



Northern Illinois
University

Northern Illinois University Video Standards and Style Guide

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This document is designed to create consistency across all videos produced at NIU, building NIU's brand and meeting our viewers' expectations every time they watch an NIU video.

Video Standards

Audience

Primarily, an NIU video is a retention and recruitment tool for the university. The main audiences are current and potential students, therefore, the majority of the content should be designed for students.

Secondary audiences include media, faculty, staff, alumni, donors and community members.

Logos and Branding

NIU Brand Standards

All videos must adhere to NIU's [Communication Standards For Institutional Brand Identity](#), including standards for brand colors and fonts.

To present a consistent, unified image and reinforce NIU's branding and marketing initiatives, all division, college, school, department and special information videos must clearly identify the relationship with the university.

NIU Logos and Trademarks

All NIU videos should include the following elements, which are included in NIU's standard templates:

- The NIU logo, implemented according to the [university's graphic standards](#).
- Copyright information as follows: © 2xxx Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University. All rights reserved.
- The full name of the university – Northern Illinois University – must appear in the intro and outro of the video.

Use of the Huskie Athletics logo on videos other than for Huskies Athletics is prohibited without written consent from Intercollegiate Athletics, or its designee.

No university trademarks may be altered or manipulated in any way or merged with or placed directly against any other logo.

Third-party Advertising and Logos

Third-party advertising is prohibited in NIU's videos. Only Marketing and Communications may grant an exception.

Event sponsorship logos are permitted after being cleared by Marketing and Communications. A third-party logo must be supplied by the sponsor and must be a high-quality image. Low quality or unofficial logos will be removed.

Copyright

All videos must comply with official copyright laws. Any content, photo, image, logo or media that doesn't meet copyright guidelines will be removed from the video. Before including any element that may infringe on copyright law, contact the Assistant Director of Digital Content in Institutional Communications at socialmedia@niu.edu.

Accessibility/Closed Captioning

As a state institution, the NIU website is required to comply with the [Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act](#) (IITAA) which requires Illinois agencies and universities to ensure that their websites, information systems and information technologies are accessible to people with disabilities. All new videos that will be linked from NIU's website must be closed-captioned to meet these accessibility guidelines.

Grammar, Punctuation and Word Style

Grammar and punctuation must follow the latest edition of the Associated Press Stylebook. Correct usage of university-related terms including degrees, semesters, majors and minors can be found in the [NIU Web Style Guide](#).

When capitalizing a video title, use title case. If a word is hyphenated, capitalize only the first letter of the first word.

Intros and Outros

Introductions and closing credits should be no longer than two seconds long and must use the standard intros and outros that include the NIU logo and the words Northern Illinois University. To request NIU's standard video intro and outro files please contact the Assistant Director of Digital Content in Institutional Communications at socialmedia@niu.edu. Exceptions must be approved.

Copyright information should be included on the last frame. Copyright information as follows:
© 2xxx Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University. All rights reserved.

Lower Thirds

Occasionally there are exceptions to these general rules for lower-third titles. Any exceptions to the following rules must be approved by Creative Services.

Capitalization

Capitalize the first letter of all words in the lower third headings. If a word is hyphenated, capitalize only the first letter of the first word. If the subheading of a lower third is a sentence, use sentence case (capitalize only the first letter of the first word and include punctuation at the end of the sentence).

Interviewee Information

Keep it simple. The interviewee's name appears on the first line; their title appears on the second line:

Name

Title, Department (if applicable)

Students – Collect the student’s name and major. If the student has a double major, collect it. Do not include the student’s year in school or their year of graduation or their minor.

Do Use

John Smith
Biology Major

Tina Jones
Engineering and Spanish Major

Don’t Use

John Smith, Senior
Biology Major, Sociology Minor

Tina Jones, Engineering Major
Class of 2017

Faculty and Staff – Collect the person’s name and preferred title. Do not use faculty titles in the first line.

Do Use

John Smith
Professor, Biology

Thomas R. Phillips, Sr.
NIU Chief of Police

Don’t Use

Dr. John Smith
Biology Department

Chief Phillips
NIU Police and Public Safety

Other – Collect the person’s name and preferred title

Do Use

John Smith
DeKalb Resident

Tina Jones
Fermilab Engineer

Don’t Use

John Smith, DeKalb
Resident

Tina Jones, Engineer
Fermilab

Styling

Graphics must conform to the NIU standard lower third template that can be requested by contacting contact the Assistant Director of Digital Content in Institutional Communications at socialmedia@niu.edu.

YouTube Titles and Descriptions

The Social Media team writes all titles and descriptions for videos listings on YouTube.

Filenames

This filename convention is derived from practices used at Creative Services.

- Use all lowercase letters.
- Use dashes instead of spaces or underscores.
- Keep filenames relatively short.
- Use a consistent naming convention. Name files in numerical order if applicable.
- If the concept for your video may be revisited in the future, tack on a year to the filename. Again, be consistent with naming files.
 - Filenames “procrastination” and “procrastination-2008” display a revisiting in 2008 of the original video (produced in 2006).
 - Filename “quidditch-08” leaves the possibility for another Quidditch video to be produced in the future
- If the video is part of a series of any kind, create a series name. In this case, incorporate either the year or season number up front.
 - dunphy01-cod, dunphy01-scallops
 - svid08-ace-jenkins, svid09-nathan-ryan
 - bands01-grimis-01, bands01-grimis-02

Best Practices

Video

Considerations Before Shooting a Video

Do not include any other logos other than Northern Illinois University approved logos. Any exceptions require prior approval from NIU Marketing and Communications. When planning a video shoot, the videographer and director should be given answers to the following questions. The director or client should provide this information. If it's not provided, the videographer should request it.

- Who is the audience of the video?
- What is the purpose for the video?
- What should the audience learn/do after seeing the video?
- What is the news angle?
- Where will the video live? On a website? On television? In a live presentation?
- Who is providing interview questions? Institutional Communications? Videography? Faculty or staff?

Interviewing

When a video is planned, a facilitator who is knowledgeable about the topic should be assigned to the project. The facilitator will create a list of interview questions and make sure the interviewee is engaged. If a news writer is not already assigned, clients and/or videographers should contact the Assistant Director of Digital Content in Institutional Communications at socialmedia@niu.edu to assign a facilitator to their video project.

Video Technical Guidelines

- Video recording and final output should be well lit, properly white-balanced and should not appear dark on-screen. Edited video should be properly color corrected.
- All video shots are to be clearly focused and well framed. Close-ups should focus attention, not distract the viewer.
- Video output is to be stable, not shaky. A tripod should be used whenever possible to reduce "camera shake." If a tripod is not used, camera shake should be very minimal.
- All titles or other text added to the video must be proofread for accuracy and proper grammar.
- Any additional graphics or animations should be professional, appropriate and necessary for the message of the video. Graphics and animations must be clean, clear, undistorted and fit on the screen.
- All fade ins/fade outs, effects, etc. should add to the message of the video and must be smooth, not abrupt or choppy.
- All dead air should be edited out so the video is seamless from beginning to end.
- For videos showcasing speakers, panels and events, make a version of the video specifically for online use. For example, trim down or cut out extended introductions. An online audience wants to see the main attraction. If needed, include speaker bios in the written YouTube description.
- For audio recording, make sure to place the microphone close to the subject and monitor sound levels to provide the best quality sound. Be mindful of background noise that might interfere with the recording such as traffic, lawnmowers, crowds, etc.

YouTube Guidelines

- Video Format: The preferred file type to upload to YouTube is MPEG (.mp4)
- Aspect Ratio: Native aspect ratio without letterboxing (example: 16:9)
- Resolution: High Definition video at either 1280x720, 1920x1080 or higher
- Audio Format: MP3 or AAC preferred
- Frames per Second: Native frame rate
- Aspect Ratio: The aspect ratio of the original source video should always be maintained when it's uploaded.
- Original Video Source: The less a video is re-encoded prior to uploading, the better the resulting YouTube video quality. Video for upload should be as close to the original source format as possible.

Camera Angles

Videography staff needs to be aware of the camera at all times and must stay out of the line of sight of the video camera. If video staff is included in a video, they must be edited out of the final version.

Saturation

The saturation of a video should be consistent throughout the video and should be set to make the image appear natural. Too much saturation and the colors “glow.” Too little saturation and it begins to look like black and white. However, there are times where saturation can be used in various extremes for a necessary effect. Saturation can be adjusted in post-production if the original image is not ideal.

Contrast

The contrast of a video should be consistent throughout a video and should contain a pleasing balance of shadows/dark areas and highlights. Contrast can be adjusted in post-production if the original image is not ideal.

Frames Per Second

Choose 29.97 frames per second to match legacy content. For stand-alone and special projects then you may use 29.97 or 23.98.

Lighting

If you need to light interviewees, make sure the lighting matches the ambient light so that b-roll isn't a lower quality than a-roll.

Although every lighting scenario is unique with different variables, lighting should help the subject (such as an interviewee) stand out from the background, but still look natural. A general rule of a 2:1 ratio of key light to fills will usually produce this result. Extreme contrasts which are sometimes used in Hollywood movies are usually not appropriate for university-related videos. When lighting an event is not possible, camera gain up to 9 dB is acceptable to help illuminate a darker image.

Editing

Content editing should be paced to tell the story in a quick, concise manner, since most content is produced for web delivery. Telling a story in two to three minutes can be challenging, but you are trying to get the audience interested in the subject, not explain every detail of that subject. Most videos will end with some sort of call to action to gain more information.

Video editing should also be fast paced with shots generally in the three to 10 second range. Try to avoid slow, extended camera movements unless the subject matter calls for longer shots. An establishing wide shot is usually placed first to set the scene, but sometimes a close-up can serve as an effective attention getter. The pace of the background music will often determine the pace of the editing, so it is important to make the music selection based on the subject and desired feel of the end product. Effective editing should tell the story visually to a point where a viewer could get the message without hearing the audio of what's being spoken.

Always send a screenshot of any title screens or lower-thirds to the Clearinghouse or Creative Services editor for fact-checking and proofreading.

At least one person who was not the videographer or editor must view the video in its entirety before being released.

Compliance

NIU's Video Standards apply to videos for all NIU divisions, departments, offices, programs and activities. For questions or to request exceptions, contact the Assistant Director of Digital Content in Institutional Communications at socialmedia@niu.edu.