



Biotechnology and
Biological Sciences
Research Council



Engineering and
Physical Sciences
Research Council

Lesson 2 – Background and audio

Some material modified from @learnsoton

Digital Learning – www.southampton.ac.uk/digital-learning

Collated by the Environmental Biotechnology Network: <http://www.EBNet.ac.uk>

@EBNetUK



Lesson 2 Aims

By the end of this lesson, you will have:

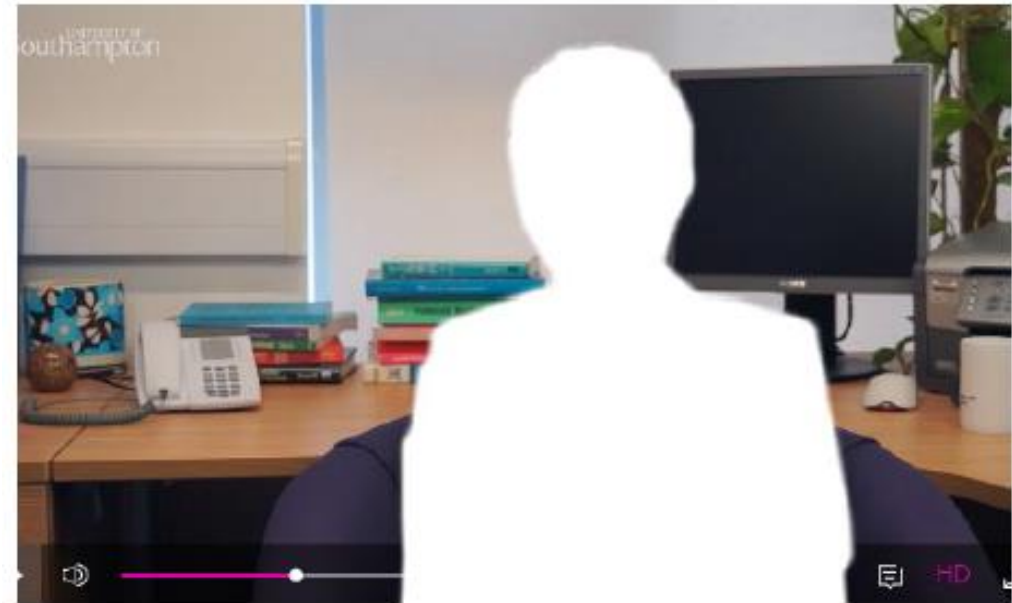
- A basic understanding of how to find a suitable location for filming
- A basic understanding of how to record the best sound with the equipment you have
- Created a video to practice finding a suitable location for filming, as well as practicing optimal use of the built-in or external microphone

NOTE: Due to the variety of phones in the marketplace, this course does not show you how to run the recording software on your particular phone



Find a suitable location

Watching the news during lockdown, we've all been trying to read people's bookshelves or wondering which artist painted that picture behind the speaker...



Photos: Digital Learning, University of Southampton

When filming, try to minimise anything that may distract from your content such as clutter and toys. This may mean going to a spare bedroom, finding a blank wall, or tidying a corner of the house. The photo on the left shows a curtain behind the presenter. Some vloggers use a pull-up screen. If you have animals, small children or other potential interruptions – LOCK THE DOOR!

OPTIONAL VIEWING: The best interview interruption ever filmed (the poor mother looks like she may have been in the loo when the children escaped): <https://t.co/QgLE8LreWq?amp=1> (0:52 minutes)



Audio – recording the best sound, too

Whilst the viewer can often live with relatively poor video, getting good audio is important. Here are some key tips:

- If you are filming with a phone or tablet, do not cover the microphone, and try to angle the mic to point roughly towards you (without affecting the picture)
- An inbuilt mic on a computer, tablet or phone mic is not great, but may be the only option you have. Earbuds are usually better. Over-the-head gaming mics provide the best sound outside of professional microphones, but may be a bit distracting if you are filming your face
- Some corded mics have better sound; but having a cord may interfere with your ability to film
- For the best sound, the microphone should be 15-30 cm away from your mouth. With inbuilt microphones, get the microphone as close as possible – which will probably be at least 30 cm in order to film yourself properly
- Re-do the video (or if possible edit out) to avoid any loud noises, squeaky chairs, background music or other audio distractions
- Speak clearly



Audio and location



For the best sound, avoid places which echo. A bedroom can be a good place to record audio, because of its soft furnishings – some BBC radio presenters actually present from under the covers, as they dampen extraneous noise (not recommended for video!)

OPTIONAL VIEWING: Top Tips for Audio (2:49), Paul from Digital Learning at the University of Southampton is showing how not to do it in the photo above but providing some great tips here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtiSiWel1NQ>



Looking your best on video

In addition to good lighting, looking directly at the camera and using a good camera angle, there are other things you can do to look your best on video:

- Minimise or eliminate touching your hair, face etc or waving your hands about excessively
- Make sure your appearance is tidy
- Try to dress appropriately for your video subject matter
- Don't wear wild, distracting patterns, wear solid colours which contrast with your background
- If sitting, lean slightly forwards, NOT backwards



Exercise 1

Experimenting with sound and location:

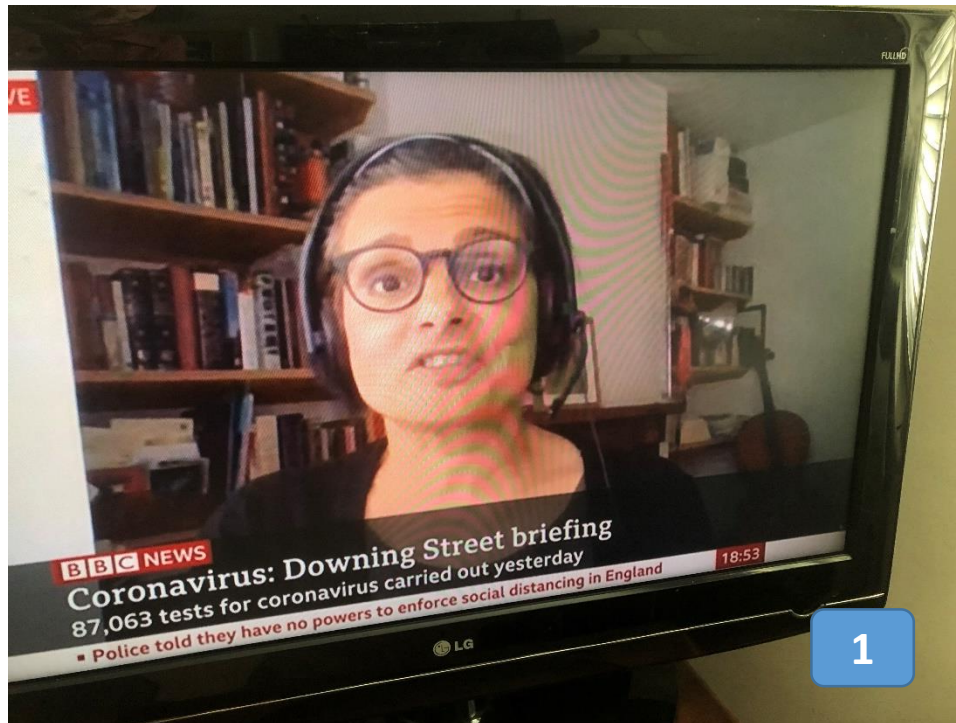
Holding your phone, shoot a short video of yourself.

Whilst speaking (again, you can say 'blah, blah', or recite a poem or some nonsense), try filming in various rooms of your house: perhaps a bedroom (on the bed and under the covers); in the sitting room; outside; on a balcony; in the loo; in the car. As you film, partially cover and uncover the microphone. Try different places in the room: the middle, a corner, standing, sitting on a chair or sofa. If you have a microphone or headphones with a built-in microphone, try these out.

Play back the video. Which locations look best (perhaps after sorting out any visual distractions)? Which sound the best? Does the sound improve by using headphones with microphone? If you have more than one pair of headphones or a separate microphone, which sounds best?

Exercise 2

Examine the photos on this page. What are the good and bad aspects of the camera angle, background and lighting? Also, note the three different types of audio microphone being used.





Exercise 2 - Discussion

- **Photo 1** – Note that she has an overhead gamers' earphones with built-in microphone which is not too distracting. No glare from her glasses. Good diffused lighting, albeit from the side. Plain clothes. Her background are bookshelves and a guitar, so interesting without being too distracting. She is looking directly into the camera
- **Photo 2** – Quite hard to see some of the detail, as the photo is taken from the TV. The light appears to be coming from above, however, which makes his forehead extra bright, although it is not strong light. The kiwi (and limes, out of shot) on the right hand side of the photo were slightly distracting. Note he is not wearing a headset
- **Photo 3** – Very strong light from above, which casts harsh shadows, so the viewer just sees a nose and forehead. Reflection from a spotlight on left side of photo. People appear to be coming out of the side of his head, and the picture is interesting, but distracting. Note he is wearing wireless earbuds

We hope you've enjoyed this

...and any suggestions for further ECR training on this subject (or any others) are welcome and can be directed to us at:



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