

# Engage Your Audience!

## Conducting Effective Web Conferencing Sessions

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# Conducting a Blackboard Collaborate Session in the New Experience

There are many things you can do to deliver high-quality, highly-effective web conferencing sessions. The following pages provide suggestions that you can use as you begin to deliver sessions in this environment.

As you become experienced using web conferencing and handling participants, you will develop your own style of leading a session.

## Preparing the Content

Before you sit down to deliver a web conferencing session, you need to think about the content you want to deliver as well as how you plan to deliver it.

- Design content and create presentations to include interactivity and variety to engage all types of learners (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.). Make sure you provide opportunities for participants to interact and collaborate with each other as well as with the material.
- Make sure the content you create is easy to see. Keep background templates simple so that they don't distract from the content you want to share. It's usually a good idea to avoid gradient colors in the background.
- Use a font type and size that is easy to read. Typically, fonts should be no smaller than a 12-point standard font such as Arial, Verdana, or Times New Roman.
- Use visuals whenever possible especially for complex processes or procedures.
- Avoid slide after slide of bulleted lists. Transform bulleted lists into graphical representations, lists of questions, or even games.
- Identify which files you wish to include in your session.

## Preparing for Your Session

If you have never taught an online synchronous session before, you should take some time to familiarize yourself with the features and functionality of the product and allow yourself to get comfortable with a new method for presentation delivery.

- Practice before leading your first session! You should be comfortable with the content you are delivering as well as with the web conference session tools. Invite friends and co-workers to your practice sessions to make the sessions more realistic. Practice using the tools you intend to use during the session.

- Practice with two computers – one with you as the moderator and another logged in as a participant. As you work with your presentation, look at the participant computer to see what they are seeing.
- Don't try to use all the tools in your first session. Get comfortable with the basic web conferencing tools and add more advanced tools over time.
- Set your user profile image to be shared with others in the session.
- Ensure your microphone and speakers are working properly.
- Plan to deliver your session with a co-moderator. This person can assist you in the presentation, respond to chat messages, and conduct sound checks with participants. Make sure you work with the co-moderator to identify who will perform which activities.
- Identify a delivery space that is comfortable and quiet with no distractions.

## Preparing Your Participants

- Have a check-in session for new participants. This check-in session, held prior to the participant's first online session, ensures that the participant is ready from a technical standpoint. Set up a time, for example an hour or two, when new participants can call in and someone walks them through accessing the session, checking their audio, and the basics of the interface. In this way, new participants will attend your first session prepared to engage, rather than apprehensive over the new technology.
- Send pre-session information that includes (1) the agenda/objectives, (2) how to access live and post-session recordings, and (3) a support number to call. Identify exactly what you expect of your participants. For example, this might include browser requirements, the pre-configuration information, the time of check in sessions, the installation of any plug-ins required by your content, etc. It should also include the exact time the session is scheduled to begin, how to access the session, and any pre-work that needs to be done.

## Before the Session Begins

Use the checklist below as you join the session:

- Join the session 10 – 15 minutes before the session is scheduled to begin.
- Open web pages and applications needed for application sharing. Close all non-essential applications.
- Load your content (i.e. PowerPoint, files, etc.).
- If working with a co-moderator, give them moderator privileges when they join the room.
- Build community by creating a profile and encourage participants to do the same. Consider creating a bio page introducing yourself.

## As the Session Begins

- By default, you will see notifications as participants join the session. Greet participants as they join and have them speak to you as well so that you can check their audio.

- When presenting a session, provide a slide with instructions including how to communicate with chat, audio, and video and how to test audio.
- Remove or assign privileges to participants as appropriate.
- Remind participants to click the Step Away button if they are temporarily away from their computer.
- If there are participants new to web conferencing, give them a brief overview of the interface, including how to raise their hand and how to send a Chat message.
- Lay down house rules: how to step away, when to use your mic for questions, when to raise hand, and how to ask questions.
- Use your webcam to introduce yourself. If the audience is large, do not take the time for individual participant introductions. Instead, ask them to write a brief bio in chat and take a few seconds to read over it.

## During the Session

- Speak clearly and don't rush.
- Animate your delivery. You must use your voice to project energy and enthusiasm into your delivery.
- Lighten up and have fun with your audience; tell short stories to drive a point home. Do not go overboard with having fun, maintain your professionalism, and do not waste time.
- Visualize your participants. Consider using video for introductions or encourage them to setup their User Profile picture.
- Look at the whole screen, not just the content area. Watch for chat messages and raised hands.
- Encourage participants to raise their hands when they have a question or comment.
- Ask questions and provide opportunity for interaction. Provide specific instructions on how participants should respond (i.e. by using the chat or raising their hand).
- Use the Content Editing tools to assist you in your delivery. For example, use the Pencil or Pointer to call attention to specific regions on the screen. Try to provide some mark up for each screen.
- Dress professionally, and make sure your surroundings are tidy and uncluttered.
- Include features such as Sharing Content to assist you in delivering your content and making the sessions more engaging and interactive.
- Keep your audience active and engaged by providing an activity for them to do within every four minutes.
- Use the participant's names often in teaching scenarios. This will promote active listening.
- Provide a screenshot of the interface to use as a reference as you conduct your session.
- Do your homework, and know your audience so that you can tailor the discussion around their needs. Provide a pre-requisite assignment, and do not let the one person who did not do it drive the pace of the session.

- Be a good timekeeper, keep the agenda flowing, and do not be prey to rabbit holes. Do not answer long complicated questions in the middle of getting your point across. Do not go over time publicized time allotment!
- Use content that is organized and simple. If sharing web sites or other documents, make sure to have them open and ready!
- Refer back to the agenda to show where you are on the agenda roadmap.
- When you make transitions during the session, communicate what you are doing (i.e., I am switching from App Share, back to content. Give me a few seconds to bring it up.).
- Practice what you are preaching! Record your session by yourself, and tweak your delivery before the actual session!

### At the End of the Session

- Thank participants for their attendance.
- Make sure participants know how to view the recording.
- Stand by for further questions until all participants have left the session.
- Make notes of any changes you might want to make in future deliveries.

## Tips on Using the Blackboard Collaborate Web Conferencing Features

This section provides useful tips and techniques for using the various Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing features.

### Technical Help

- Use a WebRTC supported browser, such as Chrome. If using a browser that does not support WebRTC, make sure your Adobe Flash plug-in is up-to-date.
- For faster speed, hardwire to your Internet source when available. When using wireless, make sure you are near the router.
- Close any unnecessary programs/documents to reserve bandwidth.
- Have support numbers on hand (North America - 1.877.382.2293; Ireland - 1.800.64.4528; United Kingdom - 0800.051.7248; Australia - 1.800.26.7338).

### Audio

- Elicit longer responses to allow for the initial delay using audio when a user first turns it on.
- As the moderator, you should ensure that all participants can hear you and that you can hear the participants when they speak. Remind participants to use the audio gauges in the Audio and Video Settings to adjust their microphone and speaker volumes.
- Web conferencing provides a utility that allows you and each participant to test and configure the audio at any time during your session. This utility can be accessed through the

*Collaborate Panel > My Settings > Audio and Video Settings > Set Up your Camera and Microphone.*

- If a participant accidentally leaves their microphone on, you can regain control of the microphone by temporarily taking away audio permissions for all users.

## Participant Permissions

- Determine which permissions your participants need. You can choose to give them no permissions, partial permissions, or all permissions, depending on how you want to manage your session.

## User Profiles

- Upload a user profile picture from the My Settings Panel, by clicking on the avatar next to your name.
- Determine whether user profile pictures should display throughout the user interface. The default is set to allow all users to see profile pictures. To disable this, allowing only Moderators to add profile pictures, access the Only show profile pictures for Moderators checkbox, from the *Collaborate Panel > My Settings Panel > Session Settings*.

## Live Video

- Video allows you to add a human touch to your sessions. Users can share their web cam with all the attendees in the session. This can be used to show the presenter, as well as to conduct demonstrations and simulations.

## Multiple Moderators

- There can be more than one moderator during the session. You can grant moderator permission to or take them away from session participants at any time. You cannot revoke moderator permissions from attendees that enter the session as a Moderator, however.
- This feature gives you the ability to have a co-moderator in session with you. The role of the co-moderator could be to handle technical problems and answer questions in the Chat panel while you are leading the presentation.
- If you wish to have a guest speaker in your session, ask the speaker to join the room as a participant and then give them Presenter privilege during the session.
- You can give any of your participants elevated privileges at any time. For example, you may want to have a participant lead the users through an activity or have a group of participants make a presentation to the others.

## Chat

- To save time when typing the same message to send to participants, prepare a separate text file that contains standard greetings and messages for participants. Open the text file during the session and use the standard keyboard shortcuts to paste your message in the text box. On Windows: copy (CTRL+C) and paste (CTRL+V). On a Mac: copy (CMD+C) and paste (CMD+V).

- To express emotion such as laughter or confusion, type a text string in the Chat window, for example, :-o for surprised or ;-) for a wink, or click on the Emoticon button in the Chat input field and select from the available emoticons.

## Whiteboard

- When using the whiteboard:
  - Create a page for participants to work on
  - Incorporate activities on the whiteboard
  - Plan the exercise
  - Encourage creativity
  - Let it get messy
  - Involve everyone
  - Play games
- When a presentation is loaded onto the whiteboard, all the slides are converted into static images. This means that all transitions, animations, and links will be lost.
- To incorporate builds into your presentation, create individual slides where you build one bullet point at a time. This way, when you advance to the next slide, the next bullet will appear.
- Create activities for participants to work on in the whiteboard area such as games and icebreakers. For example, create a slide with a grid using the Content Editing tools (varies depending upon the number of participants). Assign a cell to each participant and ask him or her to respond to a question by typing their response in their assigned cell.

## Saving Whiteboard Files

- You can save the whiteboard screens by right-clicking on the image and selecting Save image as...
- Save the whiteboard screens to a file anytime during your session for archival purposes or to send to any participants who may have missed your session.

## Application Sharing

- Share an application or your entire desktop using Application Sharing. As you navigate through the application(s), all participants will see your mouse move and the changes as they are being made. For example, during a meeting, you can collaborate with colleagues on documents and spreadsheets. In a training session, you can train participants on a new application or product. In an academic setting, students can share their work/assignments with you and you can make comments and changes directly on the document.

## Polling

- Polling attendees is an excellent way to ensure they are paying attention, engaged, and understand the material. It also makes the session more interactive. Using the polling tool also helps the Moderator set the pace of the session by determining who is understanding the material and who may need additional information.

- There are five different polls to choose from: Yes/No responses and multiple choice questions ranging from 2-5 response options.
- Ask a question or display something on a slide or the whiteboard and have the participants answer using the polling response dialog.
- The polling responses are hidden from the participants in the session. You can view the polling responses on the moderator interface.
- A summary of the results can be displayed to participants after the poll is complete by selecting the Show Responses link. This locks the poll in its current state and displays the current results to participants. Select Hide Responses to open the poll back up, allowing participants to add/change their response.

## Breakout Groups

- A breakout group has the same features as the main room and can be used to facilitate small group activities or private meetings. The participants in a breakout group can only hear the audio and see the content in that room.
- You can create breakout groups any time during the session and move participants between them. Sessions auto populate with two ready-to-use breakout groups, named Group 1 and Group 2. Collaborate provides two ways to assign attendees to group:
  - Custom Assignment: Allows the moderator to drag and drop participants into groups or use the ellipsis menu next to an attendees name to assign them to a selected group.
  - Randomly Assign: Collaborate will determine the number of possible groups based on the number of session attendees. A randomly assigned breakout group must have at least two participants. The Number of Groups drop-down menu allows the moderator determine the number of desired groups from the possible breakdown.
- Attendees enter breakout groups with full moderator rights within the space allowing them to make use of all the available Share Content features.
- Prior to sending participants into breakout groups, provide specific instructions and let them know how much time they have to work on the activity.
- Remind participants to raise their hands if they have questions while in a breakout group.
- Leave a message on the current whiteboard screen in the main room informing participants who join the session late to raise their hand to contact you.
- Visit each breakout group often to let participants know that you are available.

## For Further Exploration

- Interested in submitting product feedback? Want to create, view and vote on ideas? - <https://community.blackboard.com/community/ideasmain>
- Understanding the Changes - [https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/030\\_Changes](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/030_Changes)

- Release Notes - [https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/010\\_Release\\_Notes](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/010_Release_Notes)
- Training Program Development Solution - [http://www.blackboard.com/resources/training/tpdtakeaway\\_3.24.16.pdf](http://www.blackboard.com/resources/training/tpdtakeaway_3.24.16.pdf)
- Browser Support - [https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/040\\_Browser\\_Support](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/040_Browser_Support)
- What is WebRTC? - <https://webrtc.org/>
- Collaborate Integrations - <https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/Integrations>
- Wi-Fi Router Placement - [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/27/wifi-router-placement-tips\\_n\\_6943024.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/27/wifi-router-placement-tips_n_6943024.html)
- Known Issues - [https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/010\\_Release\\_Notes/Collaborate\\_Ultra\\_Known\\_Issues](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/010_Release_Notes/Collaborate_Ultra_Known_Issues)
- Blackboard Services Status - <http://status.blackboard.com/>
- How to Troubleshoot Audio Issues in a Collaborate with the Ultra Experience Session - <https://blackboard.secure.force.com/publickarticleview?id=kA7390000008OR3>
- What is Bandwidth? - <http://searchenterprisewan.techtarget.com/definition/bandwidth>
- Low Bandwidth Management - <https://blackboard.secure.force.com/publickarticleview?id=kA770000000Cc3Z>
- Best practices for Bandwidth/App Share - <https://blackboard.secure.force.com/publickarticleview?id=kA739000000028q>
- System Requirements - <https://blackboard.secure.force.com/publickarticleview?id=kAB70000000PAsD>
- Networking Info <https://blackboard.secure.force.com/publickarticleview?id=kA770000000Cbtt>
- Firewalls, web sockets, proxy settings - <https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/Networking>
- Accessibility - <https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Administrator/Accessibility>
- Keyboard navigation - [https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/076\\_Accessibility#keys](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/076_Accessibility#keys)
- Closed captioning - [https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/075\\_Live\\_Closed\\_Captioning](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra/Moderator/075_Live_Closed_Captioning)
- Self-Service Support - <http://www.blackboard.com/forms/signupform.aspx>
- Collaborate in Bb Student - [https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Bb\\_Student/Collaborate\\_in\\_Bb\\_Student](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Bb_Student/Collaborate_in_Bb_Student)
- Join the Community - [www.community.blackboard.com](http://www.community.blackboard.com)
- Blackboard Help - [www.help.blackboard.com](http://www.help.blackboard.com)
- Blackboard Support - [www.behind.blackboard.com](http://www.behind.blackboard.com)