

Ten Tips for Going Online With a Basic Public Speaking Classroom
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If you are reading this, you have most likely been told you will be teaching your on campus class remotely or online for at least a few weeks, if not the rest of the semester. In 2009, I was faced with the same decision made by administration. During a historic flood, our campus went online with all on campus classes. We had approximately one week to decide what we would do because the students were on Easter break, and we were all told we would not be coming back. At the same time, most of the city was asked to evacuate. So, as a new faculty member, myself, my two children, my sister, and my cat all relocated to a relative's house. Many of my students did not have their computers, their books, and many had slow or no Internet.

Fast forward 11 years, and we were once again told we would be going online after Spring Break. In this case, students were told to bring their laptops and books home with them. However, the uncertainty of being displaced and without Internet still holds true.

These are my top 10 tips I have for facing this difficult hurdle.

1. **Accept that your online class will NOT be the same as your online class.** Accept that assignments will need to be modified, some even dropped all together. The class WILL change. You cannot teach it the same.

2. **Offer grace to YOURSELF and YOUR STUDENTS.** What does that mean? First, be kind to yourself. This situation is not one you created, but it is one that you need to face. The same is true of students. Many fear what will happen. I traditionally have a "no late work" policy. I have changed that policy to a "nothing will be counted as late" policy. I will still list due dates, but if a student is unable to meet a due date, I will accept the work when they are able to complete it.

3. **Ask your students.** Because I am in a group of people who are most at risk during this time (I am asthmatic), I guess I was fortunate in one way—I knew my classes would go online before others did. I had made the decision for my own health, and am fortunate that my administration supported that decision. That meant I had 2 class days with my class to decide what we would do. Some ideas my students shared with me include:

- Make the Speaker Report a Podcast/ Ted Talk report: Rather than requiring them to attend a live speaker they will watch a Ted Talk or Podcast.
- Instructors should record videos: I wasn't actually planning to record videos, but all of the students said they wanted one at least weekly, so that they felt like they could still see me.
- Set up a discussion board so they can talk with each other: The students requested the discussion board be set up so they could talk easily to others in the class. The students, on their own, also set up a group chat between themselves so that they could stay in contact. Obviously, most people cannot do this. I strongly urge you to open a discussion board to discuss ideas for assignments and their most significant concerns about the course.

4. **If you teach synchronously, record the class so that it is accessible to ALL students.** I understand the appeal of teaching synchronously, and I don't want to have a debate about whether you should or shouldn't. However, please know that students are in unique circumstances as well right now. Some may have started a job because they are no longer at school. Some may be watching younger siblings as parents go to work and schools

have been closed. Everyone's world is in flux right now. Understand that it is unrealistic to think that students will still have an open time in their schedule to meet as a class exactly when the class previously met. Be open to students watching the video at a time that is convenient to them.

5. Find a platform to load and/ or share student speeches. In 2009, it never occurred to me to consider the amount of space my Blackboard course had. I know now, it is not enough for 22 students to load individual 5-7 minutes speeches. I am personally using OneDrive for all of my students. My university uses OneDrive as a whole and it was a suitable solution. Other options include YouTube (and making the privacy limited) or Google Drive. If students are sharing live, Zoom may be the best option. This is also important because you will be able to avoid incompatible formats in videos in the student recording and you viewing.

6. What about peer critiquing? Peer critiquing is a significant part of my class, and I use it to help build a sense of community. If you are using a platform such as OneDrive, students can easily share their link in a discussion board set up in the Learning Management System. Students then can leave their comments with the link that they viewed. This is possible with any system that will allow the student to share a link (rather than a video).

7. What about an audience? This was the aspect of the course I struggled with the most, and had the hardest time giving up. By this point, students have completed $\frac{1}{2}$ of my course. We give small speeches every day in class, so they have spoken in front of an audience many times. With the CDC recommending social distancing, I would not recommend requiring the students to gather their own audience. For my class, I have decided to waive this requirement. If you want to try to require an audience, Zoom offers the ability to record sessions so that students are able to get an audience to watch them remotely (and they can record it).

8. Use Rubrics. Rubrics will assist not only the students in seeing your requirements, but it will make your grading easier and faster. I use a list format and simply circle what they did/ did not do, so it is clear if a requirement was met. I make each area worth a total of 10 points, so that the math is far easier as well.

9. MAKE RULES. Make sure you point out rules for their video recording. First, I do not require them to record on a specific device. Most students have a smart phone, so I recommend they use that. However, from previous experience you will want to remind students that they should be fully clothed, as they would be for the in class experience. They should avoid having distractions in the room such as a barking dog or a crying baby. I let students know that sometimes this is inevitable, but to limit it as much as possible.

10. Be honest with your students. Well, maybe not too honest. Be the voice of calm and certainty amidst the chaos right now. At the same time, let them know what you are doing in your world. I always add personal details, so they do not feel completely disconnected with me. Keep in contact with them, and let them know that you too are just doing the best you can.