

To Lecture or Not to Lecture? That is not the question!

What we want to know is:

How to make the best use of “Live” sessions?

Your Challenge:

If you haven't already

1. **Watch** the Introduction Video (3 min)
2. **Respond** to the Poll (3 min)

Getting the Background (1.5+ hrs)

3. **Read the text, below, and review the resources that most interest you,** making notes about the suggestions and approaches that you would like to incorporate into your synchronous sessions

Draft it! (1.5 - 2+ hrs.)

4. **Grab a template and design at least one** dynamite synchronous session - one that you plan to use during the first week or two of your course. **Be sure to note what will happen prior to and after the session.
5. **Bonus:** Gather any resources you'll need and practice with the tools you'll use for this session (LMS, Zoom/Collaborate, video recording application, other)

A couple short articles for starters:

Remote Learning Begs the Question: Must Lectures Be So Long?
[Remote Learning Begs the Question: Must Lectures Be So Long?](#)

To Lecture or Not to Lecture... How About Maybe?
[To Lecture or Not to Lecture... How About Maybe?](#)



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from North Project

First and foremost

As a minimal move, consider moving at least half of what would happen in a normal 3-hour class to asynchronous methods. Record part of your typical lecture (10-15 minutes) and post it for students to view when it is convenient for them. They can view it more than once if merited. There are several easy ways to record (Youtube, recorded Collaborate or Zoom, etc.) or check with your institution's IT Help for the options they support. Recorded audio is also an option if the topic does not require visuals - just keep it short.

- **Why not just record my lectures?** Part 7 of the Tony Bates piece, Online Learning for Beginners [Online learning for beginners: 7. Why not just record my lectures?](#)
- **Transitioning to Online Lectures** [Transitioning to Online Lectures | Centre for Teaching Excellence](#)

More importantly, think about content delivery as multi-faceted (text, articles, videos, podcasts, etc.) There are lots of small steps you can take to gently move away from long synchronous lectures. Many online courses have few or no whole class synchronous meetings. They embrace varied methods of content delivery and student engagement strategies. It takes a bit of time and work to redesign a face-to-face course into an effective and enjoyable course that relies primarily on asynchronous interactions. For now, just start with a few, add a few more when you are ready. Who knows, if and when you are back in a face-to-face classroom you may find that many of the new strategies you employed online work just great in your face-to-face course, too.

Avoid death by powerpoint! This TEDx talk will give you tips on making the most of your slides

• <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwpi1Lm6dFo&list=PLq4uKB7HRNyeUDvftTe67pyRBg6sCalQf&index=75>

During the days prior to a synchronous session

Think about what would prepare students to take best advantage of those precious hours/minutes in synchronous sessions.

Encourage students to complete the assigned readings (There are several ways to do this.)

- 1) Post a brief video (5-10) minutes, highlighting important and, hopefully interesting, sections of the readings. Motivate/inspire students to anticipate the content. Think about posing a problem or situations that the readings will help solve. This will help focus students as they watch for clues to addressing the situation or problem.

- 2) Students complete readings and post “Muddiest Point “ to a forum set so they do not see other students’ posts or do not see them until they have posted their own muddiest point. (Alternatively, the muddiest points could be submitted as assignments, sent via email, submitted as the response to a questionnaire, survey or short answer quiz/test.) The instructor gathers responses prior to 10:00 and decides how best to address them. What is the most common area of confusion? What are the most important points to clarify? A few options are:
 - Clarify in text or audio/video and post to course
 - Post the most important muddiest points to different discussion threads and require students to post a single paragraph explanation to at least one of the points
 - Plan to clarify some of the points in the first 10 minutes of the synchronous session
- 3) Students complete readings and take an ungraded, online quiz. The instructor can determine what areas they should address/clarify in another way. Maybe in one of the ways listed above.
- 4) Put students into asynchronous discussion groups and ask them to participate in a discussion of the readings. Each week, a different student in the group can be the discussion facilitator. The instructor can drop into the discussions to see how things are going and occasionally contribute or can require the facilitator to submit a brief summary/report.

Help students anticipate and interact with some of the concepts they will encounter in readings, videos or lectures. Here are a few ways to do this:

- 1) Ask students to “interview” someone - parent, roommate, friend, co-worker, social media friends, etc. Offer at least one question related to up-coming content for them to ask and encourage them to follow-up with ones they construct. Examples for a couple of subject areas:
 - a) What do you know about residential Building Codes?
 - b) What do you think are the most important things to remember when dealing with an Alzheimer’s family member?
 - c) What are the similarities and differences between Fascism and Populism?
- 2) Ask students to list 5 things they already know or have heard about the concept.
- 3) Have students to predict:
 - a) What they think the author’s view would be on a related topic
 - b) The six countries with the lowest per capita consumption of electricity
 - c) The 3 top reasons people give for not reporting child abuse
- 4) Do a ‘Minute Paper’ activity (or have them draw a concept map) at the beginning of the week/session/lecture and another one at the end. Ask students to assess the change. Or collect and you assess the change.

Active-ate your live session

Realize that most, if not all, students require time and engagement to properly process information. Class discussion is fine, but generally does not engage all students. Often it becomes a discussion between the instructor and a few students with the rest just, hopefully, listening. Minds tend to wander. Even in a face-to-face class instructors cannot know if students are giving their full attention or if they have something else on their minds. There are lots of activities that can help students engage as well as give the instructor an indication of what students are understanding and what they are not.



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- How to Use Active Learning in an Online Lecture
<https://tophat.com/blog/how-to-use-active-learning-in-an-online-lecture>
- Active Learning for Your Online Classroom<https://ctl.columbia.edu/resZoom> : Five Strategies Using
[htsources-and-technology/teaching-with-technology/teaching-online/active-learning/](https://sources-and-technology/teaching-with-technology/teaching-online/active-learning/)

Break up your lecture

Think of your lecture as a series of mini-lectures, each between five and fifteen minutes long. You may identify 3-5 segments in a typical hour-long lecture. Perhaps more for a three-hour lecture. To help you focus the intent as well as actual outcomes of the segments, ask:

- What is the main point(s) of this section? Are there one or two examples I can give? Is there a story to tell? Are there visuals that can make an impact?
- What is important for students to know? Can I sharpen the focus and remove unneeded material? What should they be able to state as their primary take-aways from this segment?
- How will I know if students 'got it'? How can they demonstrate their understanding?

Once the mini-lectures are identified, consider:

- Which might be recorded via audio or video, posted to the online course and available for students to view at their convenience before a certain date.
- Choose or create an activity that asks students to interact with the content. You'll want to plan something consistent with the importance of the understanding.
- Are there one or two that need to be done synchronously? Why?
- Might any be effectively viewed after a synchronous session? Perhaps one that can be wrapped into a more extended asynchronous interaction or assignment. One quick example: Post the video in a discussion forum and ask students to post comments/questions thereby continuing the discussion beyond the live session.

Transforming Your Lectures into Online Videos [Transforming Your Lectures into Online Videos](#)

Short activities to “interrupt a lecture” can be interspersed with lecture segments

2 Main Take-Aways and a Question: Often referred to as **Minute Paper**. Give students 1 minute to write 2 things they learned and one question they still have. Depending on the size of the class, responses can be submitted through the chat, as the response to a survey, short answer quiz questions or through the assignment submission feature of your LMS.

Two Test Questions: Ask students to craft 2 questions that they might expect on a test based on this lecture segment. These can be collected/shared in lots of ways but you might try using [Padlet](https://padlet.com/) (<https://padlet.com/>), [EtherPad](https://etherpad.org/) (<https://etherpad.org/>) or other online tools.

Explain the concept: Give students 1-2 minutes to write what they would say if trying to explain this concept to someone not taking this course (12 year old cousin, 65 year old grandparent, someone from another country, etc.)

Poll: Post a short (maybe 2-3 questions) poll and allow students to respond anonymously. Alternatively, ask a series of questions and students can reply in the chat area using emoticons. The poll can be about student reactions to the content or their feelings about their own understanding.

Breakout Rooms: Putting students into breakout rooms where they can collaborate on one of the above tasks or perhaps something a bit more time-consuming can be very effective. Just schedule the appropriate amount of time and be sure the instructions are clear.

Practice Quiz: Give students just a few minutes to complete a very short quiz that will test their understanding of a segment. Set it so that students get feedback immediately.

Q&A: Encourage students to ask questions over the content just presented. You, as the instructor, can respond to the questions or call on other students to help out. You could also do this in a Fishbowl environment.

Fishbowl: Call on 3-5 students to be part of the fishbowl (or ask for volunteers.) These students will interact as the other students look on. This can be a simple Q&A session or you can structure the discussion around pros & cons, debate, etc.

Alternatives to Lecture offers an example of an asynchronous 'Fishbowl' activity:
[ALTERNATIVES TO LECTURE](#)



Map out your synchronous sessions to ensure you have thought of everything!

Examples:

1. [The lesson Plan for Bootcamp Day 1 Opening Session](#)
2. [One Way to Approach a 1-hour synchronous session](#)
[One Way to Approach a 1-hour synchronous sessionh](#)
[a 1-hour synchronous session \(e.g. 9:00 - 10:00\)](#)
3. [Example of a Session Plan for a First Class](#)
4. [A Bad Example](#)
5. [Download a generic Lesson Plan Template](#)





One Way to Approach a 1-hour synchronous session (e.g. 9:00 - 10:00)

8:45 Open the session early and let students test their audio/video by chatting with other students. Join them, if you want, but keep it light, friendly and informal. Encourage students to check in early to be sure they are not experiencing any technical issues.

If a student finds they are having trouble they can trouble-shoot or contact a help desk or even a savvy classmate to get the matter resolved before the 'formal' start of class. If you have a large class you may want to create breakout rooms where smaller conversations can be held. Perhaps 1 or 2 students would volunteer to 'staff' a 'Help Room' where students having trouble could go for help. (Obviously, these students would need to be available via phone, text, or email, etc. as a back-up for students who are having difficulty accessing the session.)

Consider making 1-2 students co-hosts or moderators to help monitor chat and/or let people in from the waiting room (in Zoom for example) after class starts (if someone is late or the internet drops.) This role can be passed to different students halfway through the session or for the next session.

Many instructors and/or institutions offer a 'test' session a day or two before their first synchronous session. All students can test their connection and equipment before an actual class session. And most institutions provide online tutorials for synchronous tools.

Depending on the tool you are using (Zoom, Collaborate, etc.) establish a method to indicate it is time to stop the chatter and begin class. Some tools have a timer that can be set to count down and signal when time is up. Some have a whiteboard where you can post a "Let's get started" message or post a slide indicating class is formally beginning. Try to start on time or within just a couple of minutes of the scheduled start time rather than waiting until everyone shows up. You will probably ask all students to mute their mics (or you can mute all mics) as you call the class to order.

9:00 Begin class. Consider beginning by engaging students with a brief activity, such as:

- Post several quick questions in a poll or by asking students to respond in chat. These can be related to readings or assignments or they can just serve as a way to get students to weigh in on another matter
 - How did you find the assigned readings? (Difficult and hard to understand, A bit difficult but helpful, A good presentation of the content)
 - Which article did you find most helpful?
 - Which chapter's content do you need more help with to understand?
 - How are you doing on the assignment due next week? (Haven't started, Halfway through, Finished)
 - Where were you when the storm hit, last night?
 - What was the last movie you saw? Book you read for fun?
 - How do you feel about the Prime Minister's remarks on climate change? Racism?

Acknowledge student responses and briefly discuss or ask one or two students to comment. (70% of you liked article X best. Why? -or- Seems like this group mostly likes sci-fi. What appeals to you most about this genre? I tend to enjoy...) Or you might provide some advice/clarification on the

