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Vlogs and Screencasts

KEY IDEAS
<p>This chapter introduces two common forms of video production that can be developed by a single individual or a small team quickly and without professional equipment. Vlogging is a genre that relies on the ethos of the host. In vlogging, authenticity and authority are constructed through spoken oral performance but sensitivity to <i>mise-en-scène</i> is important. Screencast videos display a movie of one's computer screen, often combined with narration and music. Both are simple video production formats that require careful planning if they are to accomplish their goals. Vlogging and screencasting can be highly effective in informing, entertaining, and persuading. To make effective use of these forms of creative expression, a good understanding of the power of performance is needed.</p>

When Hank and John Green started the Vlogbrothers back in 2007 as an experiment in brotherhood, they vowed to communicate to each other only by video blogging for one full year. They couldn't have imagined that they were influencing an entire generation. When they began their experiment, they had been inspired by the work of the performance artist Ze Frank, whose videos, posted online in a pre-YouTube world, included talking directly into the camera in episodes that were just three minutes long. The episodes also featured an unusual style of editing, where right in the middle of a point, Ze Frank would move a few inches closer to or away from the camera, accompanied by a jump cut that is now a standard feature of vlogging.

Hank once commented that videoblogging is "about turning the camera on and off and talking," noting that vlogs are a profoundly personal form of direct address by an individual to an audience. The pleasure in viewing vlogs can be understood by noting that they are a form of *interstitial media*, something we generally use for a little bit of time in between other activities. Vlogs fit "the cognitive style of Web browsing because they are made with the tacit assumption that no activity claims the computer user's total attention for long."¹

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Figure 11.1 The Vlogbrothers.

Part of the appeal of the Vlogbrothers was undoubtedly their nerdy and distinctly amateur identity (Figure 11.1). Today, the divide between producers and consumers of media has eroded nearly completely. As Nick Couldry writes, “Professional and amateur cultural production are not distant, but closely overlapping, regions of the same vast spectrum.”² As media becomes more social, amateurs become more central to the enterprise and the social compulsion we feel – the need to keep up with “the media” – is not so much based on watching television as in being part of online mediated interpersonal relationships.

Long before *Big Bang Theory* made nerdy guys into television celebrities, Hank and John Green were just two ordinary guys, sharing their love of computers, Harry Potter, sledding, hair, science, and happy dances. As of summer 2016, the brothers still post two videos per week onto their Vlogbrothers channel. John Green posts a video on Tuesday, and Hank Green on Friday.

These two talents have parlayed their vlogging into a creative enterprise, creating YouTube videos on channels that include SciShow, CrashCourse, How to Adult, Mental Floss, and other channels. Both Hank and John use vlogging as a way to perform a constructed identity that offers self-disclosure in an authentic, vulnerable, and personal way. They make a good living from their creative work, including YouTube advertising, which pays them more than \$5 per 1000 views. They also get money from putting on conferences. Their fans also pay small sums of money using a crowd-funded platform called Patreon, which enables people to support creative artists online.

Vlogging and Screencasting

Vlogging and screencasting are genres of moving image media that are now commonly found online, produced by both professionals and amateurs and ranging widely in content, form, length, and tone. Today, these forms of video production can be created without expensive video cameras, microphones, or special equipment.

Vlogging is a first-person style of episodic video production that is tied to the rise of YouTube. It is characterized by a charismatic host who speaks directly to the camera, offering ideas, information, and usually humor or charm, using a conversational style to create the sense of a *parasocial relationship* between the host and the audience, where viewers feel emotionally and socially connected to a celebrity, character, actor, or host, even in the absence of face-to-face contact. We derive some of the pleasures of a real relationship from the familiarity of feeling “in touch” with another human being we see on video. These feelings of emotional warmth are intensified when characters are people we can relate to, or when they perform with charm and grace. Vloggers and their viewers have an interdependent relationship that helps create a feeling of social connectedness through participation in an online community. One of the most globally recognized vloggers is PewDiePie, a Swedish comedian and YouTube celebrity, age 27, who, with 51 million subscribers on YouTube, has the most viewed YouTube channel of all time.³

Screencasting is another type of video production that involves the use of moving images displayed on a computer or laptop. A screencast may take the form of a demonstration or explainer video, where a combination of still images and moving images are captured from a computer screen (through screen capture software and the computer’s webcam) and combined with narration and music.

Since YouTube is such a brand new medium, of course, these genre labels are provisional and still in formation. YouTubers may mix vlogging and screencasting with animation and live action in a single video. Because these formats are useful for creating to learn, we’ll focus on them in this chapter, recognizing that the insights gained from producing vlogs, animations, and screencasts are useful for all forms of media. But to put things in context, we must consider the historical, political, and economic significance of online video.

Developing an Argument

Great vloggers demonstrate fine qualities of carefully structured argument. Sometimes, you can see and hear them move through three distinct phases where they present, develop, and share their ideas:

- The claim that answers the question: “What do I think?”
- The reasons that answer the question: “Why do I think this?”
- The evidence that answers the question: “How do I know this is the case?”

Vloggers don’t always present claims, reasoning, and evidence in the kind of structure you might find in a written document. Sometimes they begin with the evidence and then use reasoning to discover their claim. This is similar to the way writers work out their ideas. Even though the written claim is presented first as the thesis statement, the writer arrived at the claim as a result of careful reading and analysis of the source materials. Most of us discover our ideas in the process of writing and creating to learn.

In a video entitled, “What’s Wrong with Monopoly?” John Green creates a screencast that starts with the opening line: “Today I will be reviewing the mobile app Monopoly, and what I’d forgotten or perhaps just never noticed, is that Monopoly is a terrible game. The basic idea that you buy property and then charge rent when your opponent lands on that property is distressingly similar to real contemporary human life.” As we listen to this thesis statement, presented upfront, we view moving images from the mobile version of the Monopoly game, which is an animated and interactive version of the actual game (Figure 11.2).

But Green is doing much more than offering a review of the mobile game, as it turns out. As evidence that the game is awful because it’s too similar to



Figure 11.2 “What’s Wrong with Monopoly?” screencast.

real life, John Green describes some details about playing against a nonhuman opponent (the artificial intelligence) who proposes increasingly more desperate trades as the game continues, leading the human player to take pity on the machine. By examining his emotional reactions in agreeing to ridiculous trades, John Green supplies a form of evidence rooted in his own response to the game. By analyzing the game's values, Green notes that although getting rich is celebrated, such success is a random thing, being dependent upon the role of the dice. Thus, the game offers "a convoluted self-contradictory analysis of capitalism." Green then reviews the history of the inventor of Monopoly, a guy named Charles Darrow whose story is described in the game's instruction manual. Then Green surprises us with a twist: "Turns out, 30 years earlier, a woman named Elizabeth Magie invented a game called 'The Landlord's Game' that demonstrated how capital tends to become concentrated in fewer hands." This game was even played at business schools and over time, thousands of collaborators modified and improved the game. Green said, "The game was really created by a community and the free market failed to reward that community, instead wrongly assigning most of the value to one contributor." To deepen this argument, Green notes that the mobile Monopoly app was created by Hasbro, the multinational company that bought Parker Brothers, suggesting that "the history of Monopoly turns out to be a far more interesting study of capitalism than the game itself." He concludes by returning to the premise of the 4-minute screencast, rating the game a 2 out of 10 (not recommended).⁴

In constructing this argument, Green began by observing specific features of the game. After sharing his emotional response to the game, he summarized information about the game, using facts and evidence about the game's origins. From that process, his thesis statement emerged. Green's short screencast managed to both inform and entertain while offering us a brief but persuasive critique of capitalism. It satisfied the expectations of those expecting a game review but went far deeper by offering a larger and more critical perspective on the question, "What's Wrong with Monopoly?"

A Short History of Online Video

Since the first videos were uploaded in 2005, the rise of YouTube has been revolutionary in helping democratize media culture. In 2007, researchers found that about half of the most popular videos on YouTube were excerpts from traditional mass media – television shows, advertising, informational programs, celebrity interviews, and Hollywood movies. User-generated content was a term that first came into use in 2005 to describe any form of content that is shared online using social media. In only 10 years, we've seen "Evolution of Dance," "David After Dentist," and "Grumpy Cat" videos reach millions of viewers.

Today YouTube videos are a fascinating kind of popular culture created by ordinary people.⁵

You have been part of the origins of user-generated content. You probably remember young Justin Bieber's rise to fame and his discovery as a 13-year-old boy, as teens watched him on YouTube playing the guitar and singing from his bedroom in Canada. It was a viral sensation.

Of course, social media has been increasingly a vehicle of communication for marketers and mass media. YouTube has become a primary vehicle for *talent discovery* of all kinds. YouTube videos are a part of mainstream entertainment media now, competing with television and film. You didn't need to wait for MTV to broadcast Psy's "Gangnam Style" music video – the song was available to people all over the world. Many were inspired to create remake videos, versions of the song that include people recording themselves singing and doing the horsey dance moves that captured the world's attention in 2012.⁶

User-generated content is an important way for social change activists to reach, inspire, and mobilize audiences. YouTube has enabled activists to be independent of mainstream mass media to a greater degree than ever before. As a result, YouTube has also become an extraordinary tool for both beneficial and harmful propaganda. "Kony 2012," the documentary about the Ugandan warlord, Joseph Kony, reached 100 million views in just seven days, becoming the most viral video ever. People shared the video, in part, because it blended art, human rights advocacy, and journalism in a skillful way, tapping into people's strong feelings about fatherhood, family, and social responsibility.⁷

But you don't have to be a talented performer or filmmaker to reach a large audience on YouTube. There's plenty of dreck. Some ordinary people have found an audience for their ideas about almost any topic. Some are using it to present information about what's happening in their communities, workplaces, and schools. *Citizen journalism* is a form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions.⁸ As the smartphone became a ubiquitous part of life, people all over the world were able to upload eyewitness news, enabling anyone and everyone to be a citizen journalist. Ever since the videotaping of the 1992 beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police ignited riots, we continued to learn about police brutality in African American neighborhoods through the documentation of abusive treatment via smartphones. In the spring and summer of 2016, in the months leading up to the election of Donald Trump, these videos dominated the news media as citizen documentation of police shootings became almost routine.

Choices, Choices

Perhaps you will comment on the ideas of others, in developing a review. Or you'll share information and present or explain ideas. You may even choose to reveal yourself, with all your warts, contradictions, paradoxes, and

inconsistencies. Whatever you do, you will find that vlogs are, from a technical point of view, pretty easy to produce. Most people can produce a 5-minute vlog or screencast in 3–5 hours from start to finish. As in all forms of public speaking, the main message of a vlog is communicated by both the verbal content and the nonverbal behavior of the vlogger. Vlogs remind us of face-to-face conversation, and the sense of immediacy and intimacy we experience when viewing them is a big part of the appeal.

Beyond the ideas and content that a vlogger chooses to talk about and the qualities of their performance, vloggers make many other choices that shape how they convey ideas visually in a vlog. The location, physical place, and lighting all represent choices that communicate a message. These choices are sometimes referred to as *mise-en-scène*, a term used in film theory that includes specific issues such as setting, location, lighting, camera position, and performer position.⁹ Because the vlogger is usually performing all the roles of performer, cameraman, and producer, vloggers make personal decisions about how to depict themselves: where and how to be standing (or sitting) and whether to include face, upper body, or whole body in the frame. They make decisions about the length of the video and choose production values: whether to publish their videos as unedited video files or edit them to include introductory and closing sequences, music, other video content, title credits, sound effects, and more.

Ethos: Performance: The Power of Personality

The ancient Greeks knew that the performance of identity was a crucial factor in whether a speaker was perceived as competent, believable, and trustworthy. They used the term *ethos* to refer to all the ways in which the personality of the speaker affects the audience. In speaking about the power of personality in the context of communication, the use of the term “performance” doesn’t necessarily mean what an actor does on a stage. The sociologist Erving Goffman used the term *impression management* to refer to our tendency to present an acceptable image to the people around us.¹⁰ Thus we perform various kinds of human behavior through many forms of ordinary social interaction.

Four fundamental video production techniques can have an impact on how the speaker is perceived. First, to achieve a sense of emotional intimacy in video, many vloggers use the *close-up*, focusing attention on the performer’s face. Because YouTube videos are generally low resolution, close-ups become effective devices to create visual intensity. The close-up has long been used in film as a way to establish the main character and to capture aspects of thought and feeling through facial expression. In narrative movies, close-ups help create a sense of identification with a character, while in documentaries, close-ups communicate authenticity, which is a sense of believability.

Secondly, *direct address* to the camera can shape how audiences respond to the ethos of the performer. Direct address occurs when the performer looks in



Figure 11.3 The emotional power of direct address by the Vlogbrothers.

the direction of the audience and seems to be looking directly at the viewer (Figure 11.3). In narrative fictional movies, this technique is seen infrequently because it is understood to be breaking the fourth wall, the metaphorical window that separates viewers from the imaginary world of the drama or comedy. When direct address is used in movies, it's usually to complicate the viewer's relationship to the characters or story. Direct address when used in a vlog elevates the role of the viewer because we become directly part of the performer's story. Direct address conveys a sense of immediacy, so, for example, we can watch a performer's direct address and feel like they share the same time and space as us, even when we know the video was made years ago in a remote location.

Third, whether to use a static, shaky, or *moving camera* is another important decision that affects ethos. Derek Muller, who created the YouTube channel Veritasium, sometimes uses a selfie stick while walking around in a city, creating a moving camera effect as he and talks, walks, and films simultaneously. Although this is a challenging performance to master and produce well, the technique combines the excitement of action and unpredictability that is appealing to viewers.

Finally, another characteristic of ethos can sometimes be found the quality of the *framing* used by vloggers. How was a character depicted visually and specifically positioned within the frame of the camera? In Karoliina

Talvitie-Lamberg's study of confessional vlogs, she found that poor quality video appeared to make the video performance itself seem more intimate. She explained, "The rough image quality helped construct the impression of the situation as an authentic and real one." In one video she examined, half of the vlogger's head was framed out of the image. Still, the effect was powerful. The camera angle communicated the private nature of the confession, as if the camera was "only a witness" of the situation.¹¹ When video production techniques are used to enhance ethos, vlogs don't feel produced as much as simply created.

Parasocial Relationships

In the 1950s psychiatrists began noticing that some people were obsessed by celebrities, engaging in fandom as a type of one-sided relationship. When you pay attention to a particular athlete, musician, or political figure, you're extending emotional energy, interest, and time. But the other party, the living persona, is unaware of the other's existence. Sometimes they are aware of their fans en masse, as in Lady Gaga's recognition of the "little monsters." Feelings of attachment with celebrities, organizations (such as sports teams), or television stars are common.

There are reasons why people form parasocial attachments to media figures. During childhood and adolescence, young people may form attachments to celebrities or media figures as a part of the identity development process. For adults, scholars describe the pleasure of parasocial relationships using the term *uncertainty reduction* to describe how relationships develop over time through a process of moving from uncertain to more certain. In the beginning, you experience uncertainty in your encounter with another individual. Over time, as uncertainty decreases, liking increases because you are better able to predict the other's behavior.¹² Also, consider that parasocial relationships are relatively low-risk relationships: you enjoy the feeling of "knowing" someone without having to reciprocate by sharing your own identity, needs, ideas, and values. Thus, there's little personal risk in forming attachments to media figures.

Participatory Complications

Many people experience real delight in creating and publishing a vlog. They experience a sense of creative flow. Vloggers may also experience a profound sense of making a meaningful personal, social, or political contribution by addressing topics and issues that are important to them and to society. It may be that the performance of identity enables vloggers to make an authentic connection to their audiences. But make no mistake about it: when vloggers share

personal stories, they may be more or less authentic. Actors are very skillful at creating performances that seem quite real even though they are not. Of course, some vloggers may be simply seeking attention or using fake intimacy to make a superficial social connection with the viewer. We shouldn't assume that the very format of the vlog inherently makes people truthful or brings authenticity to the fore.

There are a variety of complications that come from performing one's identity online in a highly social online context. Vloggers are often part of a community and their vlogs are a form of conversation. For example, the hashtag #smallyoutuber links together a group of people who are making vlogs for fun. They are often fans of more highly visible YouTubers but enjoy adding their own voices and creativity to the mix. When people make reference to or respond to other vloggers, this helps create a sense of community.

Scholars who study marketing and media recognize that people may adopt a number of stances towards the complications of online participation, taking on the role of devotees, tourists or minglers.¹³ Consider your own interactions online: they may vary from one context to another, as you have different levels of participation with family, friends, coworkers, online friends, and even brands of products. You may be a *devotee* if you possess a strong interest in a particular online activity, but have few strong social ties to other members of the online community. For example, I use Twitter frequently but I don't engage in much personal conversation with individual users. Insiders also have a strong personal interest in a consumption activity along with strong social ties to other community members. For example, I feel connected to some (but not all) of the people who are my Facebook friends and feel a sense of obligation to participate in social interaction. Sometimes, you might take on the role of *tourist* if you lack strong ties with either the online activity or with other members of the online community. For example, I occasionally use Quora to scan for interesting questions and answers, but I rarely contribute to the platform. My online investment in Quora is minimal. Finally, in some online interactions, you may be a *mingler* by maintaining strong social ties with other members of the online community just for fun but without much passion for the topic or activity being discussed. I use Instagram as a mingler because I only view the images shared by my friends and am otherwise not that engaged with other content.

Interaction between vloggers and their viewers is semi-structured and creative. Vloggers often directly ask the audience to subscribe to their channel, like, or comment on their work as this builds reputational status and provides financial support. Sometimes interactivity is designed into the video itself. For example, in the video entitled "Epic Rap Battles of History," this highly produced and hilarious music videos feature rap battles between historical figures, actors, and celebrities. In "Austin Powers vs. James Bond," we hear Nice Peter, epicLLOYD, and Dave McCary offering their taunts to each other in clever

rhymes. At the conclusion of the video, viewers are asked, “Who Won? What’s Next?” and the comment thread is filled with opinions about which historical rapper was best and suggestions for future pair-ups.¹⁴

How to Create a Vlog

First, plan what you want to talk about – and plan to talk about something that interests you. Use impromptu, extemporaneous, or written manuscript techniques for planning the content of your vlog. Have a clear purpose and audience and keep this firmly in your mind throughout the production process. You may want to have friends serve as your studio audience, to increase the feeling that you’re actually talking to someone, or you may prefer to perform alone, speaking to an imaginary audience – it’s up to you.

Select a location and arrange the space. Be attentive to the background. It’s best to have some depth to the background. If you are standing in front of a wall, the flat background makes you look small and trapped in the frame. If you’re standing in a room, with light from a window shining on your face, the depth of field behind you helps create an aesthetically pleasing shot. Lighting is important to video production because people look best with diffuse white light shining on their faces – this makes everyone look better and there is no substitute for great light. Don’t shoot at nighttime in a dark room without good light and never film yourself in front of a window.

Vloggers may use a variety of different types of video cameras, from expensive DSLR cameras to smartphones or the webcam on a laptop. When using a video camera, a tripod is essential to ensure that the camera is steady. Camera placement is important for vlogging. When you place the webcam or camera on a tripod, just slightly higher than your eye level, you look up to it a bit, creating an attractive jaw line, according to MissFenderr, a vlogger. Warm up and practice to get used to talking in front of the camera. “If you mess up, just say it again,” says MissFenderr.¹⁵ Once you hit record, use vocal energy and enunciate. Many vloggers stand to perform because standing up helps your voice sound more lively and energetic.

When it’s time to edit, you can use video editing software to edit your work. You may even explore collaborative free online video editing tools like WeVideo where teams can share footage and work together on a project. Many people have created screencast videos to explain how to use these tools – and you’ll find that if you run into a problem, it’s likely that someone has described how to solve it via a screencast video. For example, the keyword search “WeVideo help” yields over 10 000 videos where people created short tutorials or advice on using the basic and advanced features of the online video editing tool.

Many vlogs use *jump cuts*, a distinctive style of editing (Figure 11.4). Jump cuts remove pauses and speed up the rate of speech by removing some of the



Figure 11.4 Editing jump cuts.

nonspeaking time that occurs between sentences. While some people find these cuts jarring, they do focus your viewer's attention. Jump cuts can add rhythm and accentuate the informal, playful feel to vlogs. Jump cuts are a distinctive feature or convention that distinguishes vlogs from professional productions. Online tutorials demonstrate how to edit jump cuts by listening for pauses.

One common technique is the use of a jump cut to communicate a humorous aside, a remark that is not directly related to the main idea. Other people use jump cuts to intensify small movements. For example, John Green may move from the left side of the frame to the center in a jump cut, creating a shift that disrupts the viewer's sense of time.

Although it's not very difficult, some people may need assistance or benefit from a video tutorial when first learning to export video: uploading these files can be confusing to beginners. The quality of the image is related to the size of the digital file. If your video files are in a high resolution video format, they will take longer to upload.

Screencasting in Education

Tutorials are an important genre on YouTube. When Kimberly Turner decided to create the video, "Vlog Virgins," she developed a series of videos where she demonstrated how to create and edit videos.¹⁶ By creating a screencast tutorial, she was able to demonstrate how to use iMovie to record webcam video.

This is a fine example of informal digital learning, the kind of learning that happens online as self-directed learners provide assistance to others using Create to Learn principles. When watching a screencast tutorial, we can see a process in action, as when we see Kimberly selecting video clips to assemble, using simple drag-and-drop techniques to add sound effects and music. She combines her screencast with a web camera where she explains her work, talking directly to us via the camera in her laptop. As a viewer, I watch and learn from such screencasts, as I watch, then pause and copy. Repeating this process enables me to learn at my own pace, by observing and imitating, as apprentices have done throughout the ages. What a great way to learn!

Screencasts are a simple but versatile video production tool for both informal learning as well as for formal education at the elementary, secondary, college, and university levels. In one classroom, a college professor created math screencasts that demonstrated how to solve problems. Because people can pause and replay a screencast, it can help learners handle ideas at their own pace. One study found that students who used screencasts to clarify misunderstandings, supplement the lecture material, and review for exams helped them to perform better at a college level math course. Students in this study preferred instructor-developed screencasts to those provided on the college website, with one student noting that “having the lecturer create them also means that you’re shown the method on how to solve a problem just as you have seen in the classroom.”¹⁷

In this book, the emphasis is on what happens when students create screencasts as part of the learning process. Teaching others has always been a great way to learn something. Eric Marcos, a middle school teacher in California, discovered the power of screencasting when teaching math to sixth graders. One of his students was struggling with how to solve a problem, so he made a screencast video to demonstrate a problem-solving strategy. Another of his students, inspired by her teacher, spontaneously created her own math screencast at home, sharing it with Marcos. “There are multiple ways to solve math problems,” she explained. “Plus, kids like learning from other kids.” Mr. Marcos shows students how to use Windows Journal to demonstrate their problems and Camtasia to record their screencasts. Mr. Marcos even teaches kids how to add special effects to their screencasts including adding yellow highlighting or enhancing the audio quality.¹⁸

One student, Tiana Kadkhoda, actually discovered that she had an interest in math only when she began creating interesting visuals and collaborating with friends on math screencasts (see Figure 11.5). “By explaining difficult concepts on video, I was forced to confront and clarify my understanding of the topics,” she wrote. “Through these videos I have learned how to clearly communicate visually and verbally, study more effectively, become a leader among my peers and take control of my education by extending learning beyond the classroom.”¹⁹

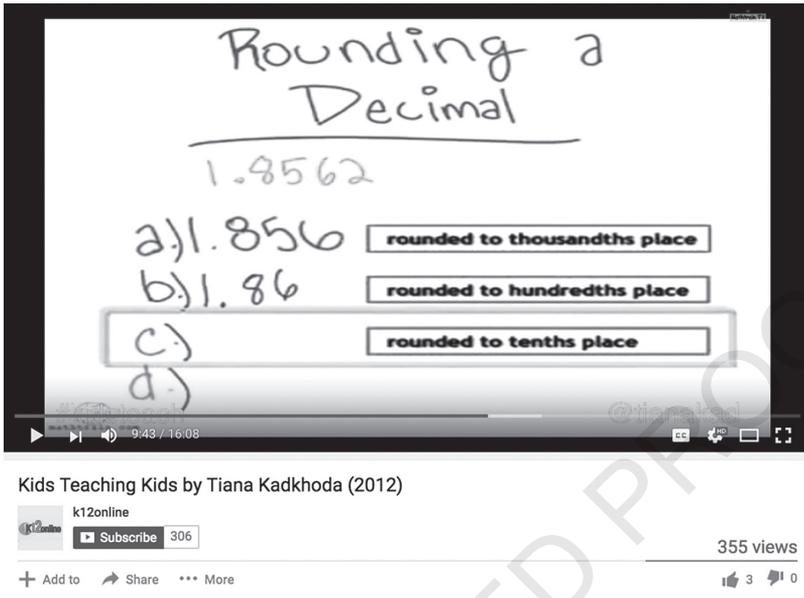


Figure 11.5 Screencasts for learning.

Some Types of Academic Screencasts

Demonstration. A presenter demonstrates a process using a digital media platform or with a series of images or other content presented on a computer screen.

Slideshow. A presenter discusses content accompanied by a series of PowerPoint slides.

Conversational. Two or more presenters discuss and comment on content using a combination of webcam, PowerPoint slides, and screen capture.

Whiteboard drawing. A presenter narrates a whiteboard session, using digital ink to write and draw on blank PowerPoint slides or uses another drawing application like Explain Everything.

How to Make a Screencast

Screencasts enable you to inform, persuade, and entertain. Have a clear purpose and audience and keep this firmly in your mind throughout the production process. As you develop ideas for the content of your presentation, you'll want to decide whether to use impromptu, extemporaneous, or manuscript speaking. If your content is complex, you may want to create an audio

recording of your content in advance of creating a screencast to give you greater control in editing.

Choose a screencast tool (like QuickTime, Screencast-O-Matic, or Screenr) and familiarize yourself with the digital tool. Each tool will enable you to record your screen by using a sizing tool to select which part of the screen you want to capture. It will have a button for starting, pausing, and stopping the recording. Some tools will enable you to switch between recording via webcam (depicting your face) and the screen recording. Others will enable you to combine webcam and screen recording, displaying the webcam in a little box at the left-hand side of the screen.

Your presentation should have a strong opening line that helps people understand what they will be seeing and hearing. Practice your presentation and make a practice recording. This will help you determine if the content of the screen is correct. You may want to increase the font size, make your icons bigger, and even increase the size of your mouse arrow. When you save your recording, you may publish it directly to YouTube or save the file to your computer and then upload. You may benefit from using the Annotation tool in YouTube to add text on screen to your video. Depending on your purpose, you can choose whether to share your video with the world or limit access using the Unlisted or Private functions of YouTube. If you want people to see your video, remember to add tags to help increase the findability. By adding 6–10 keywords and offering a concise summary of your video, it's more likely that your work will find an authentic audience.

Ethical Issues: Dealing with Feedback

Vloggers and screencasters sometimes create media for the fun of it. They may or may not be aware of their audience and the choices they are making in representing their own identity. Some people find that their work receives little attention and few people view it and other times vloggers and screencasters are surprised when people like, comment, or share their work. PewDiePie, one of the most famous YouTube celebrities, decided to disable the comments on his YouTube channel after the quality of the comments, along with spam and self-advertising overwhelmed him. Instead, he uses Twitter as his main method of communicating with his 30 million subscribers.

In any case, interaction among online viewers can be robust, visceral, raw, and sometimes disturbing. Some vloggers find creative strategies for dealing with criticism. When researching the work and lives of YouTubers, Patricia Lange said that “circulating personal information to a vast Internet audience creates risks that range from humiliation to emotional and physical harm.”²⁰

In their quest for attention, some vloggers and screencasters have discovered that the mass media formula of sensationalism is just as effective on YouTube

as it is on CBS, NBC, or MTV. Offensive content attracts attention and gets people talking. That's why trash talking in the comment threads of YouTube can often lead to increasing video views. Some people even claim that the rant should also be considered a sub-genre on YouTube, Reddit, and other online communities. When you define your work as a rant, listeners expect that you're going to be biased and emotional. As Lange notes: "It is as if marking harsh criticism with the term 'rant' makes it socially acceptable to its audience."²¹

Once you have uploaded a video to YouTube, you may receive feedback on your work. But remember that only about 12 percent of people who view videos actually use the commenting function of YouTube. Some registered users may post a text or video response to what they have viewed; comments are displayed in reverse chronological order. For some videos, there are so many comments that they flow across multiple pages. As a video creator, you can enable or disable comments on your video. You can moderate comments, choosing which ones to display on your website and remove comments that you do not wish to see displayed on the video. Users can also flag inappropriate comments or suspected spam for moderation.

If you read comments on YouTube videos for more than a few minutes, you'll find considerable *flaming*, a term that originated in the 1980s in the early computing community to refer to people who "speak rabidly or incessantly on an uninteresting topic or with a patently ridiculous attitude."²² Flaming is the expression of strong and inflammatory opinions, including the use of offensive language such as swearing and insults. It's a simple way to draw attention to yourself online.

Humiliating other screencasters and vloggers, criticizing others, and talking insensitively about race, class or gender are cheap shots, an easy way to attract attention. Some people even choose not to exchange feedback and interaction about YouTube videos because they anticipate their comments will be criticized by haters. In her video, "Stop Supporting Media Trolls," Kat Blaque notices that viewers' attraction to conflict and controversy is part of the economics of YouTube.²³ Getting to be the "Most Discussed Video" is actually aided by the presence of haters, who may displace their own unhappiness through making mean comments. The advice most commonly offered is "Don't Feed the Trolls." Trolls are an internet menace: their comments seem designed to deliberately anger people, or disrupt a discussion. They use abusive language, or pretend to be profoundly ignorant because, like all human beings, they crave attention, which is why ignoring them usually makes them go away.

Activity: Create a Screencast or Vlog

Create a screencast or vlog that addresses a specific topic of interest and simultaneously informs and entertains. Consider your audience and purpose carefully in deciding whether to create a vlog or a screencast. Apply some of the

concepts you learned in this chapter to your work. Share your work with others and ask them to offer their interpretations. Then write a short essay that describes your creative process, beginning with your choice of mentor text. Consider these questions:

- How did your ideas develop in the process of creating the vlog or screencast?
- What techniques did you use to ensure that your work was both informative and entertaining?
- Which ideas from this chapter informed your strategy or message?
- Reviewing your completed work, what did you like best? What might you have done differently or improved?

UNCORRECTED PROOF

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