

## Using Short Video Tutorials

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### Framework

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Teachers have argued for the use of the Web 2.0 tool screencast software, such as Techsmith's Jing, to provide feedback on student course assignments (Lee, 2012). A screencast is a digital recording of computer screen output, also known as a video screen capture, often containing audio narration (Davis, 2012). A teacher might review a student's assignment on a computer and use screencast software to record video of the teacher's evaluation of the student's assignment, along with the teacher's comments. However, screencast software has other uses within a course, including video tutorials. Silva (2012) notes that few studies of the use of screen video capture software to create tutorials have been conducted, and of those the overall student impressions of such tutorials have been favorable.

The goal of this paper is to describe how teachers can use Web 2.0 screencast software to provide students with short video tutorials. As Urtel and Fernandez (2012) note, audio podcasts work best when short, and it is likely true of video tutorials as well. Although numerous screencast software applications exist, the focus of this paper will be on Jing (<http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html>), as at the time of this writing, it is free and relatively simple to use. Jing is available for Windows and Macintosh operating systems. The discussion of this application should be construed as one example of many, rather than as a specific product endorsement.

The Jing application captures the actions on a screen and stores them as a video file. Additionally, if the reviewer's computer is equipped with a microphone, audio may also be captured. Jing is limited to video captures of up to five minutes, which can be converted to the Flash format for viewing on Windows and Macintosh systems. Application upgrades from the free service allow longer videos and varied formats, including MPEG-4 for viewing on Apple mobile devices or uploading to a video-sharing website, such as YouTube. Captured videos can be shared: via a course management system, such as Blackboard or Oncourse; by converting the video to a format compatible with a video-sharing service such as YouTube, then uploading the video and sharing a link; or by uploading video to a website affiliated with Jing ([www.screencast.com](http://www.screencast.com)) that provides limited, free access for uploading and sharing videos.

Instructors can use video tutorials in several ways. They can be used to create quick lectures or demonstrations for a class as part of a planned lesson, which can be used to supplement instruction in a traditional classroom; or they can provide the student with a tutor-type of resource by allowing students to replay material. Further, the video tutorials would be useful as online content for hybrid (blended traditional face-to-face and online courses) or even fully-online courses.

The software would also provide an excellent tool for specifically answering student questions electronically, in an easy to understand or explain manner. When a student emails an instructor with a question, the instructor can generate a brief video explanation/response tailored

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to the student's concern. While a valuable tool for many courses, the strength of this tool would be best recognized in the hybrid and fully-online courses where visual content might be more beneficial for responding to student questions.

## **Making It Work**

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As an instructor, this author uses the screencast software in web design courses. Regardless of whether the courses are taught in a traditional or hybrid format, these courses require demonstrations on how to perform various actions with software or with code, and the screencast software easily captures such video and audio of the demonstrations and makes it available for replay. Should tutorials require more than the five minute limit imposed by the free version of the software, they can simply be broken down into a series of shorter segments. After examining other similar products, it is the opinion of this author that the screencast software is also superior for creating high quality, precise, static captures of parts of a screen. This feature is valuable for creating print documentation to supplement recorded videos.

As an instructor, this author also uses the screencast software to generate impromptu videos in response to student requests. If a student needed specific guidance on how to use Adobe Photoshop to slice an image into a webpage, this author would create a brief video demonstrating how to perform the activity. Similarly, if a student emails a question concerning issues with software, or with problems with HTML or CSS, a brief video response tailored to the solution would be generated and sent to the student. The use of the screencast software allows the instructor a similar degree of flexibility as if she were present in the classroom with the student. The benefit for the student is the receipt of tailored information she can review and replay until she gains the necessary degree of understanding, without requiring the student to necessarily be in the classroom.

Lastly, since many of the general student questions are repetitious in nature, the use of the screencast software allows the instructor to develop a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) resource of videos which students can examine for solutions to FAQs.

## **Future Implications**

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As digital media becomes easier to use, instructors across the spectrum of education will continue to find new ways to integrate it into teaching. Networked communication tools will become further integrated into our students' lives as bandwidth, processing power, and mobility improve, allowing Web 2.0 tools such as screencasts to become increasingly important means for interacting with students. Lastly, as institutions migrate to different platforms and formats for courses, tools such as screencast software can provide students with more of a sense of the presence of the instructor.

This topic was based primarily on pre-existing sources of information and could be enhanced by future researchers who might conduct larger scale studies of instructors and students.

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