

CREATING GREAT SOFTWARE TUTORIALS

Make your own multimedia learning materials

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE WRITTEN TUTORIALS

What makes an easy-to-follow written tutorial?

Clear instructions

- Plan your content
- Decide whether the instructions will be project-specific, or more generic in nature
- Run through the steps and write them down in order
- Reassure the reader by explaining expected behaviour
- Use minimal text. What can you leave out?
- There are often multiple ways to do things, but you don't need to explain all methods all the time. Choose one method only
- Use bold sparingly to highlight specific instructions like shortcuts, or other actions
- Include great images. Visuals make a tutorial easy to follow and attractive to look at



Good layout

- Start with a brief sentence to describe what you're going to do
- Use point form or numbers for the step-by-step instructions
- Use some white space – don't squish everything up!

IMAGES: SCREENSHOTS

Screencapture software allows you to take a photo of your screen, or part of your screen. You can then use the image in a written tutorial, or in a video tutorial.

There are free options for screencapture, but if you're going to be creating tutorials frequently it's well worth purchasing one of the professional programs.

Tips for images

- Think about which images you should include in your tutorial
- You can take screenshots of windows, sections of documents or menus
- Only capture the part of the screen you need – it will be clearer (and bigger)
- Add arrows or boxes to highlight the part of the image you're referring to
- Save your images in a single project folder so they're easy to find (or in a photo management program such as iPhoto)

SCREENCAPTURE SOFTWARE

Free

- Jing – best free option (Mac and PC) <http://www.techsmith.com/jing/>
- Mac inbuilt option http://guides.macrumors.com/Taking_Screenshots_in_Mac_OS_X
- PC inbuilt option <http://graphicssoft.about.com/cs/general/ht/winscreenshot.htm>

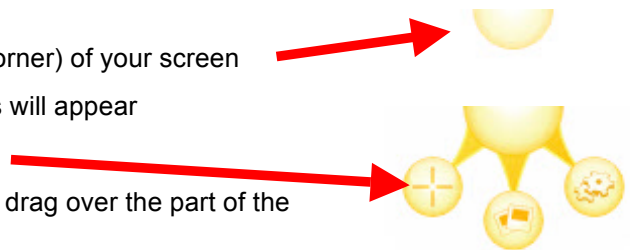
Paid

- SnagIt (the one I use). Excellent features including image editing, effects (torn edges, transparency, annotations, image editing), mouse capture, capture of menus and sub-menus and much more.

IMAGE CAPTURE IN JING

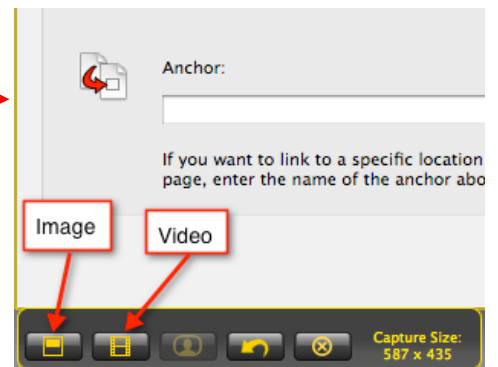
Select the Region

- Download and install Jing
- Look for the little sun at the top (or top right corner) of your screen
- Hover your mouse over the sun and 3 options will appear
- Click on the **Capture** option (on the left)
- Cross-hairs will appear and you can click and drag over the part of the screen you need
- Let go when you're happy with your selection



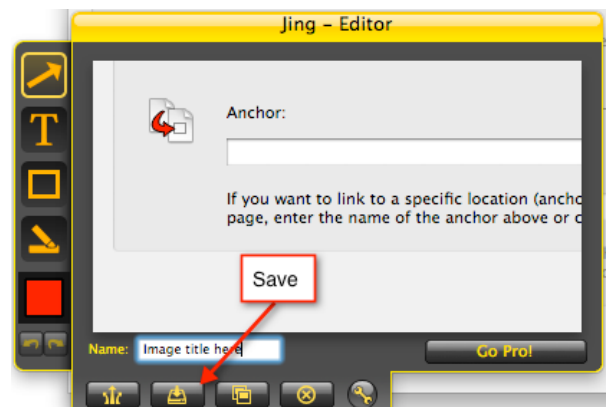
Choose Image or Video

- When you let go, you'll see your capture like this
- Now you'll need to choose whether you want to create a still image, or a video
- Click on the **Image** button on the left



Name and Annotate Your Image

- Title your image in the white Name box
- Add annotations using the buttons on the left
- Click on the **Save** button
- Select a location for your image (it's a good idea to set up a folder for all images related to one project)
- Click **Save**



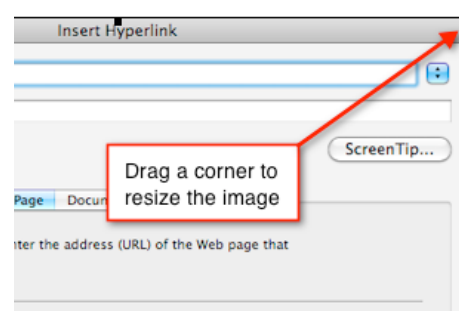
ADDING YOUR IMAGE TO A WORD DOCUMENT

Insert Your Image Into Your Written Tutorial

- Open your tutorial document
- Position your cursor where you want the image to appear (or at least nearby)
- Go to **Insert > Picture > From file**
- Navigate to the image you created
- Click **Insert**
- The image will appear in your Word document

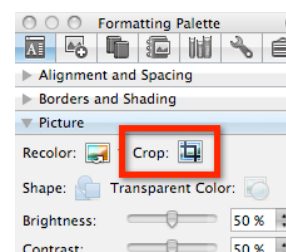
Resizing Image in Word

- Click on the image to select it
- Resize the image by dragging one of the corners in/out (dragging from a corner will avoid distortion)



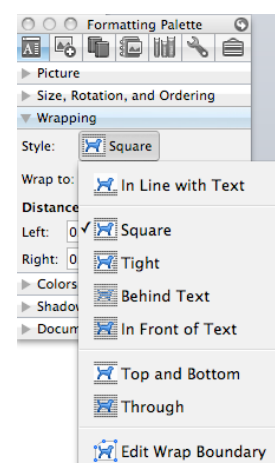
Crop The Image

- Click on the image to select it
- On the **Formatting Palette**, click on the **Picture** tab and then select the **Crop** tool (or go to **Format > Picture**)
- Click on the edge of the image and drag the mouse inwards to crop it



Position An Image Anywhere on the Page

- Click on the image
- On the **Formatting Palette**, click on **Wrapping** and then choose one of the options next to **Style**:
 - In line with text - image appears between 2 paragraphs
 - Square – image moves freely around in document. Text wraps the image with a square border
 - Tight - image moves freely around in document. Text wraps image and conforms to image shape



SCREENCASTING (VIDEO)

What you need:

- Screencasting software
- Microphone
- A way to share the videos with your students



Software Options: Free

- Jing (free) – limited to 5 minutes, not viewable on iPhone (creates Flash videos) <http://www.techsmith.com/jing/>
- Screenr free, online limited to 5 minutes web-based, viewable on iPhone <http://www.screenr.com/>
- Voicethread – not a screencasting program as such, but a good straightforward way to add a voiceover to still pics <http://voicethread.com>

Software Options: Paid

- Screenflow (Mac only – the one I use) <http://www.telestream.net/screen-flow/>
- Camtasia Studio (PC only) - education discounts available, can bundle it with Snagit <http://www.techsmith.com>
- Camtasia for Mac (not the same as the Camtasia PC version) <http://www.techsmith.com>

Microphone options

- Inbuilt mic in your computer
- USB mic (\$100ish)
- A “regular” mic (ie. Shure SM58) and an audio interface

Sharing Screencasts

Videos are generally too big to email. The best option is to upload the video to a website so that students can view them at home. You may be able to upload them to your school website. Other options:

- If you use Screenr, they will already live on the internet. You’ll just need to give the URL (web address) of the video to the students
- If you use Jing, you can use their free sharing site www.screencast.com
- If you use a paid software program like Screenflow or Camtasia, you can upload the videos to video sharing sites like Youtube, Vimeo or Teachertube

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE VIDEO TUTORIALS

- Decide what sort of style video you’re going to make and how much time you have to spend on it
- BEFORE you hit record Plan, Plan, Plan (an outline or script is useful)
- You MUST include a voiceover or onscreen instructions
- Be careful with mouse movements – don’t circle objects repeatedly
- Break instructions up into short videos, rather than create one long video. 5 minutes is a long time
- Your first video may take a long time to make, but it gets quicker!

UNSCRIPTED, UNEDITED VIDEOS

If you're using one of the free screencasting tools, like Jing or Screenr this will be the type of video you'll create because they don't have editing options. Basic steps:

- Open the software program you're creating the tutorial for
- Open the screencasting software (or go to the screencasting website if you're using an online solution)
- Select the area to capture (if applicable)
- Press **record**
- Wait for the countdown and then carry out the steps of the task
- Describe the steps verbally as you do it. Don't worry too much about ums and ahs or slip-ups!
- Re-record if necessary

SCRIPTED, EDITED VIDEOS

If you're using a professional screencasting program and want to create a more professional video you'll need to take some more time to create your videos.

There are numerous approaches to making tutorial videos. Here's the way I do it:

- Write a script and practise the steps in the software program
- Record the audio in an audio editing program such as Audacity (free), leaving slight pauses between each step (this makes editing easier later on)
- Edit the audio if necessary (remove slip-ups, unwanted gaps, mistakes)
- Import the audio into your screencasting software program
- Record the screencast (the visual part)
- Edit the audio and video together so they match up
- Add effects such as call-outs, video actions and audio actions
- Add in titles and theme music

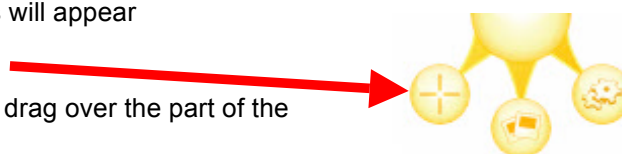
Optional Extras

- Add onscreen text to reinforce any shortcuts mentioned
- Add subtitles (captions) for the entire video. Because I upload my videos to Youtube, I use a free online subtitling program called Captiontube <http://captiontube.appspot.com/>

SCREENCASTING IN JING

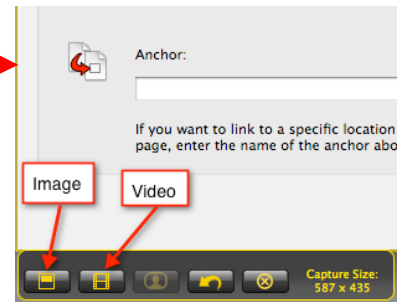
Select the Region

- Hover your mouse over the sun and 3 options will appear
- Click on the **Capture** option (on the left)
- Cross-hairs will appear and you can click and drag over the part of the screen you need
- Let go when you're happy with your selection



Choose Image or Video

- When you let go, you'll see your capture like this
- Click on the **Video** button, second from the left



Microphone

- Make sure your microphone is connected to your computer and that it's not muted in Jing

Record

- A 3 second countdown will show on your screen (get ready!)
- Perform the actions you want to demonstrate and narrate at the same time
- Click the Stop button when you've finished
- You can click on the **Play** button to view a preview



Save and/or Share

You can either save your video to your hard drive, or you can save it to a video-sharing site.

- Use the Share on Screencast button to upload your video to Jing's own video sharing site
- Use the Save button to save the video to your own computer

IDEAS FOR SCREENCASTS

- Record tutorial videos about software/websites for students ahead of classtime
- Students can record themselves doing exercises during classtime - save for revision
- Students create tutorials for one another (or for staff!)
- Mark student work verbally – record yourself speaking about student work on your screen
- Record yourself commenting on videos of student performances
- Have students record comments about each others' work
- Students can record a verbal response to photos/artwork/videos/recordings
- Record students doing work at the interactive whiteboard

LINKS

Making Effective Tutorial Videos: Behind The Scenes of a Screencast

<http://midnightmusic.com.au/index.php/2010/07/making-effective-tutorial-videos-behind-the-scenes-of-a-screencast/>

Marking student work via screencasts

<http://paulmcgovern.net/marking-via-screencasts/>

Teachers Describe Student-Created Tutorials

<http://langwitches.org/blog/2011/03/09/becoming-good-tutorial-designers>

<http://kimcofino.com/blog/2011/02/27/students-as-teachers-6th-grade-tutorial-designers>

Jing Education Blog

<http://blog.techsmith.com/edublog/>

CONTACT

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- Join the Midnight Music mailing list for tips and news: www.midnightmusic.com.au

