

Tune-in: Staying Connected with Students

One of the biggest concerns that faculty and students express in online or hybrid learning environments is a loss of connection and community. For remote students, an emotional connection to their peers and to you is one of the most important motivating factors for engagement. Although the screen and physical distance that separates you may seem like a barrier, there are ways to be intentional about how you check-in with students during synchronous and asynchronous class times. Checking-in regularly also supports students with diverse learning needs because learning on a device with multiple sensory inputs can be dysregulating and overwhelming.

Pedagogically for synchronous sessions

- Stopping to check-in will help slow the pace down and give all students time to reflect, breathe, and process. It also creates a more inclusive and accessible learning space.
- In a synchronous hybrid classroom (some students f2f and some remote), there may be some time lags between what is said in the room and what remote students hear. Check-ins slow down your pace so that remote learners can catch up, and by so doing, you are inviting all students, regardless of location, to ask questions, make comments, and connect with each other while participating in class activities.

Structures and strategies for synchronous sessions

- It's important to intentionally check-in or offer a change of pace every 12-15 minutes during synchronous time. Try setting a timer on your watch or phone— do it! It's not always easy to remember to change pace on your own. You have a lot going on.
- Three zoom tools that you can use for easy, quick check-ins are the chat, the whiteboard and the "reactions" function.
 - Lightning round in the **chat**: "Let's just take a minute to see how all of you are doing. In the chat, please enter what is making the most sense to you right now." *Some variations on that theme*:
 - "Take a minute to enter a question into the chat."
 - "Take a minute to enter into the chat a concept that is new to you and interesting."
 - "Take a minute to enter into the chat any problems you are having with technology that are making it hard for you to follow the conversation or fully participate in the activity."
 - Use the **"reactions"** function on the lower toolbar of zoom. Ask folks to show you with a thumbs up or clap, if they are hanging in, and then follow up with a lightning round in the chat using any of the aforementioned suggested prompts.
 - Use the **whiteboard** function to anonymously check-in with students to see how they are feeling and thinking about the course content and class flow. Emotions and Cognition are inseparable aspects of learning, regardless of the content you are teaching. Inquire about both of those internal states frequently. This helps you really understand how your students are doing socially, emotionally, and intellectually. It also conveys attention and caring on your part.

Virtual Teaching Tip

Structures and strategies for asynchronous sessions

- Use the [Canvas announcement function](#), email, or social media to let students know that you are actively involved in the course and remind them that you are available to support their success with assigned work.
- Post a video that reminds students that you are thinking about them and are there to support their success with the assigned work. Seeing your face makes them feel more connected.
- Be present in Canvas or other discussion forums by validating students' posts and asking questions that may take the conversation a bit deeper.
- Use [Voice Thread](#), which integrates with Canvas, to post videos of you responding to their work in between classes or live sessions so they can see and/or hear you.

You might be thinking

- Checking in every 15 minutes seems like so much work. Is it really necessary?
 - In a word: Yes! The longer you go without checking-in, the less present you will be with your students. You may think that everything is going well, but they may be struggling or checking out.
- What if I don't get to all of my content?
 - If you get to less content, but students get more from the experience and feel more connected to you and each other, they will stay engaged with the course.

Technology Support for Connecting with your Students

- [ETS User Guide Getting in Touch: How to contact your students through Canvas](#)
- [ETS Recorded Trainings](#)
- [ETS Getting started with Zoom](#)
- [Find an upcoming training session](#)
- Email edtech@tufts.edu for 1-1 support

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