



# Video yourself at home

Video is a great way to engage with the public. The UK public has a huge appetite for it, with video content accounting for the majority of UK internet traffic in 2017, at 70% of data transferred ([Ofcom](#))! It's also a great opportunity to grow and develop your research communication skills in a creative way, whilst feeding the insatiably curious minds of the great general public! You don't need years of training or expensive specialised equipment to make your own videos, you can get started with simple short 'explainer' videos using your phone, tablet or laptop. Follow the instructions below to create your own video in a few hours.

For some good examples of the kind of videos we mean, follow this link:

<https://www.sciencefestival.cam.ac.uk/whats-your-one-question>

## Preparation

What do you want to say? **Write out the information you want to cover** and practice speaking it slowly and clearly, timing yourself. **For example, for 3 minutes you should have roughly 300 – 450 words.** If you have fewer than this, that's ok too! See some more tips below for writing a script:

- **Remember your audience** is the general public and other young people, write for them. Try to **avoid technical jargon**. Describe and explain things in simple, easy-to-understand terms. It may help to think of someone you know, a friend or relative, and imagine explaining it to them in a way they could easily understand. If you can contact this person, ask them to read it or if you could read it aloud to them and ask for their feedback.
- Try not to learn it off by heart word-for-word as this may come across as stilted and unnatural. Identify key points with keywords to remember to help you cover everything you want to say.

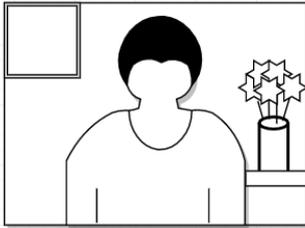
This is a skill-building opportunity – don't expect to be perfect on your first try.



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## Set!

- Find the quietest space available, ideally a fully enclosed room with a door and a window.
- Set yourself up with a chair facing the window or main source of light at a slight angle, and a table in front of you. If you will be standing, find something to mark your correct position on the floor once you have set up your camera.
- Keep the background behind you simple! Try to avoid having distracting things/people/pets/TV or computer screens and movement in the background (we know it's more difficult when working from home!)



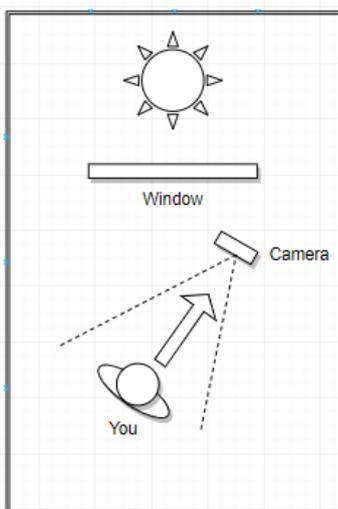
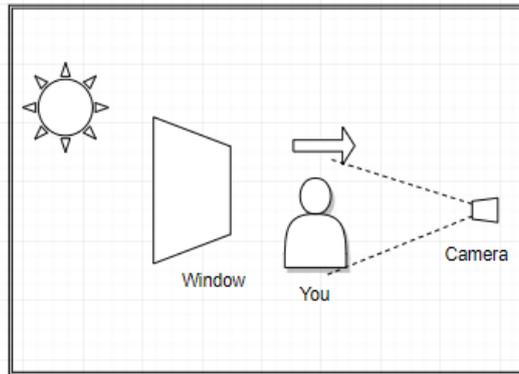
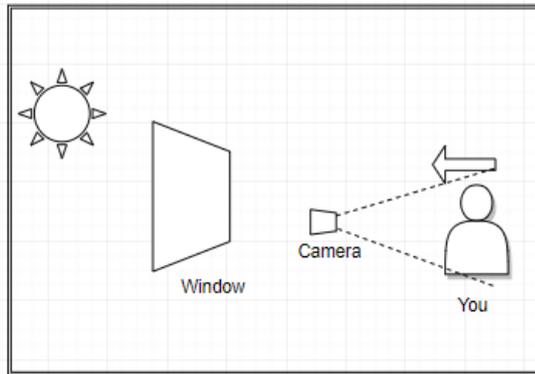
- Do you want to **demonstrate** something with objects? Ideally, sit at a table with the objects in front of you so they are within easy access, as long as they don't get between your face and the camera.



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## Lights!

- You don't need to buy any special lights for this – **natural light** is fantastic and the most flattering, so make your video during the day at a time when the light coming through your window is bright but ideally not too direct (this will cause harsh shadows).
- **Face the light!** Whether it's artificial light or a window with natural daylight, make sure you are facing it, ideally at a slight angle as in the third diagram below. If you sit with a window/light behind you, you will be silhouetted against it unless you have a brighter light source in front of you.

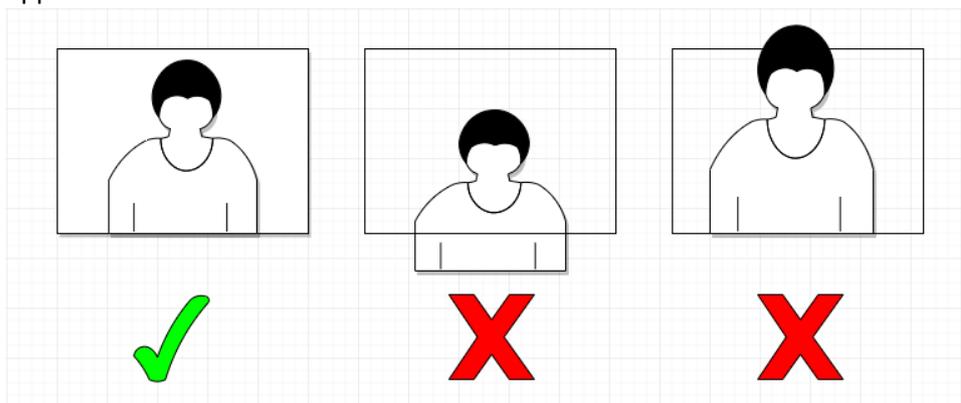




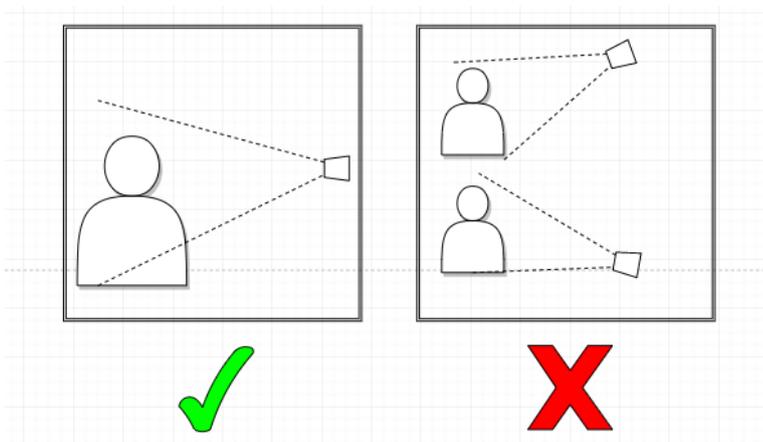
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## Camera!

- No expensive professional equipment necessary - a **smartphone, laptop, tablet** or any other **camera with a video function** will do. Use whatever you have that has the best video quality.
- Make sure your camera/phone/tablet is stable while recording – if you have someone at home who can do the recording for you, that will help. If you have a tripod, that’s great! You could use tape to attach your smartphone to it if necessary. If you don’t have a tripod for your phone, get creative and make one – some [great ideas using objects commonly found round the house at this link!](#) The simplest way can be to prop your phone/tablet against books or other heavy objects on a flat and steady surface such as a table. Just make sure you have yourself framed correctly! Stack books or other heavy and flat objects to place your camera/phone on if necessary to get it to the right height.
- Speaking of **framing** – record in **landscape mode** (phone on its side rather than upright) and make sure your head and shoulders are completely in view, **looking directly into the camera**. Ideally leave a small bit of space above your head, your eyes should not be in the middle of the frame but in the upper third.



Try to make sure the phone is roughly **level with your head** rather than below looking up (generally unflattering and can appear a bit ominous) or above looking down (can make you appear small and childlike).





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## Sound!

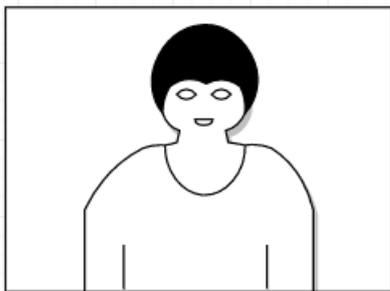
- In an ideal world, you'd record in a soundproofed studio, but a quiet room with **doors and windows shut** will do! Soft furnishings such as rugs, cushions and curtains help absorb noise and reduce echo. You can put something soft like a duvet in the room out of view of the camera if necessary to dampen down background noise and echo.
- Choose a time of day when there's less **background noise** in your house if you can, or ask if your family/partner/flatmates can stay quieter for a while to allow you to video.
- Make sure the **TV/radio is off** – not just because of noise but also because you can run into copyright issues on YouTube and Facebook. If your video contains copyrighted music that belongs to someone else, this will lead to your video being muted on these platforms!
- If you have a **microphone** that's small and unobtrusive, such as a lapel mic, great! This will help the audio quality and reduce background noise.
- If you don't have an external microphone, **speak loudly and clearly and enunciate!** Without an external microphone, your phone/tablet/laptop has to rely on its built-in microphone to record, so practice **projecting your voice** (without shouting). See a useful video on voice projection if you need help with this: <https://youtu.be/ynmemxQicQk>



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## Action!

- **Practice** what you are going to say several times before you start recording.
- **Wait a few seconds** after you press record before you start speaking, and after you finish speaking before you stop recording – this will help us with editing later! Sit still, count to five in your head or take a couple of breaths, it will also help get you off to a calm and collected start and finish.
- Remember your key points and try to **speak naturally**, as if you were talking to one person. It might help to stick some keywords up in a visible place behind the camera so you can quickly glance at them from time to time to make sure you cover everything you want to. It may also help to have someone to sit/stand behind the camera, with their eye level very close to it, so it looks as though you are looking directly into the camera lens. If alone, try to imagine the camera is a person and speak directly to it.
- **Video yourself and watch back** and see what is working and what isn't. This may feel cringey at first, but it gets easier the more you do it, we promise!
- **Record many takes.** Very few people will get it right on the first try. It's ok if you need to try it again and again. The more you do it, the more comfortable you will become. Take breaks and come back to it if you need to.
- Get an honest friend/family member to watch and give you **constructive criticism**.
- Sit/stand up straight, shoulders back and smile!
- 'What do I do with my hands? I feel awkward!' If you naturally gesticulate a lot when speaking, don't artificially stop yourself. Just be careful that you don't block your face or distract too much from your speech. Video yourself and watch it back to see how it looks. If you don't normally gesticulate much, make sure you have a table or desk in front of you to rest your hands on. Again, shoot a test video or two to see how it looks and try different things. But **DO NOT cross your arms!** This appears defensive and can make it harder for your audience to relate to you.





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## Send!

It might be possible to get it all in one take without editing required, if you stick to this simple set-up. If you have editing software and skills, that's great. If not, just send us your best take.

We hope you have a great time building your communication skills through video! We look forward to seeing what you create.

