

# Video Magic: Creating Brilliant Videos Quickly & Easily

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## 1. Keys to Video Success

Making a few key decisions up front will make the video creation process easier, faster, and more focused. Answer these questions:

- Who do you want to watch your video? (Friends, relatives? Ages? Interest level in genealogy?) Your answer:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Where will they be watching the video? (Online, on social media, an emailed video file or burned to a DVD?) Your answer:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How long will your video be? (Recommended: 1 min. for social media; 3 min. for general consumption on YouTube or your website; up to 10 min. for a family gathering or burned to a DVD) Your Answer:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Pick Your Story

Think in terms of one story rather than a family's full history. A video geared to non-genealogist family members doesn't need a lot of detail and should be focused on the high points or classic story arc. Story idea examples:

- A couple's meeting and marriage
- An ancestor's military career
- The story of why a family immigrated

## 3. Outline Your Story

For a short video (1-3 minutes) start with an outline of about 12 items. From there you can determine which are short points and which may need more time or explanation. You will fine tune these later in the storyboard.

## 4. Collect the Content

As you look through your outline, identify images and content that can be used to illustrate each point. Digitized content can include: photographs, old post cards, genealogical documents, maps, and short video clips (like digitized old home movies). Create a folder for your video project on your computer and put copies of each of these items in the folder. Saving copies gives you the flexibility to alter (such as cropping) images without changing the original.

If you want to create the video using your smartphone or tablet, save images to your Photos. Consider adding them to an album dedicated to the video project. If there are images on your computer that you want to include, simply save a copy to a cloud service like Dropbox, and access them using the corresponding app on your device.

## 5. Select Your Video Tool

**Adobe Spark Video:** *When you need a free, easy video creation tool.*

The free version of Adobe Spark makes great videos. It has limited features and videos will be branded with the Adobe logo. The Premium version (monthly subscription: \$9.95) allows you to swap your own logo for theirs. Videos can be downloaded in one size: 1280 x 720. Spark Video slides containing video or voice narration can be up to 30 seconds long. Spark Video slides containing images, icons, and text (with no video or audio) can be up to 10 seconds long. While they don't offer theme templates (which include background imagery) they do offer 8 different template styles (including starting from scratch) that allow you add your own content.

**Animoto:** *When you're willing to make a small investment to dramatically increase your options.*

Available as a free trial, with monthly or yearly subscription options to follow. Videos can be downloaded in four different sizes, which are optimized for a variety of video sharing platforms. It also offers a higher HD quality of 1920 x 1080.

*Animoto Memories* is the slideshow style video tool with over 100 theme templates that include background imagery and hundreds of songs. It includes Getty Images, offering you a wide variety of stock photos and videos. The Call to Action (CTA) feature allows you to provide a linked button at the end of your video to take viewers to the website of your choice. This is ideal for driving relatives to your family reunion website or Facebook family group page. They also offer the *Animoto Marketing* tool, which is geared to businesses wanting to create eye-catching video ads. This tool allows you to add voice narration. For a free Animoto tutorial series and discount offers, visit: <https://genealogygems.com/family-history-videos/>

**Camtasia:** *When you want full control on your computer and are willing to pay for it.* Enjoy full control over all aspects of the video creation process. Cost is approximately \$249, although less expensive educational copies can be available. It is a software that you install on your computer and it doesn't offer an app version. You can add video of any length, as well as images and voice over. All transitions and editing are done by you. Export and interactivity options are extremely robust.

## 6. Select the Theme

Adobe: Select from one of the 8 templates.

Animoto: Select from over 100 colorful illustrated themes.

Camtasia: No theme. You create the look of your video on the timeline.

## 7. Select the Music

Adobe: Select from a handful of songs or upload your own.

Animoto: Select from hundreds of songs or upload your own.

Camtasia: Select from about 15 tracks in the software or head to the website <https://library.techsmith.com/assets> to select from countless more options.

Music and copyright: music that is included with the tool that you are using has been cleared for public use. However, if you upload your video to YouTube you may receive a notification that it is in violation of someone's copyright. This is because YouTube has matched the song to its owner. If you are not running advertising in conjunction with your video no action is required. If you are, then you will want to dispute the claim by explaining that you have the rights to use the music through the video tool that you have purchased. If you elect to upload your own song, be sure that you have verified your rights to use it.

If you're in need of royalty-free music, run a Google search on *royalty free music*. YouTube offers many usable music tracks:

1. Sign into YouTube with a free Google account
2. Click your account icon in the upper right corner of the screen
3. Click the *Creator Studio* button
4. In the column on the left, click *Create*
5. Click *Audio Library*
6. Click the *Play* button to preview and then *Download* icon to download it

## 8. Storyboarding

Storyboards are essential planning tools for all film and video creators. They visually break down your story so that you can see the order that things will appear on the screen, as well as the text and possible narration that will accompany it. Both the Adobe Spark Video and Animoto workspaces are set up as storyboards. You simply upload your media content, and then drag and drop it into the appropriate location. If you change your mind, it's very easy to drag the item to a new location on the timeline. Camtasia does not have a storyboard feature, so you will need to do your planning outside of the program. However, they do have some wonderful online storyboarding tutorials that you can watch at <https://tinyurl.com/y7eav9wk>.

Storyboards can be created on a simple piece of paper. PowerPoint is a wonderful tool for storyboarding because of its slide layout. Use the program's Slide Sorter view to see all your slides on the screen at once or use the Note Page view to work on one slide at a time. Note Page view includes spots for your image and your titles or script. While it can seem time consuming to set up your video storyboard, it will save you from having to do extensive editing.

## 9. Attention to Details

There are several details to consider before your video is complete:

1. **Do you want to include a call to action?** What would you like the viewer to do after viewing your video? Animoto allows you add a clickable CTA button to the end of your video that will take your viewer to any website you specify. In Adobe Spark Video you can add a slide at the end prompting them to take an action. In Camtasia you can create an interactive "hotspot" which will act as your CTA button. This video explains how to create this: <https://youtu.be/1qbcmTNwpGg>

2. **What will the title of your video be?** This is a very important consideration if you are going to share your video on social media or YouTube. Include keywords that the desired audience is likely to search for.
3. **Write a text description of your video.** Like the title, the description is critical to allowing your video to be found through search and prepares the viewer for what they are about to see. Additionally, the description provides you another location for your call to action should you have one.
4. **What export size is best suited to the desired distribution?** Video resolution requires a bit of explanation. This page at Animoto's website explains it well and will help you choose the right resolution for your video's distribution:  
<https://animoto.com/blog/news/hd-video-creation-sharing/>

## 10. Sharing Your Video

**On YouTube:** A free Google account gives you your own free Creator Studio at YouTube. YouTube allows you to upload your own thumbnail image. This is the image that people will see when they first come across your video, so you want it to be appealing and explanatory. The free Adobe Spark Post app provides a template for easily creating your thumbnail image.

**Social Media:** Each social media platform allows different lengths of videos, and some will allow you to add a cover image. Check the *Video Help* pages for each to find out the requirements:

Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/help/166707406722029?helpref=about\\_content](https://www.facebook.com/help/166707406722029?helpref=about_content)

Instagram: <https://help.instagram.com/456185931138729>

Pinterest: <https://help.pinterest.com/en/article/video-on-pinterest>

Twitter: <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/twitter-videos>

**On your website:** One of the easiest ways to place your video on your website is to upload it to YouTube, copy the Embed code, and paste the code into your web page. Some website frameworks will allow you to simply copy and paste the video's URL from YouTube. If you're more tech-savvy, Camtasia has robust tools that allow you to create a webpage and player during the export process.

**On DVD:** Camtasia offers great tools for burning to DVD, but any exported MP4 video can be burned to DVD. To learn how, run a Google search on *burn an mp4 to dvd*.

## Resources

Cooke, Lisa L., *The Genealogist's Google Toolbox*, 2nd ed. Genealogy Gems Publishing Company, [www.shopgenealogygems.com/](http://www.shopgenealogygems.com/) (includes a full chapter on using YouTube)

*How to Create Family History Videos* (includes my free tutorial videos on using Animoto, and several video examples): <https://genealogygems.com/family-history-videos/>