

Learners' experiences of web conferencing: recommendations for facilitators

Recommendation	Sub-recommendations
1. Prepare learners for learning in the Virtual Classroom	1.1 Encourage learners to consider where they will be when engaging with the Virtual Classroom – and be aware of where your learners are 1.2 Allow time and provide support to help learners get set up technically 1.3 Make the Virtual Classroom easy to find
2. Establish commonly accepted etiquette with learners for working online, and adopt a set of protocols to facilitate communication	2.1 Use web conferencing tools such as 'hands-up' to control microphone use and to impose order on group communication 2.2 Establish group use of tools such as emoticons 2.3 Be prepared to change protocol if the group is very small, or in break out rooms 2.4 Establish your own protocol for handling silences online
3. Use icebreakers to welcome learners and to familiarise them with the web conferencing tools they will need to use	3.1 Provide icebreaker activities to welcome learners to the online session and to encourage participation 3.2 Provide icebreaker activities to familiarise learners with web conferencing tools 3.3 Use icebreakers that are fun and interesting, with a level of challenge that is non-threatening 3.4 Know why you are using icebreakers
4. Use breakout rooms to facilitate small group activities	4.1 Choose names for breakout rooms that allow for helpful learner anticipation 4.2 Select optimum numbers for breakout rooms and allow learners to move themselves in and out of rooms as appropriate 4.3 Use the breakout rooms as a safe space for small numbers of learners to communicate and discuss 4.4 Use tools such as the timer to support groupwork
5. Provide a variety of activities to meet different learning preferences	5.1 Do all you can to accommodate different thinking and learning preferences 5.2 Respect learners' privacy, in terms of what you ask of them
6. Foster student-student and student-tutor relationships throughout a course	6.1 Provide opportunities for the development of relationships between learners if participants are not already known to one another 6.2 Encourage mutual support and problem-solving 6.3 Don't get so caught up with technology that you forget your relationship with your learners
7. Consider ways to identify and manage those who participate minimally	7.1 Be aware that those who participate minimally have a negative effect on their peers, and consider ways to manage this 7.2 Consider that your provision of additional tools such as blogs or discussion groups may not meet the needs of all learners
8. Choose how to use the media at your disposal to suit the situation – video, audio and chat can be used separately or in combination	8.1 Consider whether video or audio is really necessary 8.2 Consider using the chat facility to provide equality of opportunity when there are audio problems 8.3 Be aware that text messages can be misconstrued, and use emoticons and other devices to minimise this
9. Reassure, encourage and keep things simple	9.1 Remember that learners need regular reassurance and encouragement 9.2 Maintain procedural simplicity, don't overcomplicate things

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