

CC-GS Committee on Instruction  
**Setting Expectations in Online Classroom Communities**

Teaching and learning online are still relatively new experiences for our faculty and students, so faculty are encouraged to offer students clear guidance about the expectations for an online classroom community. Instructors may wish to use the guidance for students suggested below, or to take it as inspiration for similar guidance, in the policies for student attendance and participations that are included on their syllabi. Taken as a whole, these suggestions are intended to support active student engagement in class and to provide standards for productive and respectful class participation.

Faculty should feel free to use these suggested guidelines for students verbatim or to adapt them as desired:

- Please keep your camera turned on during class. If you experience internet difficulties and need to turn off your camera for a short time, please send a private chat to the instructor to explain. If you know that you will have a special reason for needing to keep your camera off, please discuss it with your instructor in advance.
- Think about your physical setting when on camera and be aware of what appears around you on screen. Try to ensure that a light source is in front of you so you can be seen clearly. If your computer is capable of supporting the use of artificial backgrounds in Zoom, feel free to use one. Whatever you choose, please try to ensure that your background will not distract your classmates.
- Concentrate on staying focused on what's happening in your online class. If you try to multitask by answering emails or checking social media, you will miss important information and discussion points. Before class begins, silence your phone, turn off notifications, close all windows and apps that are not related to class, and otherwise limit your distractions. If you need to step away from the class for an unavoidable reason, please signal your departure in the chat before you go.
- Practice active listening skills. For example, if you are muted, use nonverbal cues to let the speaker know that you have heard and that you do or do not understand, by nodding or shaking your head or smiling, etc. Contribute actively to the chat by noting your responses or your questions that are relevant to the discussion.
- It can sometimes be a bit more difficult in an online environment than in a physical classroom to enter the conversation or get the attention of the instructor, so don't hesitate to raise your hand -- whether your own hand on video or your virtual "raise hand" icon in Zoom -- and say in the chat that you'd like to speak.
- When addressing the instructor and the class, try to look in the direction of the camera when speaking, so you can seem to make eye contact with your audience. It may be helpful to place your Zoom window on your screen directly under the camera so that you can see people in Zoom while directing your eyes toward the top of the screen near the camera when you are speaking.
- In your own view of Zoom, use the "gallery" viewing option if the class is small, so that you can see the instructor and all of your classmates at once.
- In general, keep your "mute" function on when you are not speaking, to avoid background noise from being heard by the class.
- While you may be attending class from your home, remember that Zoom class sessions are the equivalent of a public classroom space. You should therefore appear and behave in the same polite and professional ways that you would in class. For example, be fully clothed in daytime attire, and keep in mind that your camera magnifies activities that may be unconscious movements (scratching, yawning, etc.). Eating on camera should be avoided if possible, as should talking to people who are present in your space but not part of the class.
- Treat all digital course material with integrity, just as you would printed course material. Never distribute recordings of class sessions (in whole or in part) without explicit permission from your instructor.
- Keep in mind that even if you have a good internet connection, not everyone will. Be patient with connectivity issues that you or others, including your instructor, may experience.