

# Best Practices for Hosting Virtual Classes

## Video and Audio Tips

1. Unless your appearance or background is very inappropriate or distracting, turn ON your video.
2. Look at the camera. This takes a bit of getting used to since you want to look at the other participants faces (and, let's be honest, your own face), but try to look at the camera when you're talking. This tactic will mimic the in-person feeling of eye contact. It's important to gauge reactions by looking at the screen but alternating that with looking at the camera makes the audience feel like you're really talking to them.
3. When possible, try to use a good quality camera and headset instead of your computer's built-in ones.
4. Adjust your camera if it is too low or high. Your camera should be at eye level.
5. If you can, hardwire your computer into the internet. The video quality is best on a solid wired internet connection, so wire in when you can. Otherwise, just make sure you have serviceable Wi-Fi.
6. Clean up and have a simple background (a plain wall, a potted plant, or a bookshelf works perfectly).
7. Position yourself so that most of the light is coming from in front of you (behind your monitor), instead of behind you. If you have a window behind you, shut the blinds. Otherwise, you will be backlit.
8. Find a quiet space to meet, shut the door, and mute yourself as necessary.

## Plan Ahead

1. Be sure to post a schedule of upcoming virtual classes
2. Plan content for your live sessions ahead of time
3. Post an agenda for your live classes via the Blackboard announcement tool
4. Your first virtual class sets the stage for what you will expect from students, so try to make the sessions as interactive as possible.

## Before Each Virtual Class

1. Be sure to post a reminder to students via the Announcements tool in Blackboard 24 hours prior to the session. Include the meeting link in the reminder announcement as well.
2. Perform a test run before each virtual class to ensure you are comfortable using the video conferencing platform. It is also helpful to test your audio and video as well.
3. Join your meeting 15-25 minutes prior to the scheduled virtual class time so you're prepared to start on time. This also allows you to have casual conversation with any students who join early.

## During Each Virtual Class

1. Always record your meeting so you can share it with students later in the Blackboard classroom.
2. Welcome the students and introduce your Teaching Assistant or a co-host (if present).
3. Remind all students to mute their microphones and to raise their hand if they have any questions. It is also helpful to pause during your presentation to ask if there are any questions. Be sure to check the video conferencing chat for questions as well.
4. Cold call on students like you would during an in-person class to keep students engaged.
5. Sharing URLs in the chat window is usually more effective than sharing multiple websites on your screen.
6. In case there is an initial silence during Q&A, prepare one or two "pocket questions" or refer to a problem many students missed during the previous week(s) from an exam or quiz.

## After Each Virtual Class

1. Thank your students for attending.
2. If time is short, defer students to email, discussion board, or virtual office hours if they have further questions.
3. Review your chat histories if you think you missed any information.
4. Post your recording link(s) to Blackboard.