

- Send your training schedule in advance and ensure that all students have the materials needed for their participation.
- Speak concisely and clearly throughout.
- When possible, always show your face on screen in the virtual room.
- Remind participants about etiquette and virtual room features (i.e. silence cell phones/pagers and use of chat box function).
- Always start with the program outline and introductions.
- Be sure to welcome attendees who arrive late, or ask them to introduce themselves.
- Do not monopolize discussions; use this opportunity to explore others' experiences and importantly, ensure you offer enough time for others to respond to content.
- Continue to engage those who participate regularly and encourage those have not commented.
- Call on learners by name.
- Provide explicit feedback, proactively check in with participants every 10–15 minutes or when appropriate, and utilize back channels (such as a chat box).
- Use names and remind participants who is attending.
- Use collaboration tools as needed and use process support tools to focus group attention on specific information (for example, using shared screens).
- Engage in a dialogue rather than giving a summary, start dialogue with someone you know, and shift focus among the participants.
- Ensure that you have clearly defined terms.

Selecting a Platform. To launch a virtual training, you will need a video conferencing platform. If you do not already have access, you will need to select one and become comfortable using its features. There are a number of excellent platforms you can use online. The minimum requirements needed to deliver a virtual training session are: audio, video and screen share, and chat box features. Ideally, select a platform that includes virtual breakout rooms for small work groups.

Here are some ways to use a video conferencing platform during training:

- Have each user share a webcam feed for a more personalized experience.
- Alternate screen share between yourself and users.
- Download documents to share for view (some platforms distribute documents to the group after the session).
- Use chat boxes to distribute survey links and as an opportunity for participants to write comments/questions.
- Take control over participant's keyboard and cursor when granted permission (this may be helpful when demonstrating training activity on a learner's computer for a more personalized experience).

- Record the training session to keep on file or post for others to view.

Building Connections With Students. The relationships formed between instructors and learners are affected by their ability to connect and effectively communicate with each other. Interactions between learners and instructors can be difficult even in person, and a virtual setting is no different. Providing consistent check-ins and responding to chat box messages are helpful approaches in making connections with learners. Mittleman et al. (2000) suggest that instructors check-in with learners every 10–15 minutes by asking them questions like “Tom, are you with us? Do you agree with the items just discussed?” Not only does this engage learners, but it also reminds them that the training is intended to be interactive.

Also, be mindful of the chat box. Scan for messages as they are sent, especially since messages can be sent sporadically throughout the session. Read comments and questions as they are sent. When reading these messages, be sure to read them aloud. Note that some learners may send you private messages meant for you alone, and in other cases they may be sent to the entire group. Either way, you will want to share relevant comments and questions. For those that send you a private message, you might state, “*Someone* just posted a comment that reads. . . .” In using the term “someone,” you get the learners to focus on the subject and not so much the individual. After reading a message, further engage learners and ask for their reactions or understanding of the remark. This level of engagement will aid your efforts in building connections with learners.

References

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Resources

Global Learning Partners. Downloadable Resources. Available at <http://www.globallearningpartners.com/resources/downloadable-resources>.