

Sourcing and selecting visual assets

Choosing the right visual assets for your online course isn't just about picking the prettiest pictures or the flashiest videos. There are several important factors to consider to ensure that the visuals you use enhance learning and engagement.

- **Relevance:** The visuals should directly relate to the course content. An image or video must add value by reinforcing the learning objectives or clarifying complex concepts. For instance, a diagram of the human heart is vital in a biology course on human anatomy but would be out of place in a literature class.
- **Clarity:** Visuals must be clear and easily understandable. A cluttered or overly complicated graphic can confuse more than it clarifies. Ensure that each visual is simple enough to be understood at a glance yet detailed enough to convey the necessary information.
- **Quality:** High-resolution and professionally designed visuals not only look better but also convey professionalism and credibility. Poor-quality images or grainy videos can distract from the learning experience and may even undermine the perceived value of the course.
- **Accessibility:** Make sure that all visuals are accessible to all students, including those with visual impairments. Use alt text for images, provide captions and transcripts for videos, and ensure that colours and designs are visible to those with colour vision deficiencies.
- **Copyright:** Always use visuals that you have the right to use. This can mean creating your own, purchasing them, or using royalty-free images from reputable sources. It's important to respect copyright laws to avoid legal issues and to model ethical behaviour for students.

Sourcing Visual Assets:

Finding the right visual assets can be difficult, but there are strategies and resources available to help you locate high-quality, relevant, and legally usable visuals for your online course:

1. **Stock Image and Video Libraries:** Websites such as Shutterstock, Getty Images, and Adobe Stock offer a vast collection of high-quality images and videos. While these resources require a subscription or purchase, they provide professionally created visuals that can enhance the quality of your course.

2. **Royalty-Free Resources:** There are many platforms that offer free-to-use images and videos under Creative Commons licenses. Websites like Unsplash, Pexels, and Pixabay provide high-resolution visuals that can be used without cost, though it's important to check the specific licensing terms for each image or video.
3. **Educational Databases:** Some educational institutions and organisations offer access to extensive media libraries. For instance, MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching) provides a repository of peer-reviewed online teaching and learning materials, including visuals.
4. **Government and Public Domain Resources:** Many government websites and public institutions offer free access to images and videos. Websites like NASA's Image and Video Library or the US National Archives provide high-quality visuals that are often in the public domain and free to use.
5. **Create Your Own:** If you have the resources and skills, creating your own visuals can ensure they perfectly fit your course content and learning objectives. Tools like Canva for graphic design, or simple video creation tools, can be very effective for producing customised visuals.
6. **Collaborations:** Partnering with colleagues or students can also be a great way to source visuals. Engaging students in creating visual content can enhance their learning experience and provide a sense of ownership over the course material.

By keeping these criteria in mind, you can select visuals that are not just attractive but are effective educational tools. They should help students grasp the material better, remember it longer, and engage more deeply with the content.

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