



Initiative for Learning
Innovation and
Teaching Excellence



Best Practices

Teaching Online with Zoom

This document was prepared by INSEAD Initiative for Learning Innovation and Teaching Excellence (iLITE), based on observations of, and feedback from, INSEAD faculty teaching on Zoom from home as well as from their offices. It also incorporates feedback from student surveys, the IT team, faculty assistants, and other members of the ecosystem that make virtual classrooms come to life.

To access INSEAD iLITE's website, go to <https://www.insead.edu/centres/learning-innovation-and-teaching-excellence>

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This document is a guide for faculty teaching remotely either from home or from their offices to degree programme students (e.g. MBAs) or executive participants via the Zoom platform. It is applicable to the variety of pedagogical methods that instructors use in different courses.

It provides tips on how to get started with your hardware and system, and it takes you through the journey of preparing for your session, teaching the session, and following up after.

This is a working document. The INSEAD initiative for Learning Innovation and Teaching Excellence (iLITE) welcomes your feedback. For INSEAD faculty interested in personalised assistance, please contact [iLITE](#) directly and we will arrange an individual session promptly.

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Introduction

Teaching online with students or participants in remote locations puts instructors in a novel environment. All of a sudden, many find that it is not just the content or their expertise that matters. How skillfully they can navigate the technological 'room' and the tools it is furnished with, affects their credibility, effectiveness, and ultimately, students' learning.

In the Zoom environment, students appear as digital faces on a screen—some only as names. Hand raising becomes the flash of a small blue icon. The familiar mild chatter and interruptions of a live class are now muted by the Zoom etiquette.

Typical teaching gestures, like cold calling, setting up buzz groups, lecturing, and asking for questions require adaptation. With Zoom, there are more steps involved before such 'normal' classroom activities can be executed, which might become more natural over time, but require conscious effort and familiarising with the technology at first.

A lot more thinking and planning, therefore, needs to happen to ensure that even the most tested of classroom sessions runs smoothly with the new technological tools and times.

Getting Connected

To get started, you first need the proper equipment so that you are connected with your students. Here are some tips for the hardware setup, and other essentials to get you ready.

Organise and Configure the Hardware

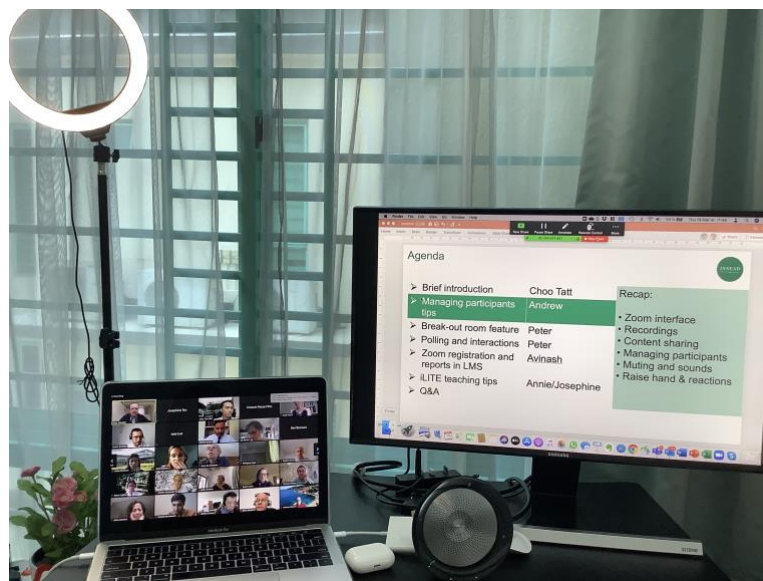
Below is a recommended configuration of your hardware for your teaching.



1. Your laptop for content sharing and annotation.
2. A monitor in extended view to see your remote participants.
 - If you plan to annotate on your slides and your laptop does not have the annotation feature, join the session with a tablet after you started the session on the laptop (Host). The tablet then becomes the co-host of the session. Share the content from your tablet and annotate from there.



- Note: one Zoom account allows up to three devices to log in simultaneously – PC/Mac (on Win/macOS), tablet (on Android/iOS), mobile phone.
- 3. A good webcam and wireless headset with microphone or your ear pods. External laptop accessories that work well for calls work for teaching as well.
- For a more stable internet connection, use Ethernet/Lan instead of Wi-Fi if possible. Alternatively, you can connect your laptop through your mobile phone's 4G network.
- Be aware of what is behind you. Use a plain background if in doubt.
- Dedicate a well-lit and quiet space in your home/office to teach.
- Get additional lighting on your face if you look dark on screen. Below is an example of setup with additional fill light (top left of image):



Set up Zoom

- Install the [Zoom desktop app](https://zoom.us/download2) at <https://zoom.us/download2>.
- In Zoom client setting, under General tab, enable “Use dual monitors”.
- Switch to a [side-by-side](#) view to see both content and presenter if you have a single screen.

Set up Backup Communication Lines

- For Executive Programmes: create a WhatsApp group for you and all the participants.
- For MBA classes: either create a course WhatsApp group for you and all the students or share your number with the Class Representatives or two students of your choice.
- With your assistant: agree on a quick form of communication in case you need assistance.
- Create a live Google Doc and share the link with the students for in-class collaboration.



Before The Session

- Distribute materials on Canvas before class so that students can follow the class easily.
- Plan to cut about 5-15 minutes of content from your teaching plan for a live class, especially if there is a lot of interaction in the session or group work (e.g. a case study).
- Chunk your session into mini segments anchored on a question, idea, or skill you want students to focus on. Plan a mix of activities in each segment. Examples of activity mix in a segment:
 - A short lecture (max 10 minutes), followed by a poll and discussion on the poll results (include cold calling), before wrapping up with a key learning point.
 - A short video clip, followed by a breakout room discussion, before regrouping for groups to share their views, and ending with a mini-lecture on a key concept.
- Prepare very clear questions ahead of time to avoid misunderstanding or ambiguity.
- Pre-set Zoom polling. You can create multiple polls before the session (great for multiple choice questions). Other tools to explore include [Mentimeter](#), [Socrative](#) or [Poll Everywhere](#) (great for more advanced features like quizzes, open-ended questions, and word clouds).
- Plan for group work.
 - Zoom has virtual breakout rooms (BORs) and students enjoy using this feature.
 - You have the option of pre-assigning them to groups before the session using Zoom's template. Or, randomly assigning them to groups. Refer to the [Zoom guide](#) to set up BORs – it is very straightforward.
- Reduce the number of media heavy items in your slides.
- Share the link to longer videos with students ahead of time in Canvas or in Zoom's chat box. You may still show shorter videos during a Zoom session.
- Print out a sheet of all students' names with their pictures and place it next to your screen. Use it for tracking students, noting participation, and remembering they are still in a 'class.'

Plan Norms and Set them Clearly in the First Session

In the first session, set aside time to introduce your students to Zoom even if they are familiar with it. Note the key features that you will be using in the course. This helps to lower anxiety and set clear expectations. Some suggested norms are as follow:

- Video on, unless bandwidth issues make it impossible.
- Always mute audio except when you are speaking.
- Use the 'raise hand' feature in the 'Participants' box if you want to speak.
- You will cold call during the session, perhaps more than in a live class.
- Brief them on if and how you will be using different interaction platforms in class.
 - WhatsApp group – for communicating technical issues (e.g., if you or a student is dropped from the call).
 - Zoom chat box – it can be used to share responses or opinions. It can also be used to signal intent to speak, for example, students can type “???” if they have a question;



“!!!” if they want to say something; “xxx” if they decide to cancel their participation intent.

- Google Doc – can serve as a virtual white board to fill in during class collaboratively. Or, when students are in BORs, you can use it to share the questions they need to work on or allow them to populate it during their group work.

During the Session

Look Professional On Screen, Be Prepared for It

With Zoom as a video platform, we apply similar guidelines as the field of broadcasting to help project professionalism and warmth when teaching, as well as convey credibility and authority. Some things to consider:

- Avoid wearing colours that blend with your background, and dots and stripes which distract attention.
- Stand if possible. It allows you to move more naturally and makes you look more dynamic.
- Place the camera lens at eye level and look into it to maintain eye contact with students.
- Project your voice and enthusiasm.
- Mute your audio when others are presenting or speaking.
- Do a technical rehearsal before teaching. Maybe even a few.
- Remember to close any unnecessary applications and browsers so that your students or participants do not get distracted when you toggle between screens.

Manage & Teach

One aspect of teaching synchronously online does not change when you are face-to-face. You need to manage the ‘space,’ the content flow, and the interactions. With Zoom, the space is the various technological tools. The flow is between each for various activities. And the interaction is affected by the fatigue that students report with sustained focus on the screen. You must use the tools to balance content clarity and process engagement. Some points to note:

- Communicate the learning outcomes for the session, how the session will progress and the activities your students will do.
- Remind students of norms each session. Especially for participation.
- Remind students to unmute when they speak and mute again after speaking. The easy way, while muted, is to hold the spacebar to speak and then release it to mute again.
- Create blank slides to write on when discussing a case. Alternatively, launch the white board on content share for annotation during discussion if your laptop allows for it. You can also connect your iPad or tablet and switch screens to ‘write on a board’ there instead when needed.
- Keep lectures to 10 minutes max, and then involve students in a discussion, together or in breakout groups. Long lectures are even more difficult for students to listen to on Zoom.
- Change the teaching method/format every 10 minutes to keep students active in learning.



- Besides annotating on slides or an electronic 'white board', you can have a physical white board behind you. In that case, make sure it is close to you and the camera, write in big letters, and do not block the view.
- Have students watch longer videos before class, shorter ones within a session.
- Give a 10-15 minute break for every hour of class.
- Maintain enthusiasm throughout the session, and the course.
- If you need longer lectures, you can flip them. Film 15-20 minutes of lecture (in 5-10 minute videos) that students can watch as preparation. Use the Zoom session for discussion of the lecture or exercises.

Encourage Participation

You need to build frequent opportunities for student participation throughout each session, otherwise attention fatigue sets in quickly. These are some approaches to involve students:

- **Cold Calling:** Call on students who have not spoken every 5-10 minutes. On Zoom, most faculty cold call more than they would face-to-face. It keeps energy up and spreads participation. Students appreciate it more than awkward silences. Make sure you tell them you will do it. But, do not use it as the main means of participation.
- **Discussion:** It is challenging for students to build on one another in the large Zoom meeting. A way around it is to use breakout rooms before a case discussion, and pair or group work in the middle of the discussion, too. It is easier to build on others in smaller groups. Sometimes the interaction is livelier and more fluid than in the chat box. More below.
- **Collaborative Document:** Use one Google Doc as a white board for the whole class that students can fill in with their responses, or leave questions in.
- **Leverage Zoom Features.** Here are examples of how instructors are using the features.
 - **Polling:** Regular polling allows students to have live data of their views as a class, that keeps them focused and motivated. Zoom polls are excellent for multiple choice questions. Pre-set the polls and launch them during class. You can also quickly set a simple poll question during class for students to answer. You can then use the results for follow-up questions and discussions.
 - **Virtual Breakout Rooms (BORs):** This is a very popular tool. Students enjoy discussing in their study groups, as well as being randomly assigned to work with classmates who are not in their usual study groups. BOR discussions help to vary the session pace and take the pressure off the teacher as the focal point. You can pre-set BORs before the class or do a random BOR activity during a session. Give specific instructions for what students are going to discuss, and what time they need to regroup.

If you want students to collaborate on a common space in their BOR discussion and present it, you can use a Google Doc, or a more sophisticated solution: miro.com

As the host, you can pop into the different rooms to check in on students' progress, and students can call you for help if they have any questions. Because you can "force" students back to the main room at the end of the allocated time, instructors find the Zoom BOR feature much more efficient to manage than the physical ones.

- **Chat box:** Some instructors ask students to post their questions for clarification; some have students to type in "???" when they want to ask questions and "!!!" when they want to say something, and; some get students to post their answers to a question or



learning points at the end of class. Others find the chat box to be a useful repository to collect questions which they can later answer offline. Some use it as a virtual “white board” during moments they want to write without launching an extra screen.

- *Hand Raising*: Many instructors use this feature regularly. However, it can get challenging to track with many students raising their virtual hands. Remind students to lower their hands when they no longer wish to speak. Some check for hand raises every 5-10 minutes if they have not cold called, while others tell students to just unmute and join in the discussion. Both strategies work for those who apply them.
- *Yes/No, Need for Break*: These indicators are found in the Participants’ section. Students find it useful to use these to signal their answers and need for break.
- Execute your pre-set polls, quizzes, word cloud or open-ended questions using other sources such as [Mentimeter](#), [Socrative](#) or [Poll Everywhere](#). Other tools to consider:
 - *Pigeonhole*: Allow students to enter and then rank the best questions to work with.
 - *Wheelofnames*: To add fun to cold calling. You enter all students’ names and they appear on the wheel. You then spin the wheel for a randomly selected student.
- In the last 10 minutes of the session, instead of a one slide summary, have students work in random BORs to discuss their learning from the session. After regrouping, ask students to write what they learned in the chat box. That is rich feedback for you, too.

After the Session

The same useful practices apply after a session on Zoom as after a face-to-face class.

- Stay logged on for 5-10 minutes after class to ‘mingle’ and address questions by students.
- Email students:
 - Ask if they have any questions.
 - Offer to set up a short call if they need it or email you their questions.
 - Have Zoom office hours
- Ask for feedback from student representatives on what worked well and what got in the way of learning in the areas of technology tools, content, and process. A simple poll on Mentimeter will also allow you to get feedback about what to continue, stop, or do more of.

Conclusion

The virtual classroom can be daunting for faculty and students new to this environment. Here are some final tips as you tackle teaching with Zoom:

- Be disciplined and patient
 - Online teaching forces instructors to be more structured, concise and clear.
 - Teaching remotely tends to feel ‘slower’ due to technical, spatial and logistical challenges, as well as unfamiliarity. Students take a longer time to respond, too.
 - Expect the class to be less energetic and spontaneous with the “distance.” That means you have to put in more effort to keep the energy high for you and the students.
- Embrace simplicity
 - Consider using the simplest possible tools, and then incorporate more as needed.



- Be mindful of students' circumstances
 - You may have students who are joining the class from different time zones and with different connection quality. Practise empathy. For example, do not insist that students have their videos on, when it might not be possible or embarrassing.
- Keep learning
 - Watch the session recordings and learn for your development. Review the class moments that you might handle differently. If you learn fast, students will learn faster.