

# Video Ventures: Making Movies in Your Classroom

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## Video Projects: Entertain

Sometimes the goal of a video is simply to entertain. Although student productions are often cheerful and amusing, they can also be comforting or thought-provoking. While viewers may learn something from this type of video, the project may just convey a story, imagine a world, or illustrate an idea.

Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) identified seven elements of Digital Storytelling:

- **Point of View.** What is the main point of the story and what is the perspective of the author?
- **A Dramatic Question.** What question will keep the viewer's attention and be answered at the end of the story?
- **Emotional Content.** What issue will make the story personal and powerful?
- **The Gift of Your Voice.** How will you use your voice to help the audience understanding the context?
- **The Power of the Soundtrack.** What music or other sounds will support and contribute to the story?
- **Economy.** How can the story be told with just enough content without overloading the viewer?
- **Pacing.** How will the rhythm of the story progress at a rate that is pleasing for the audience?

**Tell a Story.** Storytelling is the art of conveying a sequence of events to express character, plot and setting. Ask students to write a script for a story in a particular genre: Action-adventure, Animal story, Crime, Detective, Fantasy, Historical fiction, Horror, Inspirational, Mystery, Realistic fiction, Romance, Science fiction, or Western. Also, consider creating a film in a foreign language.

**Retell a Story.** Involve students in retelling a picture book or creating a script for a chapter from a book. Or, share local myths, legends, and folklore. Retell a classic story such as Cinderella. Re-enact a short story or picture book using puppets, dolls, or Lego people.

**Update a Story.** Take a classic story and bring it up-to-date. Or, place the story in a different setting or use varied types of characters.

**Record a Theatrical Program.** Keep in mind that some plays (particularly musical) restrict recording and dissemination. Before recording a performance check for any restrictions on use.

**Create a Music Video.** Tell a story through music. To accomplish this goal, students must exercise creativity and cooperation.

**Make a Television Show.** Many schools are holding their own American Idol- type programs. However there are other ways to incorporate television-like programs into learning. For instance, involve students in using a popular program such as CSI as inspiration for their own science show.

**Record a Game Show.** Use the game show format to share understandings and also entertain the audience.

**Re-enact a Time in History.** Provide students with a list of historical events related to the history curriculum. Ask them to re-enact an encounter, scene, or situation. Take on the role of a specific person such as an explorer or scientist. Or, explore the people from a particular decade.

**Create an If I Were... Video.** Ask students to imagine. What would it be like to be something different from themselves?

**Make a Speculative Video.** Rather than simply focusing on the famous people in history, ask students to create a video representing how an everyday person might react to a well-known figure. What would it have been like for your great, great, grandmother to meet Eleanor Roosevelt? What might she ask? Ask students to ponder what would happen if people could travel through time or if fictional characters came to life.

What would happen if two characters from different books met at a party?

What would happen if two generals from different time periods met at a dinner?

Consider a conversation between two people on a topic where they agree or disagree. What would this conversation look like?

Cesar Chavez and Richard Nixon: What is your position on affirmative action?

Frederick Douglass and Robert E. Lee: Should the slaves be freed?

Alice Paul and Woodrow Wilson: Should women have the right to vote?



### **Try It: Tell a Story**

Create a 30-second story with a beginning, middle, and end. Your characters should be objects such as a stapler and paperclip (human hands are okay) rather than people. This should make script reading much easier. The video will be a single, self-contained scene with no editing. Record it three times and pick your best.

## Video Projects: Emote

Sometimes a video producer wants to connect with people at an emotional level. Use video to convey the wide range of human emotions including happiness, sadness, fear, joy, empathy, and affection.

**Show, Not Tell.** Involve students in creating a silent movie that shows emotions rather than describes them with words and narration.

**Share Insights.** Rather than the traditional book review, try a media review. Watch a movie, listen to an audio recording, or view a television program. Then, write a critical review. Or, provide a video-based book critique. Ask: Has something you read changed the way you think or feel about something? When, How? Has something you've read made you think about another person's point of view?

**Connect to Emotions.** Rather than a traditional view of animals, think about their relationships. Do animals fall in love? How could you show this in a video?

**Activate a Poem or Short Story.** Write an original poem or use an existing work. Use visuals and motion to convey additional meaning.

**Demonstrate Character Traits.** Create a video that reflects a character trait such as honesty, perseverance, self-discipline, fairness, respect, integrity, courage, compassion, or loyalty.

**Convey Abstract Concepts.** Use video to explain an abstract concept such as freedom, mindfulness, hope, liberty, poverty, or justice. Or, visualize vocabulary from a subject area. Also use visuals to express action words, descriptive words, opposites, positions, and other concepts. Create a video for younger students. Consider a project that includes figurative language.

**Record Oral History.** What was it like to live 10, 50, or 100 years ago? Record a video interview to collect oral histories and stories. Put the clips together to build an understanding of a person, place, or time.

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### Try It: Focus on Emotion

Design an assignment that connects with students at an emotional level. Use the ideas above to start your discussion.

## Video Projects: Inform

Many traditional curriculum activities involve communicating knowledge to others. Young people need to be able to organize information in meaningful ways to express their understandings. Consider interesting ways students can share their knowledge by explaining, defining, reporting, and sharing the results of inquiry.

**Create Documentaries.** A documentary is a work of nonfiction intended to document some aspect of reality.

**Update a Classic Informational Video.** Some videos have good information, but they have become dated. Ask students to update a classic.

**Create a Personal or Family History.** Ask students to share their personal history. Rather than tracing their entire life, share personal artifacts that represent phases in their life such as a stuffed animal, baseball glove, piece of jewelry, or a favorite video game. Or, focus on a family event or experience.

**Organize Information.** Students often have a difficult time figuring out how to share their understandings. Design assignments that require students to categorize information, seek patterns, build diagrams, or visualize results. Students might trace the history of an invention or incorporate some of the following elements: Timeline, Cycle, Chain of Events, Clusters, Tables. Use before/after to show the impact of an event or use a chronological approach to a single day, weather event, building construction, plant growth, growth of mold, etc. In science, show a chain or process. Can you see the food chain at work in your neighborhood?

**Represent Information.** Video provides an opportunity to transfer text-based learning into a new form. Ask student to use visual representations relationships, demonstrate causality, or express time through physical actions or visual changes. Use visuals to support arguments. A video of a bee on a flower provides evidence of the important role of bees in pollination. Ask students to visualize a shadow clock. Take a series of shots (stop action) during the day tracking the movement of the shadow. Show two ways to solve a problem or illustrate a solution such as coins for making change. Explore a math concept such as tessellations and create a video showing this concept in the "real world."



### Try It: Create an Informative Nature Video

Select a nature movie clip and record your own narration to go with the video.

Your clip should include at least three facts and one opinion. Share your video with a classmate. Can they pick out your facts and opinion?

## Video Projects: Instruct

Students can learn by creating directions, conducting demonstrations and presenting ideas to others. Involve young people in modeling, tutoring, guiding, reviewing, demonstrating and mentoring activities. Rather than reading and writing directions, watch a video containing step-by-step instructions for a procedure. Then, write instructions for your own video production. Students still get experience writing, but they do it in a different way.

Use props to provide analogies, demonstrate concepts, or reflect the thoughts of an actor. Create science models, dioramas, and other physical materials that can be used to explain how things work.

**Create a Tutorial.** Use video to show techniques for producing a product such as a work of art. Explain each step and key techniques. Use over-the shoulder shots and close-ups.

**Conduct an Experiment.** Share the process of conducting an experiment. Be sure to include the elements of the scientific method. Focus on each step in the process (i.e., hypothesis, materials, procedures, results). Narrate each step.

**Demonstrate a Procedure.** Demonstrate the proper procedure for completing an activity. Describe how to use a piece of equipment. Incorporate examples of proper use and incorrect approaches. Be sure not to do anything that is unsafe even for a demonstration. For instance, focus on health or safety rules (i.e., weather, water, cooking, fire, science, laboratory, bike).

**Explain a Concept.** Video can be used to explain a concept and provide examples.

**Demonstrate Strategies for Personal Health.** Create a video showing ways to manage a stressful situation or deal with feelings caused by disappointment, separation, or loss. Consider topics such as bullying, peer pressure, and other common problems connected with home and school life.



### Try It: Demonstrate a Skill

Create a movie containing a series of short video clips that demonstrate a process, procedure, or skill. Use a variety of shooting techniques such as an establishing shot, close-up, over-the-shoulder, and medium shot to meet particular needs.

## Video Projects: Challenge

Ask students to use the video format to challenge others. Inference is the reasoning involved in drawing conclusions based on evidence and prior knowledge rather than simple observation. Ask students to provide hints or clues without providing the solution. Students must combine the information provided with previous knowledge, experience, and beliefs to come up with the answer. In other words, they make an educated guess or prediction. Not everyone may draw the same conclusion. A person's experience impacts their perspective. A project would involve asking questions, collecting evidence, making connections, sharing predication, making decisions, and drawing conclusions.

**Present an Issue and Challenge Thinking.** A student video can be used to provide multiple perspectives on a topic. This can then serve as the basis for discussion of this topic. This video could take the form of a debate, presentation of two sides of an issue, or an open-ended series of questions with possible answers. Provide evidence to support a number of different perspectives. Then ask the audience to make a final decision. For instance, who owns the land that is appearing in the Arctic as a result of ice melting? Should we establish a colony on the moon?

**Build a Visual Story Starter.** Use a book, short video clip, or model to jumpstart a video production. Read the book **Of Thee I Sing** by Barack Obama. Then, ask students to write and record their own question and answer based on famous people from your state. Use the book **Move!** by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page to get students thinking about how animals move. Then, choose an animal from the book and learn more about its movement. Use online video sources to see the animal. Create their own video combining stock footage with your movements. Challenge others to move like an animal.

**Create Visual Story Problems.** Create a problem for others to solve. This could be a math problem, but it would also be a social situation involving peer pressure.

**Create Inspirational Video.** Use videos as inspiration for student productions.

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### Try It: Create a Challenge



Create a video that provides information needed to solve a problem or make a decision like a real-world math problem. Or, establish a scenario culminating in a dilemma. Use a variety of shots to add interest and provide detail. All of the information needed to solve the problem or discuss the topic should be provided in your video. Think about close-ups, over the shoulder shots, and other interesting camera angles. Use settings, meaningful props, and/or puppets or other ways to represent characters. Put a title at the beginning and a question or other text at the end. Enter at title at the beginning. Consider using titles to highlight steps or vocabulary.

## Video Projects: Engage

News and current events engage young people in thinking about the world around them. Rather than assigning a report, ask students to create a news program. Rather than a traditional journal, keep a media journal detailing what news they read, music they heard, and programs they watched.

**Create News Programs.** A popular way to integrate video into the classroom is a regular news program. Keep in mind that news programs can be associated with any content area. Your news program might contain a lead story, weather, sports, lunch menu, guests, and local events. The video **It's News to Me** suggests four aspects of a simple news video:

**Introduction:** introduce self and topic

**B-Roll and Voice Over:** narration over footage

**Adding Additional Information:** bring everything together

**Outro:** toss back to the studio

**Create Topical News Programs.** Explore content-area news and events.

**Design Travel Programs.** Take viewers on a virtual tour of a local or remote location. This could be an "arm chair" tour of a favorite country, a virtual field trip to a local nature park or historical place, or an imagination trip inside a cell or through the Earth.

**Create Special Event Videos.** Create a program focusing on a special current event.

**Highlight Special Programs.** Use special programs to explore people, places, and things of interest. Students enjoy exploring trends such as hairstyles or popular bands. Explore ordinary, famous, and infamous people through background information, interviews, and historical footage. Consider a "Day In The Life" series focusing on important people in the school, career shadowing projects, or the lives of animals. Highlight a student who is a recent immigrant or a child with an interesting ethnic custom.

**Create Welcome Programs.** A popular project involves welcoming others to school, getting to know teachers, or orienting new students. Record important activities during the year. Also record discussions of important class topics such as school rules and expectations, dress code, discipline issues, or class procedures. These can later be integrated into a class or school orientation.

**Build a Video Yearbook.** In addition to a traditional print yearbook, consider a digital product. Film events throughout the year. This project can serve as a year-end activity involving students in selecting and editing the raw footage. Then, share the program



with parents at the end of the year. What a great public relations tape to show at Open House the following year!

**Create a Student Portfolio or Showcase.** Involve students in creating a video portfolio that reflects their work. Showcase a piece of student work such as the results of a science experiment, a diorama, or model. For instance, each team member could describe a contribution to the Native American Village they created. One might focus on the teepee while another might talk about the fire pit. Or, use video to highlight a piece of personal artwork (i.e., sculpture, collage, mobile, painting) discussing the steps in creating the artwork, particular areas of ease or difficult, or describing the materials or approach. Take periodic reading samples to check fluency.

**Highlight School and Community Programs and Projects.** Look for ways to connect to school and community projects. Tell the history of your school. Go "behind the scenes" at school or in a local business. Interview local people about their role in shaping the community. For instance, focus on local heroes.

**Create Teacher Productions.** Although you'll want to get your students involved with video production, consider creating videos that reflect your work as a teacher. Ideas: **Anticipation.** Ask students to describe what they would like to learn. What are their goals? What do they already know about the topic? Or, what do they think will happen in the book they are about to read.

**Slice of Life.** Create a regular video newsletter or other communication that shows what's happening in the classroom.

**Tutorials.** Create short tutorials reviewing key concepts, providing examples, or demonstrating the steps in a process.

**Process.** Ask students to share their thinking as they solve problems. For instance, show me how you solved the math problem, tell me how you completed the science experiment, or share how you made your decision. Film students as they create products. Ask them to talk about each stage in the process as they work their way through a project.

**Products.** Ask students to talk about the product they have produced. Direct them to describe their model, poster, or other creation.

**Reflect.** Ask students to talk about what they learned during a unit. Remind students about what they said at the beginning of the semester.



### **Try It: Create a News Program**

Watch a few videos on this page. What are the features of an effective news or event program? Create a project that incorporates a mixture of still images and video. Think about using historical photos, diagrams, maps, and other images to enhance your video project.

## Video Projects: **Provoke**

Use video as a way to provoke people to think in different ways about a topic. These heightened emotions may arouse anger and frustration galvanizing a group to take action. Or, these feelings might stir strong positive thoughts about a person, place, thing, or concept. The goal is to change attitudes and take action.

**Create Public Service Announcements.** Non-profit organizations often use public service announcements (PSA) to influence public interest. These short advertisements are intended to raise awareness of an issue as well as impact attitudes and spark action. The videos are often shown for free or at a low cost by some media groups. Some of these groups also create their own such as NBC's *The More You Know*.

The Ad Council is well-known for their national campaigns. Check out classics such as *People Start Pollution*, *People Can Stop It*, *Brain on Drugs*, and *Test Crash Dummies*. Their ads focus on changing public attitudes topics such as drugs, tobacco, crime, health, and safety issues. See their ads at the Ad Council You Tube Channel.

Some religious and faith-based organizations produce Pass to promote themes that support their values. Government agencies create videos to recruit military enlistees, encourage voter registration, or inform the public about important initiatives. You may remember *Medical Quackery* from the FDA, *VD for Everyone*, or *Smoke Bear*. Check out the Corporation for National & Community Service: You Tube Channel and SAMHSA: You Tube Channel for examples. Watch *Reading Promotion Pass* from Library of Congress.

Increasingly, television programs are incorporating Pass as part of episodes on topics such as bullying, diabetes, or suicide prevention. The popular program *Glee* often contains these Pass Examine Pass aimed at teens and talk about how their effectiveness such as *Stay Teen: You Tube Channel*. Watch videos about protecting ears from hearing loss by people such as Carson Daly.

**Change Attitudes.** Use video as a forum to change attitudes about a topic such as the Rainforest or Using the Library.



### **Try It: Create a Public Service Announcement**

Create a short video (30 seconds or 60 seconds) focusing on a social issue of importance to your local community. Stress the local aspect as well as the global aspect.

## Video Projects: Persuade

Persuasive messages use powerful visual, auditory, and kinesthetic movements to prompt action.

Advertisements are intended to persuade an audience to take some action such as purchase a product or service. Commercial advertisers hope to generate sales through repeated viewing of logos, slogans, and other images associated with their product. This is called branding.

**Take Action.** Create a persuasive video asking viewers to take action.

**Advertise a Place, Product, or Event.** Apply persuasive techniques to the creation of a video commercial. In addition to traditional commercials, consider a twist. Create a commercial for a product in a different time period or create an election campaign advertisement.

**Create a Book, Movie, Play Trailers.** Trailers are used to advertise books, movies, plays, or other productions.

**Advertise a Local Place or Service.** Create a video advertisement for a local non-profit or service. For instance, promote the local farmer's market or blood bank. Advertise a local attraction. Use a specific advertising technique.



### Try It: Create a Book Trailer

Create a short video that persuades someone to read a book.

## Video Production: Planning

*How will I identify a topic and organize my ideas?*

While some people start with words, others prefer to begin by creating images in their mind. Think about how you will combine still and moving images, words, and sounds to create an effective video project.

**Still and Moving Images.** How can the story be told visually?

- **Setting.** Finding the right location is critical to a video production. Seek out an authentic environment that matches the story. In other words, try not to make it look fake. Look for a place that is quiet for quality audio. Try to eliminate materials or people in the background that might be distracting.
- **Props.** From personal items and costumes to artifacts and science equipment, props can play an important part in telling a story. Rather than these items becoming clutter in a scene, use close-up shots to focus attention on them.
- **Expressions and Gestures.** Many human emotions and thoughts can be conveyed through expressions and gestures without the need for words. Demonstrations can provide information and show how something works.
- **Camera Movements.** Moving the camera can focus the attention of the audience.
- **Shots.** An establishing shot provides a wide view of the setting, while a medium shot shows the subject and surroundings. Use a close-up to focus on the subject and an extreme close-up to isolate a particular element of the subject such as a hand or head.

**Words.** What words will best convey or reinforce the central message?

- **Narration.** Use narration to share background information, anticipate a scene, or interpret the action. Use the words to add detail to what the audience sees. Remember to practice reading the narrative aloud. In some cases, pauses will need to be added or words may need to be changed to work with the images.
- **Dialog.** Use dialog to move along the story, show conflict, or express feelings. People can pose questions or use words that cause the audience to wonder about a topic. An interview is a great approach to gain information about a person's life and experiences.
- **Screen Text.** Sometimes it's useful to provide statistics, key words, or phrases during a video production. Be sure this text contributes rather than distracting from the visual aspects. Consider the age of the audience and the purpose of the production.

**Sounds.** How do voices, sounds effects, and music contribute to the story?

- **Voices.** The tone, speed, and pitch of a human voice convey emotion and can dramatically alter a story.
- **Sounds Effects.** Consider how sounds such as thunder, a door squeaking, or the crying of a baby might contribute to a story line. Eliminate sounds that distract or don't serve a specific purpose.
- **Music.** Seek music that conveys the emotion of the story such as excitement or fear.

### Planning Content

What roles will the actors be playing? Will there be a narrator?

What location will you use for your movie? What makes it a good location?

What props will you need for your movie? How will they be used in in the film?

What costumes will actors be wearing? How does this contribute to the film?

Consider both individual and group responsibilities.

Use tools for scripting and/or storyboarding.



### Try It: Storyboards

Compare different examples of storyboard.

## Video Production: Shooting

*How will I create the video that's in my head?*

**Sources of Images, Sounds, and Video.** Why re-invent the wheel? Use existing images, sounds, and video clips in your projects. Be sure to check copyright and provide credit when you use the works of others.



### Try It: Explore Resources

Explore resources that can be used student productions.

**Techniques.** Digital technology provides the opportunity to try lots of different techniques. Try some of the following in your projects.

- **B-Roll.** You'll want video footage that provides an overview of your scene such as the outside of the building, people getting out of the car, faces showing reactions, and close-ups of doors opening. These can be woven into your story to add interest.
- **Box Scenes.** Create your own scenes using middle school examples from Vimeo for inspiration.
- **Cell Phone Video.** You don't need a fancy camera to produce and interesting video. Use your cell phone. Read *7 Superb Short Films Shot with Cellphones*.
- **Claymation.** Use stop-action animation to create a story using clay or other figures. Place your camera on a tripod. Place the figures in a scene. Press record, then stop recording. Move the figures slightly. Then, record again.
- **Door Scenes.** Create your own scenes using middle school examples from Vimeo for inspiration.
- **Thomas Edison.** Use some of the techniques Edison used in his early films. Go to Vimeo for student examples.
- **Green Screen.** A green screen allows you to easily insert an impact in the background. You need administrator access to add this file.
- **George Melies.** Melies was a famous early film maker. Ask students to emulate his techniques.
- **Lumiere Brothers.** These early film makers had a unique style. Ask students to emulate it.
- **Silent Film.** You don't need words for a great film. Watch the following examples of silent films. *Still Life* by high school students



### Try It: Explore Video Techniques

Explore one of the techniques above. How could you integrate it into a video project?

## Video Production: Editing

*How will I put together all the elements to build a product?*



### **Try It: Online Template-Driven Tools**

Before jumping into video editing with students, practice the experience using one of the many template-driven online tools for organizing video.



### **Try It: Online Video Production Tools**

Many tools can be used to create videos online. There are also tools to capture what is happening on your screen to make demonstration videos or tell stories. Use tools to download videos for use in class or in video projects.



### **Try It: Video Editing Software**

Movie Maker is an easy-to-use video editing program provided by Microsoft for Windows XP. iMovie is a free and easy tool for Macintosh. Adobe Premiere is great if you can afford to buy software. Try a variety of tools and make comparisons.

## Video Production: Sharing

*Where can I share my project so others can enjoy my work?*

Encourage children to enjoy creating videos at home as well as at school.

- **Sharing Online.** After creating your video, consider sharing it online. Before making student projects public, be sure to get permission from parents. Check out an example form by Mrs. Plunkett.
- **Collaborative Projects.** Read *Teaching English through Film and Screenwriting*. Students created videos, removed the audio and sent them to another class. The second class then added their own narration.



### **Try It: Share Projects**

Design a plan for sharing projects. Discuss issues in sharing with the public such as copyright, video storage, and parent permissions.

**Assessment.** Evaluating student projects is an important part of the process.



### **Try It: Design Assessments**

Explore online sources for rubrics and scoring guides. Create your own for a video project. Use RubiStar to get started.