

## Live Synchronous Online Classes: How Can They Inform Face-to-face Classes?

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*What does a live synchronous online session look like?  
How is it similar to/different from a live synchronous face-to-face session?*

### THEORY

**How does the instructor get out of the way of student learning?**

*It's not about us!*

*It's about what the students learn.*

*Harness the collective knowledge of the group.*

*Be a facilitator, not a dictator!*

*Allow learning to be participatory: in thinking and doing - responding, interacting.*

*Zoned-out, inattentive, disengaged, bored (!) students do not learn.*

### ANXIETY

**In live synchronous online sessions, there is a concern about whether students are attending to the material and whether they are thinking and comprehending, applying and analyzing. Is there ever such a concern in face-to-face classes?**

### SOLVING THE PROBLEM

**How does the instructor keep students engaged?**

- Uses mini-lectures/lecturettes and short stories.
- Does not speak more than 3-5 minutes without asking for student response.
- Provides frequent prompts that ask for students to say or do something

**How does the instructor know whether students are engaged? Part I**

**In a live synchronous session the instructor cannot see the students. What does s/he do? Do these, or analogous, options apply in face-to-face classes?**

- Notes student response time. How long does it take for students to respond to questions and answer polls? If it is long, they may not have understood, or their attention may have waned.
- Observes the quantity of student-initiated acts. Are students raising their hands? Sending chat messages? Asking and answering questions? If not, they may have tuned out.
- Observes the quantity of student responses: Are you receiving feedback from your questions and requests? From your tools: hand signal, green check, red x, emoticons? Are students volunteering? Are all participating in group activities, i.e. responding simultaneously on the white board or drawing an important visual together?
- Uses tools to get students to attend or to check comprehension. For example, ask for a nod (green check, red x).

**How does the instructor know whether students are engaged? Part II**

**What kinds of prompts do instructors provide?**

- Yes/no or short answer questions
- Open ended prompts
- Marking important/salient points in a list of items
- Asks students to respond to a list by marking the most (salient, key, important) point or most important point each student needs to remember.
- Calls on students
- Uses polls
- Formative quizzes/testing
- Puts students into groups and gives them a discussion prompt
- **And ... silence – 5-7 seconds wait time in order for students to answer**

### **How does the instructor know whether students are engaged? Part III**

#### **How do the students respond to prompts?**

- Students are called on.
- Students self-select.
- Students mark specific items in a list, for all to see.
- Students raise hands (hand icon) when asked a question.
- Students respond to questions w/yes or no (green check, red x). All can see.
- Students respond with very short response on the whiteboard, for all to see.
- Students respond in chat with responses that are a little longer (open ended questions). All can see.
- Students get into break-out groups, discuss a question, then return to the class session with a response from each group leader.

### **How does the instructor know whether students are engaged? Part IV**

#### **How do instructors follow up on students' questions and responses?**

- If students ask a question, the instructor chooses appropriately from the following: 1) Answer question fully. 2) Answer partially and then re-direct to class. 3) Immediately re-direct to class. 4) Re-direct back to questioner for clarification.
- Instructor can look at any set of responses and choose several to expand upon or ask students to expand on.
- The instructor knows how to respond to student answers (not with "That's good," or "I agree," but with substantive expansion or feedback).

### **VARIOUS OTHER MATTERS**

#### **How does the instructor teach students about expectations about attendance, preparedness, and participation?**

- Short lecturette on nature of the course (participatory, not passive listening).
- Therefore, students are expected to come prepared to discuss material.
- Therefore, students are expected to attend.
- Class is not a reiteration of the textbook. *If it is, why should they attend?*

#### **How does instructor "cover" needed material if students are allowed to take time to work together?**

- Is very focused, coherent, concise.
- Makes sure explanations are very clear.
- Makes sure there is a visual aid to explanations (lists, phrases, pictures that students can see).
- Rethinks the content in light of how students will deeply learn.
- Similar to above: Takes a reality check by asking how much students will retain, comprehend, recall in five years, and answering the question