

Teaching Live, Online Sessions: Tips & Resources

This document is designed for faculty who want to facilitate and support live, online sessions under emergency or unexpected conditions. Holding same-time, same-place conversations using Zoom or other web-conferencing tools is a form of synchronous instruction in online modalities. You most likely are asking your students to attend lecture or discussion virtually during regular class time, and the “same place” is the platform you are using to facilitate these interactions. The technical details below focus on [Zoom](#), though the general tips are not tool specific.

Create and Share Your Session Details

- ❑ **Get to know the platform.** Follow Zoom’s directions for [getting started](#), or refer to your chosen platform’s support for help downloading, installing, or using the tool.
- ❑ **Schedule and create your live sessions.** Zoom allows you to schedule [single](#) or [recurring](#) meetings for lectures, class discussion, or group activities. You can personalize session details (e.g., title of your lecture or course activity) and options (e.g., muting student mics or webcams when they join).
- ❑ **Share your session link with students.** Share your Zoom session link by copying the information in a class email or as an announcement in Canvas (also sent to your students via their SLU email accounts) using the **Announcements** tool.
- ❑ **Remind students of your session start date/time and arrive early.** Take the opportunity to [remind your students](#) of your class a day before and re-share the meeting link. If this is the first time you are holding your class using Zoom, show up early in your meeting room and encourage your students to do so as well to give everyone the opportunity to become more comfortable with the platform.

Session Preparation Essentials

- ❑ **Consider your video and audio source.** Using a headset and microphone improves the quality of your video and audio feed. You can use a built-in webcam or microphone, but some students may find it difficult to hear you or you may break-in and out.
- ❑ **Think about your webcam feed and light source.** Keep in mind that students will see everything in your video feed, including cramped bookshelves, personal photos, and, any file on your desktop, if you choose to screencast a presentation. Be mindful of this, and try to keep light sources in front of your webcam to reduce glares or halos in your background image.

- ❑ **Join from a location with fast, reliable Wi-Fi.** Use a wired connection if possible, or a wireless connection in your home or office. Avoid public wireless options, which are less reliable and may boot you or your students out of a meeting.
- ❑ **Run a tech check.** Is your webcam working? What about your microphone and video quality? Do you know what all the buttons do? Check these features each time you enter the room, and re-check your session options to adjust participant settings.
- ❑ **Appearance matters.** It's easy to forget that you are on camera, so be mindful of your movements, expressions, and energy. Even giving a 15-min lecture virtually can be draining, so be prepared to inject discussion or other interactive features into your meetings to break up the flow and improve persistence.
- ❑ **Consider recording your sessions.** Zoom allows you to [record your live sessions](#), and then share these sessions as videos for later viewing. This option might be helpful for students who cannot attend, or those who would like to review content at a later point. Be sure to tell your students that the session is being recorded, which includes any discussion in the chat window.
- ❑ **Get help!** Ask a colleague or student(s) to help you run your meetings. You can grant host privileges, which allows others to caption your videos, run polls, check the chat window, or share links to your students. Having someone help you may also reduce anxiety and improve the learning experience.

Interacting with Participants

- ❑ **Be present and build community.** Your students already know you and each other by this point in the semester. With that said, check in with them at the beginning of your session or [incorporate a survey that polls](#) their thoughts and concerns. Be sure to monitor the chat window, if possible, and respond to questions using the Q/A feature during your live feed to mimic the face-to-face interactions you're accustomed to.
- ❑ **Engage and formatively assess your students.** Most of the formative assessments you use in your class can be easily transferred online. You can still pose questions to your class using the [chat window](#) or poll student understanding by incorporating questions throughout your live session. You might also consider asking students to work on a shared set of notes or a study guide in a Google doc as they participate in the meeting.
- ❑ **Try breakout rooms.** Regardless of the size of your class, you can use [breakout rooms in Zoom](#) to encourage students to collaborate with each other. You might want to create a structure for these discussions (e.g., timekeeper, reporter, leader, note-taker) or give students a set of guided questions they can work through. You can float around each group, and students can raise your attention by asking for help in their sessions.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by [email](#).