

Multimodal Composition: Invention

An Introduction to Multimodality

Texts always have at least a visual component. The font, spacing and format influence the way in which a text is read and interpreted. Considering how the visual components of an essay or presentation interact becomes even more important when incorporating images, audio streams and videos. The mixing of these various elements becomes a multimodal text that can be analyzed alongside the work's content.

Conceptualizing your Composition

Most genres—books, emails, standard essays—have a particular form for particular reasons: uniformity, formality, legibility, etc. You might consider reasons for your visual, aural, and editorial elements by being aware of your choices during composition and the overall purpose of your project.

The following questions may be useful in thinking about and understanding the effects of various elements on your audience. You might use them as a way to make revision and composition decisions:

<i>Material</i>	<i>Formal</i>	<i>Efficient</i>	<i>Final</i>
What is the most suitable material to use considering my audience, resources, and assignment?	Does this presentation or arrangement of material have a strong relationship to my rhetorical purpose?	How will I use new and traditional tools to illustrate my point? What will I need to know to be successful?	Considering my intention for this project, how is content/form related to my purpose?

Composing in New Modes

If you are more accustomed to traditional genres and forms, you may need to learn new skills for writing and reading multimodal texts. Resources for terminology, tutorials and design principles are given below.

Technical Tutorials

[MediaCollege.com](http://www.media.college.com) offers free tutorials and tips for working with video, audio, photos, graphics and web design.

[Tutorialparadise.com](http://www.tutorialparadise.com) is a database of video tutorials for multimedia programs like Photoshop and Audacity.

Analytical Guides

[Silva Rhetoricae](http://www.silva.rhetoricae.com) shares some ways of thinking about content and form (rhetoric.byu.edu/).

[Purdue's Online Writing Lab](http://www.purdue.edu/owl/writing_lab) describes how to develop rhetorical analyses of multimodal texts. (owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/725/02/).

Instructional Videos

[Principles of Graphic Design](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eUhJ_jTrMQ)
http://youtu.be/-eUhJ_jTrMQ

[Effects of Typeface Choices](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU830I2k2ug)
<http://youtu.be/qU830I2k2ug>

[Process of Video Production](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7nYDL1yyEk)
<http://youtu.be/U7nYDL1yyEk>

University Writing Center

University of Denver • Penrose @ Driscoll • (303) 871-7456 • www.du.edu/writing/wrc.htm

A Place to Start with Resources and Applications

Multimodal texts are relatively new to academic instruction: you might read, listen, or watch other work to see what you like and how similar techniques may be effective for your project.

Online Applications

The sites listed below are online applications that function across operating systems by being Internet-based. These tools can be used for creating and editing multimedia. Many provide their own tutorial video or guided instruction for first-time users. Other helpful videos and instructions for specific questions are search-able online.

[Aviary.com](http://aviary.com) is the online alternative to Adobe® Creative Suite, offering easy-to-use applications for music creation, image markup, screen capture, video and audio editing.

[BlockPosters.com](http://blockposters.com) reworks large image files for printing from standard printers by dissecting the image for reassembly—useful for attention-grabbing community projects.

[Google.com](http://google.com) houses sites for creating documents, presentations, diagrams, models, websites and blogs for any of your collaborative or individual projects.

[Jaycut.com](http://jaycut.com) offers an online video-editor that can remix scenes, trim clips, add music, transitions, effects, captions, subtitles and publish on YouTube or your desktop.

[Prezi.com](http://prezi.com) is an online alternative to PowerPoint software that can publish presentations with embedded images, video, audio and effects for viewing online or on your desktop.

[Screencast-O-Matic.com](http://screencast-o-matic.com) is an online screen recorder and editor that can publish videos to directly to YouTube or your computer.

Content Databases

Through Penrose, writers can access many more subject-specific resources for images, video and audio (see, under “Databases,” “Digital Media”). Make sure to review “Terms of Use” for all media. Penrose Services offers a useful guide (<http://tinyurl.com/penrosefairuseguide>).

AccuNet/AP Multimedia Archive provides access to images, audio clips and graphics from 160 years of news history which may be useful for political and community projects. (Available through Penrose Databases)

[Archive.org](http://archive.org) is an extensive and continuous collection of current and historical videos, images, texts, software and music.

[FreeMusicArchive.org](http://freemusicarchive.org) is a collection of free, legally download-able audio recordings. Tracks are offered under different licenses; understand Terms of Use.

University Writing Center