

## **Synchronous Online Video Classes Best Practices**

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**Keywords:** synchronous virtual classroom, synchronous learning, web-conferencing, e-conferencing,

See other best practices regarding discussion based learning that apply.

Examples of Synchronous Virtual Learning:

- Web Conferences (Zoom, Google Hangout, Skype)
- Virtual Live Classrooms (Canvas “Big Blue Button”, Adobe Connect)
- Chat rooms (Canvas “Chat”, IM)
- Live Collaborative Documents (Google Docs, Office 365, pin boards, etc.)

In general, synchronous virtual classes are best at increasing the “social” presence of your class. The three presences of a “Community of Inquiry” taught by Garrison, Anderson, & Archer 1999 are social, cognitive (the material) and teaching (the direction/structure). Synchronous classes also reduce what is considered the “transactional distance” (Moore, 1993) that exists in every class, virtual or face to face, in the student-teacher dialog. Students thereby feel a stronger sense of community, sense of accomplishment and course satisfaction.

**Synchronous Virtual Classes are great for:**

- Making personal connections between the students and student to teacher
- Increasing motivation for work
- More connection to the course (less transactional distance)
- Increasing engagement in the material
- Less complex discussion
- Instant feedback (verbal and non-verbal)
- Light-load Co-operation (especially in smaller groups)
- Understanding both content and logistics
- Planning activities

**Not as good for:**

- Deep critical thinking
- Flexibility / Accessibility (everyone has to show up at the same time)
- Group work (asynchronous is better)
- Final exam mastery

**Teaching Strategies:**

One advantage regarding synchronous classes is that the teacher’s skillfulness in leading discussions in the face to face classroom (critical inquiry, co-operative debate, Socratic learning, immediate feedback, humor, etc.) can be used naturally in the virtual classroom. It is more difficult to build these components into asynchronous learning. Clark (2005) suggests some additional strategies (parenthesis are my additional notes):

- Maintain a lively pace (I was in a web conference the other day and it was painfully slow and awkward because no one was taking the lead to move it along)
- Visualize the content (can you add any pictures / slides to help direct conversation?)
- Incorporate frequent participant responses (polls, hand raises, everyone saying something...)
- Use small group break-out rooms (not necessary for an already small class)
- Students feel more positive about the interactions and are more engaged if classes are shorter (60 – 90 minutes)

### **End goal:**

We want students to connect and understand, that is “make meaning” using the social co-construction of knowledge (Brierton, Wilson, Kistler, Flowers, & Jones, 2016). Ideally a synchronous virtual class would be an online space that will foster a true community of inquiry: “a cohesive and interactive community of learners whose purpose is to critically analyze, construct, and confirm worthwhile knowledge” (Power & St-Jacques, 2014, p. 683)

### **Resources:**

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