# What I Have Learned Facilitating Learning Online, Part 1: Five Best Practices for Live Sessions

By Gina Fugnitto | Categories: Technology & Remote Learning

In a millisecond, many of you have been asked to transition instruction to a virtual platform to engage students in remote learning. You might wonder: *How do I continue to connect with my students? How do I continue to create a connected and safe learning experience? How do I keep my students engaged? When do I go to the bathroom?*

I thought it might be helpful for me to share some of the best practices I have developed facilitating learning via Zoom over the past few years. Here are my five best practices for creating and leading dynamic, intentional, and valuable online learning experiences.

### Best Practice #1.

I engage as if I were in the room. I still try to connect with my eyes, facial expressions, and the tone of my voice. I still use wait-time. I still expect participation. I still use cooperative structures for learning.

*Does your platform allow you to use a chat box? Breakout room?* If so, consider how you might take advantage of those tools.

### Best Practice #2.

I establish our way of work and teach folks how to engage in the learning. Don't expect it to be quick and easy! My essential ground rules are: be on camera, be prepared, use the mute button, use the chat box, and work well with others in breakouts.

*What are your essentials? How are you teaching your students to be engaged in the learning? What does that look like?*

### Best Practice #3.

I accept what is different about facilitating learning via Zoom and incorporate that into my own practice: I might have to repeat myself, especially when giving directions. Wait-time is longer when online and I know to expect longer spaces of silence. The talk-time ratio is different and that is all right as long as I am prepared.

Take note of your platform's "delays." I have learned that on Zoom, the chat box can be 10–15 seconds delayed. I have to accept that and accommodate for that by allowing wait-time.

### Best Practice #4.

I come to the experience prepared, yet flexible. Preparedness is essential for allowing you to connect, to be clear, and to be flexible as needed. I have my materials by my side. I have any items necessary already open on my computer. I have a glass of water within reach. Sometimes, I even have a few snacks at my side.

*How can you be prepared enough so that you can be flexible?* Part of being flexible is accepting the fact the things can take longer than expected.

**Best Practice #5.**

I consider what is reasonable for the learner and the content. There is no "powering through" online learning. The most effective online learning experiences are planned with intention.

Here are some important questions to ask yourself when lesson planning: *When might I use a quick-write? When might a quick chat box conversation be beneficial? When might I use a more in-depth conversation/work time via a breakout room? When might independent work/learning time be effective? When might we need breaks? When might we need movement?*

These are unprecedented times. From one millisecond to another you went from facilitating learning in your well-thought-out classroom community to engaging students in remote learning. Don't forget to give yourself grace. Don't forget to be flexible. Don't forget to keep it simple. Don't forget you are doing the best job you can do given the circumstances. Don't forget that no matter what, your students want to connect with you and their peers.

Most of all, don't forget that you can do this!

Click here to read part 2 of this blog series, What I Have Learned Facilitating Learning Online, Part 2: Community Building + Navigating a Virtual Platform