

Using VoiceThread to Record Visual Reflections

Ashley Hasty, PhD
Lecturer, Apparel Merchandising
The College of Arts & Sciences
Indiana University Bloomington
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Audience –

This tool can be useful for instructors of both small and large classes, although it would be most useful for smaller classes due to the time-intensive nature of grading. Additionally, this tool would be especially useful for instructors of creative or visual courses.

Instructional approach/Tool Involved –

One learning outcome for this course is to evaluate visual promotion activities. In response to this learning outcome, students complete a VoiceThread activity, which is an External Tool option within Canvas Assignments.

VoiceThread Assignment:

Groups are asked to find an image of a window display from the last three months on WindowsWearPro and upload it to Canvas. They are then required to answer the following questions thoroughly using all of VoiceThread's features.

Course-Focused Questions:

- How did our in-class activities, so far, (tours, field trips, in-class worksheets, etc.) help your understanding of visual merchandising?
- Explain how this display is appropriate for the store's brand and target market.
- Describe the display in terms of design tools and rules.

In response to their work, I am able to use Media Comments within Speed Grader to provide personalized and timely feedback. This is a feature that I use with many of the assignments in this class, but it is especially important for the VoiceThread assignment because it is conducted entirely online. There is no in-class time devoted to this assignment. Therefore, it is especially important that students receive timely feedback and Canvas allows this feedback to be personalized with media comments where students and I can have an asynchronous conversation about their work.

Implementation steps –

The main tool involved is VoiceThread, which can easily be embedded into a Canvas Assignment through the following steps:

1. Click on the Assignments tab
2. Click the blue “+ Assignment” button
3. Enter the assignment information such as the assignment name, description, and number of points as you normally would
4. Under “Submission type” click on the scroll-down menu and select “External tool”
5. Click “Find”
6. Scroll to the bottom and click on “VoiceThread”
7. Click the blue “Select” button

Once you save and publish the assignment, a button will appear at the bottom of the assignment description that says “Load [Assignment Name] in a new window.” When you or a student clicks on this button, it will automatically bring the student into the VoiceThread website. There is no need for the student to register within VoiceThread.

After the students access VoiceThread, they create a new VoiceThread by following these steps:

1. Click on the green “+ Add your own” button on the top right
2. Click “Create a new VoiceThread”
3. Click “Add Media”
4. Click “My Computer”
5. Upload an image of your choice by selecting the image and clicking “open”
6. Title your new VoiceThread and enter a description, if necessary
7. Click “Comment”
8. Click on the + sign at the bottom center of your image
9. Click on the microphone icon (a pop up from Adobe Flash Player Settings might appear, click “Allow.”)
10. Record your voice answering the assigned questions
11. While recording your voice, use the pen tool to draw on the image to help you illustrate your points
12. Click “Stop Recording” when you’ve completed your reflection
13. Click “Save”

Future directions/modifications –

Students enjoy using VoiceThread. Students occasionally show frustration before they learn how to use it, but by the end of the semester students talk about how the tool enables them to discuss and evaluate visual promotion activities in a visual way. In the past, students were asked to write an evaluation of a visual promotion activity

and students struggled putting into words their evaluation of a visual work. VoiceThread allows students to actively use their chosen visual promotion to illustrate their points. Students have indicated a great appreciation that they can access VoiceThread through Canvas. I've heard complaints about other professors using external tools that require students to create a new username and password. Students expressed relief when they found out they can access VoiceThread directly through Canvas and that they are automatically registered when they access VoiceThread through the Canvas Assignment.