If you’ve shot and edited video pertaining to the medical school, you’re ready to upload your content to YouTube. Here’s how to optimize your videos for search engine success.

1. **Always upload your video to YouTube.** The Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and many other Northwestern affiliates manage YouTube channels. YouTube boasts more than 1 billion unique users per month and is the web’s second largest search engine. Given the high volume of traffic, the massive number of searches conducted on the web site, and the site’s relationship with Google, Communications recommends using YouTube **even if you are also uploading your video directly to another site**, such as Vimeo or Facebook.

   You can find recommended specifications for uploading your video to YouTube on the Office of Communications web page.

2. **Do keyword research.** [Google Keyword Tool](https://ads.google.com/home/tools/keyword/) is a great resource for generating a list of words and phrases that are used in search when looking for content like yours.

   Look for high-volume keywords with low or medium competition, and use the keyword suggestions in your image tagging, names, and descriptions.

3. **Create a descriptive title for your video.** Descriptive words will help search engines connect interested users with your image. You would be better served by using the title “Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine Match Day 2013,” vs. “Match Day.” Likewise, “Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine Obesity Disease Lecture by Dr. John Doe,” is better than “4-29 Lecture.”

   Whenever possible, include Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine or Feinberg in the title.

4. **Write a keyword rich description for your video, and link back to the Feinberg site.** Include the names of prominent speakers, subjects, and your department, center, or institute in the description. Also, include the word “video” in your description.

   Following your video description, insert something like: “Learn more about Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine at [www.feinberg.northwestern.edu](http://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu).”

   Contextual links are not allowed in YouTube descriptions as of June 2013. If your link is long, use a link shortener such as [bitly](https://bitly.com/) to condense it.

5. **Use tags.** Tags are helpful because they help YouTube users locate your video. Because of this, you can use as many keywords as necessary – but make sure all these are relevant to your video. These keywords or tags add weight to your content. There is no singular “best practice” for the number of keywords; don’t be sparse with your keywords, but don’t litter your tags with irrelevant words. When researching tags and keywords, check Google for common misspellings. For instance, Alzheimer’s is commonly spelled as alziemers, allzheimers, alzeimers and altzheimers. All are appropriate for the tags field.

6. **Be consistent with titles, descriptions, and tags.** Don’t worry about overusing the same words. Consistency is important to search engines.
7. ** Beautify your video thumbnails.** Video thumbnails are the images that people first see when deciding whether to watch your video. These thumbnails often accompany video descriptions within search engine results. Be sure to select the most compelling thumbnail from those provided by YouTube.

Recently, YouTube has begun rolling out a custom thumbnail feature, though not all accounts have the ability to use this feature. If you have the ability to use a custom thumbnail, feel free to use a compelling still shot from your video that accurately communicates what your video is about.

8. **Extra credit: Include transcripts and take advantage of YouTube’s caption feature.** Most videos produced in-house will not have a transcript to share. However, if you do have a transcript, or find it easy to create one, an option exists in the YouTube Video manager to “upload a transcript” (it’s located under the subhead “Captions”). Again, since search engines cannot see video, a transcript or captions serve to let these sites know the content of your video.

9. **Correct the captions.** If you do not upload captions, YouTube will provide automatic “machine transcripts” for your videos within a few days. These are created by a machine and are not very accurate (for instance, one Feinberg video had “nanoparticles” captioned as “hamburgers”). Take some time to correct these, as Google will index them.

You can easily correct the captions by following these steps.

- Login to your YouTube channel.
- Click “Video Manager” in the navigation menu (top of screen) and select ‘edit’ for the video you wish to correct.
- Select the option “Captions” from the video edit menu.
- Click on “Active Tracks.” The captions will appear in an editable box along with time-stamp. Correct each caption while playing the video on the left hand side.
- Click “Save a Copy” when you have completed the corrections.
- Name your corrected captions track and save the changes.
- Disable automatic captions.

10. **Add your videos to a Feinberg playlist.** Communications maintains several playlists for YouTube. You have two options for inclusion on a Feinberg playlist.

    a. If you upload to your own channel (department, center, or institute), send an e-mail to n-mladic@northwestern.edu with the link to your video. Communications will add your video to the appropriate playlist on the Feinberg channel.
    b. If you do not have the option of uploading your video to a YouTube channel, send your video on disk to the Office of Communications, along with text for the title, descriptions, and tags. Videos sent without title, description, and tags will not be eligible for upload.

This process may seem time-consuming, but it’s important to remember that without the right metadata and text, videos are virtually invisible to search engines.

*You are welcome to re-post these tips. If doing so, please credit “Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine” and link back to www.feinberg.northwestern.edu.*

*Created 6.10.2013 by Nicole Mladic*