

Quick Tips for Online Teaching

Communicate that a Zoom class requires active engagement, just like an in-person class

1. Address “spectator mentality” directly! Encourage students to approach a Zoom class as an in-person class for active engagement vs. a Netflix show where they would be passively watching. Explain how active engagement will help them learn.
2. As much as possible, students should try to create a space for active learning, where they can sit up, have any necessary materials, and turn off their phones during class.
3. Encourage students to experiment with different types of note-taking during class. Is it easier to take notes on paper, to avoid juggling the Zoom screen with other screens?

Encourage active participation during class

1. Please do not require students to have their videos on or only count them as present if their videos are on. This disadvantages many students. Some students may have limited bandwidth and can only join if their video is disabled. Some students may be joining from a Chromebook or other device without a camera. Some students may not want to show their current living situation, and are unable to use a virtual background. Students may be juggling child or elder care or sharing a small space with many others. Students may be living with an undocumented family member or friend. Some students are unable to focus if their face is on display.
2. Use the chat extensively! Begin class by posing a question and ask everyone to answer in the chat. Tell them it’s a check-in, or an icebreaker, and that you’ll take attendance that way. This can be a temperature check (how are you doing today?), a sharing/community question (please share your best tip for relaxing when you’re stressed out), or a humorous question (pineapple or not, on pizza?). This primes students to use the chat, and then throughout class, you can pose many other questions and ask them to respond in the chat.
3. Use breakout rooms every 20 minutes or so of lecture. You can monitor if folks are talking in the breakout rooms by looking at their little microphone icons. Have a specific activity and a product for students to work on in the breakout. For example, you might provide a specific scenario (that you type into the chat) and ask them to discuss that scenario in their breakout room, and that when students return, you’re going to ask each room to share one strategy to address that scenario.

Note: Here is an [example](#) of a more extensive activity that students can work on together while they’re in breakouts. You can monitor their progress in real time, and call them back to the main room when it looks like students have reached certain levels of completion.

You can also use an online whiteboard such as [FigJam](#), that allows students to work together in real time. Educators (such as yourself!) can register for a free account.

Provide as much organization and structure as possible

1. Tell students ahead of time how long you anticipate the Zoom class will last. This will help them plan. If you plan to Zoom for more than 75 minutes, provide a brief break, and let them know approximately when it will happen and for how long.

2. Use an agenda, such as [this one](#), that you go over at the beginning of class by screen-sharing. You can also check off your agenda items as you go along. Be sure to post this agenda near the top of your Moodle page so students can follow along. And direct them to review the agenda if they miss class.
3. Provide a comprehensive calendar, such as [this one](#), that lists classes, assignments, and deadlines.

Maximize accessibility

1. Record each of your Zoom meetings to the cloud, and post the recording link after class. By recording to the cloud, auto-transcripts should be generated.
2. Remind students that they can turn on transcripts during the Zoom meeting.
3. Screen-share when appropriate, so students can see how you're navigating to various documents, etc.
4. When providing instructions, type them into the chat as well as speaking them out loud.
5. Provide students with multiple ways of engagement; please do not require them to unmute and speak out loud a certain number of times to earn participation points. This can cause a LOT of anxiety among students.
6. If you use recorded lectures, consider providing them in multiple formats. For example, if you record narration in a PowerPoint file, provide the .ppt file as well as an .mp4 file which can be more easily viewed on a tablet or phone. Also, provide transcripts to your lecture.
7. If you have resources that can be accessed via links, such as an online news article, you can also provide a .pdf by clicking on "print" and "save to PDF." This will help students if they hit a paywall or have Internet connectivity issues. Compared to Word files, generally speaking, PDF files are smaller files and often easier for students to open with limited Internet.