

# Video Conferencing Tips and Suggestions for Faculty

## General Tips – Zoom Tips – Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Tips

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### **General Tips**

As you continue this semester's courses through online teaching, you might choose to incorporate a video conferencing component to teach live classes. Please review the following tips to help make your video conferences effective and efficient.

- 1. Supply students with the agenda and materials.** The agenda and other pertinent meeting materials, including website links, should be shared with students at least a day before each session so that participants can access them during class. Display the agenda at the start of class to give students a clear idea of how class will progress.
  - 2. Dress for optimal video quality.** Aim to dress the same way you would to teach an in-person class. Neutral and muted colors, such as medium blues or pastels, help the camera focus more easily.
  - 3. Close all unused applications and clear your desktop.** Only activate and open the applications you need for the session. Clean up your computer's desktop from any visual clutter and clear your Internet browser windows or tabs to showcase only the items needed for the class.
  - 4. Limit screen sharing capabilities.** Instead of sharing your entire computer screen during an online class, share only a specific application, window, or document. This practice focuses students' attention on relevant course materials, without the risk of them viewing other materials on your computer. If you plan on sharing your browser window, consider hiding your bookmarks toolbar and clearing your browsing history to protect any private information.
  - 5. Join each class a few minutes early.** This will give you an opportunity to test your audio and/or video, and ensure your background is appropriate. It is also courteous to your students to be punctual and prepared when they join the session.
  - 6. Discuss online etiquette.** Discuss your expectations and online learning guidelines with students at the beginning of class, and periodically revisit the topic.
  - 7. Consider recording the class.** Your recordings can be shared after the class with students who were unable to attend, or can be shared with all students to ensure they have access to the information that was shared during the session.
  - 8. Take time to promote class participation.** If applicable, allow students to have the time and opportunity to contribute to the discussion and share their ideas with the group. Use features like chat, breakout rooms, or polling to encourage classroom engagement.
  - 9. Be patient.** Be forgiving of mistakes during the video class session. There are bound to be technical glitches and other hiccups, so be patient with yourself and your students.
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## Zoom-Specific Video Conferencing Tips

If you are using [Zoom](#) for video conferencing, consider the following tips for successful video conferencing:

1. Use a [virtual background](#) to maintain the privacy of your remote location.
2. Use Zoom's various meeting host tools, such as [mute all participants](#) or [disable join before host](#), to maintain control of the online classroom environment. [Click here to view Zoom FAQs](#), for information regarding many of Zoom's features.
3. Consider using Zoom's recording feature. Record your meetings [locally](#) or to the [cloud](#), with searchable transcripts. [Click here to learn how to automatically transcribe cloud recordings](#).
4. Beware of "Zoombombing," a new form of trolling in which a participant uses Zoom's screensharing feature to interrupt and disrupt classes. At this time, we advise faculty to link to Zoom lectures from within Blackboard, and for all UM community members to consider [setting a password](#) to join meetings and/or to enable the [waiting room](#) option. [Click here to learn how to protect your Zoom meetings](#).

If you experience any technical issues with video conferencing, the [UMIT Service Desk](#) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help. For support, call (305) 284-6565 or email [help@miami.edu](mailto:help@miami.edu).

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## Blackboard Collaborate Ultra-Specific Video Conferencing Tips

If you are using [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#) for video conferencing, consider the following tips for successful video conferencing:

1. **Find a private location for your meetings:** If you want to keep anything in the background hidden/private that may distract attendees in your meeting, find a solid wall you can sit in front of (*Blackboard Collaborate Ultra does not have a virtual background feature like Zoom*).
2. Use Blackboard Collaborate Ultra's various meeting host tools, such as [mute all participants](#) or [choose how early](#) you want students to enter a session to maintain control of the online classroom environment. View [Collaborate Ultra FAQs](#) for information regarding managing attendees.
3. Consider using Blackboard's recording feature. Record your meetings to share with students via Blackboard Learn. If you want to let participants [download recordings](#), you can set this before the session and recording begin. Learn about [the recording process here](#), including how students can access your recordings.
4. **Be selective with participant permissions.** When creating a session, you can choose what [participant permissions you want to allow in Session Settings](#). You can turn on or off a participant's ability to chat, share video, share audio, and draw on shared files or the whiteboard. The permissions are turned off for every participant in the session. If you want to let a participant talk or chat, [promote the participant to a presenter](#).
5. **Discover other engagement features:** Blackboard Collaborate Ultra allows you to [schedule multiple sessions](#), [present slides](#), [add files and share applications](#), [poll students](#), [record attendance](#), and use a virtual whiteboard to interact with students. This [short video](#) introduces how to navigate Ultra within your course with more robust information on the [Blackboard website](#).