

“In Plain English” Videos—tips for students

-use images to accompany words whenever possible.

-think about how concepts are related. Show their relationships to each other in the way you organize them on the screen. Use lines, arrows, boxes, speech bubbles, and other visual organization tools.

-think about anchoring some items to the background with tape—those that you don’t want to pick up/brush away/blow away



-most images should be about 5” tall/wide, with bold, dark, and simple lines.

-small three-dimensional items can also be used

-remember that you have the ability to layer objects

-get a large envelope to keep your images and papers related to this assignment in. Leave it in the classroom so there’s no chance it’s in the absent person’s locker on filming day.

-create a title graphic for the beginning of your video. Include the title of your video and the names of your group members.

-you must give credit to your sources of information. Ask your teacher if this should be done on camera or submitted in another way.

-you can use a dry erase board for the background and draw on it. Or, you can use another very simple material. White paper makes a great background.

-work from a storyboard and a script. Make sure the script is written in your own words and is in plain, easy-to-understand wording. Often a real-world example helps to illustrate a difficult concept and improves the audience’s ability to remember what you are teaching them.

-find out how long your video needs to be and use a timer when you practice. Stick to the recommended time range, even if you have to go back and dig up more information or cut something out.

-rehearse the whole production several times before setting up your camera. Decide who will move objects on to the stage, who will remove objects from the other side of the stage, who will be the narrator, and who will be the camera person.

-set up your tripod on the floor with the camera facing down, at a distance of 1-2 feet from the stage area. That way you will not have to zoom in. The back leg of the tripod should be slightly longer than

the front two legs so the tripod leans forward. That way when you point the camera straight down you will not have the front legs of the tripod in view. Take extra care not to knock this unstable tripod over. It is a good idea to put a chair over the longer leg so no one walks right behind the camera.

-figure out where the boundaries of the filming area are. You may want to use masking tape to mark the edge of the stage.

-look for shadows on the stage. If needed, position extra lights to eliminate them, or move your stage to a brighter area.

-at the beginning of your video, hold a dry erase board in front of the stage. It should list the title of the project, the take number, and the names of your group members. This helps with editing and managing files later on.

-If you mess up a segment, just start over with a new take. If you press the record button to stop recording in between takes, it will be easier to delete unneeded takes.

-to save battery power, please keep the video camera off when it is not needed.

-when filming, make sure things that aren't supposed to be on the screen are totally out of view and vice versa. The camera person should constantly watch the camera during filming.

-GO SLOWLY! When filming, the narrator should read the script slowly and clearly. Pauses are ok so that viewers can absorb the image and the audio. This gives your audience time to process information before moving on.

-Try to set up in a quiet area but do not worry about background noise. If needed, sound can be muted and re-recorded later. Sound effects can be added later.

-Your teacher will be evaluating your teamwork and final product. Ask him or her for a rubric so you'll know exactly what your grade is based on.

-For examples of "In Plain English" style videos, visit the website www.commoncraft.com.

This tip sheet was created by the Technology for Student Learning Team at Rodger O. Borrer Middle School in Wilmington, Ohio. Permission is given to reproduce this document for use in the classroom.