

Guidelines for Students: Making a Video Project

Even though video projects will be highly individualized based on teacher requirements, testimonies used, and/or your own point of view and voice, the following are guidelines to help you make a video project in iWitness.

FIND A FOCUS

1) Develop a clear focus for your video project before you begin. If you are creating a project as part of an iWitness activity, a focus has already been provided. Alternately, your instructor may have given you a topic, theme, or prompt as the basis for your project. If not, create your own.

DEFINE THE TASK

2) If it is an assigned project, be clear on the basic requirements before you begin. Have answers for questions such as:

- What are the goals of the project?
- How much time do I have to work on it?
- How many clips should be included?
- How long should each clip be?
- Are the clips going to be from one interviewee or several?
- Am I working alone or in a group?
- If I am in a group, how is the work to be divided?
- How long should the entire project be?
- In addition to testimony clips, what else should be in the project?
- How is the project to be assessed?

3) Cooperative groups of four or so students are recommended for classroom video projects.

4) A carefully organized and tightly focused video project is often ten minutes or less.

CHOOSE THE TESTIMONY CLIPS

5) Because searching for project clips can take time, consider searching/saving your project's clips outside of class.

6) Avoid topics/themes/concepts that are too broad and result in overwhelming results.

7) On Search Results page, scan the list of results for the best matches. Example: although the search for *camp marriages* may indicate thousands of results, only the first results use the two terms exclusively in conjunction with one another.

8) On the search results page, consider further narrowing your results by filtering interviewees by gender, experience group, and country of birth/interview.

9) If using a single interviewee's testimony clip in your project, the clip should be long enough to allow the viewers to connect with the interviewee, which can be as short as a minute but most often averages three to five minutes.

10) If your project focuses on an event, you may use clips from several interviewees in order to show multiple points of view.

ORGANIZE AND REFINE

11) Even though you will become attached to ideas and interviewees, focus on the project's goals/requirements, your viewers, and the advice of the guidelines. Seek an outside opinion when you can't decide what to cut down or leave out.

12) Consider using a [storyboard template](#) to help organize the order and sequence of the elements in your video project.

13) Give your project a working title. You may well alter your title as the project develops.

BUILD MEANING

14) The clip(s) you have chosen to feature were extracted from a larger life story, so a brief introduction and/or explanation of whom and what viewers are about to see is good practice.

15) Whenever the project is in need of explanatory text, it may be written text and/or narration.

16) To add text, you can use the provided white or black image in the video editor or upload a text image previously created and formatted as a .jpg, .bmp, or .gif in a drawing tool such as Paint®. Screen text should be brief, spell-checked, and in a simple font large enough to read.

17) To add narration, you can upload previously recorded audio files such as .wma, .wav, or .mp4. Before recording the audio file, know correct pronunciations and practice until it sounds natural with a consistent tempo, volume, and modulation.

UPLOAD MUSIC

18) Suitable music may also be uploaded. Make sure the music does not overwhelm or interfere with the message of the interviewee.

19) Keep efforts balanced. Be wary of spending much time searching for music if it interferes with the available time for searching testimony on iWitness, creating explanatory text/ narration, etc.

ADD IMAGERY

20) As a companion to narration (or music), consider adding relevant, appropriate images for your audience to view while the audio plays. Images could include photographs, artwork, maps, and other visuals. How many depends on the running time of your narration and/or music. Generally an image should remain on the screen for four or five seconds, longer if it is a text-based image.

21) When you add an image to your project, include a small, very brief on-screen identifier, usually on the lower left-hand side, so that viewers know what the photos is, an approximate date (if available) and the copyright holder.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

22) To add a personal component to your project, you may decide to upload your own video files in formats such as .mpeg, .wmv, or .avi from cameras like an iPod Touch® or Flip®.

23) Your video file may be your own responses or connections to the testimony clip(s) and/or interviewee, peer responses to a relevant topical/thematic question you have posed, an original composition, a pledge, or a call to action.

24) Before you record yourself or others, decide whether to upload a single video (or audio) file or create separate files to upload.

25) Consider writing down what you want to say beforehand. If interviewing others, tell them the question(s) ahead of time. Practice until you (and others) feel natural and comfortable on camera. Find a quiet, well-lit place to record.

26) If it is necessary to read your response from a card off camera, practice reading until you sound natural. The placement of the off-camera card is also important to the look and feel of your video.

27) When recording your video, keep the camera as steady as possible and keep the subject central to the shot with minimal on-screen distractions. If your video is divided into several files, the setting, lighting, volume, pace, and voice modulation should stay fairly consistent amongst the files.

WRAP IT UP

28) As you near completion of your project, revisit your working title. Does it still seem like the right title or do you have a new one that more closely represents the theme or meaning of the final project?

29) You may use a quotation, a poem, a reflection, a pledge, or a call to action as your conclusion. It might be manifested as an image or images with a voiceover (narration), a personal video, a text image, or testimony clip.

30) After the conclusion, use the provided black or white image in the editor to create a text image that, at a minimum, lists the names of featured interviewees and also the names of institutions/entities for other resources included. Also consider crediting yourself and members of your group, using only first names if you prefer.

31) Before you submit your project, revisit the project's requirements to make sure you met or exceeded expectations. Complete a rubric/self-assessment if one is provided.