

Creating podcasts and videos

Digital content is everywhere, and podcasts and videos are a great way to reach many audiences anywhere in the world – from kids on their iPads to time-poor teachers. We'll take you through how to begin producing podcasts or videos, from developing a unique concept to recording, editing and publishing. It's worth bearing in mind that creating good quality digital content can be more time-consuming than often expected so it's good to be sure that you can find the time to commit to your project.

Videos and podcasts are great for:	Videos and podcasts are less suited to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaching large numbers Being accessible to wider audiences Having legacy online for others to see Entertainment Reaching younger audiences (e.g. teens) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction with your audience Sharing skills Gaining insights from your audience Reaching certain groups (e.g. the elderly)

While not necessarily the most effective formats for generating two-way dialogue with your audiences, videos and podcasts can generate peer to peer dialogue about the topic of your piece. Alternatively, they can be used as an effective tool to generate a shared level of understanding that enables deeper conversations with your audiences at a later date. Of course, there are always comments! Sharing your creation somewhere

that enables commenting opens the opportunity for dialogue and engagement.

Once you have **developed an aim**, researched **your audience** and have determined that digital media is your best method of engagement, you can start to think about your concept.

1 | Developing your concept

There are lots of podcasts and videos out there, so consider what makes your content unique. What might encourage your audience to click and play your video or podcast over another? Sometimes, trying to appeal too broadly could result in something that gets lost in the masses while a strong theme or hook can make you stand out to a particular group of people. Start by considering what your audience's interests are. A comedy podcast might suit them, or a video that includes poetry. The length of your content will also depend on your audience type. If it is aimed at younger children, bite-sized video content of 2-3 minutes might be best whereas a 20-30-minute podcast would be ideal for a working professional on their commute.



2 | Getting set up

To produce a podcast or video you'll need some equipment, some of which you may even have to hand already.

Equipment	Low-cost/existing	Mid-range
Recording devices	Smartphone or laptop Headphones with built in mic	Zoom H4N recorder Shotgun microphone DSLR Camera
Editing software	Audacity for audio Hitfilm Express for video	Adobe Audition for audio Adobe Premiere for video
Sound quality accessories	Styrofoam (to cover noisy equipment when recording)	Foam sound insulation Pop filter
Video quality accessories	Smartphone lenses In-built flash Smartphone tripods and sliders Cheap LED lights / reflectors	One prime lens and one focal lens DSLR flash DSLR tripods and sliders LED triple lighting kit and stand

Location

Where you film can make a big difference to the quality of your podcast or video. Ideally try to find somewhere with no background noise (banging doors, outside traffic) where you won't be disturbed. For video also consider somewhere with good lighting ensuring your subject is well lit. Imperial College photographer, Thomas Angus shares some great tips on lighting in this blog. If you're recording or filming outside you may want to consider purchasing mid-range equipment which will produce higher quality content in different environments.

Planning ahead

Plan your logistics, including booking in guests. If you are planning on creating a series of videos or podcasts, releasing them regularly (such as weekly) can help to build your audience. Try to develop a timeline and an idea of themes about four or five episodes ahead.

Branding

Decide on your 'brand' – the look and feel of your content – early on so that your audience can identify you and your content. Consider aspects such as a logo, music, graphics and tone of voice. Perhaps you'd like to use Imperial's branding or the sub-brand of your department. Speak to a communications colleague about supporting you with this.

3 | Plan your content

Considering your structure before you begin recording will save you a lot of time when recording and editing. Videos are usually planned using a storyboard to identify the key parts of the story you wish to tell and the imaging, shots or content for each section. You might find it helpful to plan using the below structure, however this may be more varied depending on the style of your video or podcast (e.g. documentary, magazine style, how-to guides or interviews).

- 1. Intro** – how will your episode start? You will likely have:
 - a. A preview. You might use a short clip from the most interesting part of the episode to tease your audience and keep them invested
 - b. Music / sound effects, animation or other graphics as part of your branding
 - c. Some form of context. What is this channel? Who is the presenter?
- 2. Content** – the main content of your episode, perhaps split into different segments to keep audiences engaged, separated by a jingle.
- 3. Outro** – how you end your episode which may include:
 - a. Promotion of your next episode or any future activity (such as meet-ups or competitions)
 - b. Calls to action – what would you like your audience to do? Subscribe / Rate us / Send in a question
 - c. Music / sound effects, animation or other graphics – reaffirmation of your branding

Top tips

- Give your audience something new and valuable right from the outset.
- However, do hold something back to keep them listening / watching! For example, you might allude to a great ending to an anecdote which will be revealed later.
- Consider length. The most-watched videos on social media are often around a minute in length.

No camera? No problem.

Videos can take various formats. Perhaps your video is an animation (no camera required!) or perhaps you just want to pull together some stock footage to add some visuals to your message. There is plenty of software available out there. Some easy-to-use examples include:

- [VideoScribe](#) – allows you to create whiteboard animations
- [Wochit](#) – enables use of thousands of royalty-free video footage

4 | Record your content

Practice recording your voice or filming yourself to help you get used to the equipment and recording techniques as well as your presentation and positioning.

Tips for audio and video:

- Have clear pronunciation, speak slowly and don't trail off at the end of sentences
- It may be difficult listening to the sound of your own voice initially but this is normal! You will get used to it.
- Up your natural personality. Your audience will be able to tell if you are not authentic but try to aim for a more energised version of yourself or it may appear flat.
- Aim to record twice your episode length to have enough actual content in the edit.

Tips for video only:

- Try to anchor your feet to one spot to prevent distracting movement but relax from the waist up to still seem natural.
- When presenting directly to the camera, try to keep eye contact with the camera and not look at anything outside of the frame. If the viewer can't see it they'll feel excluded.
- Show rather than tell when possible. For example, if you're filming in London, what brief clips can you include that sets the scene?
- Smile for a few seconds, then start talking! At the end, keep smiling for a few seconds after you finish. This will make it easier in the edit.

Tips for recording:

Indoors	Outdoors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check that you cannot hear anything noisy outside the room such as passing cars or banging doors.• Cover noisy machinery (such as a computer tower) with foam insulation.• You could also add a pop filter to your microphone to prevent any plosive consonants such as 'P's and 'T's creating 'pops' on the track.• There will always be a small amount of hiss in the background but this can be removed via software. Simply ensure you have enough 'silent' time on your track as the software will use this as an example of what to remove.• For video, take a photo of the scene and check it. Ensure you are well lit, you are in focus and there is nothing distracting in the background.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For audio, have one headphone on and one off. This helps you listen to both what the microphone is picking up but also the noise around you.• Try to keep the microphone at a fists distance from yourself or anyone else speaking to ensure content is usable and have any background noise in mind.• If there is a loud distraction in the background, record the content again.• If it is windy, use a deadcat to shield your microphone.• For video, you may need to adapt to different lighting and work to maintain focus if you are moving.

You may wish to include an interview as part of your podcast or vlog. Tips to consider:

- Have some questions planned so that you cover the key topics that you want but try not to overly script and leave space for extra questions and follow-ups to make it sound more conversational.
- Researching the topic or person beforehand will help you to get the most out of your interview.
- As you interview put yourself in your audience’s shoes and ask the questions they might ask, such as asking for further explanations.
- Interviewees may be nervous, so try to reassure them you can re-take questions any time and give them simple questions first to ease them in. You may even want to send them some sample questions beforehand to help them prepare.
- You could conduct interviews for podcasts over online platforms such as Skype but ask interviewees to also record their side of the conversation on their phone as a back-up.

Sourcing audio and footage

There are number of sites offering audio and footage for you to use copyright free. Just make sure to check the creative commons license and follow any instructions, which might include crediting the source or not editing it in any way.

Audio	Video
https://www.audioblocks.com/ https://freesound.org/ https://www.youtube.com/audiolibrary/music	https://www.videvo.net/ https://videos.pexels.com/ https://pixabay.com/

5 | Edit your episode

Editing involves storytelling skills, such as ensuring the content flows well, makes sense and that there is enough suspense to keep audiences engaged. Check back to your planned structure or storyboard to guide you.

Here are some tips to get started:

- Cut out sections of usable content and add it to a separate timeline within your project – now you have the pieces of the puzzle in one place you can figure out how to put them together.
- Remove background noise.
- For podcasts, you can be a bit more drastic about cutting conversations. Remove ‘um’s and other unnecessary speech and if you need a pause, cut silence from another section and paste it in. Use ‘cross-fade’ to blend where you have cut or edited to create a softer flow.
- For video, it’s more difficult to cut conversation as viewers will notice the jump. For sections you really need to cut, consider using footage without audio (B-roll) over your main footage to ‘hide’ your editing. For example, if you would like to edit an interview with a teacher, you could show some visual footage of their classroom as you play the edited audio of them speaking.
- Use copyright-free music, sound effects and stock footage for higher production value.
- Export to the desired format (depending on hosting platform).

There is lots of guidance available online for using specific editing software, from help with specific questions to fuller tutorials. Learn techniques as you go and practice applying your new knowledge.

6 | Publish and promote your content

For platforms to publish to, we recommend [SoundCloud](#) for audio or [YouTube](#) for video. Imperial has its own accounts for these which you may be able to use. You can also set up your own blog via [Wordpress](#) and publish it there. However, you need to ensure that your content will be found. To promote your channel:

- Use keywords in the title and descriptions to make it searchable
- Share through social media and get your friends and peers to share it
- Invest in social media advertising
- Collaborate with others such as popular podcasters, bloggers or communicators
- Use [Google trends](#) to find out what's topical right now and build an episode around it
- Asking your followers to rate, subscribe and comment on your content will boost its popularity and visibility
- Publish episodes regularly to ensure followers come back
- Interact with your followers, such as answering their questions or running a competition

Evaluate! Reflect on your episodes to see what's going down well and what can be improved. Even collecting a small amount of feedback can help you make your channel better. Encourage your followers to leave a review or fill in a survey at the end of each episode.

Case study: Imperial Podcast

What is it?

The College's official podcast series, communicating the great research being conducted at Imperial to the wider public. It is presented by Gareth Mitchell, who has decades of experience working with BBC radio, and put together by Hayley Dunning.

Why is it a good example?

This is a great example of how experienced presenting and interviewing can be done. Through clever questioning, Gareth keeps the listener engaged and ensures conversations are accessible to non-scientific audiences. The podcasts are created monthly and shared across multiple platforms. Each episode has a similar format comprising of sections covering different topics and interviews. Details about the topics are shared on the web pages to spark interest.



Further resources – Let us know of others!

[YouTube Creators](#)

– This channel features advice from various video creators to help you succeed on YouTube.

[Mike Russell](#)

– This channel features advice from various video creators to help you succeed on YouTube.

Imperial photographer, Thomas Angus shares his top tips for lighting –

<http://wwwf.imperial.ac.uk/blog/photography/2020/04/01/looking-better-on-video-calls/>