

The Moovly Guide to Video Script Writing

Learn how to prepare the creation of your video,
how you can avoid that blocking “empty screen”
situation, and more!

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Introduction

It's decided. This project needs a video. There's no budget to involve an external agency or skilled freelancer to have this video made, but hey, today there are these great do-it-yourself video tools, so why not create this video yourself?

So there you go. You've found this pretty neat online video creation tool, you've opened it to create a new video and... there you are. Sitting in front of your screen, staring at a white video canvas, waiting for inspiration, thinking about how to get started...

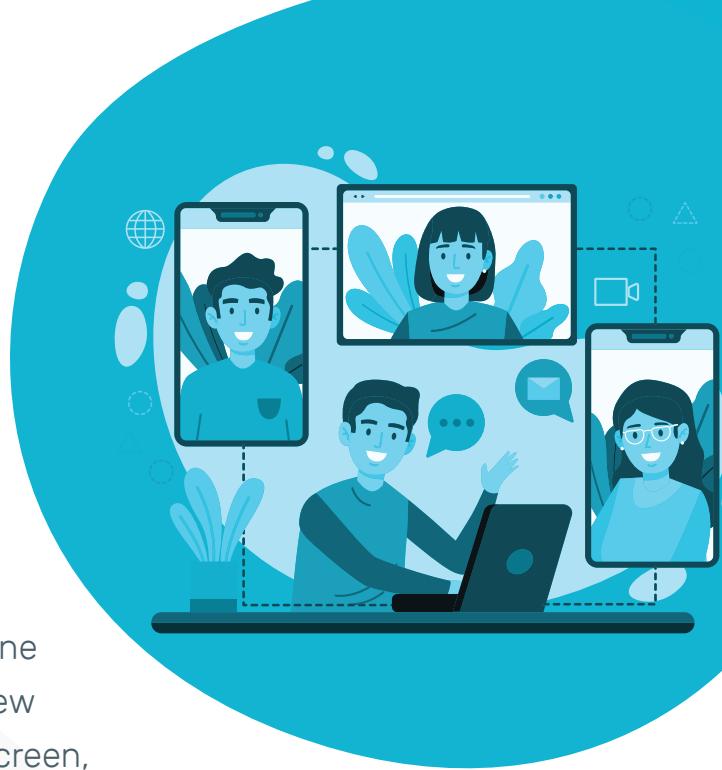
Sounds familiar? A powerful video creation application is a wonderful tool for people who already have brilliant ideas about the content, flow and style of the video they want to make.

But what if you are not there yet? What if you do need a video for your project but don't know where or how to start? What is the best way to approach this challenge?

So many people have already created videos about numerous subjects, with a large variety in objectives, target audiences and styles. It turns out that most successful video projects did not start by opening a creative tool, but with a **preparation phase**.

That's what this Guide is about: how do you prepare the creation of your video? What should you do before creating your video? How can you avoid that blocking "empty screen" situation? Or worse, how can you avoid having to redo your hard video creation work – or parts of it – because you forgot to think about certain requirements, conditions or expectations?

This document provides guidelines to help you make a successful video.



Phase 1: Analysis

*Give me six hours to chop down a tree
and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.*

— Abraham Lincoln



Preparation is key to a successful video project. Gathering information, discussing with others what the intentions and goals are of your video, identifying the boundaries of your project: all of these are essential and required before any creative steps can be taken.

Ask yourself the following questions – and make sure the answers are clear, agreed and definite before moving on to the next step.

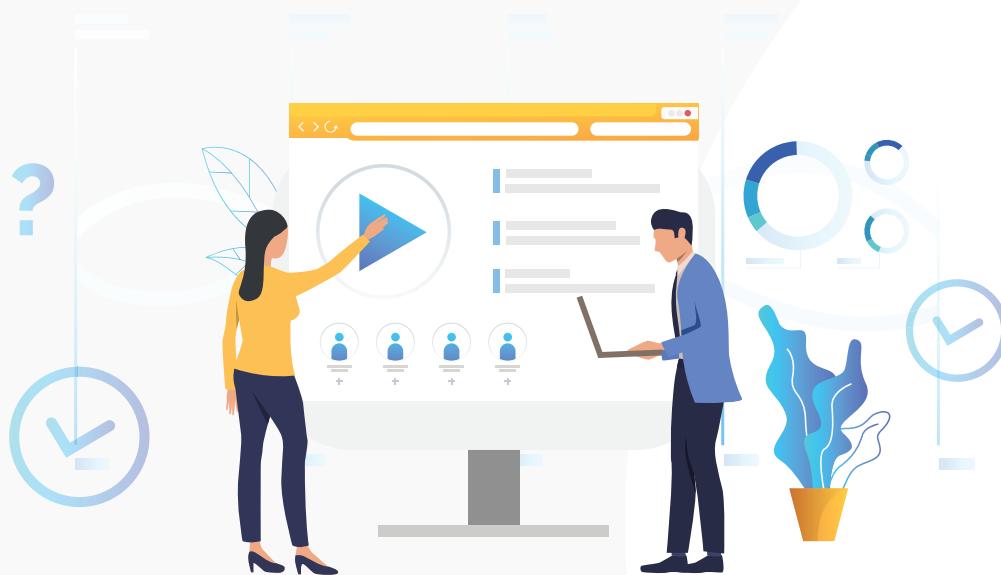
1. What are the objectives of your video?

What would you like to achieve with your video? Which goal does it have? Which problem does your video address or aim to solve?

These objectives need to be clear and free of any doubts or different opinions among the stakeholders of your video (if not, those differences will come back when they get to see your video).

Some examples of clear objectives:

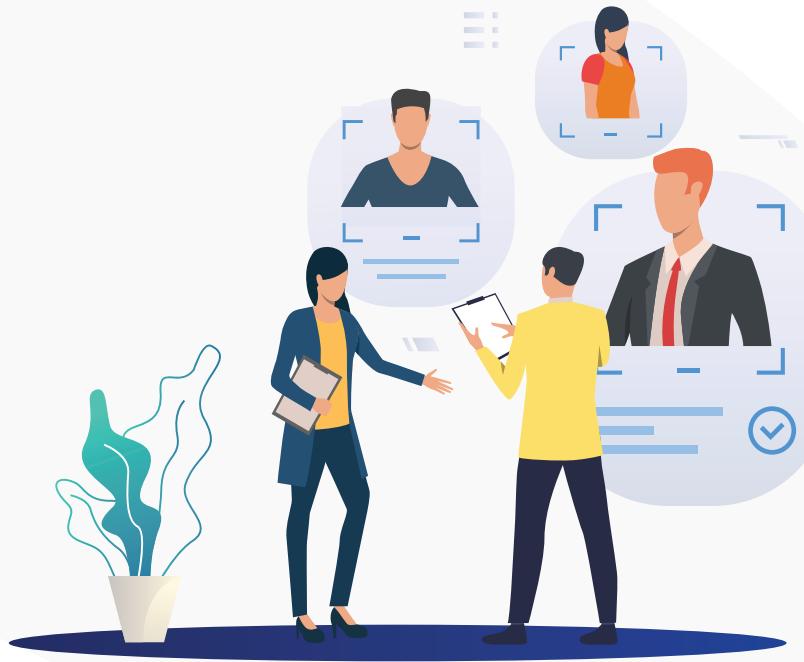
- » *The goal of our video is to reduce customer complaints about the configuration of our product by explaining it step-by-step*
- » *Our video should generate interest and promote our product by demonstrating its major features and benefits.*
- » *Our video should give our employees confidence and insight in the reasons behind our recent organization change.*



TIP: Make sure to limit the objectives of your video to keep them achievable.

2. Who is the target audience of your video?

Identifying your audience and understanding who they are – with respect to the content of your video – is very important. This question comes with many sub-questions you should take into account:



- » **Who** are the people that we want to address with this video? Employees, clients, prospects, partners, investors, the “general public”...
- » **What level** do they have? Is the subject completely new to them or do they already have some background knowledge about it?
- » **How interested** are they in the subject? Will the video be mandatory to watch (e.g. as part of an onboarding program) or optional? What is their need or expectation?

The more specific and narrow your answers to the above questions are, the higher the potential success of your video. If your audiences are very broad (different types of people, different levels, different interests), it will become very challenging to create a video that meets the expectations of all these types of viewers. In other words: try to limit your target audiences to one homogeneous group with the same level and interests. Some examples of well-identified audiences:

- » New employees joining our organization in technical departments

- » People managers dealing with yearly performance appraisals
- » Online users getting started with our product for the first time

If you attempt to broadly appeal to everyone, there's a chance you won't appeal to anyone.



Narrow your audience and focus on it. If you attempt to broadly appeal to everyone there's a chance you won't appeal to anyone.

3. Where will your video be seen?

Via which distribution channel(s) will you offer your video to your target audience? Will they find it on your intranet, your website, your Learning Management System (LMS) or YouTube? Will they see it on a large television screen, in a presentation or on a booth at an event? Will they view it on their mobile devices?

These destinations may determine how you approach the content of your video:

- » If most of your audience is able to watch your video on a computer screen while listening to its voice-over, you can achieve higher levels of attention and concentration on your content.
- » Television screens in a noisy factory, restaurant, exhibition or reception area require video content without sound and containing clearly readable text messages
- » Mobile viewers will see your video on small screens, so any text you use in your video requires a big font size

4. What style and tone should your video have?

Videos come in many different styles and tones: a serious documentary style with footage, funny cartoon or simple whiteboard styles, animated motion graphics, screen recording based tutorials, pushy commercials, dynamic music videos, a “talking head” in front of a camera... – or a creative mix of these styles.

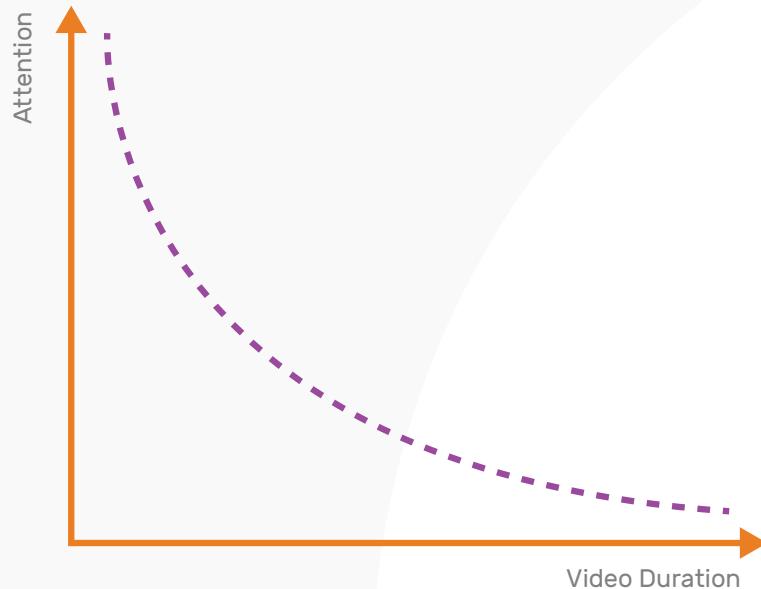
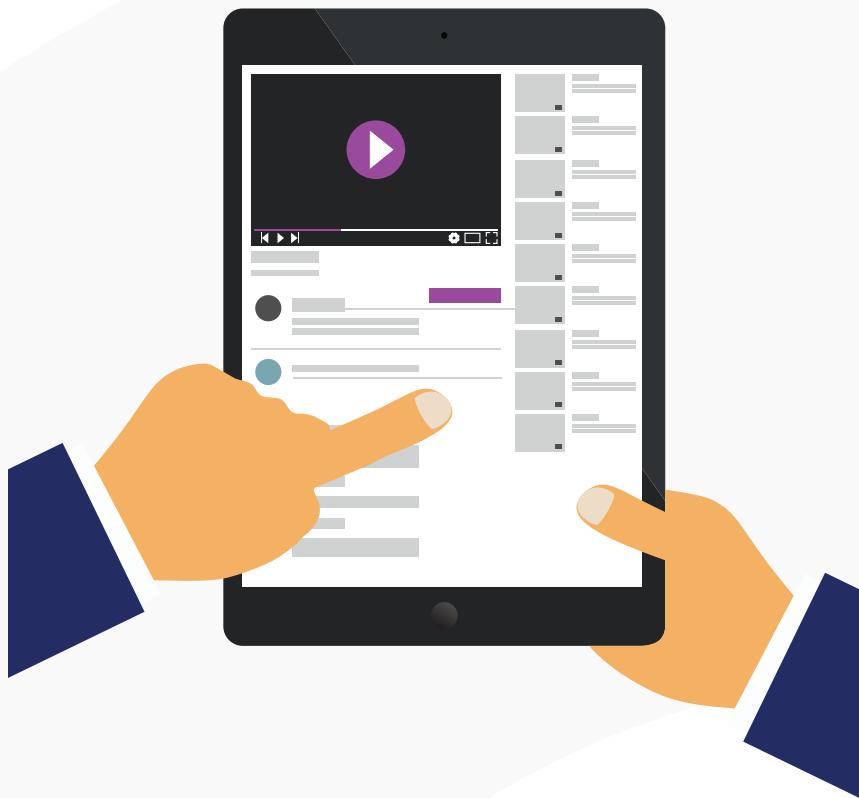
If your company is a brand or a large enterprise, your video may need to respect the brand style guidelines, including the correct colors, fonts, graphics and other visual elements.

Before you start writing a script for your video, you'll have to determine what the style and tone of your video should be. When your video features cartoon figures in a humorous dialogue, your script will be very different compared to that of a footage and voice-over based video.



5. What is the ideal duration of your video?

When you create a video, your final purpose is that it is viewed by as many people for as long as possible. Attracting and keeping the attention of your target audience is a challenge in environments where every app or screen is trying to tempt them.



Many studies have shown that shorter videos are more effective than longer ones.

The following table lists the optimal video length with the best viewer engagement for different types of video:



Type of video	Optimal video length
Explainer video	2-3 min
Product video	2-3 min
Communication video	1-3 min
Promotional video	1-2 min
E-learning/training video	2-5 min
Social video	30-60 sec
Testimonial video	2-5 min
Onboarding video	3-10 min
Teaser video	15-30 sec

As a major part of your audience doesn't make it to the second half of your video – even for videos of 2 minutes – you should **put your key messages in the first half of your video**. In other words, organize the content of your videos in the same way journalists do when writing news articles: by initially providing the most important information, followed by supporting details.



TIP: If your video risks to become too long because you have too much to tell, consider cutting it in two or more shorter, independent pieces. Divide and conquer!

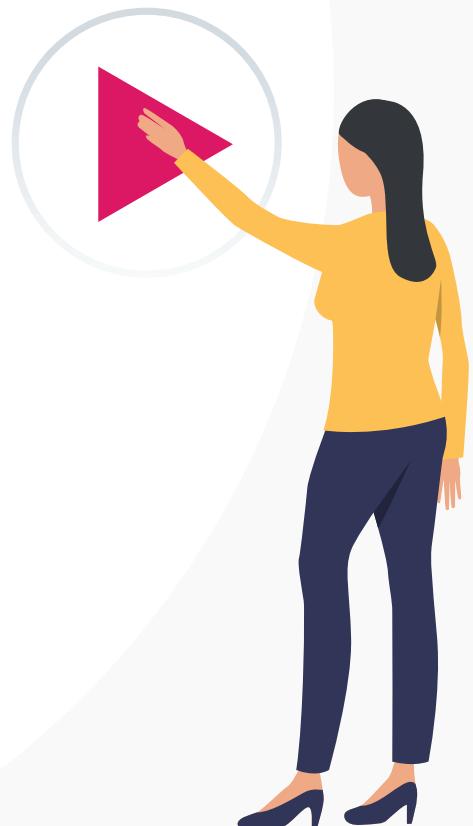
6. What is the Call-to-Action of your video?

As your video has objectives, its purpose is that you want your audience to understand, know or actually do something. What is the next step you would like your viewers to take? That is the **Call-to-Action** (CTA) of your video. Before you start writing your script, you should think about what this ideal call to action would be.

In many cases that call to action is explicitly presented at the end of the video. For online videos, it usually involves clicking on a link, visiting a web page or completing a form.

Here are some examples of calls to action:

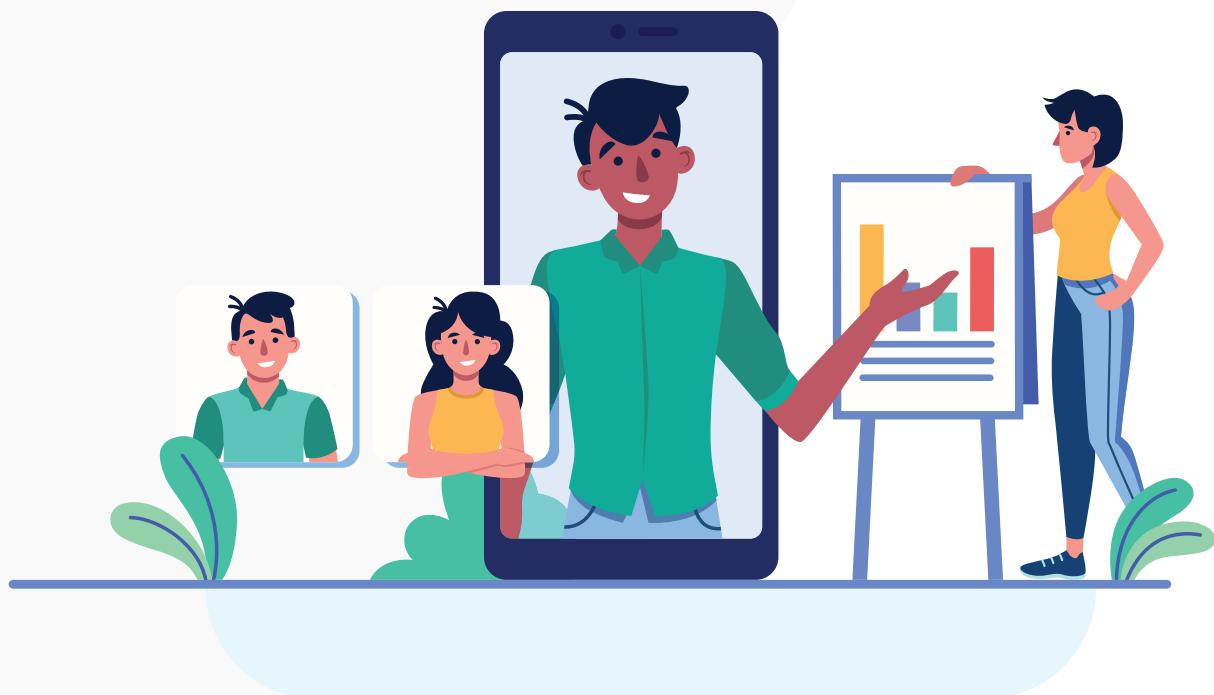
- » Visit a web page
- » Contact a person
- » Enter your email address
- » Complete a form
- » Download a document
- » Download an app
- » Buy a product
- » Subscribe to a service, a newsletter...
- » Watch another video
- » Share on social media
- » Become a member



7. Summary

Now that you've given some thought to these questions, you should be able to complete the following table:

Video Title	
	Objective(s)
	Target audience
	Distribution channel(s)
	Style
	Duration
	Call to action



An example of an internal communications video:

Video Title		Security in the workplace
	Objective(s)	Increase awareness of key security precautions at work
	Target audience	Employees
	Distribution channel(s)	Intranet
	Style	Photo/footage/text based, aligned with company brand Including voice-over and music
	Duration	3:00 min
	Call to action	Visit the internal corporate security web page

An example of a product promotion video:

Video Title		Save time with this simple app!
	Objective(s)	Convince new users/customers of the benefits of our product
	Target audience	Visitors of our web page and YouTube channel
	Distribution channel(s)	Company web site, YouTube, social media
	Style	App screenshots, graphical style (icons, figures...) No voice, only music – key messages in text
	Duration	1:00 min
	Call to action	Download the free trial version

Phase 2: The Script

You might not write well every day, but you can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page!

— Jodi Picoult



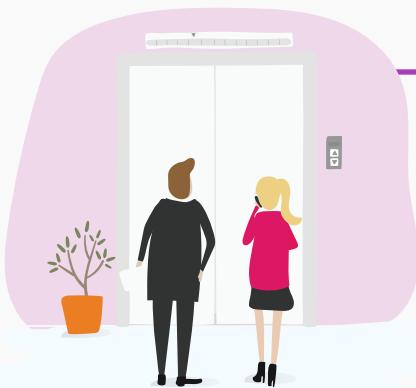
Now that you've made these decisions and you know exactly what kind of video you want, you're ready to take the next step in the process.

1. The Outline

Before moving on to elaborating a detailed script, start with writing a short outline of your script: a checklist with the key messages you want to convey to your audience.

Think about the following questions, and write down the answers in bullet list style:

- » What is the main reason for your video, the context that gave birth to the idea to create this video?
 - *Try to write it down in a language your audience can understand.*
- » What is the issue you are trying to tackle or the problem you'd like to address in this video?
 - *Try to identify an issue or problem your audience can relate to.*
- » Which messages are essential to communicate to your audience in order to reach the objectives you've chosen? If you have 4 or more messages on your list, what is your top 3?



*Think of the **elevator pitch** metaphor: suppose you're standing in the elevator with one representative person from your target audience during 1 minute, what would you tell him/her?*

2. The Storytelling Formula

Even when you have clear view about **what** you want to tell in your video, **how** you tell your story is possible in many different ways.

Storytelling is a combination of fact and narrative. If your video is just a sequence of facts or messages, chances are high that your audience will quickly find it very boring and drop off. Bringing your message through an emotional, engaging or entertaining story has a much more powerful effect on your audience and increases both attention and retention.

There are many different storytelling formulas you can choose from. Which one to select is dependent on the nature of your subject, your target audience and your objectives.

Below are a few popular storytelling formulas that are commonly used for videos:



Problem – Solution

Start with a description of a problem or problematic situation your audience can relate to (that will also catch their attention). Then explain what the solution is and how it will solve the problem.

Example:

- *Many people are confused about... This causes...*
- *Therefore we are introducing... This new approach will improve...*

5 Tips To...

Start with one or more questions about your subject to your viewers. Then provide a sequence of tips to deal with it.



Example:

- *Are you looking for the best way to handle...? Do you often experience...?*
- *This video provides 5 tips to better...*
- *Tip number 1: Make sure to...*

The Character's Story

Create one or more characters and tell their story: first tell who they are, then let something happen (an incident, a new situation, a problem...). Next, describe how they are handling the situation and come to a conclusion.



Conclude your video with a few tips for the viewer in case they run into a similar situation.

Example:

- *This is Tom. Tom works at a... Every day, Tom does...*
- *However, due to..., Tom suffers from...*
- *One day, Tom decides to change... From now on he...*
- *Therefore, if you happen to run into a similar..., ... [action]*



The Dialog

Two characters have a conversation. One character is the challenger, the interviewer asking the questions, or someone complaining about a problem.

The other character provides answers, proposes solutions, brings help.

Example:

- *Character 1: "Oh no, this can't be true, I've lost my..."*
- *Character 2: "Really? What happened?"*
- *Character 1: "Well, this morning I... and then..."*
- *Character 2: "Don't panic, there are ways to ... You can always... You know, it also happens to me, but what I do then is..."*



Headline news

Bring your messages in the style of a news show, first with strong headlines, then elaborate with more details. You can also insert a testimonial from a person and/or a quote from an expert providing advice.

Example:

- *The number of people with ... symptoms has never been so high! Over ...% of all people working in... say that... [insert testimonial of a person confirming the statement]. The reason for this is... To do something about this situation, experts advise to...*

3. The Script

When you have chosen a suitable storytelling formula, you are ready to apply it to your outline and write your script.

The script is a chronological description of your video, the blueprint of the story you are telling.

- » If you are using voice-over in your video, the voice-over text can serve as the basis of your script, optionally with some visual instructions in between.
- » If your video has no sound or only music, your script is a detailed, sequential description of each scene.

Note that the length of your script will also determine the length of your video. If you plan to add a voice-over, the number of words is a guideline for the duration of your video. Professional English voice-over artists usually read at a speed of **120-140 words per minute**. (Note this may be different in other languages).

While writing your text, think about your audience and make sure you're using a language they understand and can relate to. How do they talk? What kind of words do they use? **Convert your logic to the logic of your target audience.** Your video needs to appeal to your audience, not to your boss!

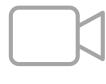
How can you motivate your audience to pay attention to your video? What is their



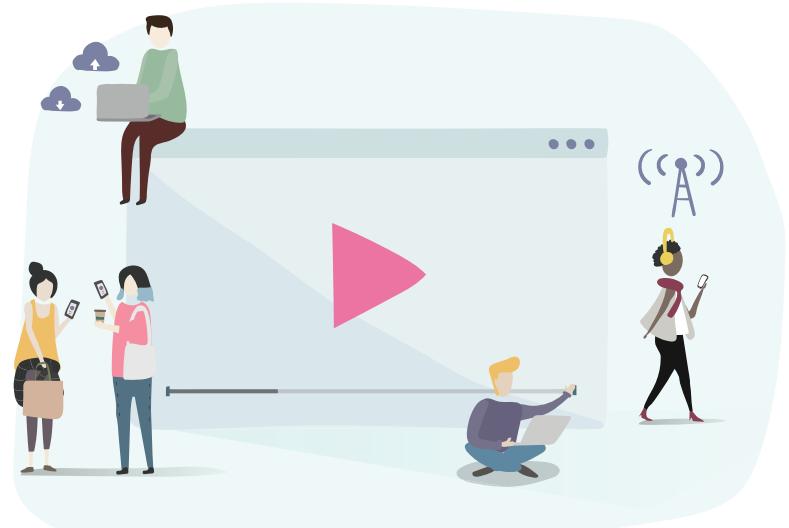
feeling, position or opinion about the subject? (ignorant, defensive, interested, positive/negative...) Take this into account while thinking about how to word your messages.

And (it's a cliché but so true): **keep it simple and short!** While you are writing, chances are that your script is too long for the target duration you had in mind (see Phase 1.5). As said before, if you have too many messages to convey and it is very hard to shorten your script, then consider making two videos instead of one. One about this and one about that, instead of one single video stuffed with too much information that doesn't come across anyway.

A commonly used format for a script is a table with 2 columns: one column describing the audio, the other describing the visuals (= what happens during the audio). You can do this scene by scene or phrase by phrase. Just create a table as follows:

 Audio	 Visuals

	
Audio	Visuals
[Title scene] Soft introductory music	Footage of blue sky with clouds Title appears centrally (fade-in-out): <i>What is cloud computing?</i>
Music fades away	Show an icon of a cloud and below the icon, the words "The Cloud"
[Voice] Most of us have already heard about "the cloud". Our computers, smartphones and even TV screens are connected to it.	Icons of a computer, a smartphone and a TV appear around it, in sync with the voice
[Voice] But what is this abstract thing called "the cloud"? And where is it?	Fade in soft, still, blue background picture with clouds.
[Voice] This video explains what cloud computing is and how you can benefit from it	2 words appear over the background: What? Benefits
...	...



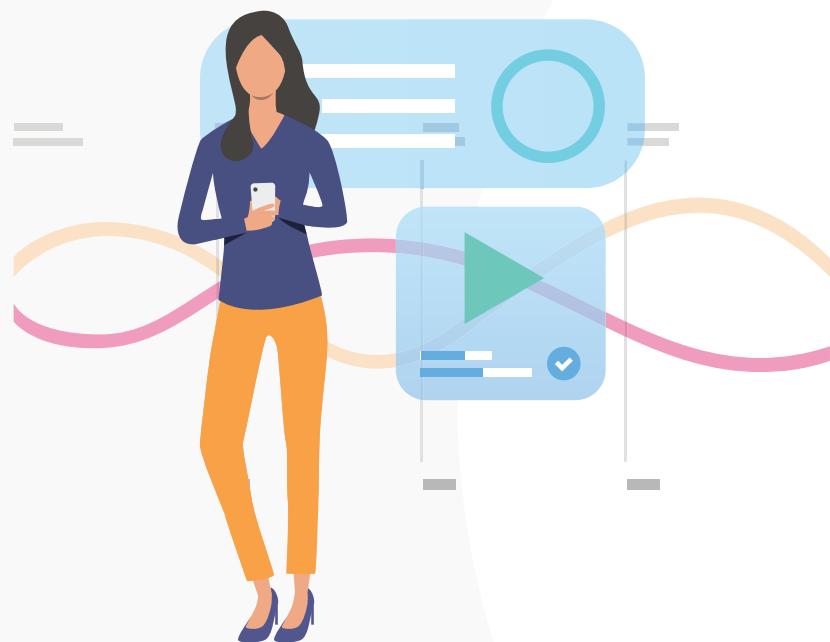
A few final writing tips:

- » Don't hesitate to address your audience directly, as if you're speaking to them. When your video contains advice, tips or solutions for your audience, address them with words like "you" and "your".
- » Don't mix personal pronouns (I, we, you, they...) in your script, as it may confuse your audience. An example text with mixed pronouns:
 - *We all know how difficult it is to manage your agenda. Always start with a to-do list. Everyone needs to find their own way of dealing with time management.*

The same text rewritten with all pronouns converted to "you":

— *You know how difficult it is to manage your agenda. Always start with a to-do list and try to find your own way of dealing with time management.*

- » Don't concentrate too much information in every sentence or message. Give your audience the time to listen, view and absorb your content. Again, if you have too many messages to bring in your video, spread them over multiple videos. You can't drink from a fire hose!



Phase 3: The Storyboard

The storyboard for me is the way to visualize the entire movie in advance.

— Martin Scorsese



Note: if you are the only one producing the video and deciding about the content, you may want to skip this phase and immediately move on with Phase 4 (production). If, however, you have other stakeholders involved in this video, this storyboard phase may help you save a lot of time in the production phase...

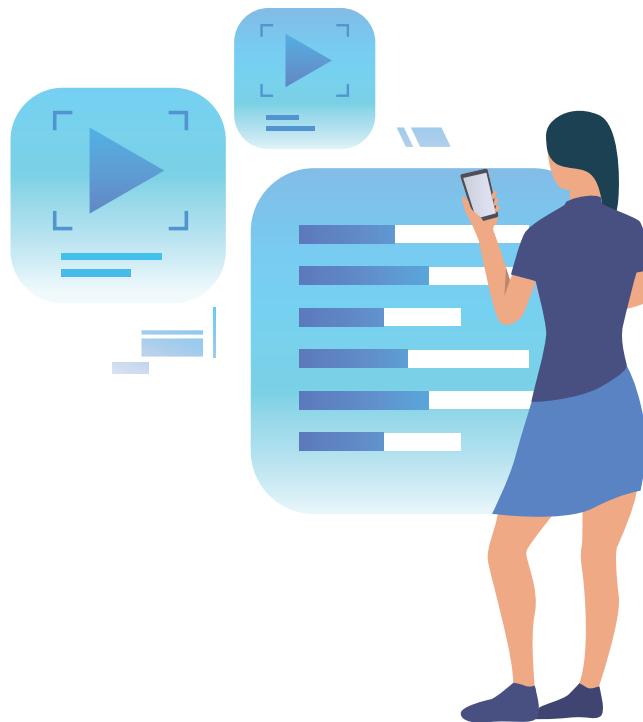
While the script describes the content of your video in a textual form, the storyboards describes it in a visual way, by adding a series of thumbnails or mock-ups to every scene.

In other words, a storyboard adds visual detail to your script. Every visually different part of your video is illustrated with a graphical representation. This way, your stakeholders and/or video producers can easily understand what every scene will look like, and provide feedback or ask questions before the content is created, shot or composed.

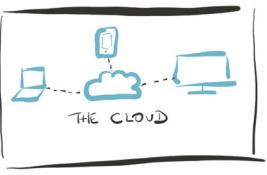
The drawings or sketches of a storyboard can be very rudimental and should not be very detailed. They should be clear enough to be interpreted correctly but it is not required you are a graphical talent to produce them.

The format of a storyboard can be as simple as an extension of the script format as used in the previous phase. The audio and visual descriptions should be added next to the illustration of every scene.

In a storyboard format, the example used in the previous chapter could look as follows:



Storyboard: "What is Cloud Computing?"

1.		<p>Audio [Title scene] Soft introductory music</p> <p>Visuals Footage of blue sky with clouds Title appears centrally (fade-in-out): <i>What is cloud computing?</i></p>
2.		<p>Audio Music fades away [Voice] Most of us have already heard about "the cloud". Our computers, smartphones and even TV screens are connected to it.</p> <p>Visuals Show an icon of a cloud and below the icon, the words "The Cloud" Icons of a computer, a smartphone and a TV appear around it, in sync with the voice.</p>
3.		<p>Audio [Voice] But what is this abstract thing called "the cloud"? And where is it?</p> <p>Visuals Fade in soft, still, blue background picture with clouds.</p>
4.		<p>Audio [Voice] This video explains what cloud computing is and how you can benefit from it</p> <p>Visuals Question mark fades out and 2 words appear over the background: <i>What? Benefits</i></p>
...

When your storyboard is ready, share it with the stakeholders and reviewers of your video, and ask them to provide you with detailed feedback. If they have any comments about the content, style, wording, order, length or other aspects of your video-to-be, now is their chance to share them with you!

When you receive feedback, process it, update your storyboard and if useful or expected, share your final version once more with your reviewers.



Phase 4: The Production

The play button is the most compelling call-to-action on the web.

— Michael Litt



Congratulations! When you've made it to this phase, you've thoroughly prepared every aspect of your video. Now is the time to get started with the production of your video.

The most efficient way to turn your storyboard into a video is the following:

1. Record the voice-over

Extract the pure voice-over text from your script and paste it in a new document. If you are going to record your own voice, this text is the one to read.

If you are relying on an external, professional voice actor, add reading instructions (particularly when some of your words are abbreviations or specialized jargon) and put the words to emphasize **in bold**.



2. Search and gather your media

Your script and storyboard describe the visuals and audio (music, voice, sounds) to be used in your video.

If you are using Moovly, browse and search the millions of available media objects in the Moovly libraries for the ones you want to use in this project. Or if you have these assets on your computer or mobile device, upload them to a separate personal library in Moovly. That way, you have all your media nicely organized in a project media library.



3. Structure your video in Clips

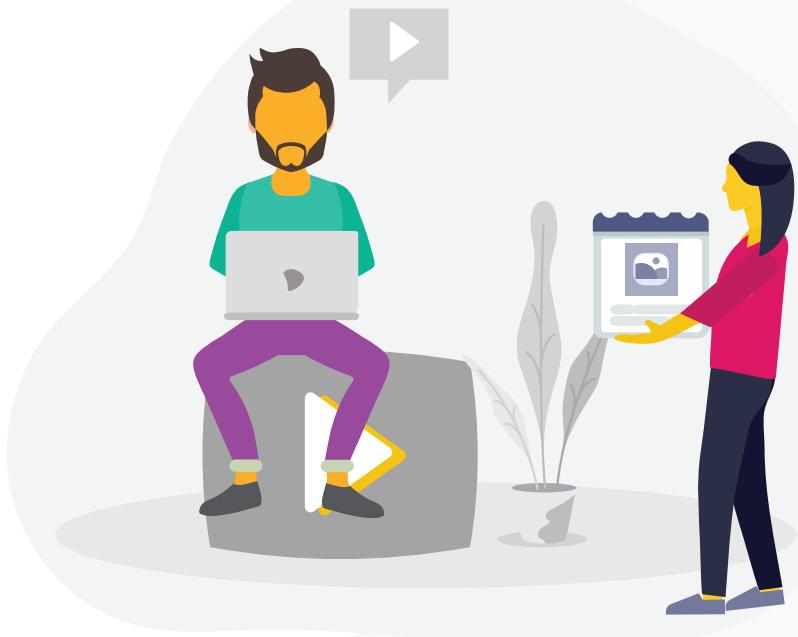
As your storyboard is organized in separate scenes, it is convenient to preserve this structure in your video project.

Moovly enables you to organize your content in different Clips, which are groups of animated objects. Organizing your content in Clips not only gives you structure and overview, but also allows you to easily shift, copy and move pieces of content.

You can put your audio in a separate Clip, for example containing your background music and voice recording. Or you can cut your voice-over into smaller pieces, one per scene or Clip.

4. Drag, drop, animate and synchronize

Scene by scene, drag and drop your media objects to your video stage and synchronize them with your audio and each other. Add animation effects for every object as appropriate. Don't exaggerate your animation, always consider the best way to get your message across.





5. Review, fine-tune and share

Video creation is an iterative process: you'll spend some time fine tuning the visual details and timing. The nice thing about that is that with every iteration, your video gets better.

It is inevitable to have several rounds of revision, certainly when there are multiple stakeholders. As you've built the video content based on an approved script or storyboard, there's only limited details left that your stakeholders can provide feedback on: any global feedback on content structure, voice-over text, duration or style should have come earlier.

When you're using a simple, flexible and powerful video editing application such as Moovly, updating your video is as simple as updating a PowerPoint slide. In other words, any corrections can be done easily and are just a natural part of the video creation process.



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