



Making Docutubes – A Guide for Home Educators

Docutubes are short documentary-style films made by children and young people. Through the creative process of making a '**Docutube**', children and young people **explore**, **discuss** and **reflect** on issues relevant to religious toleration and peace, drawing both on historical examples and on their own experience.

The creative process of film-making, and the Docutube method in particular, can be a great way for your child/children/young person/people to explore and engage with many topics and find ways to connect with others, and our society and culture in ways that feel safe, interesting and meaningful to them. It is also a great tool to develop their communication skills and voice their views.

The Docutube method has been developed by The Open University and a wide range of international partners in the context of the [RETOPEA](#) (Religious Toleration and Peace) project funded by the European Union. Since 2020, this method has been piloted across Europe in a wide range of contexts, including schools, youth groups as well as groups of children and young people with refugee backgrounds, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants.

The free OpenLearn course '[Young people and religion: creative learning with history](#)' explains how teachers and youth workers can support children and young people in making Docutubes. This process has been designed to be very child-led. However, the flexibility Home Education can offer even more scope for child-led, person-centred approaches.

Supported by the Culham St Gabriel's Trust, the project team at The Open University has been exploring how the Docutube method can be used in and adapted to home education contexts. This guide forms part of a set of resources the project team have co-produced with a home educating parent. It provides an overview of the different steps that could be involved in the process of making a Docutube in a range of home education contexts. Whether you are working with one child, or a group, at whatever stage and whatever your own personal needs and interests, we hope that this guide and connected resources will be useful to you.

You can access a shorter version of this Guide [\[Insert link\]](#) and a more Visual Resource kit [\[insert link\]](#) that can be worked through alongside your child/children/young person/young people [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

We would love to hear how you have used the Docutube method and resources. So, please get in touch at retopea@open.ac.uk if you have any questions or would like to share your experiences.

Preparing your workshop

Before embarking on the process of making a Docutube – or supporting children or young people in the process, you might want to consider the following:

Why make a Docutube?

Do you have a particular personal goal or purpose in mind for this project? Is this something you will think about before beginning the project, or something that the children might like to develop together? Once completed, how might the Docutubes that you have made be shared, or would you prefer to keep them private? What thoughts will help you make those decisions?

What role will you take as a facilitator?

What preparation will you do ahead of time and how much will be involved in the process? Will you be in a 'teacher' role, or exploring the questions alongside the children? How might your own experiences and worldviews be relevant? How much will you share with the children of your own personal thoughts, beliefs and experiences? To what extent will you support the filming and/or editing process? Would you like to work with other home educators to run a workshop as part of a larger team, or do a smaller project with just your child/children, or with a few of their friends?

Who is involved?

Will you be supporting a single home educated child with making a Docutube – or will you be working with a larger group? What age is the child/children? Or are they of different ages? Film-making can be a very collaborative process as there are different roles that different members of a group could take, both behind and in front of the camera - interviewing, presenting, editing, preparing artwork for their Docutube, etc. (you can probably think of others...). Different approaches could work well with children of different ages, interests and different educational and/or support needs. Are there any other children or adults that you would like to work with, or get support or insights from?

How familiar are the children with ideas of 'peace', 'dialogue', 'worldview', 'religion' and 'religious toleration'?

What could support them to extend their frame of reference/vocabulary? Why might this be important or useful? A good initial entry point for the child/children/young person/people could be to think about their own thoughts, beliefs, feelings and worldview and how they inform decisions they make, what they enjoy, and how they choose to live their lives. It can be empowering for children to think of themselves and their own inner and outer worlds as worth of study and enquiry and of interest to others. Similarly, thinking about how others see and experience the world can nurture empathy, intellectual curiosity and understanding. These are skills that they can apply to all their subjects and interests, as well as in their world. The questions and activities in the Visual Resource can offer support for this kind of gentle, child-led discussion.

What resources will your children enjoy engaging with?

Consider what types of resources your child/children/young person/people might find most engaging. Will you choose these resources ahead of time, or will this be something that you do together?

The [RETOPEA Clippings Collection](#) includes more than 400 bite-sized sources (including texts, maps, images and videos) that explore aspects of religious diversity, toleration and peace in a wide range of different cultural and historical contexts. You can use these as inspiration for further exploration. However, other windows into working with the method could be an article in the news, a favourite film/book/tv programme/game, a local place or issue.

Consider whether you would like to select a small selection of clippings (3 or 4) from the RETOPEA Clippings Collection that you would like to focus on, and to what extent you want to involve your child/ children in the selection of



these clippings. Will you choose some clippings ahead of time or facilitate the children/ young people to look through them together?

The RETOPEA clippings are arranged in [twelve themes](#) (including: gender and sexuality; migration, trade and travel; propaganda, stereotyping and communication; discrimination and being different; ideas about toleration; peace and conflict resolution; memory and heritage; law, police and public order; places and buildings; religious practice; clothing and dress; as well as family life). However, the RETOPEA website also includes a collection of '[Narratives](#)' that suggests which groupings of clippings work particularly well together and how they can be connected. You could focus on one narrative or mix and match to explore a narrative or theme of their choice. In school and youth group environments groups often work with a small selection of around 5 clippings, but you could explore what works best in your own home educating context.

It also might be important to consider whether any of the clippings might have a more personal impact and how you could provide the appropriate support for this. As well as an intellectual and creative project, this can often be a highly personal and emotional exploration, both for children/young people, and for their adults.

What timeframe would work well for the child/children that you are preparing this project for?

In the context of schools or youth groups, a total of 13-20 hours is ideally needed to run a Docutube workshop. However, with the greater flexibility possible in a home education context, consider what might work best for you. You could create an immersive experience over 3 days, or even 2 with tight scheduling, or work on it over an extended period, as a project over weeks or months, with time in between to reflect and gather material.

The process involves four phases: ENGAGE, PLAN, CREATE and REFLECT. We have suggested some rough guide for timings to help you to think about the timing of each phase. However, you will know best how long your child/children/youngperson/people would enjoy spending on each area, and you can also always adjust as you go. In particular, if you are planning something quite structured, make sure that you leave plenty of time for the editing part of the CREATE phase, which often takes longer than people think.

What venue or venues could you use?

If you are working in a group with other families, you'll need to find a venue that accommodates the whole group. This particularly applies for the 'ENGAGE' and 'REFLECT' phases of the workshop, which ideally involve the whole group. For the 'PLAN' and 'CREATE' phases, you might consider splitting up the group into smaller groups. In our work in schools and youth groups, we found that it has particularly worked well to form small groups of 3 to 4 children to plan and create a three-minute Docutube together. With the greater flexibility of home education, you could also consider other approaches, such as children or families making their own individual Docutubes or making a longer Docutube with a larger group, with each child contributing a section, or with the whole group planning a longer piece together.

You could consider whether you would like to combine the process of making a Docutube with a field visit, for instance to particular buildings, local museum or any other sites. You could watch some of other children/young people's Docutubes for inspiration, or just think about places that feel meaningful to you, or places that you know nothing about that you could explore.

What equipment and/or software will you use for filming and editing?

Ahead of the workshop, try to establish what kind of filming equipment and editing programme you already have. Our team has used GoPro cameras, tablets, iPads and smart phones to record Docutubes, but there are many options available. Smart phones, tablets/ iPads as well as laptops and PCs often come with their own editing software. There is also a range of free software available on the Internet that supports more sophisticated editing techniques, such as [OpenShot](https://www.openshot.org) : <https://www.openshot.org> or ShotCut <https://www.shotcut.org>.

ENGAGE: (3+ hrs)

Ask open questions to help the children/young people to find ways into the topic that feels relevant for them:

- How do you see the world?
- What thoughts, feelings, beliefs and ideas do you have?
- Where do they come from?
- How do they make you feel?
- How do our minds put ideas together? How do we think and see things?
- How might that change over time?
- Why might we think or feel similarly or differently to others?
- What is culture? How do our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and ideas shape the society we live in?
- Can looking at different times and places be helpful in understanding how we see the World? And how others see it?

You can find some further resources for these discussions in the Visual Resource pack [Insert link], which can be printed off as a PDF or viewed on a screen.

You might find also it helpful to draw on resources on the Open University's [Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub on OpenLearn](#) as discussion prompts, particularly:

- ['Religion, Faith, Spirituality and worldviews?'](#)
- ['Why worldviews?'](#)

In pairs, practice telling someone else about how you see the world, and hearing how they see it.

- What is easy or hard about explaining how you see things to someone else?
- Is it easy or hard to understand how someone else sees things?
- Why do you think this is?
- Is it useful to think about how you see the world? And how others see it? Why? Or Why not?
- What is creative tension? If you see things differently do you discuss or fight about your ideas?

Once your child/children/young person/young people have explored some of their own views and perspectives, you could facilitate discussion, covering some of the following themes:

1. Representations of religion and religious diversity in the media (including questions, such as 'How accurate or inaccurate, fair or unfair, do you think different types of media are when they discuss different religious groups?')
2. Religious diversity in the past (e.g. 'Historically, how religiously diverse do you think your city/town/country/Europe has been? Are there any particular 'turning points' when your city/town/country/Europe became more or less religiously diverse?')

3. Religious diversity in present-day society (e.g. 'In the present day, to what extent do you think religious diversity offers benefits or challenges to society?')
4. Potential connections between approaches to religious diversity in the past and present (e.g. 'Are there ways in which we can learn from history?')
5. The nature of religious tolerance – what does it mean in practice? What does religious toleration mean to you? Is it a useful idea for us today? Why? Why not? How can history help us think about religious diversity and toleration today?

If you are facilitating these conversations in a group setting, consider how you or other parents involved would like to run the session. In schools and youth groups, we advise facilitators to:

- give everyone time to think even if this means the occasional awkward silence
- allow children and young people their voice but steer the conversation back if they get distracted
- affirm healthy differences of opinion or experience but managing conflict or aggression firmly.

You could use a selection of RETOPEA Clippings as discussion prompts:

Universities all over Europe worked together to curate these sources that might help us to think about Religious Tolerance in our time and throughout history. Why do you think they did this work together? There are over 400 clippings in the collection- including images, texts, and short videos—designed to explore religious coexistence and tolerance, <https://retopea.eu/s/en/page/clippings>. Some are arranged into 'Narratives' such as *Peace and Conflict Resolution, Memory and Heritage, Propaganda, Stereotyping and Communication, Clothing and Dress, and Gender and Sexuality*, or you and your children could create your own 'Narrative' with clippings that you like, or would like to understand better.

You could select 3 or 4 clippings from the RETOPEA Clippings collection to facilitate the discussion. Each clipping has useful contextual information and questions.

What is a Docutube?

You could watch [the animated RETOPEA film](https://retopea.eu/files/original/d0ab1b87f7556696aaf71cc3047aafbe1b82e2a8.mp4#t=1) to generate enthusiasm:

<https://retopea.eu/files/original/d0ab1b87f7556696aaf71cc3047aafbe1b82e2a8.mp4#t=1>

You can also find some examples of Docutubes here: [Religious Toleration and Peace · Docutubes · Retopea](#)

You could consider questions, such as:

- How did watching this Docutube make you feel?
- What questions does it make us wonder about?
- How has it been created?
- What editorial decisions have been made?
- How do these Docutubes engage with issues of religious toleration and peace in the past and present?
- How do these Docutubes reflect the participants' different local environments and experiences?

Checklist

- Consider how you are going to explore the RETOPEA clippings collection. Does every participant need access to the RETOPEA website? Or would it be helpful to print out some clippings?

PLAN: (2+ hours)

Prompted by the earlier discussions, think about how some of these ideas can be translated into a three-minute film (a 'Docutube') and start working on a 'storyboard' or script.

- You could use the following video to start thinking about your own approach to planning and creating a Docutube:
https://www.open.edu/openlearn/pluginfile.php/3350268/mod_oucontent/oucontent/110493/1562ee14/hy3fcps_g/nc_retopea_2019_vid014_compressed.mp4
- You could talk about other documentaries and videos that the children/ young people like. What makes them work well?
- You could talk about the importance of having a key message, or whether there are questions that the children/ young people would like to explore through their filming?
- Thinking back to the clippings, you could discuss how to bring past and present together in the Docutube/s.
- What film-making techniques could be used to help explore these ideas? For instance, this could include:
 - Pieces spoken directly to camera.
 - Home-made drawings or maps
 - Hand-written graphs or bullet points
 - Short dramatisations or reconstructions of historical events
 - Interviews with people or explorations of places.
 - Objects which provide evidence (eg: a religious object or outfit)
 - Landscapes which provide context.
- You might like to consider what props, artwork or resources you might need.
- You could consider whether to visit specific places and film on location. This could perhaps be a place that could give further insights into the ideas or questions you've explored in your discussions? It could be a place that might help children/ young people understand why they see the world the way you do? Or a place that helps understand how others view it?

You can use a storyboard and/or script to plan how visual and audio elements of their Docutube could be thought about together or as distinct elements that can be recorded separately – and combined in a wide range of different ways in the editing process. Below is an example of an extract from a script a group of young people in Warsaw developed for their Docutube:

VISUALS/ SHOTS	AUDIO/ WORDS
Title says 'Jewish migration to Warsaw'	
Presenter introduces the film inside building	Presenter: Migrations are often now considered as something negative, especially for countries that are welcoming migrants. We are now in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, a city historically regarded as an asylum for religious immigrants, Jews in particular.
Camera pans over and shot changes to new angle	Presenter: But are peoples' attitudes towards other religions still positive now?
New shot of presenter outside. Camera pans up from feet.	Presenter: We will ask students and people on the streets of Warsaw what they think about religious immigrants and if they could find refuge in Warsaw.
New shot, also outside (use garden area?). Presenter speaking to interviewee.	Hello, I would like to ask you a few questions. What would you think if new synagogues were built in Warsaw?
	Interviewee responds with answer.

You could suggest doing a 'pitch' for their film and as an opportunity to set out their plans for their Docutube.

You could consider questions like:

- What is your key message?
- Who, where and what are you filming, and why?
- If you are working with a group, what different roles might people have?
- Do you need to think about any about any safety and ethical concerns?

Listen carefully to each other and offer constructive advice.

Checklist

- Have clips of documentaries or short videos to inspire the child/children/young person/people ready.
- If you are in a group, make sure that the room is set out with space for discussion and planning.
- What materials will be helpful for storyboarding and scripting?

CREATE: (3+ hours filming, 4+ hours editing)

You could watch this video with tips and tricks from a professional film-maker

[/www.open.edu/openlearn/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=1267491](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=1267491)

You could try out a range of different filming techniques, including:

- **Close-up shots** where objects or people are filmed close to the camera, with focus on small details
- **Establishing shots** of landscapes, buildings, street names etc., to set the scene or give context
- **Moving shots** where the camera moves. This can convey a sense of dynamism.

Consider what you think makes a good film shot:

- **Composition:** think about how you are framing what you are shooting in the frame – do you want a wide shot, showing context, or a closer shot showing the speaker's facial expressions?
- **Camera angle:** consider using a tripod for stability.
- **Sound:** holding the camera close to the speaker also ensures sound is clear and the audience can hear what the speaker says. If a microphone can be connected to the camera, this can also help to give a more professional end result.
- **Lighting:** this can really bring a shot to life. You want to have what you are filming reflecting as much light as possible – point your light source at your subject, not at your camera (or move your subject into the light). Avoid filming against a window, the contrast in light levels means the speaker will be in silhouette.

Think about ethical/safety implications for interviewing, locations, etc.

You can discuss the importance of being considerate and respectful and of asking for consent if you film people or (where needed) at particular locations, such as museums.

Different roles in the team if you are working in a group and the relationship between filming and editing

If you are working in a group discuss how long things will take and agree some deadlines if you are working in a constrained time period, so that the groups have sufficient time for editing. The less footage you film, the quicker it is to edit!

Encourage your group to think about their different roles in making the Docutube and negotiate taking turns. It's important to remember that the technical roles are just as important as the 'stars' in front of the camera! Encourage your group to approach the filming and editing process as a joint endeavour and take editorial decisions as a team.

Assembling your footage

In the editing process, you can work with the shooting script developed earlier in the workshop. This will help with decisions about which content to include, and in what order. A good way to start is by creating an 'assembly' – placing all the footage they've created roughly in order, without worrying about style. What is most important in the editing



process is to focus on the key message the children/ young people intend to convey. You could think about your Docutube as telling a story, making an argument or following a line of enquiry.

If things don't go as planned

Accidents and issues do happen on film shoots and edits, and it is not unusual to find that something you planned to use to make their Docutube work isn't available, or is unusable for some unexpected reason. Here are some practical suggestions for what to do if this happens:

- A voice-over is an easy way to add missing information, or to connect sections together. This can usually be recorded straight onto the video at the editing stage.
- Sound and vision do not need to come from the same source – if a location shot has too much wind noise, for example, you can take that audio off and replace with music or a voice over. And you can cut away from a talking head to show a location shot, but keep the audio as a voice over.
- Consider using still photographs or images from the clippings to illustrate what is being talked about – this can be very effective!
- You can still shoot extra 'pick up' shots while in the editing process to fill any gaps – for example, talking heads, shots of their fellow participants at work, or even drawings or props.

Using music and stock images

You could also consider whether to add music to the Docutube. Below are examples of websites that offer royalty free music:

- <https://taketones.com/>
- <https://musopen.org/>
- <https://soundcloud.com/>

And here are some examples of websites that help you find royalty-free images:

- <https://search.creativecommons.org/>
- <http://imagebase.net/>
- [Pixabay](https://pixabay.com/)
- <https://unsplash.com>
- [PEXELS](https://www.pexels.com/)
- [Flickr \(Creative Commons\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/commons/)

Remember that exploring issues and making connections through the process of creating a Docutube is just as important as the final film itself. It doesn't have to be a sleek, technically perfect film.

Checklist

- Check that all equipment is working and charged.
- Remember using consent forms, if needed (for instance for people that are filmed or interviewed, particularly if you intend to share your Docutube in public).
- If filming on location, put plans in place to mitigate and identifiable risks or challenges.
- Remember deadlines if working with time constraints!



REFLECT: (1+ hrs)

Make sure you leave plenty of time at the end to edit and reflect on what you have created.

Premiere your film!

Bring the group/groups together to 'showcase' their Docutubes. How can you make this showcase special and meaningful? What might be the benefits of reflecting on the process, or on sharing it with others? How could your docutube become an inspiration for others?

Discuss which ideas or parts of the film-making process were most meaningful and interesting.

In either the large or small group(s) encourage students to reflect on their experience of creating the Docutubes.

Ask questions like:

- How did you decide what to include in your Docutube?
- What did you enjoy most about making a Docutube?
- What have you learned from working with the RETOPEA clippings? (e.g. about the need to engage with information in a critical way, considering different kind of sources and multiple perspective)?
- Have your thoughts or feelings about religious toleration changed?
- How did you find history could help us think about the present?
- What can we do to shape the society we live in?

You could have a party, invite your friends, host a panel discussion on what you have learned? Or what it made you wonder about.

Your film might lead to a thought, which might lead to a conversation, which might lead to an understanding, that might change the world and inspire other people to make their own Docutubes!

Checklist

- Ensure you have a Projector or screen to show the films on.
- Reflect on the whole process, not just the finished Docutubes!