

When creating an instructional video, whether it is about a product or a concept, it is important that you first write a script. A script will keep you on topic and will inform the visual elements of your video.

To get you started, we have put together some of our top tips for writing instructional video scripts:

- Plan before you begin writing Pg. 2
- Keep the video visuals in mind Pg. 3
- Use a friendly and conversational tone Pg. 3
- Avoid humor and clichés Pg. 4
- Keep the sentences short Pg. 4
- Use clear and simple language Pg. 5
- Use a story structure Pg. 6
- Read your script out loud Pg. 7
- Utilize Our In-House Editing Pg. 8
- In Conclusion Pg. 8

Plan before you begin writing

Before you begin scripting, take some time to carefully plan what you are going to include in your script, and how you will write it. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is the video's audience?
- What is the purpose of the video?
- How long will the video be?
- What is the most important information to include?

The answers to these questions will dictate what information you include in your script, how much detail you include, and how you structure your script.

Take the time to plan and create a rough outline before you begin writing and save a lot of time editing later!

One of the best practices for video length is to keep the video short and focused. The shorter the better! Starting the video with a visual or words that capture the audience's attention is the key to creating amazing video content. Put yourself in the shoes of your audience and ask yourself what they really need and or want to know. Remember that videos can be excellent teaching moments, so create them based on what your audience needs or would like to see.

A good strategy to help you focus is to think about the elevator speech. In an elevator you may have two minutes or so to explain to someone a tricky topic simply and efficiently and help them understand it before you reach your destination. Research shows writing in education should be between an 8th and 10th grade-level. You are the expert and you know the topic inside and out, so how might you explain it to an 8th grader?

Keep the video visuals in mind

In video production, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Thus, it is important to keep in mind the visuals that will accompany your script while you are writing it. Your script should complement what is being shown on screen.

Ask yourself: Do the words and phrases you are using lend themselves naturally to on-screen visuals? If you can imagine your message in a visual format, focus on those images as you develop your script. If you cannot imagine a complimentary visual, consider re-phrasing it or using a visual simile or metaphor (e.g., You may feel like a fish out of water when you try something new) to help highlight and convey your message.

Let your creativity and imagination guide you; our team has access to a variety of images to help you bring your script to life!

Use a friendly and conversational tone

Use a [warm and conversational tone](#) when writing your script. Using too formal a tone can be off-putting to an audience watching your video and can sound stiff when read aloud. Instead, imagine that you are explaining the concept to a friend in person. Strike a balance here and don't be too informal; avoid using overly informal language or colloquialisms.

Avoid humor and clichés

While it is important to use a friendly and conversational tone, be careful when you are using humor in your script. Consider your audience. Will the use of humor be inappropriate for your audience and subject matter? Does your audience contain people from multiple cultures, who may interpret the humor differently? If you are not sure if the humor will land as you would hope, ask a colleague to review it for you and then be willing to take their feedback and adjust accordingly.

Similarly, avoid using clichés in your script. Due to overuse, clichés can lack meaning and impact. You might find that you use a lot of clichés in your everyday conversations such as, “better safe than sorry” or “beating around the bush,” and so they can easily slip into your script when you are writing in a conversational tone. Be vigilant that they don’t end up in your finished script.

Keep the sentences short

Aim to keep your sentences short and to the point. Long, meandering sentences will be difficult to read out loud during recording. Make sure that the voice-over artist (whether that is you or someone else) has adequate time to take a breath. The longer a sentence, the more likely it is that the speaker will make a mistake and need to re-record the sentence. Additionally, if a sentence is too long, you may lose the audience as they forget your original point.

This practice is quite helpful if you’ve chosen to be on camera to deliver your script. Shorter sentences will give you time to breathe and speak naturally.

Use clear and simple language

It is important to use [clear and simple language](#) in your script so that your audience understands your meaning without having to re-watch the video or having to stop and look up unfamiliar words. Consider contextualizing tricky vocabulary by defining the word or using it in a familiar context. However, when in doubt, use a simpler word.

This becomes even more important when recording the voice-over for your video. Overly complicated language or words that are difficult to pronounce can result in the voice-over artist making mistakes and having to re-record the audio.

Let's consider an example. Read the following two sentences aloud:

1. *The distance between my house and the two retail establishments, when travelling on foot, is equidistant.*
2. *There is an equal walking distance between my house and the two shops.*

The second one is easier to understand and to read aloud. It contains fewer complicated words, is shorter, and doesn't take as many grammatical twists.

Use a story structure

Think about using a story structure or story arc when writing your script. Make sure that you have a definite beginning, middle, and end. This will give your video structure and keep you on topic.

For example, when writing a script for an e-learning video, you could tell the learner what the lesson will cover (beginning), then cover the lesson content (middle), and finally reiterate what the learner should now know at the end of the video (end).

Stories often come with pictures, so tying this structure to visuals that re-enforce your content will ultimately have a positive impact on your students time and time again. It can be fun to develop and create a video built using a story structure; they tend to be the most engaging for students.

Read your script out loud

One of the most important steps when writing your script is to read it out loud. What you have written might read very differently when read aloud. Reading out loud will allow you to work on the pacing of your script and to re-write any awkward, clunky, or complex sentences that do not sound right when you read them out loud.

One idea is to make an audio recording and listen back to it. If it sounds good, it is ready for production! Don't worry, you're not required to use your own voice in the end; we have a variety of voice artists who will record your script for you. Keep in mind, though, that your voice can be a point of connection and engagement with your students.

Reading your script aloud will help you gauge if your tone is conversational enough and give you a good idea of how long your video will be. This practice will help you adjust your tone and decide if you need to shorten your script. You can also copy and paste your script into this tool [Script Timer](#) tool to calculate how long it will take to deliver your script. Best practice is between three to five minutes.

Of course, some content calls for longer videos. If you have a longer script, consider breaking it into two videos. Or, consider that we can create chapters within videos, so as you write think about natural breaks in your content where a chapter break could be added. This way viewers can select which parts of a longer video they would like to watch.

Utilize Our In-House Editing

Our department has an in-house editing team who can review your script upon completion and give you suggestions on strengthening your script, as necessary. The video team fully supports their assistance and we encourage you to use their services. As a matter of fact, we used their editing expertise with this document you are currently reading.

They will collaborate with you and review your script. Then, with your students in mind, make suggestions and comments, recommending different ways to brighten your script and make your video as clear and concise as possible.

In Conclusion

If you do not know exactly where to start and want to have a discussion with someone on the video team please feel free to reach out and schedule a brainstorming session. We will help you formulate your script and walk through it with you step-by-step, if necessary. We are committed putting our best foot forward with you and will even write the script for you. Simply provide us with an outline and necessary content and we'll take it from there.

We hope that you find these tips helpful as you go to write your next instructional video script.

Please feel free to contact the video production team at video@bellevue.edu with any questions or to get started creating your masterpiece!