
Creating an Inclusive Virtual Space

**A resource guide for creating an inclusive space while working, teaching,
and engaging remotely**

Updated February 2021

INTRODUCTION

This resource guide is intended to serve as a starting point for anyone interested in learning how to create a an inclusive virtual space while working, teaching, and engaging remotely. Each section contains general and easy to follow recommendations for promoting inclusivity in different virtual settings. The additional links provide an opportunity to access and navigate other valuable resources related to online diversity, inclusion and engagement.

I. Facilitating Virtual Meetings

II. Hosting a Webinar

III. Online Engagement and Management

IV. Remote Teaching

FACILITATING VIRTUAL MEETINGS



Tips

- **Name Settings**—in lieu of face-to-face introductions, invite participants to edit their name settings to reflect how they would like to be addressed. Consider suggesting preferred pronouns and/or a pronunciation guide.
- **Engaging everyone at the start**—without being able to chat one-on-one with a neighbor, the start of online meetings can become awkward. Consider inviting participants to answer an icebreaker question in the chat box. If size allows, try to acknowledge each participant as they join the meeting to let them know that their presence is important and appreciated.
- **Accessibility of participation**—individuals may face a variety of barriers related to online learning and work, including unreliable internet, different time zones, or discomfort using virtual tools. When meeting for the first time, make sure to thoroughly introduce any new technology, and consider accessibility when choosing materials to share and activities to facilitate. Can participants contribute if they need to call in?
- **Recognize difficulties**—as a community, we are facing unprecedented feelings of frustration and isolation. Use language that recognizes the difficulty of the situation and acknowledges that we are all working together to navigate this new digital environment. Consider providing time for personal reflection, or checking in on how participants are feeling on a scale of 1-5.

More Resources

- [Online Meeting Resources Toolkit for Facilitators](#), Facilitators for Pandemic Response Group [Google drive file]
- [Tips for Creating an Inclusive Virtual Space](#), Krystle Starvis and Jessica Leacher, *Aspen Institute*
- [Tufts TTS Secure Zoom Meeting Guidance](#)

HOSTING A WEBINAR



Tips

- **Diversify content and imagery**—when selecting speakers, creating presentations, and constructing invitations or advertisements, ensure that you are developing representative content for your intended audience. If compiling a report on the event, incorporate diverse authors and resources.
- **Consider different learning and processing styles**—when preparing materials, think about sending agendas and visuals ahead of time for individuals who need time to process or are planning to join via phone, or providing real-time notetaking tools or post-event summaries to assist participants in staying engaged. Consider using [Rev.com](https://www.rev.com) to automate captions/transcriptions.
- **Encourage participation**—to solicit rich discussion and engagement, consider providing multiple media for interaction during the event, such as a synchronous chat room or opportunities for small group discussion via [Microsoft Teams](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/teams).

More Resources

- [What Will It Take to Improve Diversity at Conferences](#), Ruchika Tulshyan, *Harvard Business Review*
- Hire Black illustrators for design projects from [Illustrator Hub](#)
- [Leading Groups Online](#), Jean Rewa and Daniel Hunter [pdf file]
- [How to Run a Free Online Academic Conference: A Workbook](#), Franklin Sayre [Google drive file]

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT AND MANAGEMENT



Tips

- **Be sensitive to the emotional climate**—providing a space for individuals to express their socio-emotional needs.
- **Dedicate time for social interactions**—building and maintaining relationships is critical, even when working remote. Consider starting weekly or monthly email threads to share personal highlights, swap recipes, or build in fun check-in questions to meeting agendas.
- **Develop clear communication plans**—develop guidelines with your team about what should be communicated via email, chat, phone, or video call, and determine realistic response times to ensure that individuals do not feel the need to be on call outside of work hours. Also consider using project management platforms, such as [Microsoft Planner](#), to allow teams to delegate tasks and indicate what has been completed while minimizing back and forth communication.
- **Allow for flexibility**—working remotely requires everyone to deal with unexpected scenarios, from disconnected Wi-Fi, to sick kids, to never-ending construction background noise. When in a management position, it is important to model empathy during inevitable hiccups to ensure that team members feel supported during disruptions that may be out of their control.

More Resources

- [COVID-19 Racial Equity and Social Justice Resources, Remote Work & Online Engagement, Racial Equity Tools](#)
- [Building Trust While Working Remotely](#), Sara Baker, *The Engine Room*

TEACHING



Tips

- **Acknowledge different levels of comfort with Zoom**—people have different levels of technological comfort, make sure you emphasize this and let students know they can decide to turn their camera off if they prefer.
- **Have a back up plan**—in case technology fails, have a plan about what to do, which should also be shared with students.
- **Clear communication**—be clear and concise about the content you will cover and include a variety of activities that address different students' needs, styles and expectations. Increase channels of communication (i.e. email, shared files, text messages).
- **Consider starting class with a warm welcome**—to foster authentic connections, you can start a class by taking a few minutes for everyone to share something positive (i.e. what are you hopeful for?).

More Resources

- [Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching](#), Tufts' site with resources for teaching and for guiding faculty in their development.
- [Friedman School Faculty Resources](#), Friedman' School's site with a wide range of teaching and online course conversion resources for faculty.
- [Audio and Virtual Conferencing with Zoom](#), *Tufts Technology Services*
- [Zoom Video Conferencing for Remote Teaching](#), *Swarthmore College ITS Blog*
- [8 Ways to Be More Inclusive in Your Zoom Teaching](#), Kelly A. Hogan and Viji Sathy, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* [free access to site with Tufts log-in]