public Domain** licenses and the various **Creative Commons** licenses. To ensure the Fair Use obligations to content creators, ensure that you are only using content that is licensed to allow you to use it in an online course.

Once you've found good, usable, properly licensed content, you need to ensure that your found content has the necessary features for accessibility.

Using videos with captioning



Captions are on-screen text descriptions that display the dialogue, identifies the speakers, and describes other relevant sounds that are otherwise inaccessible to the viewers of a video, television show, movie, computer presentation, or similar media production. Captioning was developed to assist people with hearing impairments, but can be useful to all people depending on their situation. For example, captions can be read when audio can't be heard no matter what the reason, such as a noisy surrounding environment, or due to the need to keep quiet (no audio playing), such as in a hospital or in a library when headphones aren't available. Captions can also help improve language comprehension and fluency, whether in your native language or a second language.¹

Note: Captions can be either closed or open. Closed captions can be turned on or off, whereas open captions are always visible.

Finding videos with proper captions

Once again, your Librarian can be an invaluable asset in finding captioned videos. If, however, you want to go it alone, here are a few tips.

All videos that are uploaded to YouTube are automatically captioned using voice recognition software. While that means that all videos have captions, unfortunately the voice recognition captions are often very inaccurate; sometimes embarrassingly so.

On the YouTube website, there is a search filter that looks only for videos with captions that are not automatically-generated. Using the CC search filter finds only videos where automatic captions have been edited, or a captions file has been uploaded by the content owner.

Typically, but not always, either of the two actions above should result in captions that are much more accurate than the automatic captions. However, it is always a good practice to review the video with the captions turned on to ensure that they are helpful and not inaccurate.

Creating captions for videos in your online courses

You might want to create your own videos to make sure that the content is covered the way you prefer, and to put your own personal stamp on the course content. In this case there are different techniques that you can use to create a video and create a good set of captions. It's possible to create your own caption file using any text editing tool, but we recommend using a video platform such as YouTube that has tools to make captioning easy, including editing capabilities and start/stop timing to ensure the text is properly coordinated to the view.

Note: To use captions in YouTube, you need a Google account. If you use any of the various Google tools, you already have one, or you can create a free account.

1. In YouTube, go to **Your Channel > Content**.
2. Click **Details** (the pencil icon) to edit the video.
3. In the left menu, click the **Subtitles** tab and add your captions file.

For more information, see [Add subtitles & captions](#).

Creating a transcript

It's helpful to also have a transcript of the captions to share with learners using screen readers. One option is to download the captions file and turn it into a transcript. For more information, see [Tips for creating a transcript file](#).

Another option is to use a speech-to-text tool while you are recording the video. Most mobile phones have a speech-to-text converter, or, you can easily acquire one in your app store.

What's beyond Captioning? Described Videos!

Captioned videos are a good first step toward accessibility of video content for online courses, however, the captions tend to capture the words spoken in the video, which can sometimes be confusing without understanding the context within which they are being spoken.

Described video, descriptive video, and audio description are three terms that all mean the same thing: a voiceover description of the primary visual elements in a video. Some examples of things that could be described on a video include setting the scene, costumes, actions, expressions, scene changes, and the like. These descriptions would be beneficial to viewers with low or no vision, as long as they can hear the audio descriptions.

There are many factors to consider when making described videos, and the full extent of knowledge extends beyond this series of accessibility tips for online courses. However, one free and simple service to consider is the website [YouDescribe.org](https://youdescribe.org), where you can add audio descriptions to YouTube videos.

Note: Content in this topic was consolidated from **Finding Captioned Videos for your Online Courses** and **Creating Captions for your Online Courses** and has been updated from [WAMOE](#), the Web Accessibility MOOC for Online Educators; co-created by Karen Sorensen of Portland Community College and Barry Dahl of D2L.