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Comparing 12 Free Screencasting Tools

Combing through the basic functions and features of a list of tools I've become aware of, to select some for further testing.



Over the course of the week, the list of Screencasting [tools that have been recommended to me](#)¹, or that I've otherwise learned of, has grown to a dozen.

I have a goal of trying identify a free tool or set of tools to use to create stand alone tutorials by combining screen images and screen motion with audio. I would also like to have some editing capabilities, so I could combine multiple captures and rearrange the order of these pieces if needed, and to be able to re-record audio annotation if possible. I would also like to have screen annotation capabilities, at least for the screen captures.

Given this set of desired functions and features, and the long list of tools, it's only logical that I briefly review each application to see what they can do. Based on these initial fundings, I'll select a number of tools to take for a trial run, much as I did with Jing [last week](#)².

I realize that in a quick overview like this, I may miss something important about how one or more of these apps work, so if anyone notices any errors or important omissions in my summary table, please comment and let us know about them. I wish I had the time to actually try all of these tools out, but I don't, so I am sticking with this broader approach of learning a little about each app and using that info to inform my decision about which to spend more time with.

Feature/Function Summary Table

Application	File Format(s)	Sharing Files	Editing Capabilities
Jing.com	SWF (Shockwave Flash)	Files are created on the local PC (the app runs locally, not on the Internet). SWF files are stand alone and can be shared like any other file (and viewed with any SWF compatible viewer), or via Screencast.com.	Screen images can be edited
Other Jing Notes: <i>Presentations are limited to 5 min. in length. Inexpensive Pro version (\$14.95/yr.) provides add'l capabilities (such as MP4 file format).</i>			
Screentoaster.com	Unknown (that is, presentations are stored on the site, in whatever format they happen to be in, and cannot be downloaded)	Presentations (stored on the site) can be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites.	None
Screenjelly.com	Unknown	Presentations (stored on the site) can be shared via email links, or Twitter.	None
Other Screenjelly Notes: <i>Recordings are limited to 3 minutes.</i>			
Screenpresso.com	PNG, JPG, GIF, BMP	Captured image files can be easily be shared.	Many editing tools for manipulating and annotating the captured images.
Other Screenpresso Notes: <i>Screenpresso is just for image capture, not for screen motion capture (it really doesn't belong in this list!).</i>			
Screenr.com	Unknown	Presentations (stored on the site) can easily be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites. <i>[I have since learned that files can also be downloaded as .mp4</i>	None

		files. KW 1/24/10]	
Notes: Screenr's main focus is sharing screencasts via Twitter.			
Screencast-O-matic.com	.MOV	Files can be exported, and therefore easily shared or uploaded to sites like YouTube. Presentations can also be stored on the Screencast-O-matic site and accessed by URL or embed code.	None (in free version)
Other Screencast-O-matic Notes: Videos can be up to 15 minutes long. There is a Pro version that allows files up to 1 hr. on length and provides more functionality.			
Freescreencast.com	.FLV (Flash Video)	Presentations stored on the site can be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites. Presentations files can also be downloaded in .FLV format, for viewing with any Flash compatible viewer.	None
Other Freescreencast Notes: According to their last blog post (almost a year ago, in Feb '09), Freescreencast is going to made fully available as 'open source' software.			
Screencastle.com	Unknown	Presentations (stored on the site) can be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites.	None
Other ScreencastIt Notes: Screencastle does not use log ins, so all casts are instantly available to everyone, and are not linked to individual accounts. One interesting feature of the site is the availability of widgets for automated screencasting from within Wordpress and some other tools.			
Webinaria.com	AVI, FLV	Files are stored on the site, and can easily be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites. Files can also be	None

		downloaded in .FLV format, for viewing with any Flash compatible viewer.	
CamStudio.org	AVI, SWF	Files are created on the local PC (the app runs locally, not on the Internet), and can therefore easily be distributed. These formats can be uploaded to YouTube and other video sharing sites for web based sharing.	None
Faculte.com	Unknown	Presentations (stored on the site) can be shared via email links, and can also be embedded on websites.	There are a number of editing capabilities, including the ability to add captions to video.
<i>Other Faculte Notes:</i> <i>Faculte is really intended to be a paid tool. The free option limits presentation creators to just 200 views of their presentation.</i>			
Debut from NCHsoftware	AVI, WMV, FLV, ASF, MPG, 3GP, MP4, MOV, and more	Files are created on the local PC (the app runs locally, not on the Internet), and can therefore easily be distributed. These formats can be uploaded to YouTube and other video sharing sites for web based sharing.	There are a number of editing capabilities, including the ability to add captions to video.
<i>Other Debut Notes:</i> <i>There is a paid "Plus" version of Debut available for \$59.95, with various add-on applets available as well to provide additional functionality.</i>			

Summary of Findings

Several of these tools seem to provide the same basic function - screen motion and audio capture (with no editing capability) and the resulting captures can only be published right on their site. Screentoaster, Screenjelly, and Screencastle each look like they fall into this category. I much prefer a tool that allows files to be downloaded, providing more flexibility for distribution, and the potential for combining clips with a tool like Windows Movie Maker to create a desired end result.

A couple sites don't meet my criteria and therefore won't be further considered (*Screenpresso is just for images, and Faculte's free version limits the no. of users who can view presentations*). This leaves Jing, Screencast-O-matic, Freescrencast, CamStudio, Webinaria, and Debut to consider for further review. I've already test Jing a bit (see [last week's post](#)² for more on this). Debut looks like it has great potential, with it's editing capabilities and available paid upgrade. It also allows for screen image capture or screen motion capture, like Jing. Of the rest, based on a review of the information on their websites, I would rank my interest (most to least), as follows: Screencast-O-matic, Webinaria, CamStudio, then Freescrencast. *[Ed Note - After writing this article, I learned that Screenr.com allows files to be downloaded, and after trying this tool, I really like it – KW 1/31/10]*

Of course, you may have different goals than I, and some of these tools may meet your needs even though they are not necessarily what I am looking for, so feel free to check them as you see fit!

[1] <http://www.emergingedtech.com/2010/01/10-free-screencasting-tools-to-check-out/>

[2] <http://www.emergingedtech.com/2010/01/creating-brief-instructional-videos-and-more-with-jing/>

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