

10 Things You Must Know About Creating Epic Course Videos

flyplugins.com/10-things-you-must-know-about-creating-epic-video-content-for-your-course/

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If you're anything like me, you learn best visually by having an example or video which you can refer to or replay over and over. After all, repetition aids learning.

Am I right, or am I *right*?

Did you see the repetition there? Okay, *bad* joke.

However, there are times when I've taken online courses which include video content that either 1) makes me want to fall asleep or 2) fails to keep my attention, sending my mind spinning off in other directions.

I'm well aware that I may be a little ADD, but the reality is...

If your online course videos don't grab your student's attention, they *will* tune you out.

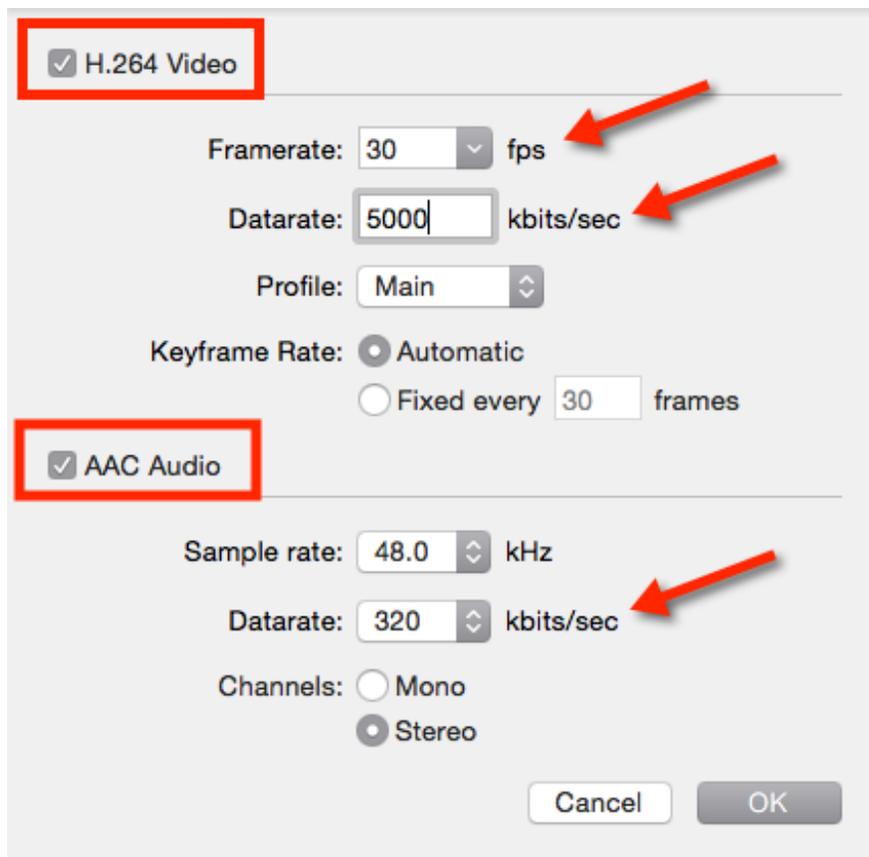
So in this article, I'd like to share 10 of my favorite tips to help improve the quality of your course videos. Unfortunately, the only thing I can't help you with is making you a more interesting teacher!

1. How to create video with good resolution and proper audio quality

Video - Video quality is important, especially when you have textual content in your video which you expect the viewer to read. There are many things we can talk about when it comes to video quality, however, I want to focus on a few important points. These are simply guidelines and you are welcome to experiment, however this is a great starting point.

Resolution - There is a lot of hype around producing HD video. The lower end of high definition resolution is 1280 pixels by 720 pixels also known as 720P. This is actually the size I use for all of our video tutorials here at Fly Plugins. Since most of our videos are tutorial type videos, it's important for the video to be clear. The higher resolution you use, the larger your video file size will be which can have an effect on play back. For 1080P you will want to use a 1920 pixel by 1080 pixel resolution.

H.264 Encoding - This is also known as MPEG-4 AVC encoding. It's the most common method used for video compression and we highly recommend it. There are other encoding methods, however, H.264 is compatible with all mainstream browsers like Chrome, FireFox, IE, and Safari (including mobile browsers for iOS and Android). For example, WEBM is compressed with a different video codec, but does not play in all browsers hence we don't recommend using it.



Video Variable Bitrate - Since your video file is composed of bits and bytes, the bit rate is simply the rate of bits processed in a unit of time, typically in seconds. Since I use 720P for my resolution, I will export with a bitrate of anywhere between 2,500 and 5,000. When doing a video tutorial with a screen capture, I will use the lower rate and the higher rate if I include regular type video. This setting is probably one of the most important settings. If you set the bitrate too high, your video file size will not only be huge, but the video may not play very

smooth across the internet because of the amount of data being transferred will be unsustainable.

FPS or Frames per second - This is the amount of images that the recording imaging device or software program will display consecutive images called picture frames. If you are using an external camera and you are going to import the video to an application like ScreenFlow or Camtasia, I recommend using 30FPS. When exporting your video, you can use anywhere from 24FPS to 30FPS. My rule of thumb is, if I am only doing a screen capture, then I will use 24FPS, but if I include myself in the video, I will use 30FPS. The higher the FPS, the larger your video size will be.

Audio - When talking about audio, you really want to ensure that you have clear audio. It's really worth purchasing a good quality USB mic like a [Blue Snowball](#) or [Yeti](#) or even better a full blown mic / mixer setup would be best. When it comes to sound quality, you don't want to fall short.

ACC compression for audio - ACC or Advanced Audio Coding compresses audio at a similar bit rate to MP3, but has better quality and is the preferred compression for the audio on your video.

Audio Bitrate - We typically recommend an audio bitrate of 384 kbps which is the equivalent of "stereo".

2. Keep your videos short and sweet

It's a well known fact that we have very short attention spans. In a world full of interruptions, and busy schedules, it's important to create content in a sense where it's interesting and to the point. Most people who are looking to learn a new skill don't have time to spend watching long video clips.

Put yourself in the shoes of your potential students. Perhaps your students are people who have regular day jobs who get off work, have to pick the kids up, take the kids to tee ball practice, make dinner, do the homework thing (because homework is really for parents), and all they want to do is lay their tired head down on that nice fluffy pillow.

The last thing they want to do is flip open their laptop only to watch some monotone dude talk for 45 minutes covering the equivalent of 5 chapters from a textbook that you could have read in your spare time.

Keep your video under 10 minutes if possible and only cover 1 or 2 key, important points. At the end of the video, provide a quick summary and some actionable steps if applicable. This will make your content more palatable and your students will not only appreciate it, it will in turn be more effective for them.

[BONUS TIP] - Provide an action guide in a PDF download that helps students perform the actionable items you've spoken about in the video. You can download the templates we use in

the **Article Resources** section at the top of this guide.

3. Host your video on a fast platform



There are several places to host your video and it all depends on what you need. If you need a fast service but don't care about protecting your video content, you can use YouTube. If you want more control over the protection of your video you can use Vimeo, Amazon S3 or Wistia. Although you will pay a premium for that security. I will talk a little more about security a little later.

- **YouTube** - YouTube is free and you can upload a video with a time length up to 15 minutes. It's possible to increase the time limit with YouTube ([click here for details](#)).
- **Vimeo** - With Vimeo Basic you get an upload limit of 500MB per week and up to 25GB free per year. You can [upgrade](#) your plan if you need additional space.
- **Amazon S3** - AWS S3 is super cheap! Currently it costs \$0.03 per GB up to 1TB then pricing goes up a little bit. Check out the pricing details [here](#).
- **Wistia** - You can host up to 5 free videos with Wistia Branding and then you'll have to upgrade to host additional videos without the Wistia branding. Pricing details can be found [here](#).

4. Best practices for embedding your video

In WordPress there are multiple ways to embed video. Just as a side note, the video player that is native to WordPress is [MediaElements.js](#), which is the best HTML5 video player with Flash "fall forward".

If you are embedding YouTube, Vimeo, or any MP4 file, you can simply place the URL into a page or post and the editor will automatically embed the video. However, if you want more control over the video frame size you will need to use the embed shortcode...

For more info on the embed shortcode, checkout the WordPress codex on [embeds](#).

For YouTube and Vimeo, you can also use the embed code snippet that's provided in the "share" section of the video.

For video hosted on Amazon S3 or any other cloud storage platform, you can use the video shortcode...

```
[video src="http://domain.com/videos/video.mp4" ]
```

For more info on the video shortcode as well as other parameters you can use, checkout the

[WordPress codex](#).

For Wistia videos, you will need a special embed code from Wistia.

5. Use fluid video size

Fluid video or responsive video is a highly sought after feature. Most themes today have taken into consideration the desire for responsive video and have implemented a CSS solution.

However, some themes simply haven't followed suit. Without getting to technical with CSS, here is a great [reference guide](#) from W3Schools on using CSS to make your video responsive in case your theme doesn't have responsive video capability.

6. Use good video screen capture software

Creating a video of your computer screen while you demonstrate using software, some sort of application, or how to fix something is a great way to train people. However, to do so, you will need some software.

There are several products available that do screen capture recording, but the two best, in my humble opinion are [ScreenFlow by Telestream](#) (*Mac*) and [Camtasia by TechSmith](#) (*Windows*).



ScreenFlow



Camtasia Studio®

I actually use ScreenFlow (*I'm a Mac guy*) to edit regular video that I shoot with my Canon T3i which works really well.

[BONUS TIP] - One thing that you can do as well is record your KeyNote or PowerPoint presentation. This is a great method for teaching because you can record yourself instructing as you display the slides. This is great for evergreen content.

7. Brand your videos

Part of making your video appear professional is branding your video. There are various ways to brand your video.

- Create an intro/outro for your video to display your company name and logo. You can do this by using a service like [Intro Maker](#) or [Vipid](#). Be sure to use a good high resolution logo image and make sure it doesn't clash with the video background. Some of these videos come with background music but I typically purchase music and use it for background music. Which brings me to my next point.
- Use some cool background music for your intro/outro video. [Audio Jungle](#) and [Pond5](#) are

great options for music. If you are doing an instructional video, I don't recommend using background music through the entire video. I would only recommend that if you are doing a "testimonial" based video or a sales video. Make sure the music is appropriate for your brand and not just your favorite song or genre.

- If you are using a slide deck, be sure to brand your slides with your logo, website, and social media handles. Typically I will modify the master slide in KeyNote or PowerPoint and include my logo, website, and Twitter handle.

8. Protect your video assets

There are some instances where you may want to protect your video from internet thieves. I want to make it clear that there is no method available on planet Earth to guarantee that your video will not be stolen if you make it available online. With screen capture software and recording devices available (*i.e. mobile phones*), any video can be stolen.

One of the best ways to protect your video is to simply brand your video. Why would anyone want to steal a video that has been branded by someone else. Another way you can add a security measure is to place your video behind a "membership wall" using a membership plugin like [WishList Member](#), [MemberPress](#), or [Paid Memberships Pro](#).

Aside from that, it is possible to provide some basic security methods that will help protect your video. One method for securing your video is "domain level protection". This basically means that your video can and will only play on a specified domain. Vimeo Pro/Plus and Wistia both provide this type of protection.

With YouTube, you can set videos to private, however, that simply means that you must grant individual access to the videos, however you can't embed private videos on your site. YouTube allows you to leave your video as "unlisted" which just means the video will not appear in YouTube search, however you can still embed that video on your site, but anyone can get the URL to the video and share it.

It just so happens that we at [Fly Plugins](#) have an alternative solution that will allow you to secure your videos!

[S3 Media Maestro](#) is a great solution for protecting video hosted on Amazon S3 and can play regular video from just about any video hosting solution.



Why Amazon S3? Amazon S3 is a very inexpensive method for storing any digital file including video and includes the ability to add a measure of protection with expiring URLs. S3 Media Maestro uses the AWS API to create unique, encrypted, and expiring URL's.

What does that mean?

Basically you can host your video on Amazon S3 and display it on your site with an expiring URL. If someone inspects your webpage source code and gets the URL, the URL will only function until the expiry time is up. Once the time is up the URL will never work again.

Once the page with the video is reloaded, a new unique, expiring URL is generated and your students can watch the video again. If you'd like to see it in action, feel free to check out our [video demo](#) of S3 Media Maestro.

9. Add a poster image to your video



Adding a poster image with the video shortcode is super easy. You simply need to add the "poster" parameter to the video shortcode. For example:

```
[video src="http://domain.com/videos/video.mp4"  
poster="http://domain.com/images/poster.png"]
```

With S3 Media Maestro, it's very similar, just add the "splash" parameter...

```
[s3video s3url="myvideo.mp4" splash=  
"http://domain.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/poster.png"]
```

The poster image will display on top of the video frame as soon as the page loads. As long as you are not using "autoplay", the poster image will display until the play button is clicked.

Be sure to use the space on the poster image wisely. Make sure to brand it, and make it interesting. Sometimes I will actually use a picture of myself rather than a huge logo. It just makes it more personal and people relate to people, they don't relate to logos.

[BONUS TIP] - Make your poster image the same size as your video. For example, if your video is 1280px x 720px, make your splash image the same size.

10. Practical tips for recording and editing video

Here are a few more tips I'd like to leave you with for when it comes time to actually begin recording your course content:

- Most people don't feel comfortable in front of a camera so it will take some getting used to. I've recorded people who do public speaking for a living, however, when placed in front of a camera, they experienced stage fright. The best thing to do is just do it often which will allow you to get used to it. It will eventually become more comfortable.
- Be prepared before hitting "record". If you are doing a presentation with KeyNote or PowerPoint, be sure to have some notes handy so that you don't freeze or get a "brain fart" in the middle of your presentation. Sometimes doing a dry run prior to actually recording really helps.
- Don't worry about editing out every single "mess up". Sometimes it's a breath of fresh air to see things raw. For example if you pronounce a word incorrectly, and you caught it and corrected it immediately on the video without making a big deal, I would suggest leaving it in the video.
- Don't edit out every deep breath or mouse click sound because it will take too much time to get it perfect. I used to have this terrible habit of smacking my lips while speaking on video and it would sound annoying to me when I would watch my recording. Then I would edit my audio to remove every lip smack and a 10 minute video would take me over an hour to edit. I got to the point where I would edit out a few of the loud lip smacks, but would leave a few in the video. As you record more video you will learn to speak more clear and be conscious of what you are saying.
- Practice makes perfect! Yes, I know that is "so cliché", but the more you engage in video presentations the better you will become and the easier it will get.