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Screencasts work best as single-serving examples of problems and how they can be solved. Entitling your video "Using CINAHL's Advanced Search Features" does not tell your viewer what exactly will be covered in the video, nor does it help you decide where to limit the scope of your instruction. You should instead try to address a problem such as "How to use CINAHL's MeSH Terminology to Locate All Relevant Sources." Structuring your videos to answer a question will keep them short and to the point, keep you focused while creating them, and inform your user about their content before they view them.

The audio portion of your screencast is critical so try not to distract your user from it with flashy effects. Tell a story while you're demonstrating a search method because this will provide context for your learners. For instance, using the above example, you can explain why MeSH terms better than free text rather than simply stating that this is the case. End your video by telling your user what to do next. A call to action may be exactly what they need!

General practices
- use a script and rehearse
- avoid using the face came inset as it distracts viewers
- avoid screencasts longer than 2 minutes (if you have more material, then you have more than one screencast)
- break your screencasts into digestible bits
- if you are in an advanced program that allows editing, record in small chunks so that you can edit them more easily later

Desktop and Browser Preparation
- clean up your wallpaper (i.e. no personal pictures)
- clear your desktop of unnecessary files, folders and icons
- clear your browser cache
- remove visible bookmarks from navigation bar
- if possible, install a second "clean" browser on your computer for screencasting
- disable pop-ups and test-run your web applications

Mouse
- rely on the visual emphasis of the cursor (and enhance its visual presence through callouts) instead of trying to wave the mouse cursor on the screen
- pause before clicking to let the viewer see where the cursor has stopped
- if possible, put a callout (visual emphasis) on the act of clicking

Notes and Frames
- use notes sparingly
  - i.e. something not mentioned in audio, a little tip or trick
  - keep to a minimum if you have audio as it can distract the viewers
- frames and arrows are much more preferable
- subtitles below the presentation
  - can allow the audience to fast forward to the emphasis point
  - can be useful with ESL audiences

Audio
- improving the audio even marginally will far improve the perceived quality
- use a noise-reducing microphone
- reduce echoes by filming in a room with soft surfaces such as your living room
- if possible, reduce electrical sounds such as computer fans and other appliances
- gather thoughts, interject smiles, and don't rush

Screen resolution and your recording area:

- use standard aspect ratios 640x480, 800X600, 1024X768
- if selecting an area of your screen, try to keep it rectangular (no squares)

Screencasting Checklist

I Have Prepared...

- figured out the aim of this screencast
- thought about what my viewer will need so they will learn something new from me
- run through the demo without recording so I know I can perform it without getting lost
- made notes on paper so I keep with the flow of the demo when I do get lost

Scripted...

- I've listed all the steps that must be shown, read the script to someone else and they agree that it covers everything that's needed
- Written the script to include all the narration, actions and notes that I need

Prototyped...

- recorded a prototype and the sound records ok and the screen's text is readable
- checked that the video is as short as it can be – no more than 2-3 minutes for a tutorial
- during the prototype I made sure to leave in sections where I could take a breath and gather my thoughts
- dealt with external sources of possible noise, my cell phone is off, windows and doors are shut, fans are unplugged and pets are in another room
- checked that the computer isn't under a heavy load so the fan is running slowly and quietly
- practiced smiling when I start to record so I sound happy, relaxed and interested rather than bored or rushed
- read the narration a few times so I don't rush or go too slow
- a glass of water to hand in case my mouth goes dry

Recorded...
- cleared the recording area of icons and windows that aren't useful
- set my background image to a neutral colour or a useful image like the UBC logo
- checked that all the latest Windows, Flash, anti-virus and Java updates are
- set a pop-up blocker and allowed exceptions for the sites I need
- checked that if windows are opened during my screencast, they appear in the recording region
- cleared my browser's form-field cache and URL history if I'm using the browser
- made sure I don't wiggle the mouse during recording to draw attention to parts of the screen
- made smooth, sweeping mouse movements when moving between screen elements

- viewed the final recording and nothing was missed out so the aims I had are definitely met

Edited (advanced software only) ...

- cut dead scenes from the recording in the editor
- added some zooms so the viewer's attention is directed to the important screen elements
- added highlights to emphasize important parts of the screen when the rest should be faded or blurred
- used text annotations and arrows to add extra information visually which back-up the narration (but do so sparingly)
- checked the narration and removed background noise and silenced 'ums' and 'errs' and loud breaths
- only used one or two types of fade throughout the video and each is quick (about one second long)
- Added an opening title slide with the title and date
- Added a closing title slide with a website and call-to-action details (if they're relevant) and the Creative Commons license

Exported...

- exported the final video using the proper codec and file container and viewed the exported video for any glitches created during the export process

Distributed...

- verified that all copyright permissions have been obtained for licensed materials in my video
- uploaded the video internally and/or externally (which could be public or private)