

Camtasia Basic Recommendations

Here are some basic recommendation for making good software videos using Camtasia Studio 8 and 9.

These recommendations might change as technologies change and improve. If you find a better way to do something please share it.

The most basic information is to keep the videos as short as possible and don't cover too much in one video. 3-7 minutes is a good target with 10 minutes a maximum.

Recording

1. Program size and recording area

We want to record and produce videos at 1920x1080, which is the current updated ratio used on Vimeo and Youtube, etc.

Set the size of the program you are going to record to 1920x1080 at the beginning. (If you change it after inputting video media you will be to resize the media.) It may be best to roughly guess this, then perfect it by measuring it using something like Jing^[1] which quickly gives you the dimensions of the window you hover over.

Set the size of your recording area to 1920x1080 or a close ratio of 4:3 and exactly select the program you are going to record. You should not have any space around the program you are recording in the resulting video. You should not have any parts of the program missing from the recording (unless this is done deliberately for some reason.)

Tip: Consistently position the program being recorded in a corner so that your Camtasia Recording area is always set to the same place. Then, before each recording you only have to make sure the program is set to that area size and is exactly in the corner.

Clean up your desktop before beginning a screencast. Hide the icon and set the background to a solid color, preferably blue.



In Camtasia Studio, the first thing added to your timeline needs to be 1920x1080 in order for the canvas size to be set to that size.

2. Mouse movements

While recording, move the mouse only when needed. Remember you will be able to add callouts (arrows and other methods of highlighting) during editing so you do not need to circle controls with the mouse.

If you need to think during a recording, you can either pause the recording or simply do not move the mouse making it much easier to cut that section later, leaving no trace.

Note: Windows 10 has a fix if your mouse moves/jumps on a click.

Editing

In Camtasia Studio, the first thing added to your timeline needs to be 1920x1080 in order for the canvas size to be set to that size.

Title Screen

We might well have a variety of Title Screens e.g. one used consistently for Paratext videos, another by Palaso team, another for SIL-only products. If we can then use them consistently that would be good.

I prefer to use a title clip for only 4 seconds - enough time to communicate the title. My slide includes the copyright and tries to use an SIL theme.

Use the Transition Fade to transition gently from the title slide to the video recording.

The title slide can be made as a static picture in a image editing program such as Paint. It should not include the title of the video - this can be added in Camtasia Studio. This way, the title slide picture can be reused in many videos without having to edit and resave the picture.

In Camtasia 8 and 9:



A Title Slide can be added after the rest of the editing process; you do not have to add it first. To do this:

- Ensure all tracks are unlocked and turned on.
- Select the first 5 seconds of the video (or the length of time you wish your title slide to be.)
- Right click and select Insert Time.
- The content on the tracks is all shifted to the right leaving a gap of the length selected at the beginning, into which you can insert your title slide.

Zoom

Zoom'n'Pan is a great feature but can be a distraction if overused. I do NOT recommend using the SmartFocus feature as it attempts to zoom in for every click. Rather, add zoom selectively when you think it will help the users see something small that you are doing or focus on a task that will last a while.

Ensure aspect ratio is maintained.

(Some tips about using zoom will be included in an advanced tips document.)

Transitions

Use Transitions to gently move between clips. I generally use Fade between related clips and between the title slide and recording. Set the default to 1 second.

You can minimize the conspicuousness of a pointer location jump by using Fade.

I sometimes use Cube Rotation when there is a more severe screen layout change and I want to transition to that in a way that is not confusing.

Audio

Though it is possible to record the video and audio at the same time, it is not recommended. It is best to record the video and audio separately. The resulting narration is quieter if recording together than if you use the Voice Narration feature in Camtasia Studio. Also, double check the microphone settings. They may change if you use different microphones and the Voice Narration feature sometimes loses the setting to my good mic. So I need to check that it is set correctly in each project before I use Voice Narration. I record Voice Narration at about 50% or less to avoid background noise.

You can even out variances in audio levels by using the Audio features and the Volume Up/Volume down

buttons.

For an introduction to editing see the videos on the Camtasia Studio website.

Multiple videos in one Project?

While it is possible to create many videos from one project using timeline Markers and the Production setting “Multiple files based on markers”, I find Camtasia works more slowly and is more prone to bugs if my project gets beyond about 15 minutes long.

Another disadvantage to having multiple (ultimate) videos in one project is that if you add captions and use the export feature, I believe you can only export one caption file, and so the timings will be wrong for all but the first video in the sequence.

For this reason, it is largely easier to keep planned videos in separate projects unless you need to use copy and paste a lot and do not plan to add captions.

Production

These are the Production settings I am currently using. Vimeo claims they are not good enough, but they match the recommendations in Vimeo.

Summary:



Details:



As you can see the production settings match the editing dimensions - which I ensure are normally 1920x1080.



^[1] <https://www.techsmith.com/jing.html>