


# Video Testimonial Prep Guide

Since it's important to showcase faculty talent and highlight program quality, many marketing directors set out to record instructors on video as they summarize their research, speak about industry trends, or discuss what they like about teaching in their field. Video is a very effective medium to communicate your program's personality and to help prospects put faces with program facts. Developing video content can, however, be challenging to deliver successfully. "Talking-head" type videos can be dry, boring, and unpleasant when the production and direction crews are not careful and purposeful. The guidelines outlined below will help you to avoid the pitfalls that can arise when creating video content.

This tool offers guidelines for producing engaging video interviews and provides materials for you to distribute to the subjects of a video interview. See Tool #13 for ideas about what topics instructors, employers, students, and alumni might speak to during the video.

## Advantages to Investing in Talking-Head Videos

There are several resource and web navigation related advantages to simple, talking-head style videos:

 Technically easy to produce

 Cost effective relative to other video styles

 Loads quickly when user visits page

 Minimizes clutter on your website (a video's worth 1,000 words!)

## Production Advice

Follow these pieces of advice to create simple, engaging clips without breaking the bank.

### ➤ *Make it Short*

- Edit your videos to less than three minutes and make sure you are highlighting a take-away point every 30 seconds. Your investment in video is diminished when your users tune out of your video prematurely.

### ➤ *Think about Dialog Ahead of Time*

- For interview-style videos: create a script of questions that you'll ask the interviewee.
- For narration-style videos: ask the subject to put together bullet points that will guide her conversation. While you don't want the subject to read from a script, you do want her to be prepared, thus minimizing the number of cuts you take and overall time investment.

### ➤ *Engage Through Subtitles and Dialog*

- Use subtitles to assist students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Consider asking two subjects to discuss a topic of mutual interest (e.g., a degree program or an industry trend) in the same frame. This dynamic creates anticipation and engages viewers in the content for longer: they want to see how one person responds to the other's comments.

### ➤ *Perfect Your Set Up*

- MediaStorm.com offers suggestions for setting up [multiple cameras for multiple angles](http://mediastorm.com/blog/2013/04/17/standard-three-camera-interview-setup), for creating a backdrop, and for perfecting lighting. Visit their blog at <http://mediastorm.com/blog/2013/04/17/standard-three-camera-interview-setup>.

### ➤ *Vary Footage When Extra Production Money is Available*

- Film B-roll (or extra footage) of the subject teaching a course or working in the lab. Splice some of the interview audio over this footage for extra viewer engagement
- If driving home teaching points (e.g., three ways students engage with one another online), consider embedding text into the footage to highlight those take-away points. See how Jennifer Stewart's narrative about on-boarding employees includes [text overlaying footage](#).<sup>1</sup>

1) : <http://www.advisory.com/Research/Human-Resources-Investment-Center/Multimedia/Video/2012/Best-in-Class-Onboarding10>

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## Preparing Interview Subjects

Use the hand-out below to prepare your testimonial subjects or interviewees for their on-screen debut. Be sure to include the purpose of filming instructors in the worksheet and distribute one to two weeks in advance.

### Preparing for Your On-Camera Conversation with the Recruitment Team

#### Preparation

- The overall purpose of capturing your story is to (consider something like “demonstrate rigor of academics” or “explain changes in healthcare occupations” or “get to know the people behind the faculty directory listings”):  
    \_\_\_\_\_  
    \_\_\_\_\_
- Write a script around the subject of the interview; this will help you speak confidently about the subject of the interview or testimonial. Then, distill bullets to bring to the interview itself. Leave your script at home to avoid the temptation of reading from it.
- Tag team with a colleague: is there someone with whom you can discuss a topic of mutual interest (e.g., a degree program or an industry trend) on camera? Ask if you can invite him or her to participate in the interview or testimonial with you. This dynamic creates anticipation and engages viewers in the content for longer: they want to see how one person responds to the other’s comments.

#### On-Camera Advice

- Channel authenticity: speak naturally as with a friend and gesticulate as you would in normal conversation.
- Be sure you are inflecting your voice to emphasize most important points.
- Use natural eye contact (e.g., look up when you are looking for a word).
- Look at the interviewer (or to a colleague to whom you’re speaking) rather than directly at the camera. The production team may capture a few angles using a few cameras, and staring at a single camera is especially futile in this case.

#### Model “Talking Head” Clips

- [Raghu Bukkapatnam](http://www.advisory.com/Research/Medical-Group-Strategy-Council/Multimedia/2012/Advancing-Health-System-Strategy) explains that medical groups should focus on integrating physicians into medical group culture and should engage physicians in the performance improvement mandate to drive health system strategy forward.  
<http://www.advisory.com/Research/Medical-Group-Strategy-Council/Multimedia/2012/Advancing-Health-System-Strategy>
- [Marlon Kuzmick](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6w_Loui9B0&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL30A8FDA811F6DAEA) describes a course at Harvard Extension on digital story telling  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6w\\_Loui9B0&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL30A8FDA811F6DAEA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6w_Loui9B0&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL30A8FDA811F6DAEA)

#### Questions?

Contact the recruitment team:

Name: [Enter contact details here]

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_