HOW TO CREATE SCREENCASTS
A GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

Professor Ursula Weigold
University of Wisconsin Law School

THE CONCEPT

Screen-casting is a user-friendly, low-cost tool that allows a professor to create short videos with only a webcam and mic and to display whatever is on the computer screen. Thus, for example, the professor could begin a screencast with a short introductory lecture, then display and narrate a Word document, PowerPoint, or webpage on a legal research and writing topic. Screencasts can supplement traditional reading assignments and provide a more personalized, engaging overview of a topic than a reading assignment alone

Because screen-casting requires only a computer and a webcam, professors can experiment with video recording in a comfortable low-stress setting at their own convenience.

PLANNING YOUR SCREENCAST

Outline your talking points, rather than scripting them in detail.

Screen-casting lends itself to informal, conversational videos, rather than formal scripted speeches. It is a way to personalize instruction outside of class. Speak about the topic as you might during an office conference with a student, rather than rehearsing a formal, scripted presentation.

Review the outline a few times before recording to gather your thoughts and review the points you want to cover. You will be able to pause the recording—or re-record—if you are not happy with the result.

Decide where to add visuals during your screencast.

Look for places in your outline where visuals could add substance and interest to your points. The advantage of screen casting is that you are not limited to presenting one long lecture to cover your points. Including other visuals adds interest for the viewer.

Then consider which visuals would work best (e.g., a Word document, a PowerPoint slide, a video, a webpage, etc.). Note the timing and your choices for visuals on your outline.

Create or find your visuals.

For example, you could create a few PowerPoint slides to add structure and summarize key ideas. Find suitable web pages to display (e.g., a Westlaw or Lexis search page), or create graphics (e.g., text, charts, graphics) yourself.

Because the screen-casting tool records what is happening on your computer screen, you can highlight information or manipulate text in a Word document to illustrate legal writing principles.

Open separate windows on your computer for each of your visual aids, and have them ready to display when you record.

Close all other programs and windows to unclutter your computer screen. For example, if you have only one Word document open, it will be quicker to access from the task bar than pausing to choose the relevant document among several you have open.

Practice recording, to get used to the screen-casting tool and to adjust the images and narration.

Using the instructions below, or after watching the tutorials on the website, practice recording a sample screencast several times if you are new to webcam recording.

To personalize the instruction, look straight into the webcam when you are addressing students, rather than only at the computer screen. Decide whether you are comfortable with a full screen shot of yourself speaking at times, or whether you prefer the smaller image of yourself in the lower corner of the video screen, for example when you narrate another visual you display. Having at least a small image of yourself on screen may give students a better sense that their professor is guiding them through the materials.

Notice your own verbal habits. Avoid ums and uhs. Pausing briefly between sentences is also important, both for clear pacing and to make editing or closed captioning easier in the final video.

Also practice pausing the video and then resuming the recording to make the transitions between segments smoother. An easy technique is to glance down right before you pause. Right before you resume, glance down again, resume recording, and then glance up to the webcam to continue.

RECORDING YOUR SCREENCAST

Go to www.screencastomatic.com

Click **Launch Recorder**.

Wait for the **Record** pop-up box. Several options appear in the box.

       Choose **Screen** (only), **Webcam**, or **Both**.

              Click **Both** if you want to include video of yourself talking into the camera to students at times, as well as capturing whatever is displayed on your computer screen.

              Be sure your webcam is working. A small preview image will appear on the right side of the computer screen, showing what will appear in the screencast (e.g., your video image, if your initial setting is a full-screen webcam image).

       Click **Narration** to choose and check your webcam's microphone.

       Choose **Fullscreen** to record everything on the computer screen.

              Webcam image size: Click on the video image and choose the size of your own video image among the small boxes at the bottom left of the image (full screen, partial screen, or no image—narration only.)

       Click **Record**. Large numbers will appear on screen, counting down three seconds before recording begins.

       Pausing the recording: Click the red pause button in the lower left corner of the recording controller to pause the screencast. To continue, hit the red **Rec** button on the controller.

When finished with your screencast, click the pause icon again, then click **Done**.

A box with publishing options will appear. Add a **Title** to your screencast before saving or uploading.

Decide whether to save your screencast as a video file on your computer, upload to www.screencastomatic.com, or upload to YouTube.

       Your choice may be affected by the large size of the video file or other considerations. I chose YouTube because uploading was simple, closed captioning was automatic, and videos were easy for students to access.

PUBLISHING YOUR SCREENCAST

If you don't have a YouTube account, create one, then upload the video, change the title, and designate the video as Private first, if desired.

Click Publish. (The screencast takes a few minutes to upload. You'll get a confirmation when your video is available. Closed captioning takes a few minutes as well.)

CAPTIONING YOUR SCREENCAST

YouTube will add automatic subtitles. You can later check those and edit if needed.

To edit subtitles, log into your YouTube account. Click your account icon, and go to **Creator Studio**. This will list your videos.

Click on your screencast, click **Edit**, then **Subtitles/CC**.

To the right, click the link that says **English (Automatic)**. That will bring up the automatic caption text. At the top of the screen, click **Edit** again, and it will allow you to change the text and timing of the captions.

Click "**Save changes**." You should then get a message saying your subtitles are published.

SHARING YOUR SCREENCAST

Once your screencast is complete, simply change its setting to **Public** or **Unlisted** (anyone with a link), then share the link with your students.