Pedagogical tips – Teaching effectively with Zoom

Teaching & Learning

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Photo: Bjarke MacCarthy

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You can find technical guides for the software mentioned in this guide in T&L Guides in Canvas.

This guide is based on Dan Levy's book *Teaching Effectively with Zoom* (2020).

> "The overarching theme [of the book] is that at the end of the day, you are there to help your students learn. Period. It is that simple. The technology is just the vehicle. You need to master some of the technology so you can focus on that goal. But you don't need to become a Zoom master to do this well".

Planning

- Plan each online session by thinking what do you want students to be able to do at the end of the session – 2/3 main things is enough.
- Decide what activities and instruction can help students achieve those results.
- Plan activities for students to engage with the material, yourself and others.
- Conversations and delivery of material takes longer virtually: "aim to get through 80% of the material online that you would get through the same amount of time in a physical classroom".

During the session

Communication
- Very explicit communication is essential online: e.g. if you want students to have a discussion in the breakout rooms, show a slide with the topic/questions to be discussed, time allocated, does the group need a spokesperson to present later? You can also upload a word document with this information to the chat.

Active learning
- Avoid presenting for a long time without engaging students.
- When you share your slides, they will take up a large part of the screen and your image will only show in a small square on the screen. Eye contact is very much lost at this point, so keep your slides open only when it is absolutely necessary.
- Polling – it is useful to get participation from all students, create engagement with the material, check for understanding. Think what to do with the poll's results: e.g. class discussion, further discussion in breakout rooms, asking students to justify their vote. See types of questions for polling on pages 2-3.
- Chat – use the chat to find out what students are thinking about a topic and find patterns in students' responses. You can then follow up on some of the responses. Write the question in a slide, indicating how long you would like them to write in the chat: e.g. "When you hear about impact evaluations, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? (write 2-3 words in the Chat)". See prompts for chat questions on page 3.
- Group work in breakout rooms – give a meaningful task to complete. Be very clear about what you want students to achieve in the time allocated: clear task, documents/information they have to work with, clear deliverable, specified timeframe. Provide all this information in a slide, ask if they have questions, and finally send students to the breakout rooms.
- One way of helping students focus attention on the task is asking them to produce something concrete that makes their work/learning visible: e.g., fill information in a slide/document where all of them can contribute.
- Smaller groups of 2/3 people work better if you have allocated short time for the task (e.g. answer a question in 5 minutes); larger groups of 4-6 people are fine for longer tasks (e.g. produce a deliverable in 10-20 minutes).
- When students are in the breakout rooms, let them know when they are running out of time (you can send a message to all the rooms)

Some types of questions for polling

Type of question	Example

Recall	What are the basic units of life called?
	    A. Bacteria
	    B. DNA
	    C. Cells
	    D. Genes

Conceptual understanding	You roll a die twice. What is the probability of getting at least one "6"?
	    A. 1/6
	    B. 2/6
	    C. 1/36
	    D. 11/36
	    E. None of the above
	    F. I don't know

Application	Evaluators are studying the impact of a microfinance program using a randomized controlled trial. Suppose there was a drought in the region where the study was being conducted. How does this drought affect the credibility of the study?
	    A. Would not affect credibility
	    B. Would somewhat affect credibility
	    C. Would substantially affect credibility
	    D. I don't know

Student perspectives	If you were in the shoes of the protagonist of the case, would you merge with the other company?
	    A. Yes
	    B. No

Student preferences	Which of the following topics would you like to discuss in our midterm review today?
	    A. Utility functions
	    B. Public goods
	    C. Externalities
	    D. Taxes

Possible prompts for students to respond using chat

Prompts for students to respond in the chat	Goal
When you hear the term X, what are the first words that come to mind?	Assess student' initial understanding of a concept/idea, and identify potential misconceptions
What examples come to mind to illustrate Y?	Quick, low-barrier-to-participate question aimed at helping students come up with a broad range of examples that you can leverage in the ensuing discussion.
What questions do you have about the material so far?	Help you uncover things that need clarification. Can also help you be more selective about which questions you answer in class.
How would you apply this concept/idea to your own life?	Help students apply what they have learned. Typically, you would need to give students a little bit more time for this kind of question.
What are the advantages/disadvantages of X? What would be the reasons to do X?	Quickly come up with a list that you can use to jump-start a conversation.
What are the key conclusions (i.e. takeaways) from today's class?	Help your students do retrieval (a process that leads to learning) and allows you to understand what your students took away from the class (and compare it with what you planned for them to take away).
What did you do last weekend?	Foster a sense of community before class.

RESOURCES
Levy, D. (2012). *Teaching effectively with Zoom: A practical guide to engage your students and help them learn.* 2nd edition.