

Let's Chat: Engaging Students in the Zoom Chat Space

Looking for ideas for using the Zoom chat space? There are some wonderful ways to use chat strategically, efficiently, and playfully to increase student engagement. Chat spaces can afford an additional opportunity for all students to be engaged with each other and the content, which can lessen feelings of isolation and help create community.

Pedagogically

- The chat space can be used for both social and pedagogical purposes. Expressing themselves and having conversations via text can be a familiar mode of connection for our students.
- Opportunities to "chat" are particularly important for creating community with and among students, and for their sense of kinship with each other. The chat can be used for conversations unrelated to course content, and it permits freedom to connect and learn about each other. For remote learners, using the chat to connect with their peers can be akin to on-campus students hanging out in the cafeteria or in their dorm rooms, grabbing a coffee, or walking to and from any building on campus.
- Structurally the chat space can be used to augment class discussions, and as a clearinghouse for resources, files, and supportive materials. It provides manifold ways to formatively assess student learning.
- The chat space can be used to do quick check-ins with students about their emotions and their questions, and it also offers an easy way to take polls.

Suggested practices

Use the chat strategically to support conversations and connections. The chat can move quickly, which can make it seem overwhelming for many instructors and for some students. Consider these practices to help manage the chat's use:

- Use the chat space with intentionality. Allow some free-flowing social chat for the first 10 - 15 minutes of class. After that, it can be helpful to use the chat for specific purposes.
- Segment the chat for 15 minutes, soliciting only questions about content.
- Ask students to use the chat for the next ten minutes to give each other support when they ask helpful or clarifying questions or add value to discussions.
- Direct the chat to be used for five minutes for students to ask questions about upcoming assignments.
- Use the chat to post reactions to a video or themes from a discussion forum.
- Direct students NOT to use chat for ten minutes during class so you can take a break & they can focus on something else for a period of time
- Consider asking a student or TA to monitor the chat and interject questions as they arise.

Virtual Teaching Tip

Structures and strategies for using the chat

Beginning of the session check-ins

- At the beginning of class, offer very quick "lightning round" chat prompt(s) to assess how students are doing emotionally and to warm them up for the learning activities. Example emotional check-in prompts:
 - If you were the weather, what would your weather report be?
 - On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being "fantastic," what would your rating be right now?
 - If you were a song, what song would you be?
- Example learning content related check-in prompts
 - Share a question you would like answered during today's class.
 - Write the name of the author of the reading that most interested you.
 - Post a theory that we've covered in this class that connects to today's material.
 - What is one critique you have of one of this week's required readings?
 - In the chat, using a 1-5 scale, with 1 being "unhelpful" and 5 being "transformative," rate X reading. Then we will discuss.

Middle of the session gauging student learning

- During the middle of the session, learning audits can help gauge what students are synthesizing. Based on [formative assessments](#) that occur in the chat space, the instructor can determine how to quickly change course if assessments indicate that students are not yet ready to move on to deeper or more sophisticated content, are feeling frustrated or anxious, or need content or skill reinforcement. For example
 - We're about at half time today, write in the chat space an idea that is new to you.
 - Let's take a timeout to see where folks are, write in the chat space three words that describe what you are thinking and feeling right now.
 - Before we move into the last half of our time today, what is a concept or theory that has you confused or stumped?
 - If you could decide on how we will use the last half of class today, what would you propose we do?
 - Red light/Yellow light/Green light: Based on your comfort with today's content as we move into the final half of class would you suggest we stop, pause, or go?

End of session assessments and exit tickets

- Before a class concludes, it can be helpful to use the chat space to assess student learning or their class experience with an exit ticket. This is an end of class formative assessment for you (you know more about what they know) and for them (asking them to summarize their learning is retrieval practice and fosters metacognition). Example prompts:
 - Please enter into the chat space something you know now that you didn't when we started, something you can do now that you could not when we started, and something you could teach to a peer that you couldn't have taught them when we started.
 - Imagine one of your friends was out sick today and couldn't come to class. Write in the chat three sentences that best describe what we learned in today's class.
 - Share the moment you felt most connected to the content.
 - Share a moment when you felt connected to your fellow students.

Virtual Teaching Tip

- What is one suggestion you can make to the instructor so that the next class is a more productive experience for you?
- What do you know now that you didn't three weeks ago?
- With a yes, no, or "I'm thinking about it," please indicate if you would like the instructor to reach out to you for a check-in.

Technology Support for Chat in Zoom

- [ETS Recorded Trainings](#)
- [Zoom's In-Meeting Chat](#)
- [Find an upcoming training session](#)
- Email edtech@tufts.edu for 1-1 support

[Return to Preparing for Fall 2020](#)