

Using Adobe Spark to create a pre-recorded class presentation

In an in-person class students often give a presentation to the class on their ongoing research, or as a final presentation, and this is still possible in a virtual environment. While you can create a pre-recorded session in a variety of ways — PowerPoint, Zoom, etc. — one easy solution is [Adobe Spark](#), a free, web-based tool that allows users to combine images and text with a minimum of effort and technical overhead.

Before you begin

How to log in

Spark stores your creations online, allowing you to access them across multiple computers and iOS apps. In order to do this, you have to login to the service. OSU has an agreement with Adobe, so you can log in with your OSU username and password:

1. Go to spark.adobe.com
2. Click on the "Log In" link in the upper right of the screen
3. At the next screen, under the heading "Teacher or student?," click the button labeled "Log in with school account."
4. Type your in your full name.#@osu.edu address
 - Even if you use @buckeyemail.osu.edu for your email, use @osu.edu here
5. When you click into the password field, you will be redirected to the main OSU login page to complete the process; you'll need to use Duo/Buckeyepass.

Know your tools

Adobe Spark is actually a suite of three tools: Spark Post, Spark Page, and Spark Video.



Spark Video allows you to compose a series of slides (image, text, or both) that it then combines into a video. It also has the ability to record voiceover directly into the slide in an intuitive manner.



Spark Post allows you to create an image and text collage, suitable for social media sharing or embedding in larger products. While it's not the main focus of this documentation, it can be useful if you need to compose image collages, etc. for your slides; you can download the created images and use them in a Spark Video.



Spark Page creates an image-centric scrolling webpage — it's a good tool, but not our focus here.

All three of these tools are available through Spark's website, spark.adobe.com. Each is also available, free, for both iPhone and iPad through the App Store. (Unfortunately, there are no Windows Phone apps, and only Spark Post for Android.)

Create a new Spark project

If the system doesn't bring you there automatically, click on the Spark logo at the top-left of the page to go to your dashboard. Spark will show you many project templates, but for our purposes you'll probably be best served by clicking the plus sign just below the Spark logo, and then choosing "Video." Spark will ask you for a title (which is optional), and then suggest various story templates; you can explore them, but they're not targeted to academic purposes, and you'll probably be best served by clicking "Start from scratch" below the template scroller.

Using Spark Video


Note: The instructions below refer to the web-based version of Spark Video, accessible through spark.adobe.com. The iOS app works similarly, but may have slight differences.

A Spark Video is created by composing individual slides, which the program will then string together into a video.

Adding elements

Spark tries to make things as simple as possible, and limits you to certain options in certain places. To add an element to your slide — an image or a piece of text — click on the plus signs in the appropriate spaces.

When you choose to add a photo, the options pane on the right side of the screen will change to an "Add photo" pane. While there are built-in search functions, you may already have identified many photos/charts/etc you may wish to use. You can upload such saved photos by clicking on the "Upload photo" button.

The built-in search functions seek out images that are openly-licensed. The system will auto-generate a credits slide in keeping with the license agreements for thus images; if your instructor has other crediting/citation requirements, you can view the source information to create appropriate image citations. To see the source information for an image found using the built-in search, look for a small circle-i () usually in the upper left corner of the image. If you click on it, you'll see a preview of the authorship data, and a link to "View original source page," which you should follow to find attribution elements you need for the citation.

Layout

Each slide can have one of four layouts; you can choose among them by clicking "Layouts" at the top right of the edit screen. Depending on which you choose you may place design elements in various pre-determined positions. They should be fairly self-evident, and you can play with them to see what each looks like, but "Fullscreen" and "Title and Text" may benefit from some additional explanation.

The default layout is "Fullscreen": it asks for a background ('fullscreen') element — a photo, for our purposes — that is blown up to fill the whole slide. That means that unless the image happens to be exactly sized to match the window in which it is being presented, it will usually be cropped: the sides or the top and bottom may be cut off in order to fill the screen. This item is designated by the plus sign on the left of the slide.

"Fullscreen" further asks for an additional element — which for our purposes mostly means a picture, but could also be text, e.g. for a title slide or possibly for captions — and displays it centered in the middle of the frame.

It is also possible, however, to use "Fullscreen" but simply never designate either the fullscreen or the centered element; think about the differing visual effects of each, and play with it.

"Title and Text" is like a very specific "Fullscreen" layout, with an additional text element: it asks for a fullscreen background, a large piece of text (the 'Title'), and an additional, smaller text elements. In addition, you can drag the text elements to reposition them in various points around the slide. As with the other layouts, none of the elements are required, so you may be able to achieve some very different effects by using some or all of the potential elements

Adding narration

Each slide can have narration embedded in it, which you'll likely want for your Video, except perhaps for a title slide. To record narration, click and hold on the microphone button at the bottom of the slide, and speak into your computer or mobile device's microphone. Release when finished.

It takes just a moment for the recording process to kick in, so wait for a moment after clicking to begin speaking, and continue holding for just a moment after you finish speaking to ensure your speech doesn't get cut off.

If you need to re-record a slide for whatever reason, just click and hold again: the new recording will replace the old one. (There is no way to undo this change or recover a prior recording.)

Captions

In addition to narrating your presentation aloud, your instructor may ask you to display the text of your narration on screen. Such captions can be helpful for viewers who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing, who are learning the language, or who process information more readily in textual form. Be aware that, due to technical limitations of the software, you may have to make creative decisions as to exactly how to incorporate on-screen text.

If you or your instructor have chosen to include on-screen text in addition to spoken narration, you have many options. All of the layouts include the possibility of having both text and image, so experiment to see which best fits your purposes. Think about the rhetorical effects of having text superimposed on an image, as opposed to below or beside it. For "Fullscreen" and "Title and Text" layouts you can drag the text around, which creates different effects and spacings.

You also need to be aware that you may have more caption text than can fit in the designated text space, or that the font size will be rendered so small as to be illegible. (Font size is not directly adjustable; adding more

text generally causes a decrease in font size, but only within certain parameters; at a certain minimum size it just gets cut off.)

If you/your instructor desire on-screen captions, but the text is too small/cut off, you can create multiple successive, largely identical slides for the first and second halves of the narration:

1. Select the current slide, with the over-long/too-small text.
2. From the menu (three dots in the corner of the slide thumbnail on desktop; down-arrow on thumbnail on mobile), select “Duplicate”
3. Edit the text to leave the first half of it on the first of the now-duplicated slides, and the second half on the second slide.
4. Record narration on the two slides to match display text; viewers will now see a change only in the caption text, not in the display image.

Background music

By default, Spark Video wants to include background music, and it provides a number of professional tracks, as well as the possibility of uploading your own. However, you should think very carefully before using background music: for many class presentations, it may be distracting to include background music. To turn off the background music (or to choose a track if you find it rhetorically valuable), click on "Music" in the upper right of the edit window.

Theme

Spark Video has a number of built-in themes, which you can access by clicking on Themes in the upper right of the edit window. Themes control font, color, and slide transitions, in addition to setting background graphics for non-fullscreen elements, so try various ones to see which best fits your project. Be aware that a theme applies to an entire project, not a single slide.

Credits

Adobe Spark includes a Credits slide automatically, compiling the authorship info for each searched image provided. If you use a large number of images, the resulting text may be too small to be legible. If you would like to create more legible credits, or if your instructor requires a different crediting format, you should hide that Credits slide — click the three dots menu in its thumbnail's upper corner and choose "Hide credits" — and instead create your own.

Begin by composing your list of citations in another program (Word, Pages, Notepad, etc.) — it's easier to compile them all in one comprehensive list, then to break them out across slides. Once the list is complete, create a new slide after your final image using the “Fullscreen” layout. For the element in the middle, select Text. Type a heading (e.g. “Image credits”) and then paste in the first few lines of your citations: each slide can handle a fair amount of text, but the size will get smaller the more you add, so consider limiting yourself to a handful of citations per slide. Continue adding more slides for the remainder of your citations — you might add use headings like “Image credits, continued.”

Previewing and Sharing

You can Preview your project at any time by clicking the Preview button at the top of the page.

To get a link to submit, you'll click the Share button, then choose Publish. The Publish/Share window provides a few options.

- **Title** and **Subtitle**: These are optional. They do not create a title slide, but instead appear above the embedded video when a viewer follows your share link.
- **Category**: You must pick a category, but it doesn't really matter what. Choose Education or Other if nothing really fits.
- **Author**: You may choose to associate the project with your name (On), or not (Off).

Click "Create link." You'll see a shareable link, which you can submit to the appropriate assignment and/or discussion board, as your instructor directs you.

Even after you've Shared the project, you can still edit it; just return to the project and make any necessary edits. In order for your viewers to see the changes, click on the Share button again, then again choose Publish. Click "Update link" in the shaded notice box.

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