Videos in Teaching & Learning (ViTaL)

Using the Lightboard

Purpose
This document describes the Duke lightboard and suggests some ways to maximize its use for video recordings.

What Is a Lightboard?
A lightboard is a glass surface on which you can write or draw while facing the video camera and therefore your video audience. It is especially well-suited for video lectures that involve writing or drawing while speaking. The Duke lightboard is 8’ wide by 4’ high and is located in the Duke Media Services (DMS) studio in the Bryan Center. Anyone at Duke can use the lightboard by contacting DMS to schedule studio time. DMS’s usual fees for videography and editing apply.

The Duke lightboard is based on a design created by Michael Peshkin at Northwestern University.

Before Recording
People who have used the lightboard have found it useful to plan their videos carefully. Erasing and cleaning the lightboard take some time and effort, so we recommend planning one board’s worth of content per video. You can practice printing and/or drawing your content (legibly!) on a whiteboard of equal size. Leave a 3” space around the entire lightboard to be sure that the frame of the lightboard can be avoided when recording.

Choosing Markers
DMS will supply markers suitable for writing on the lightboard. You should test different colors and brands to see which work best for you. Some factors to consider include the following:

- Does the marker squeak when you write with it? (Your writing style may cause some to squeak more than others.)
- How much color contrast do you need? Be sure to test how colors display when recorded on video, not just what they look like on the
lightboard. As you choose colors, be sure to consider how they might appear to viewers who are color blind.

- You may want to use different brands to get the effects you need.

**While Recording**

We suggest scheduling 1 or 2 videos per studio appointment. This can be especially useful in the beginning as you get used to the lightboard. As you develop experience using it, you can decide if you want to record more videos in one session. If you do, be sure to allow time between videos to clean the lightboard. (DMS will provide cleaning materials.)

- If you are using notes, a matte black backing will make them less obvious in the videos.
- You can use large format grid paper to pre-draw lines for graphs and charts before recording begins. Stick the grid paper to the camera side of the lightboard, draw the lines you need on the speaker side, then remove the paper. Voila! You’ll have straight lines!
- Practice facial expressions while writing. This may seem like a strange tip, but all of us become very focused when drawing and writing and our faces show that. Practice having a relaxed look on your face so that your audience will also feel relaxed. And smile whenever it seems natural!
- Look directly at the camera when not writing. This will help your video audience feel like you’re talking to them.
- For some creative videos, you can adjust the lightboard lights so that you don’t show, but your writing or drawing does. If you use this technique, it is best to wear black clothing and to wear black gloves to enhance the effect.
- Leave a 3” margin around the lightboard to avoid having the frame appear in your videos.
- Practice on an equal-sized whiteboard for best results.
- Consider pre-writing/drawing some content. If you need straight lines, for example, pre-draw them as described above. If you want to remind viewers of something discussed in an earlier video, write it in advance.
- *Print* legibly.
- Aim for one (1) board’s worth of content per video or plan a transition when the board can be cleaned.

**Example Videos**

You can see some short examples using the lightboard at the Duke Digital Initiative (DDI) project page: [https://dukedigitalinitiative.duke.edu/projects/lightboard/](https://dukedigitalinitiative.duke.edu/projects/lightboard/) The project page also has a link to the technical specifications for the lightboard and a description of how the Duke lightboard differs from the original design.