

Leading Synchronous Meetings

Synchronous meetings are ideal for collaborating with students in immediate and spontaneous ways, e.g., for interactive lectures, guest presentations, student presentations, etc. Popular tools for synchronous meetings are WebEx, Skype, Google Hangouts.

Best Practices:

In advance of your meeting:

- If you are using Webex, confirm that no one no one else has scheduled a meeting to start or end within a half-hour of yours using the same login credentials.
- Do a test run before your first live meeting to ensure you are comfortable with the technology.
- Consider doing a “meet and greet” event with students to test their computer set-up, headphones, microphone etc. This can save time and frustration when it’s time for “real” meetings. Extra credit, or other incentives may encourage participation and allow everyone to work out various bugs.
- Considering asking a student or another participant to act as a technical resource during the meeting so that you can stay focused on your agenda.
- Send a reminder to students about an upcoming meeting. State your goals and expectations for the meeting, and/or provide an outline of the topics you will cover. Request that questions be sent to you in advance, if possible, to help you prepare more thoroughly.

During your meeting:

- To enhance a sense of community and collaboration, open the meeting space a few minutes before actual class time.
- When possible and valuable, record your synchronous meetings to share with students who cannot attend, or to provide opportunities for review - especially if presentations are being conducted.
- Specify any participation guidelines so students have a clear understanding of your expectations; you can include reminders to be courteous, to use the private chat function for technical problems, etc.
- Encourage participation and knowledge building by asking open-ended questions. See [The Art of Asking Questions](#).
- While it is important to keep your meeting moving forward, allow time for spontaneous questions, and be willing and able to adjust the topic based on student interests.
- Adapt a “guide on the side” approach rather than a “sage on the stage,” encouraging students to collaborate and discuss the topic.
- Have your presentation ready to show. This includes having websites you plan to visit pulled up and ready to share.

- Considering using a webcam to give students a face to go with your voice. To save bandwidth, either freeze or shut off your webcam when presenting other media.
- Online course meetings lack nonverbal cues. Allow extra time for questions from students. Additionally, use humor carefully, as it often relies on non-verbal cues for understanding.
- Consider offering multiple sessions on the same subject matter. This ensures students are likely to attend at least one session.
- Enunciate, speak clearly, allow listeners to process each other's accents and speaking style.
- Consider a "flipped classroom" approach: prior to the live meeting, share a recorded presentation with slides, and a required assignment. Then use the meeting time for questions, feedback, peer-review discussions.
- Most important tip: relax and enjoy the process. You and your students will learn about both your topic and gain tech skills, making synchronous meetings a win/win for all involved.

After your meeting:

- Use the GoucherLearn feedback or questionnaire tools to gather feedback on the meeting. It's most useful to collect feedback immediately after a meeting.

Sample Message to Students Announcing a Synchronous Meeting:

Hello Students, our first Webex meeting is coming up on September 15, 2014 at 8 PM EST, please mark this event in your calendar and note the time zone. As this is our first meeting, I'll be opening the meeting space 30 minutes early so everyone can come in a few minutes early to test your computer, headset and microphone set-up. Please read the directions about participating in Webex meetings that is found at: <http://goo.gl/b2Nc6W> This is an excellent opportunity to meet and greet your classmates too.

Remember our topic for this first meeting is *"Comparing the Board Game Apples to Apples, to Monopoly"*. Our goal for the meeting is to discuss the similarities and differences between the games as relates to the global economy. As our time is limited to an hour (not including the 30 minute pre-meeting, please send me any specific questions you have so that I can prepare any resources needed.

Additional Resources on Synchronous Meetings:

Faculty who are interested in hosting online office hours should consider trying Google Hangouts. See an overview and directions for getting started here: <http://www.google.com/+/learnmore/hangouts/>

For one-on-one meetings, such as providing feedback on a project, Skype is an excellent tool. It also works for virtual office hours. If you aren't already using Skype, find out more here: www.skype.com

For a clear discussion of some of the challenges and opportunities involved in live meetings, see this article from the National Center for Dialogue and Deliberation: <http://ncdd.org/rc/item/5086>

For more tips on hosting synchronous meetings, see this webpage from Texas Tech University:

http://www.tlpd.ttu.edu/content/asp/Distance_Learning/TeachingYourCourse/online_live_class_meetings.asp