

Teaching via Zoom

10 Observations, Guidance, & Pitfalls

1	Observation	Interactions in Zoom are slower and “noisier” than in person.
	Guidance	Edit and simplify what you want to teach. Focus on covering a small topic very well.
	Pitfall	Trying to teach a class you’ve taught before in person without modification.

2	Observation	Zoom fatigue is real, and brains learn better in smaller chunks.
	Guidance	Plan to present material for no more than 50% of the class time. Break it up by engaging with your students (Q&A / discussion).
	Pitfall	Expecting students to absorb material for 100% of the class time.

3	Observation	It can be harder to read subtle cues from students about how they are doing.
	Guidance	Check-in explicitly with students frequently and require a response (thumbs up / thumbs down via video; typing “Q” vs “no” in chat).
	Pitfall	Slow or ineffective check-ins (e.g. “Any questions?” and quickly moving on).

4	Observation	At <i>most</i> one person can be heard at a time.
	Guidance	Consider non-verbal signaling for quick communication with a group (thumbs up / thumbs down, chat entries, etc).
	Pitfall	More things to pay attention to. Using signals that require video when not all participants have video enabled.

5	Observation	As an instructor, your attention may be divided between your students & your material, making it hard to notice questions.
	Guidance	Tell your students how you would like them to alert you to questions (post in chat, wave wildly, etc).
	Pitfall	Choosing a method that is distracting to other students. Students may do their own thing regardless of what you ask them to do.

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6	Observation	Zoom makes it easy to share links to material on the Internet.
	Guidance	Consider putting your handout online and sharing a link to it in the chat.
	Pitfall	Assuming students can see the Zoom meeting and a shared document at the same time.

7	Observation	Zoom is a better medium for presenting detailed visual information than a projector in a classroom is since everyone can “get close”.
	Guidance	Consider using slides and images in addition to engaging directly with your students.
	Pitfall	Death by PowerPoint (even more painful in Zoom than it is in-person).

8	Observation	Some things are hard to show on a fixed camera.
	Guidance	Keep it simple, but cover critical visual information in more than one way (show it live <i>and</i> have pics of steps to screen share). Consider using multiple cameras.
	Pitfall	Not budgeting enough time. Too much technical complexity.

9	Observation	You’re no longer tied to a traditional classroom.
	Guidance	Consider things that you couldn’t have done at an in-person Collegium (messy projects, garden tours, etc).
	Pitfall	Using advanced Zoom features just because they’re there.

10	Observation	Teaching via Zoom is different.
	Guidance	Practice, practice, practice.
	Pitfall	Waiting until the night before.