

# **eTools: Using Microsoft Mix in the Classroom**

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## **Introduction**

Video-based lecture capture has become a popular necessity for instructors in varying modalities (e.g., distance, online, or face-to-face) as a primary means of subject matter information transfer. While there are applications available to record lecture content and distribute this content to students, the ability to interactively use PowerPoint (PPT) while recording lecture material is not as pronounced in some education technology offerings. Microsoft Mix is an alternative means to capture lecture content in a video format while using PPT slide decks through screen capture capabilities.

## **What is Microsoft Mix?**

Microsoft Mix (hereafter referred to as Mix) is a free add-in for Microsoft PowerPoint that allows educators and presenters to seamlessly integrate previously used Microsoft products. As an add-in/extension, but not a stand-alone application, Mix creates opportunities for Microsoft Office Suite incorporation that may elude other education lecture capturing apps. If you are among those educators who have been frustrated by PowerPoint's stoic display, Mix presents a media rich alternative.

Mix accomplishes a variety of tasks because its interactive capabilities go beyond traditional lecture capture. For example, Mix allows instructors to create PPT slide decks

with both audio and video narration. Real time formative assessment measures (e.g., quizzes, polls) also can be integrated directly into the Mix program. For instructors interested in replicating smart or white-board technology, Mix not only allows for screen capture recording, but also real time screen writing, highlighting, and formulaic presentation (which Microsoft refers to as digital inking).

PPT slides often need an interactive supplement and Mix can accomplish synchronous classroom features in an asynchronous environment. Mix is a wonderful option for those instructors who want to continue to use PPT, but are looking for a more tangible student-instructor/student-student interface. You can distribute your Mix creations by uploading them to the Microsoft Mix cloud, exporting them, or creating a MP4 and sharing your videos offline.

### **How can I get Microsoft Mix for use in the classroom?**

Access to Microsoft Mix is simple, particularly if you have already downloaded Microsoft PowerPoint. If you already have PowerPoint 2013 (or higher) downloaded on your computer, visit <https://mix.office.com>, sign in with your Microsoft account, and download the extension. If you do not have a recent version of PowerPoint, you can get a free trial version or use your education account to download Office 365 Education. According to Microsoft, Mac users may need a Windows emulator (they suggest Parallels or Bootcamp) before downloading PPT and the Mix extension.

## **How can I use Microsoft Mix in the classroom?**

Instructors can use Mix as a supplement in the face-to-face course or as a primary vehicle for content and information transfer in an online or hybrid/blended course. Specifically, Microsoft Mix can be used as:

1. *a tool to create a flipped classroom environment.* Because the Mix extension can serve as an interactive platform where content is explored online, you can use Mix presentations as an aesthetically appealing alternative to solely text-based presentations and as a means to foster student interaction with the course material through quizzes and polls.

2. *a media rich platform of content and information transfer.* Although Powerpoint became popular for a variety of reasons, one of its most appealing features is the ability to relay a substantial amount of information through text. In many ways this “text heavy” reliance can become, if not managed appropriately, an instructional faux pas. Mix allows you to create a media rich platform that emphasizes audio and video components, not just text. For example, with Mix, you can record yourself discussing a slide and limit the amount of bullet points, direct quotes, and other distracting PPT features. The ability to record your thoughts, as a supplement to text-based slides, is an excellent feature of the program.

3. *an analytical tool to dissect student participation with presentations.* The ability for instructors to monitor student attendance and class participation (when engaging in

a flipped classroom mode, or another similar modality) has been a consistent weakness for some other lecture capture applications. Mix solves the participation tracking issue by implementing data analytics in presentations. Instructors can identify those students who watched the video and know how much time was spent reading or viewing each slide.

4. *a means of enhancing student-teacher interaction.* Students and instructors alike often fall into the trap of e-mail as the sole mode of student-instructor interaction. While it may be tempting to view Mix as a tool better suited for the hybrid/blended or flipped environments, instructors in face-to-face settings can use Mix as an additional layer of rich interaction. For example, instructors can use Mix as a video announcement tool or as an instructional supplement to visually demonstrate assignment feedback or subject matter while directly commenting on classroom material. Video announcements and assignment clarification are two ways to save instructors from an overabundance of student e-mail messages.

5. *a tool to develop organizational competency.* PPT presentations still are present in the corporate environment, particularly in corporations that utilize virtual teams. Because Mix can be used in corporate settings as a vehicle for enhanced innovative presentations, students may appreciate a tutorial in the creative design of virtual presentations.

## **Conclusion**

Microsoft Mix is a revolutionary extension to the popular PPT software application. Ultimately, it provides instructors with a means to record lecture content within the PPT application and can serve as a tool to track student participation and involvement with course presentations. For institutions with access to Microsoft Office, Microsoft Mix is an effective and user friendly means to record subject matter material and enhance instructional presentations.