

These notes are from Cllr Andrew Hensman, Braintree District Council, who has kindly shared his own personal experiences of using video for social media. If you find his experience helpful and I would like to find out more please contact him for help outside of his Council role at [AndrewH@thearcher.org.uk](mailto:AndrewH@thearcher.org.uk)

“Take from these what you think is appropriate and then feel free to share them; the crib sheet is also – see web link separately.

When battery powered, I use Duet as an app, which must be running simultaneously on both the laptop and the iPad. Very little kit is then needed in the field. Of course, being an iPad, it works on Mac, too. Connecting the iPad to a USB port and it makes the iPad become a second screen for the PC (again, the app must be running on both for it to work). Autocue then runs on the iPad reflected in the glass. Use 4:3 format rather than 16:9 for scripts so the eyes don't move too far as it's obvious when you are reading close-up if there are a lot of words spaced out. Cue cards beside the camera also didn't work when close as you were looking at them, and were thus not square-on to the camera. My early videos show this very badly! Autocue is now giving away its QStart version for free and is identical with the output of a QBox, just slimmed down. QMaster only comes with a QBox so you pay well into four figures if you go down that route. With the QBox I have a separate tiny screen (the same size as an iPad) as it outputs composite video. Another screen is useful to show the actual output so that the presenter can see what they look like. QMaster allows news feeds and live editing, among other things and outputs to multiple screens if in a studio setting so that the presenter can change when a wide shot with a guest, for example. Facing the sun to give full light, was great for appearance, but also meant that the presenter was unable to see the screen, being blinded. I compromised with location by placing her slightly side on.

Different formats also exist, 1080 is either 50i or 25p. You either get 50 half frames, which are then "interlaced" as the old-fashioned TVs used to do it, or 25 full frames, which are "progressive" scan, frame by frame. This is important for editing as the very first frame of 50i has just alternate stripes because there's no previous frame to interlace with. Sometimes on a change of scene, the interlace can also show with half of the last frame from the previous scene with the other half from the first frame of the next scene. Once running, the changes are not noticeable, your eyes are fooled into seeing a moving image once the frame rate reaches over about 12 frames per second. Each format has its place, 25p for a movie feel and 50i (preferred) is more natural. Sony explains it here:

<https://www.sony.com.sg/electronics/support/articles/S500022049>

For editing, Final Cut is probably the best on Mac but, as I'm on PC, I use Vegas Pro 18: find it at [magix.com](http://magix.com) (they bought it off Sony). Magix has a Black Friday sale on and if you also go through Top Cashback you get even more off (20% if I remember correctly). It made it incredibly cheap and the one-off joining fee for Top Cashback becomes trivial.

I have a saying that "graphics is greedy" so the better the machine you use it on, the more it'll do. I got a gaming machine and it only just handles it as, even being an i9 with 32GB RAM, it isn't enough for full functionality. The equivalent Mac would have cost me far more, as the one I have is getting on a bit. Maybe one day! Graphics also take up storage, so something to consider is external storage if you're going to keep your library of unedited shots and various versions of the completed project. They may also prove useful for another project later. Services like Dropbox are also useful for storage and that has been my go-to for transferring between commissioners and the production company. Social media platforms change the format, which is usually degraded when they do. Again, I ran out of space so had to upgrade because just a few seconds of videos are surprisingly large to fit into the free plan.

Another useful addition is an HDMI input port. That way I can connect the camera directly to the PC, far better quality than a webcam. I use Cam Link 4K from Elgato, which also needs a USB 3 port due to the data transfer rates required. To check if you have one, USB 3 ports are coloured blue inside the connector (both plug and socket). I've also since migrated to a camera with SD cards rather than just tape. The format also changed from DVCam to AVCHD and is far superior. If the PC/Mac has an SD card slot built in, so much the better. Both my older Mac and PC do but not the newer editing machine. Otherwise, you need to buy a USB reader (I pull mine across my network as a mapped drive).

Why the steep learning curve for me? I also got some commissions from our Council because the professional company they use couldn't come in due to social distancing. They provided the crib sheet to tell me what they wanted. Up to you how you plagiarise it or ask permission/rewrite it as it's common sense. I'm sure they'll be pleased to let us use it. I then did the shots instead and sent them the rushes. My kit therefore improved as time went on. Here is one video complete, for which I did the whole lot:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtWgRISZwOo>

When I first sent it in, I hadn't considered accessibility (shame on me as I'm an Autism champion), but the request for subtitling therefore got me learning how to do these, and fast, as this video was time sensitive for the 11th November.

Subtitling, therefore, I found SRT (SubRip text) was the easiest and, although I included them in my finished video, they are also accepted by social media platforms where they are not burnt into the video, but appear when Closed Captions (CC) are selected instead. Guides are available for general subtitling techniques and best practices, here are two from Channel 4 and one from the BBC, plus a link to the BBC Academy (where many further guides for other subjects can also be found):

[https://www.channel4.com/media/documents/corporate/foi-docs/SG\\_FLP.pdf](https://www.channel4.com/media/documents/corporate/foi-docs/SG_FLP.pdf)

<https://www.channel4.com/media/documents/commissioning/PROGRAMME%20MANAGEMENT/ForeignLanguageSubtitlingGuidelines.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy-guides/how-do-i-create-subtitles>

The main takeaway is no more than about 34 characters per line (less if lots of wide letters such as Ms or Ws are used) and, depending on position, there must be minimal eye movement when going to the next one. Words must only appear when the person is saying them, actual words must be identical with what's said, as some people lip read and use the subtitles to reinforce what they've picked up. Once the person has stopped, subtitles must not linger. They stop, too. Effectively, they follow the audio as closely as possible, warts an' all, where the presenter stumbles/makes an error/starts again to correct themselves. Subtitle users feel cheated or an after-thought when this isn't done. They feel far more included where the time and effort has been spent to ensure they, too, get the maximum experience.

SRT files are fussy and there are many suggestions as to how they are made. The BBC shows the correct format:

```
1
10:02:07,169 --> 10:02:10,010
My Lords Norfolk and Suffolk.

2
10:02:10,187 --> 10:02:11,900
Cardinal Wolsey.

3
10:02:11,287 --> 10:02:14,005
You're dismissed as Lord Chancellor,
```

Unique, incrementing slide number  
Time on --> Time off  
Text to display

The example above uses real time, whereas importing an SRT into a video would use time elapsed, and would be written on the fly in a plain text editor (remembering to save it with a .srt file extension). Note the point at which you want the subtitle to appear at by stepping through frame by frame, and the time you want it to disappear. They form the two times (first and last frame in which the subtitle is INCLUDED). The next subtitle must be a frame later, or it may create a merge effect. Thousandths must be in three figures, including any trailing zeros. It should be noted that the thousandths of a second are separated by a comma because the SRT format was developed in France where decimal points are commas and thousands are separated by full stops. My editing software shows frame numbers which need to be converted so, at 25 frames per second, each frame is 0.04 seconds giving frame zero starting at 000, frame 1 is at 040 and frame 24 is at 960. It's 25 frames because one second consists of frames 1 to 24 plus zero at the beginning, numbered 0 to 24. It's an easy trap to fall into, the first frame is 0, the twenty-fifth frame is 24.

Developing subtitles further, from your presentation, I could see the Dumfries & Galloway slide had their logo in the bottom right. You'll see from mine that I created a watermark in the top left (it's actually a permanent transparent subtitle). I also

grabbed the poppy from the title slide, and made a picture with a transparent background from that... using PowerPoint. There are many hidden tools in there for graphics that are very useful and not many people know about them. Here's Microsoft's guide how to do it:

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-a-picture-transparent-ce96ac80-5afc-436c-ae3f-0c78009bf704>

The method I used was under "Make part of a picture transparent" ie the background. One thing to note is the options shown may not appear when the menu is dropped down depending on your screen setup. They really are there, though, because what's not obvious is the menu itself has a scroll bar and you need to pull down to find the additional options.

I know that's quite a lot, but I hope the above is useful to you, pull out of it what you need and share away, perhaps make some fact sheets? Perhaps guide me as to what to make, and I'll help put them together. Of course, I'm always happy to help anyone as we can all learn from each other. Hopefully we'll see you again when you come to BDC and run us a bespoke workshop. I still think it was the better option to buy all three rather than drop out after part one because you had such a range of participants which we won't get from our local area, so thank you for the discount code. By the way, I would change the access numbers to each part, which you then send as part of the reminder, so that anyone who only buys one ticket can't get into what they haven't paid for!

For help outside of my Council role, my email is [AndrewH@thearcher.org.uk](mailto:AndrewH@thearcher.org.uk)"