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## A Powerful Teaching Tool: Self-Produced Videos

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## **A Powerful Teaching Tool: Self-Produced Videos**

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**Abstract:** Video—once complex and expensive to create with high distribution costs—has become more affordable and highly accessible in addition to being a powerful teaching tool. Self-produced videos are one way educators can connect with a growing number of on-line learners. The authors describe a pilot project in which a series of video clips were produced on home gardening and cooking. Tips are offered on how educators can prepare themselves to produce their own videos.

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### **Why Video?**

As Extension educators explore ways the Internet can be used as a teaching tool, the choices can be bewildering. From podcasts to webcasts, from wikis to blogs, and from Blackboard to discussion boards—each of these new technologies can alter the traditional delivery of classroom-based education (Keengwe, Onchwari, & Onchwari, 2009). And, in the evolving world of social media, educators have to contend with user groups that generate content quickly and disseminate it widely. As stated in *Food Insight* (2008), sites like Wikipedia "represent the new on-line community where transparency and user interactivity are viewed as the true measure of credibility." Whether the message is to eat healthy or use pesticide safely, Extension educators must employ tools that make the messages visual and engaging for Internet learners.

In this era of YouTube, self-produced video clips are one way to connect with on-line audiences. Educators can create succinct messages that "hook" the viewer to want to learn more. Concerns about access to computers and the Internet are diminishing, even for low income households (Atkinson, Billing, Desmond, Gold, & Tournas-Hardt, 2007; Kudryavtsev, Krasny, Ferenz, & Babcock, 2007). Opportunities may soon exist to share educational video on mobile devices. Think of videos and other digital media as "learning objects" that can be used on Web pages or incorporated into traditional classroom teaching. Like LEGO bricks, learning objects can be arranged in different ways to build different learning experiences.

There was a time when videos were only produced by professionals after a great deal of expense and time. With the advent of inexpensive pocket video cameras and simple-to-use editing software, video production has now become democratized and highly accessible. With a couple clicks, a grassroots video can be viewed by millions of people (Johnson, Levine, & Smith, 2008). There are fewer barriers to video production than ever before, but where to start? Pilot projects are a good first step. The educator can learn by doing and build partnerships that will sustain forthcoming video projects.

## Pilot Video Project

In a pilot project, field faculty in Klamath County, Oregon, partnered with a local newspaper videographer to produce a series of video clips on home gardening and cooking. To gain insight into video production, a faculty member shadowed the videographer for two segments, observing techniques in filming and editing. Extension faculty produced the remaining five clips. On-camera subject experts for the clips were field faculty and Extension volunteers. Clips included such topics as garden layout, frost protection, and cooking vegetables.

The videos were placed on the newspaper's Web site and advertised in the hard-copy version of the newspaper, with each clip averaging five to 10 hits per day. The videos were then sent to on-campus media services to encode for streaming on a local Web site.

Online users had the opportunity to comment on each video. One viewer said, "This clip was concise and it had great information that was quite useful. I found it valuable as a novice gardener and it makes me want to go home and plant some seeds in my greenhouse! I look forward to future topics to inspire me further."

## Tips for Self-Produced Videos

Many skills that make a successful educator apply to video production. Creativity, understanding how people learn, and audience analysis are critical whether you are teaching in a classroom or composing a video. Producing a video is much like telling a story—it starts with a "hook" that pulls the viewer in, and follows sequential steps that lead to a memorable conclusion. Suggestions for a successful video project include the following.

1. **Choose a topic.** What do you already teach that would be better viewed than told? Choose a topic that lends itself to visual demonstration, such as forage testing, cooking, animal care, or pruning.
2. **Purchase tools.** At the minimum you will need a camcorder and editing software. Camcorders range from Flip video cameras <<http://www.theflip.com>> for \$150 (includes built-in editing software) to HD camcorders costing over \$400. External microphone, tripod, and external hard drive are also helpful.
3. **Get technical support.** Develop a working relationship with an expert; try to "shadow" a professional when filming and editing to observe techniques in action.
4. **Keep it short.** Limit educational concepts to three or four in a 3-minute clip. Editing will take more time than expected but is critical for impact.

5. **Add music and still pictures.** These will enhance the video and may help get a particular concept across. Beware of copyright issues; most universities have music and picture libraries that can be used. Insert the organization's logo at the beginning or end of the clip.
6. **Plan for access.** Find multiple ways to provide access to video clips. Choose a Web site, or link to one that has substantial traffic. Use the clips in presentations or electronic newsletters. Many universities have YouTube and iTunes U accounts to place content on.
7. **Use video as a hook.** Once viewers have watched a video, they will be more likely to want more information on the subject. Along with the clip, provide links where they can go for more information such as publications or classes.
8. **Beware of the format zoo** (.mp4, .mov, .wmf, etc.). Get technical advice on what format to choose when the video is finished and ready to be produced. Choose a format that on-campus technical support can later encode or stream to the Internet.
9. **Include evaluation.** Collect data on hits, or add a way for viewers to rate the usefulness of the video using a comments section or rating system.
10. **Keep learning.** Become a "student" of videography. Critique documentaries, and observe how they are shot and edited to improve technique and impact.

## Conclusion

Video—once complex and expensive to create with high distribution costs—has become more affordable and highly accessible, in addition to being a powerful teaching tool. Video is one way for educators to connect with a growing number of on-line learners. We're competing for their time and attention like never before.

## Related Links

Home Gardening and Cooking video series:

<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/kbrec/health-nutrition/resources#Home%20Gardening%20and%20Cooking>

How to Blend Teaching, Learning and Technology: Listen to interview with Jeff Hino, Oregon State University Learning Technology Leader, as he describes ways Extension educators can apply learner driven technology:

<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/kbrec/health-nutrition/resources#Home%20Gardening%20and%20Cooking>

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