



Winthrop University 2020 Learning Design and Technology 2020 Holiday Gift Guide!

Ho! Ho! Ho! The holidays are upon us and if you're looking for the perfect gift for the Learning and Development Specialist, Teacher, Zoom meeting professional, or anybody else in your life (or yourself), here are some suggestions for you.

In a nod to current events, this first (and possibly last) ever **#WULDT Holiday Gift Guide** is devoted to helping you **create better sound and lighting** in your video conferences and recorded learning materials. Whether you are Zooming or creating asynchronous learning materials, you'll find recommendations on headset, desktop, and mobile microphones, lighting, and more to help you make all of your learning materials and video conferences merry and bright. Or at least have better audio and lighting.

These products have all been used personally and professionally by Dr. Marshall G. Jones. They come recommended, but without an implied or explicit guarantee of any type. We have NO financial interest in any of these products. We receive NO compensation in cash or in kind for these recommendations or if you purchase any products listed here.

We do have an interest in talking to you about **studying Learning Design and Technology at Winthrop University**. We have a new cohort starting in Fall 2021. We offer a comprehensive 30 hour program, a tuition discount, course offerings that meet the needs of working adults, and the quality you expect from a Winthrop degree. For more information, email the Graduate Program Dr. Marshall G. Jones at jonesmg@winthrop.edu or request more information here: <https://gradschool.winthrop.edu/register/ldt>.

And now, on to the good stuff!

Gifts For

BETTER SOUND

If you are in Zoom meetings or recording videos for your asynchronous classes, it's time to up your game! Here are our suggestions for good value **headset microphones**, **desktop microphones**, and **microphones for your mobile phone**. If our suggestions are sold out, look for products with similar features and you should be fine.

HEADSET MICROPHONES

Are you Zooming constantly? Want to sound better and hear better? Try a headset microphone combination. Look for USB connectors that have stereo for the headset and microphone. Stereo plays in both ears of your headphones. Mono (or monaural) plays in only one ear. Here are two suggestions.

Logitech USB Headset H340, Stereo,

This basic headset microphone is about \$22 US dollars from Amazon. The good: it has open headphones so you can still hear what is going on around you and the mic is in Stereo. The bad: the mic is great for conference calls and Zoom work, but not high enough quality for good recording for learning materials. If you're looking for something just for video conferencing, this is a solid option.

https://smile.amazon.com/Logitech-Headset-H340-Stereo-Windows/dp/B008X3JGSI/ref=sr_1_8



CAD Audio USB U2 Stereo Headphones with Cardioid Condenser Microphone

This headset has a very good microphone so you will sound good on Zoom and you could use it for recording podcasts, voice over for video, and more. It is a versatile microphone stereo microphone headset. The headphones aren't noise canceling, but they let in less noise than the Logitech. You should consider that if you need to hear more in your surrounding environment. I own this microphone headset and use it for voice overs when I'm in a hurry and don't want to set up my desktop condenser microphone.

https://smile.amazon.com/CAD-Audio-Headphones-Condenser-Microphone/dp/B0000ACCJA/ref=sr_1_2



DESKTOP MICROPHONES

Condenser microphones connect to your computer through a USB port. They have electronics inside of them to give your voice tone and gravitas in meetings and recordings. Dr. Jones likes to call them "The Voice of God Mic." Condenser microphones can make the low tones richer and the high tones crisp without sounding "tinny." Here are our suggestions for desktop microphones, both from Blue Microphones

(<https://www.bluemic.com/en-us/>).

Snowball by Blue

This versatile condenser microphone is a nice balance of quality and affordability. It provides a high quality recording for around \$50 US dollars. And yes, it does look like a snowball.

<https://www.bluemic.com/en-us/products/snowball-ice>



Yeti by Blue

The Yeti is a step up from the Snowball and has been a favorite microphone of podcasters and musicians for many years. Many professional gamers are now using the Yeti as well. In a nod to its popularity with gamers, they now sell a *World of Warcraft* model, if that matters to you. It is sold in model numbers and configurations ranging from around \$90 - \$250 US dollars. And, yes, I suppose it does look a bit like a Yeti.

<https://www.bluemic.com/en-us/products/snowball-ice/#yeti-series>



Pop Filters

You will find a host of accessories for microphones, but one we recommend for most everybody is a pop filter. When you are recording high quality audio for learning materials, you want to be close to your microphone. Usually 2-6 inches away. (See the book chapter available at the bottom on this page for more details.) This will provide better quality with less echo and hissing noise when you play it back. However, if you get too close to the microphone hard consonants like “T, D, B” etc. can make a popping noise on your recordings. This is known as “popping the mic.” Pop filters are inexpensive and must have accessories for quality audio recording. The mesh like fabric is placed between you and your microphone allowing you to get close without popping the mic. You can find them online for under \$10. You can buy model specific pop filters for different microphones, but the basic ones work just fine. Because you are likely to project aerosols onto the pop filter, we recommend you treat it as a personal item. (It’s a 2020 covid-19 thing.)

<https://smile.amazon.com/Professional-Microphone-Stabilizing-Recordings-Broadcasting/dp/B01N21H9WY>



MOBILE MICROPHONES

Your smartphone has an excellent video camera, but it has a lousy microphone. Upgrade to an external microphone and improve your audio game on Zoom calls, video and more! Most commercially available microphones have a 3.5mm standard input. This is the same

size as the plug for wired headphones. If you have an Android phone, you probably have either a microphone input or a dual use headset microphone port, meaning you can plug in headphones or a microphone into the same port. Check your owner's manual for more. If you have an iPhone you'll need a microphone that connects through the multi purpose Lightning port. Microphones for mobile recording are typically either "shotgun" mics or "lavalier, or lapel" mics. Shotgun mics are used to record both voices and ambient sound. A shotgun mic is "aimed" at the sound source and picks up audio that way. Lavalier, or lapel, mics are typically used to record the voice of a single person. They are clipped onto the clothing and worn close to the face of the person you want to record. How close depends on the sensitivity of the microphone. You can also use a lapel mic during video conferencing if your computer has a microphone port. (Most do.) We have suggestions for both iOS and Android and shotgun and lavalier microphones.

iOS Devices

Rode VideoMic Me-L Directional Microphone for iOS Devices

This shotgun microphone from Rode connects directly to the Lightning port on your iPhone or iPad. It is a stereo microphone and comes with a windscreen and a headphone jack so you can monitor your audio as you record it.

https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1419053-REG/rode_videomic_me_l_directional_microphone_for_iphone.html



Mobile Interface for Apple Devices

While this isn't a microphone, this mobile interface from the well regarded audio company Rode connects to your Lightning port on iPhones and iPads and gives you input for two standard microphones and a headphone jack so you can monitor the recording. You could connect any standard 3.5mm microphone, like a lavalier microphone, to this interface.

<https://www.fullcompass.com/prod/556102-rode-sc6-l-mobile-interface-for-apple-devices>



Android Devices

Most Androids use the standard 3.5 mm input, so any stereo microphone should plug right into your phone. But here are some good ones for you to consider.

PoP voice 16 Feet Single Head Lavalier Lapel Microphone

This basic stereo lavalier microphone will allow you better audio quality on your Android phone. It is a 16ft. wired microphone. It can be used with an Android phone or with an iPhone if you use the interface above. It can be found for under \$20 US dollars.

<https://smile.amazon.com/PoP-voice-Microphone-Omnidirectional-Smartphones/dp/B07FQNBKDK>



Rode Lavalier GO Professional-Grade Wearable Microphone, Black

This lavalier microphone by Rode is a definite upgrade from a basic microphone. If you need professional level audio on your Android phone, this is a good option. It can be found on sale for under \$100 US dollars.

<https://smile.amazon.com/Rode-Lavalier-Professional-Wearable-Microphone/dp/B07WM65GTF>



Rode VideoMicro Compact On-Camera Microphone

This shotgun mic from Rode provides a good option for recording audio from a distance. Rode makes quality audio products and has several models ranging from \$70 - \$200 US dollars.

https://smile.amazon.com/dp/B08CMKX5DG/ref=sr_aod_dp_ttl



Gifts For

BETTER LIGHTING

From Zoom calls to creating video for students and clients, lighting matters. Good lighting can give you a more professional and polished look whether you are in a meeting or creating learning materials. There are things you can do to achieve better lighting in your office or home without purchasing a lighting solution. Look for rooms with windows to let in natural light during the day. Avoid bright lights directly behind you, like overhead lights or large windows. This can make you show up as a shadow. If you need more light on you, try repositioning a desk or table lamp beside you and out of the direct line of sight of the camera. Be careful with shadows here too. You want balanced light on either side of your face, so you may need two light sources, one on each side. If you don't have natural and balanced light in your workspace, you can use an external light source to light your face directly in front. These tools can help.

RING LIGHTS

Ring lights became very popular this year. Professional photographers have used them for many years in portraits because they create a circle of light around a subject's face without a center light source. This provides for nice balanced lighting. As more and more people used video conferencing for work and television appearances during the 2020 pandemic, they found the need for a more professional look through better lighting. Ring lights can provide better lighting in your home office or any other place you may be recording. Ring lights let you adjust the light's brightness and "temperature," also known as the color of the light. The temperature can be "hot," or bright white, or "cool," more of a subdued natural light. These lights can keep you looking your best in your meetings and recorded video from sunup to sundown. Here are our suggestions for Ring Lights.

Emart 10-inch Selfie Ring Light with Adjustable Tripod

This ring light checks a lot of boxes. It can be used with your phone, your computer, or a video camera. It has a tripod to allow you to adjust the height and angle of the light in addition to the brightness and temperature of the light. It is rated as being both easy to use and inexpensive. It can be found for under \$30 US dollars. This is a good option for a desktop ring light that might be a more or less permanent fixture in your office.

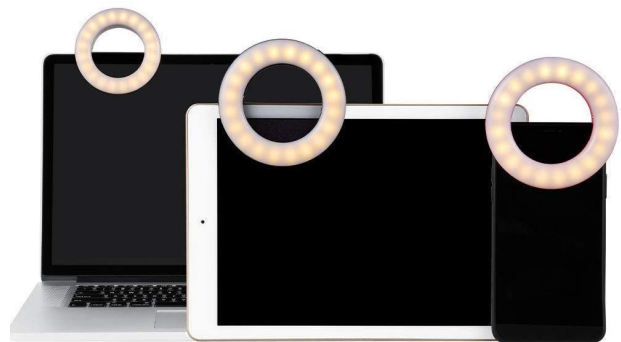
<https://www.amazon.com/10-inch-Adjustable-Dimmable-Ringlight-Brightness/dp/B07TL6Z8LK>



Whellen Selfie Ring Light

If you are looking for a more portable ring light, this small rechargeable ring light can connect to a laptop, tablet, or smartphone. It is a good option for people who work in multiple locations but still are looking for better lighting. It is rechargeable and can be found for under \$20 US dollars.

<https://www.amazon.com/Whellen-Selfie-Tablets-Photography-Rechargeable/dp/B082447KJ8>



Max. Clip Mouth: 0.6 inch

Compatible with All Smart Phones, iPads, tablets, laptops, etc

LUMECUBE LIGHTING OPTIONS

<https://lumecube.com/> makes an innovative set of portable lighting that works well for everything from Zoom calls, to photography, to video production projects, and just about any other time you might need better lighting. Like Ring Lights, these lighting solutions can be adjusted for brightness and temperature. They are rechargeable and extremely portable. They can also be plugged in for continuous use. What makes these more versatile is that they can be attached to the hot shoe of a video camera, DSLR, or mirrorless camera for improved low light environments. They can also be mounted to any standard tripod to be used on a video conference or recorded interview. Here are two portable options we recommend. **Lumecube currently has some very attractive holiday promotions.** We have no financial interest in this company, but they really do make some fine products.

Lumecube Panel Go

The Panel Go is roughly the size of a 3x5 index card but puts out an impressive amount of light. You can adjust the brightness level from 1-100%. It comes with a silicone diffuser to help soften the light. There are accessories available to connect them to your camera or attach them to your laptop to focus light directly onto your face during video conferences. It is more expensive than a Ring Light, but it is portable and versatile.

<https://lumecube.com/products/panel-go>



Broadcast Lighting Kit

If you need a light and a stand, the Broadcast Lighting Kit bundle is worth considering. The Lumecube Broadcast Lighting Kit contains a Panel Go and a table top tripod that allows you to place your light where you need. It is great for desktop meetings, but is small and lightweight enough to take with you.

<https://lumecube.com/products/broadcast-lighting-kit>



A FREE GIFT FOR YOU!

If you'd like to know more about recording and editing quality audio and video products, two of our faculty members, Dr. Marshall G. Jones and Dr. Lisa Harris, have written a publicly available book chapter *Audio and Video Production for Instructional Design Professionals*. While written for Instructional Design Professionals, it is appropriate for anyone who may need some guidance in how to create more polished and professional audio and video products. You'll learn how to record, edit, and distribute audio and video learning materials. You can read it for free here:

https://edtechbooks.org/id/audio_and_videoT

STUDY LEARNING DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY AT WINTHROP!

If you are interested in technology, learning, and helping people solve complex problems, we invite you to **earn your Master's degree in Learning Design and Technology at Winthrop University**. We have a **new cohort starting in Fall 2021**. We offer a comprehensive 30 hour program, a tuition discount, course offerings that meet the needs of working adults, and the quality you expect from a Winthrop degree. Our graduates work in k-12 schools, universities, businesses, and more. We are an excellent degree program

for teachers, but you don't need a background in education to pursue our degree. For more information, email the Graduate Program Dr. Marshall G. Jones at jonesmg@winthrop.edu or request more information here:

<https://gradschool.winthrop.edu/register/ldt>.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!

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