

How to record simple knowledge clips / lectures with OBS?

by Oksana Kavatsyuk

version 1 (16.04.2021)

The Open Broadcaster Software (OBS) is free and open-source software for video recording and live streaming (modular screen capture program). This guide will cover steps on how to record a simple knowledge clip or a lecture using OBS.

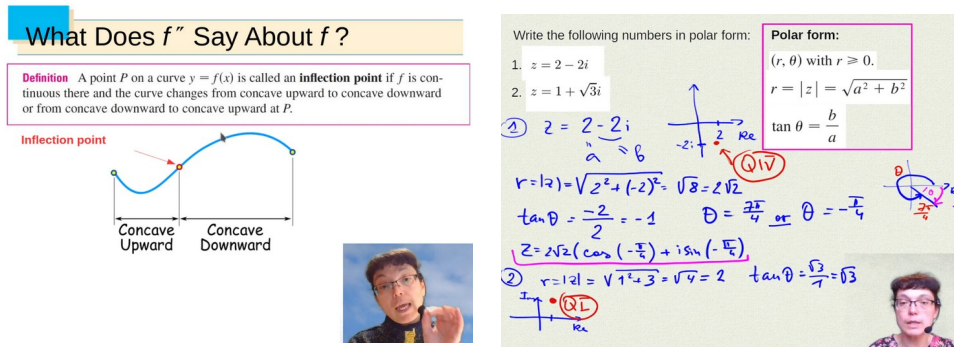


Fig. 1 Examples of the simple layout for the knowledge clip: a PowerPoint (or OpenOffice) presentation with the webcam overlay (left) and a whiteboard software with webcam (right).

I am using OBS to capture a PowerPoint (or OpenOffice) presentation with the webcam overlay (Fig.1). There is a separate manual how to use OBS for your online sessions (sharing OBS as an application in Blackboard Collaborate) by Clemens Mayer.

Equipment

To record your presentation slides with a webcam overlay you need a camera and a microphone. The simplest solution is to use the build-in camera of your laptop. An external microphone (e.g. on a clip or a head-set) will improve the quality of your sound (this is the most important extra equipment). An external USB webcam will allow often for a better image quality and can be placed at a different position than your laptop. It is more convenient to record if you have two screens. You run the OBS one screen and can see the presentation on the other screen (but recording with only a laptop is also possible).

My set-up (Fig.2):

- laptop
- second screen
- external microphone

It is important to have a good light if you plan to record the webcam. Find a place with a good daylight (but not direct sun-shine). If I need to record in the evening, I use simple lamps shining to the white ceiling (Fig.3).



Fig. 2 Basic equipment to record a simple knowledge clip: a laptop, a second screen, external microphone and a writing pad (to right as on “white board”).



Fig. 3 A simple lamp shining to the white ceiling to improve your light in the evening.

Step 1: Download and install OBS

You can download OBS under the following link: <https://obsproject.com/download> for your preferred operating system (Windows, Mac, Linux). Follow the installation instruction for your system.

Step 2: Open OBS and prepare the layout

Open OBS. You will see the default screen, shown in Fig.4. It includes the following parts: Scenes, Sources, Audio Mixer and Controls.

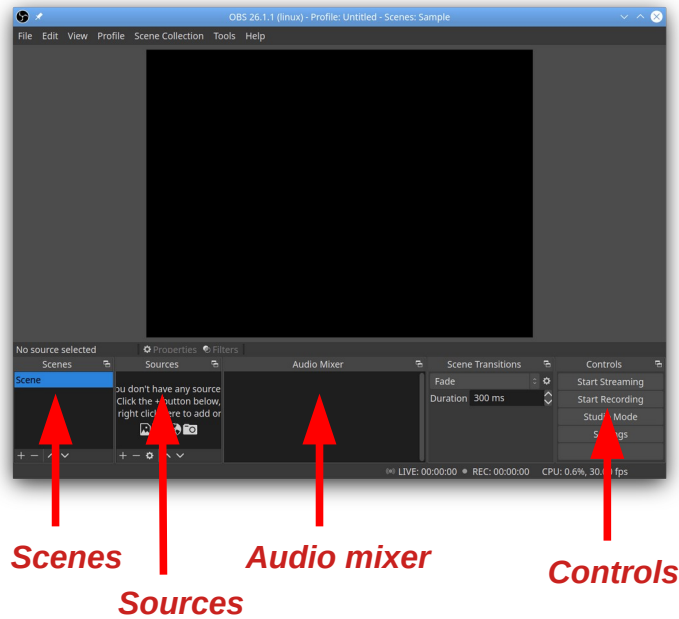
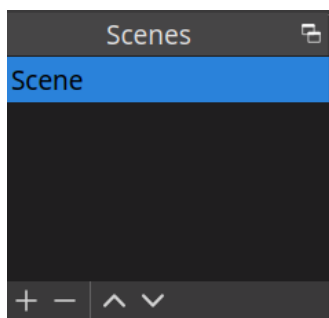


Fig. 4 The OBS default screen.

Scenes

A scene is a prearranged layout of sources. The simplest scene for a knowledge-clip would be:

- Screen capture (e.g. PowerPoint slides)
- Camera (Webcam overlay)
- Audio Capture (voice)



By default you have a scene added. It can be re-named by <right click> on it. To create more scenes (e.g. add an intro or credits) click on < + > in the scene window. Use " - " to delete a scene.

Sources

You need to provide input sources for OBS. Click on < + > and choose a source from the menu. Open your presentation in PowerPoint (or OpenOffice). Enter "presenting" mode (full screen <F5>).

- In Scenes choose **Window Capture** >> **Window** >> "Presenting: Lecture_slides.ppt " (choose your slides).

Alternatively, you can choose a window and crop the image in menu (e.g. to explain something on a website).

- To set-up the camera: choose **Video Capture Device** >> **Integrated Webcam** (choose from the list)

You should see a screen similar to the one shown in Fig. 5. The active source is highlighted with a red frame. You can drag it (to change its position) or scale it with the mouse (adjusting the red frame).

Click on a source in the list to make it active. The sources create layers in your screen. To change the order use **^ V** in the **Source** box to move them to front or back (the first on the list source is in front).

Use “ - ” to delete a source.

“Right mouse click” on a source and choose **Properties** if you need to make adjustments/changes to your existing source.

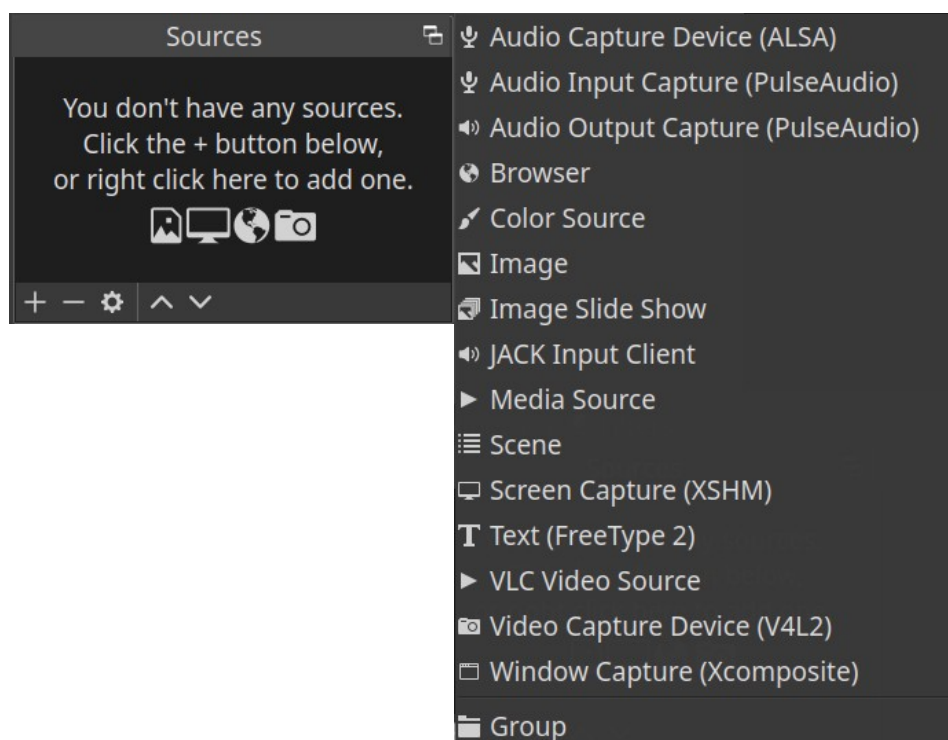


Fig. 5 The Source menu.

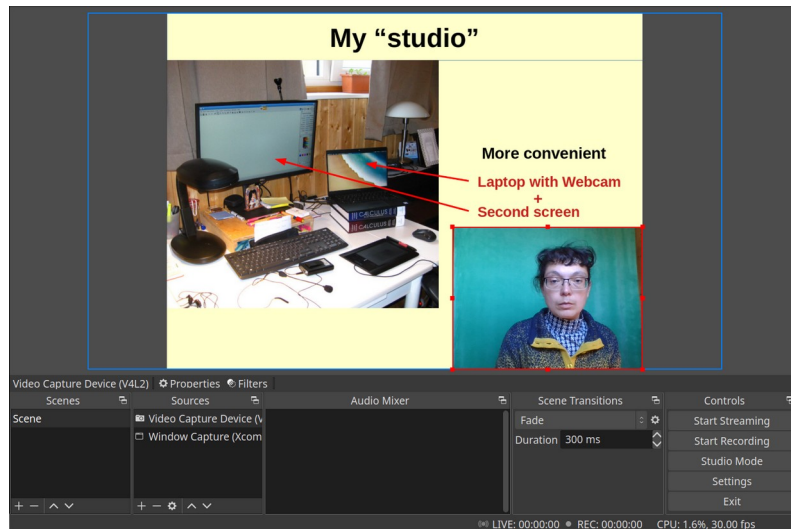


Fig. 6 A scene with two sources: a Presentation and a Webcam overlay.

Audio

To add Audio Capture (to record your voice):

Go to **Controls** (shown in Fig.4 and Fig.7) >> **Settings** >> **Audio** (in the left menu)

Choose from available sources:

- **Mic/Auxiliary Audio** >> "M-audio Transit Analog Stereo" (this is the name of my external microphone, you will have a different one)
- **Desktop Audio** (I use this one for have a sound from my intro video, added as a media source (mp4-file) in a separate scene).

Disable sources you are not using, not to disturb your recording.

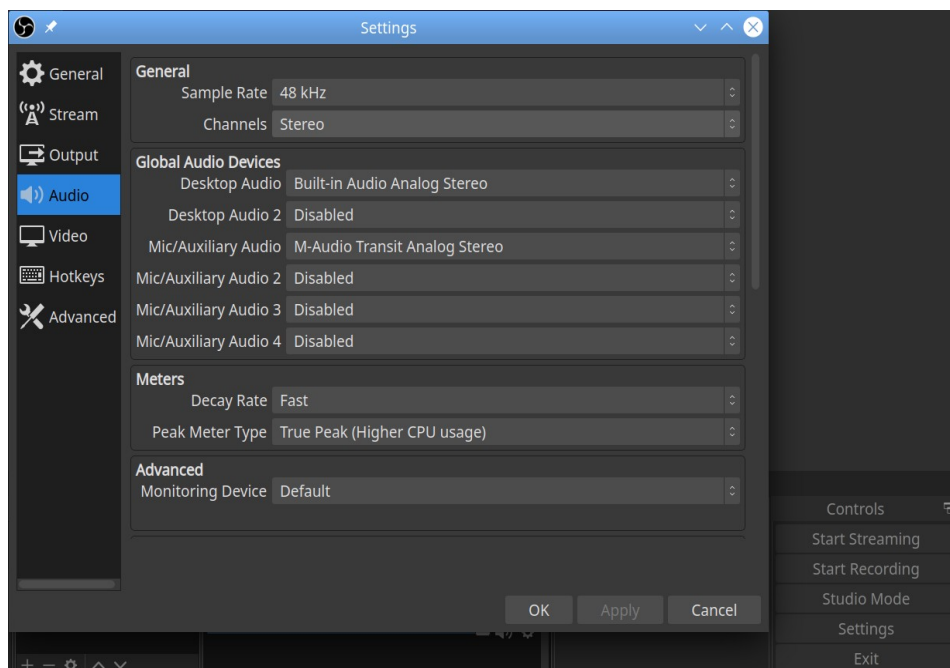


Fig. 7 A scene with two sources: a Presentation and a Webcam overlay.

Step 3: Check your settings

You are almost ready to record! Check the settings before you start.

Go to **Controls** (shown in Fig.4 and Fig.8) >> **Settings** >> **Output** (in the left menu)

Recording Path: choose a path where you would like to store your recorded files.

Use "Browse" to select a directory.

Recording Format: Choose a recording format "**mp4**" is a universal format.

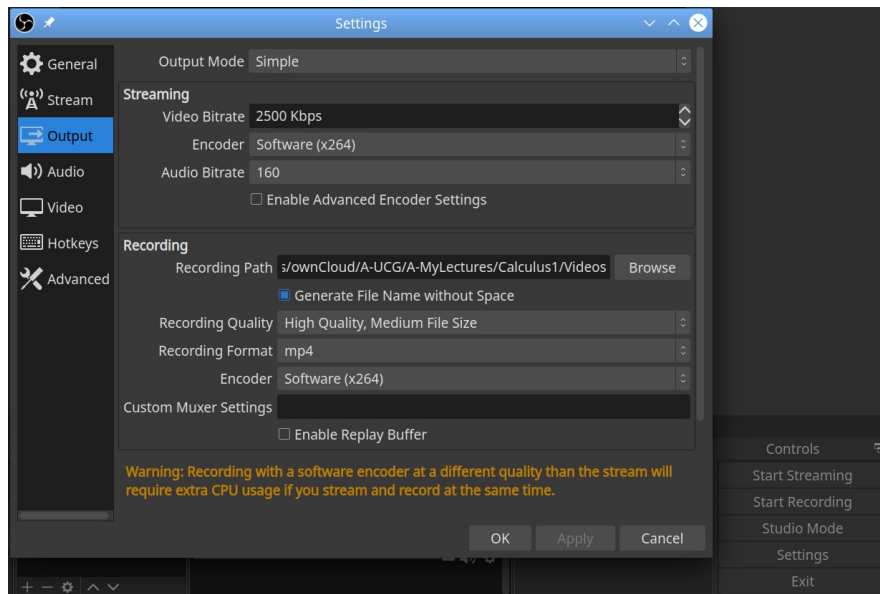


Fig. 8 Setup the output path and file format (mp4).

Step 4: Record

When you are ready:

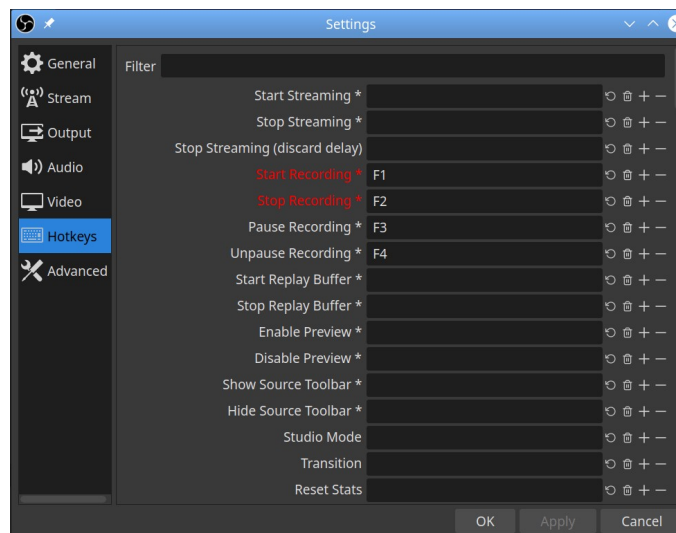
Go to **Controls** >> click on **Start Recording**. To end the recording click **Stop Recording**.

I personally, like to use "Hotkeys" to start and stop a recording. To set-up this go to

Controls >> Settings >> Hotkeys

Start Recording: F1

Stop Recording: F2



Step 5: Check your video

You can quickly find your recordings in **Main Menu >> File >> Show Recordings.**