

Strategies:

Set synchronous learning norms prior to your first virtual session

- Tell students what to expect during your synchronous meeting and what topics or questions the session will cover.
- Instruct them on how to prepare and what they will be expected to do.
- Remind them that they should respect the contributions of others and that they are expected to participate fully.
- Students should mute their microphone when not talking, but be prepared for discussion.
- They should find a quiet spot and limit background room noise.
- Reduce distractions (close unnecessary applications) so that they aren't tempted to multi-task during the session.

Technical reminders

- Create a practice session and strongly encourage students to log into Collaborate well before your first "required" session to practice setting up their microphone and camera.
- Remind students to use Google Chrome as their web browser and include links to help documentation in your Blackboard site.
- Students should check their internet speed prior to their first session.

<https://www.speakeasy.net/speedtest/>

- Collaborate is hosted on is located just outside of Washington D.C. so it is always good to check using that location.

Instructor tips

- Practice, practice, practice! You can even ask one of the instructional designers, or eLearning specialists to practice with you prior to your first virtual meeting.
- Log into your session early and include an introduction PowerPoint slide so that your students know that you are online and when the session will officially begin.
- Post PowerPoint and resources before your virtual session in Blackboard so that students can review materials and/or print off materials to follow-along during the session.
- Encourage students to raise their hand and use the chat box for questions. Ask specific students to help you keep on an eye on the chat box in case you miss questions.
- If the sessions are mandatory, record the sessions so that students can review them.

We would like to acknowledge that the majority of the tips shared in this handout were presented by Liz Storey and Rick Vandermolten (College of Education) from a previous presentation. We would like to thank them for their insight and willingness to share their experiences and best practices with others.

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Best practices associated with using Collaborate Ultra for synchronous sessions and online group work.

<http://www.gvsu.edu/idel/>
Kimberly Kenward
Liz Storey and Rick Vandermolen

- Include an attendance policy in your syllabus regarding Collaborate Ultra and review the Collaborate Ultra record logs for attendance.

--Keep your class list or photo roster handy and call on “different” students throughout the session to keep students active and engaged.

Small Group Norms

-- If you use break-out rooms, or create separate Collaborate Ultra sessions for online group work, encourage students to keep their cameras on, but limit surrounding room noise.

--Provide clear instructions as to what they should be doing in their group meetings.

--Encourage them to use the whiteboard, to think and plan, and record their meetings. They can also use Microsoft Word, handwritten notes and Google documents to record meeting notes.

--Rotate student members in each group to share or report out their group work to the “whole” class.

Encourage community building activities prior to your first virtual meeting

--Include ice breaker activities that encourage students to get to know each other’s professional and personal interests.

--Create interest surveys (using Blackboard’s survey tool or Google surveys) and share that information prior with the whole class to help make connections with their classmates.

--Explore alternative tools like Google slides, Flipgrid, or Padlet to design creative ice breakers.

Review:

<https://www.gvsu.edu/elearn/help/blackboard-collaborate-ultra-34.htm> for tutorials and documentation. You can also schedule individual consultations with the instructional designers, digital media developers and eLearning Specialists for more assistance.

Collaborate Ultra can be used for:

- Online office hours
- Online guest speakers
- Advising
- Study sessions
- Small group projects
- Synchronous class meetings

