

The Art of Explainer Videos

In this five-part, interactive project, you'll learn how creative professionals make their own explainer videos. Video has become an essential way for people to learn and express themselves, and the "explainer video" genre is particularly popular for people trying to teach or learn something new— whether for a class, a company, or on social media.

Use this step-by-step guide as you work through the project. After watching each video, take a look at the corresponding page in this worksheet for activities to help you stay on track.

- 1 Pick a topic**
Don't rush this step! After you've watched video 1, you'll spend time brainstorming topics you're passionate about. Use this worksheet to guide your thought process.
- 2 Research and prep**
Once you've chosen a topic, make sure to narrow your focus. You don't want to overwhelm your viewer by covering too much material! After watching video 2, use this worksheet for ways to organize your content.
- 3 Press record**
Now the fun part! After you watch video 3, go ahead and press record. Then, use this worksheet to guide you through the visual and audio editing process.
- 4 Review feedback**
Feedback is a gift. After you make a first draft of your video, you'll watch video 4 and use this worksheet to ask friends and family for suggestions on your work.
- 5 Share your video!**
Time to share your video with the world! Who will learn something new from you?

Don't forget!

Remember to check the video editing tools document and production checklist at the end for additional guidance on how to create quality video projects.



The Art of Explainer Videos

Step 1: Pick a topic

Brainstorm a topic or list of topics that you're excited about explaining to others. Think about topics that you might have a unique perspective on or an intuition about.

1
2
3
4
5

Research a few other explainer videos on YouTube that cover those topics. After you watch the videos, think about specific moments where you felt most engaged in the video and write them down in the "What I liked" column. Think about moments where you felt confused or distracted and write them in the "What I'd change" column.

What I liked	What I'd change
1	
2	
3	

Now, apply this to your own project.

My topic is _____.

Like other videos, I want mine to _____,

but to make it different I'll _____.



The Art of Explainer Videos

Step 2: Research and prep

Narrow your topic so it has a specific focus and will be exciting to a specific audience. Remember, you're trying to explain your topic in just 1-3 minutes.

Below you will describe your topic in one sentence. Before you write your sentence, consider:

- What do you want people to learn?
- Who is your intended audience? Who should be watching your video?
- What will make this video different from the rest?

Now, follow this format when writing down the main idea of your video:

I'm going to make a video about (topic) for (target audience) to learn (purpose).

For example: "I'm going to make a video about fireworks for high schoolers to learn how the different shapes are created in the sky."

I'm going to make a video about _____ for _____
to learn _____

Prepare.

- Will you create an outline of what you want to cover, or are you more comfortable writing out a complete script? What about drawing a storyboard and using it as a visual outline like Hillary did?
- How can examples or analogies be used to help to explain a difficult concept?
- How might the details of an image help to support or detract from the point you are trying to make?
- Do images need to be literal to make a point?

Consider how you're going to capture your audience's attention in the beginning. Some common hooks include:

- Asking a question
- Listing a surprising fact
- Describing a hypothetical situation
- Presenting a problem your video will solve
- Telling a story



The Art of Explainer Videos

Step 3: Press record

Before recording

Make a list of the equipment and materials you need. Although audio isn't necessary, keep in mind that if you choose to include it, then it should be clear and easily heard! That's right — crisp audio is important!

1
2
3
4
5

Use this [document](#) to determine what other video editing tools you may want to explore. You can also find a list of tutorials [here](#).

Like Sal said, now go for it and record your material! Try it a few times until you feel comfortable, and remember to let your enthusiasm shine through.

After recording

After you record your video, it's time for editing. Here are a few questions to ask yourself as you go through the editing process:

- Are any parts of your narration off-topic? If so, cut them.
- How can you layer visuals to supplement your audio? Will you use graphs? Models? Video footage?
- Are there key words you can use in callouts?
- Did you remember to add a title to the beginning of your video?



Production checklist

Refer to the list below for tips on how to create your best video:

Location

- Find a quiet space where you can set up your scene and shots. Try to avoid the outdoors where you can pick up sounds such as birds, cars, or wind.

Background

- Keep your background simple and relevant to your subject.
- Avoid having strong lights or bright colors that can distract viewers.

Lighting

- When shooting video indoors, try all available sources of light. Sitting in front of a window is an easy way to get natural light.
- Ideally, you want even lighting on your face. If there are strong shadows, try filling them in with a second or third light, or use a white board or sheet to reflect light back into the scene.

Staging

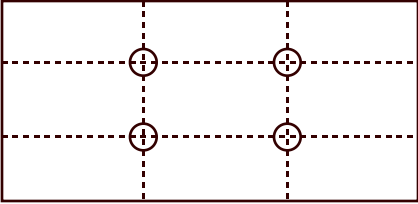
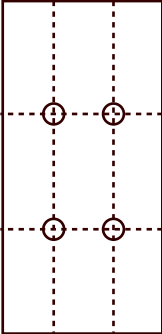
- Set up your scene or environment so you either sit or stand in front of the camera. Take into consideration the location of furniture and props.

Outline or script

- Will you read from a script or an outline? Do you feel knowledgeable enough to wing it? Either way, have a printed outline or script available for reference.

Framing

- Use the rule of thirds to decide where to put important things in your frame and keep things balanced. For example:

If you're shooting for YouTube, position the camera horizontally.	If you want to post on TikTok, position the camera vertically.
	

Production checklist













cont.



Equipment

- There's no need to go out and spend money on gear. Both Sal and Temi simply record their screens. You can keep it simple and work with your cell phone.

Audio

- When you hit Record, your camera will capture both video and audio to the same file. If the audio isn't loud enough, you might want to use a secondary device to record audio closer to the source.
- With a second audio file, it's important to make a clap sound at the beginning of your take. When you import your original video and the secondary audio file into an editor, the spike in sound will be easy to see and you can match them up to replace the original audio with the better-quality audio file from the secondary source.

Video	
Input	Editor
 Phone	 Adobe Spark
 Tablets	 Rush
 Images	 Photoshop
 Screen Recording	 Premiere Pro
 Vector Graphics	 Illustrator
 DSLR/Motion	 After Effects

Audio	
Input	Process
 Phone or tablet	Record synchronized sound that is captured by the device. Pros: It's really easy! Cons: Make sure to stay close to the device
 External Mic	Connect the external microphone or headphones to your camera. Because the audio is being recorded on a secondary source, you'll have to sync them during the editing process.



The Art of Explainer Videos

Step 4: Review feedback

You're almost to the finish line! Share your work-in-progress video with a few trusted friends and family and ask them for feedback. Make sure to ask them for specific and actionable suggestions.

A good starting point for feedback might be:

- What worked well? What didn't?
- Was there any part that was confusing?
- Did the hook grab your attention?

Feedback	Suggestion
1 1:30-1:37 you drag this out a little more than it needs to go	Shorten the length of the narration by adding a visual that shows the idea
2	
3	
4	
5	

Afterwards, consider:

- What bits of advice were most meaningful to you?
- Do you plan on following all the suggestions?
- Did any of the feedback inspire you to look at part of your video differently?

Step 5: Share!
Now celebrate your video with the world!

