

Guidelines for Videotaping Your Speech

One of the unique challenges to taking an online version of a public speaking class is the potential lack of an immediate audience, as it is often noted that communication cannot even occur without an audience. However, it is important that you always keep in mind that you *do* have an audience – anyone watching your video. By doing just that and following these guidelines, structured in that mindset, you will be able to give your speech a similar energy and engagement as a live presentation.

1. **It is very important to be clear on your instructor's expectations for an audience.** Your instructor may require you to have real people in your audience, or they may not. Also, ask if your instructor expects you to look at the camera during your speech, or only address your audience. If you don't have to have a real audience, they may ask you to look at different points in front of you.
2. **Location:** Determine a location that will allow for an ideal speech context. First and foremost, you need your speech to be seen and heard clearly by the instructor/camera. You want the background that you speak in front of to be both inviting and free of distractions, so while a plain white wall may not be ideal, more problematic would be a wall with a lot of images on it to distract your viewer. Choose an area with warm coloring and simple design. Likewise, choose a quiet area where your voice will be the only sound that your camera's microphone will be picking up, so avoid speaking near a window with heavy traffic outside, etc. Also be sure that you have adequate space to position the camera both so that you/your visuals are fully visible as well as to allow for your movement if appropriate.
3. **Distance from the camera.** Place the camera, ideally on a tripod for optimum stability, between 5 and 8 feet away from you. The more you plan to move across the floor, the greater the distance from the camera you should be. It is best if you can get someone to stand in as "you" while you set up the camera so that you can frame the shot in the way that you want it. Remember that you always want yourself to be fully within the frame of the shot, close enough that your facial expressions and any visuals you might use can be easily identified and comprehended but not so close that you overpower the frame (i.e. you are the only thing in it). Also, it is best if you can have someone film you so that they can make sure that these conditions exist during the speech's entirety. If this is not possible then do your best to know your frame limits and stay within them.

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4. **Lighting.** You want your lighting to be both natural and bright. Do not “spotlight” yourself in any way but strive for even light that makes you and any visuals you might use fully and clearly visible. You always want to check what the lighting conditions look like through the eye of the camera as it is different from what human eyes perceive.
5. **Using a microphone.** Some cameras have a microphone mounted to the camera itself and you will have to be sure to project so that your voice is picked up clearly if this is the case. If your camera has a detachable microphone that you attach to your clothing or place on a podium, be sure that it is not obscured in any way (by lapels or objects on the podium, etc) and that it is not too close to your mouth as both of these will effect the audio. Always test the audio of your camera – as well as the picture – before you start taping your speech.
6. **Leave time at beginning and end.** Allow your camera to record for about 15 seconds both before you begin your speech and after you have finished to ensure that it captures your speech in its entirety.
7. **Live audiences.** If you have a live audience watching – which is best if you can arrange it – always address them and not the camera. (Again, be clear on your Instructor’s expectations on audiences.) If you do not have an audience, it is still best to not address the camera directly – talk naturally and move your eye focus as you would if you were making eye contact with various members of an audience. In fact, it is best to pretend that the camera is not present at all once you begin your speech – this will alleviate a lot of nervousness as well as create a more natural communication environment.
8. **Forget the camera, and enjoy your speech!** Finally, and perhaps most importantly, remember why you have chosen to give a speech on your topic in the first place: because you care about that topic. Do not let the lack of an immediate audience or the presence of technology make you forget the passion and energy that you have for your topic and do your best to offer the same enthusiasm that you would to a live audience. Have fun!