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Screen Video Recording Made Simple

by Alan German

Have you tried talking a friend or relative through a series of computer steps over the telephone? It can be difficult, can't it? Another way to provide the instructions is to record a video of your computer monitor as you perform the actions, complete with your running commentary as you do so.

The best way to accomplish this is to use a video recording app that can access your video and sound cards to provide a quality picture and an associated sound track. And, what could be better than a piece of free software that does all of the above exceptionally handily?

At the club's Q&A session on February 17, 2021, Chris Taylor briefly described *OBS (Open Broadcaster Software) Studio*, noting that it was free, open-source, cross-platform (Windows, Linux and MacOS), powerful, flexible, and highly configurable. With such a resounding recommendation, this just has to be a good starting point for anyone needing to undertake a little screen video capture.

For those new to OBS, the installation process suggests checking out a four-step Quickstart Guide. This loads a web page that is one of a series of on-line guides and information on the use of the program. The four steps are to run the Auto-Configuration Wizard, set up the audio and video sources, and test the settings that have been established for recording.

The Auto-Configuration Wizard is accessed from the Tools menu and asks how the program is going to be used. Note that the radio buttons for the various options are counter-intuitive. When "lit up" the button is not selected. I selected *Optimize just for recording, I will not be streaming* as my test was going to be a simple screen capture. The next screen was to set the picture resolution and the frames per second (FPS). I left these at their default values as these seemed to be appropriate choices.

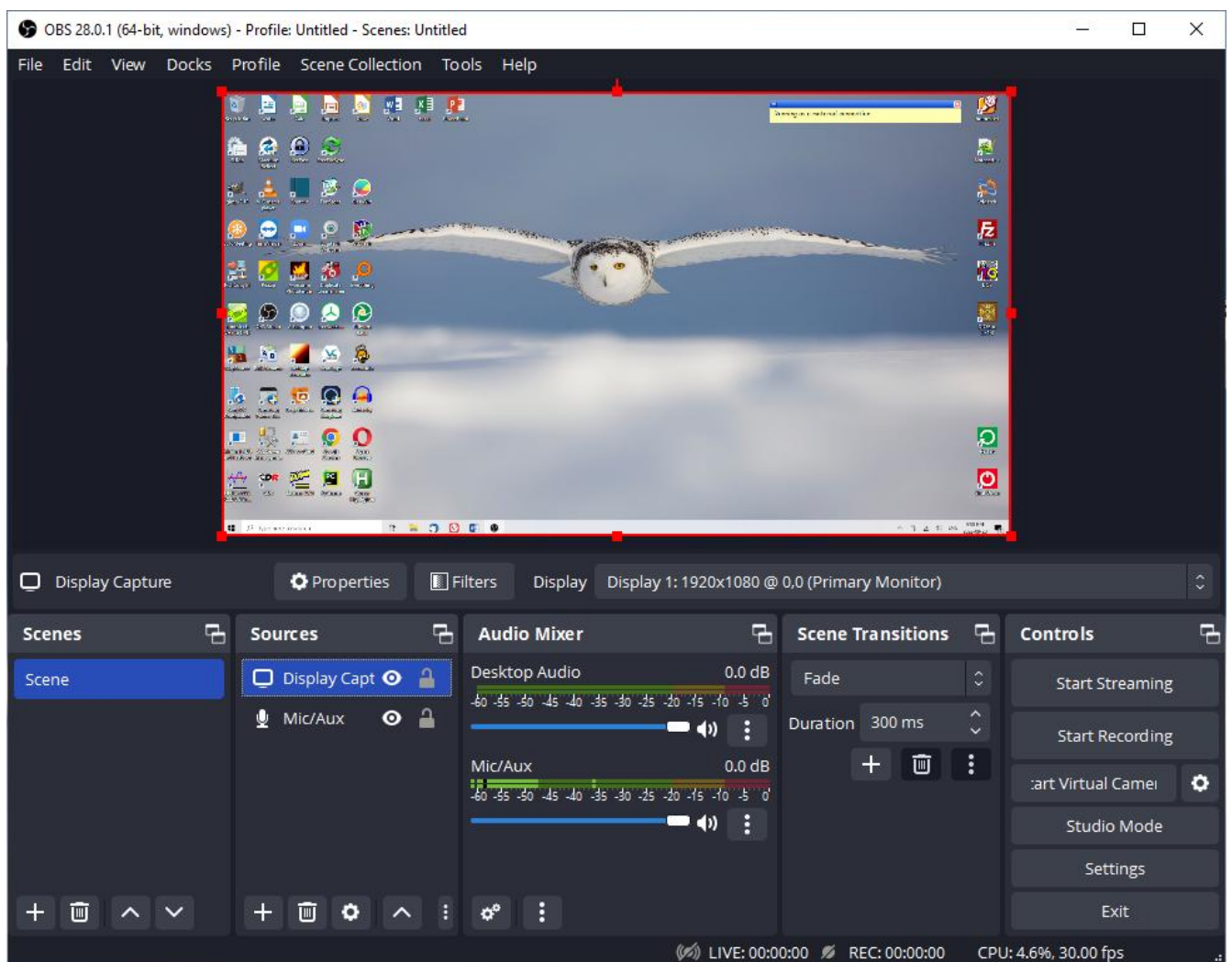
Interestingly, the auto-configuration wizard didn't provide any options for audio and video sources. These can be selected by clicking on the plus sign in the *Sources* section of the program's main window. Once again the options have those bizarre radio buttons so, taking care, I selected *Add Existing – Mike/Aux* which was then duly displayed as a blue panel under Sources.

The choices for video sources were not particularly clear. Did I want *Display Capture, Video Capture Device, Window Capture*, or something completely different? I didn't locate any useful information on this aspect of the program from the available help menu but a search on

Google suggested that *Display Capture* was the likely candidate. Making this selection suggested the *Capture Method* as automatic, at full-screen resolution, and including capture of the cursor.

The result of this setup process was quite encouraging as shown in the screenshot. An image of my display screen was outlined in red, showing that this was the area to be recorded. And, the levels on the Mic/Aux display were flickering showing that the microphone was indeed live.

Making a test recording is very simple. Just click on *Start Recording* in the *Controls* section. Then, open a folder and select a file using the mouse, while giving a verbal description of the actions being taken. Finally click on *Stop Recording* and a message in the status bar at the bottom of the program window indicates *Recording saved to 'C:\Users\toaster\Videos\2022-09-20 21-19-29.mkv'*.



Perhaps an unexpected feature of OBS Studio is that it stores videos by default as Matroska Video (MKV) files. MKV is an open-source format with container files that support unlimited

picture, audio, and subtitle tracks. Alternative output file formats, e.g. MP4 or MOV, may be specified by navigating to *Settings – Output – Recording format*.

So, if you have a use for a video recording of your display screen, or want to record streaming video from an on-line source such as YouTube, it may be well worthwhile to give OBS Studio a try. As noted, it's simple and it's free!

Bottom Line

OBS Studio (Open source)
Version 28.0.1
<https://obsproject.com>



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