



# Learning Best Practices

# In-Person Learning Best Practices

In order to facilitate the training in your classrooms, it is important to follow some simple best practices to ensure your students have a great learning experience. The following list will help you prepare for the lesson and feel more confident.

## PREPARATION

-  **Time Management:** When preparing for the class, it is important to have good time management so you do not run late or cut content. When possible, find someone to help keep track of the time or use a stopwatch for each session. Students will not be happy if you are forced to cut content due to running over time. Also, having a clicker to move your slides is especially useful to help avoid running back and forth to your laptop.
-  **Practice:** You do not need to memorize the presentation decks, but you should rehearse them at least 2-3 days prior to presenting to make sure everything is fresh in your mind.
-  **Wear Comfortable, Practical Clothing:** Wear shoes that you can be comfortable in, especially when standing for long periods of time. To avoid getting too warm while presenting, wear layers that you can remove if you need to, such as a jacket, and avoid tight clothing.
-  **Water:** Always have a bottle of water close by so if you get a dry throat or cough you have a quick solution.

## BODY LANGUAGE

-  **Eye Contact:** This makes everyone feel special and let's them know that you have noticed them. Make sure you move your eyes around the room and aren't just focusing on one person. Avoid looking at the presentation screen a lot. This usually means you turn your back to your students which is not good. It also means your voice is projecting in the wrong direction. If pointing to something on the screen, you need to stand facing your students with your arm up directing their eyes to the area they need to focus on.
-  **Smile:** Always remember to smile. It helps people feel relaxed, happy, and encourages them to have fun.
-  **Hand Movement:** Try and avoid using a lot of hand movement as this distracts from what you are saying. Try to use hand movements when you are explaining something on a slide to help direct the students to a piece of information on the screen. Avoid flapping your hands around for no reason as this also makes you look nervous. If you move your hands a lot, try holding a bottle of water. This will stop you from moving your hands too much.

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## PRESENTING

-  **Engage the Room:** Whenever you can, ask the students questions. This not only gives you a break from talking but also gets the students to participate and think. You can even have small treats to hand out for the right answer.
-  **Be Concise:** Keep your information short and clear. The more you add words, the more people will miss the key message. Short, clear information is the key to success.
-  **Speed of Speech:** Try not to talk too fast. This makes you look nervous and people cannot keep up with what you are saying. Slow down and take regular breaths.
-  **Projection:** Speak loudly and clearly. Keep your hands away from your mouth, look up not down at the floor, and speak with a strong voice.
-  **Add a Quiz:** To help break up the presentation and get the students engaged, try adding a quiz.
-  **Add Humor:** If you get people laughing a little, students will likely get more enjoyment out of the class.
-  **No Bad Language:** Do not run the risk of using bad language as this could offend some people. Not swearing will never offend someone.

## THE VENUE

-  **Know Your Venue:** If you are not presenting in a typical classroom setting, you should try to visit the venue prior to presenting there. It is important that you do this, so you can be punctual and prepared on the day of and avoid unpleasant surprises. You will need to know what equipment and facilities are provided, and what you will need to bring yourself. Work with the venue management to make sure you know the room layout and be clear on exactly what you need in the room to run a smooth class.

Make sure you have the contact details for the person responsible on the day of your class — there is no point calling someone who is away on holiday. This may differ from the general venue contact person, so have both to be safe.

If there are any constraints or limitations at the venue, you will need to let your students know. For example, is the venue and its facilities accessible to wheelchair users? Ideally inform your students in advance of such matters.

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**Test Your Presentation:** How will you be presenting the PowerPoint decks? Will you be presenting directly from your laptop to a screen or via a projector to a screen? Is there a black or white board with suitable pens for writing notes, or a flip chart?

Make sure your screen is projecting 16:9 format i.e. like an A4 paper landscape style, versus some older projectors that present 6:6.

When visiting the venue or classroom, bring your laptop with a sample PowerPoint deck on it so that you can do a practice run. This will highlight any issues, so you can resolve them.



**Where are the Restrooms:** Prior to the lesson, check where the toilets are, how many there are, whether they are unisex, and if they are accessible to all.



**Venue Do's and Don'ts:**

#### *Do:*

- Have the name and number of an on-duty venue representative in case you need help.
- Walk around the venue and the presentation room to make sure everything is in order.
- Connect your computer to make sure the sound and visuals work properly.

#### *Don't:*

- Arrive on the day of the class without having been to the venue before!
- Leave anything to chance: come prepared and bring everything you might need including the handout sheets, cables, speakers, and batteries.

## PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

### *Before the Presentation*

- **Preparation and Research:** Rehearse the content at least 2-3 days ahead of presenting it so you know and understand it well. This will give you time to research any queries or updates that you have.
- **Audience Size:** Know how many students are coming so the room is prepared appropriately. Think about how best to facilitate audience participation for the size of the group you are expecting.
- **What to Bring:** Following your venue visit, make a list of what you need to bring to make sure the class runs smoothly. We also recommend that you copy all the decks onto a USB stick, just in case!

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## *During the Presentation*

- **Watch the Time:** Use the timer on your computer, a watch, a mobile phone, or a wall clock to make sure you stay on schedule and have time to cover all the content.
- **Read Your Audience:** There will be times when your student's attention wanders, or they get information overload so be aware of when you need to invigorate them with an icebreaker or a short break. The same goes for you. If you feel your energy is dipping, take a short break or engage your students in an activity or discussion.
- **Stay Cheery:** Talking a few hours can be tiring, but it is important that you stay energetic and enthusiastic throughout the class.

## *After the Presentation*

- **Q&A:** Allow time for Q&A sessions. These can be short and can be at the end of each session. If you are asked a question you cannot answer, make a note of the query and respond later via email. It is ok to say you do not know the answer to a question. Do not try to come up with an answer that may not align with Meta's point of view.

# Virtual Learning Best Practices

Engaging students in the online learning space takes immense creativity, energy, and intentional design. *You know your content and how to teach it to students.* With thoughtful preparation and presentation in a virtual setting you can yield significant engagement and positive results. The recommendations below will support you in your adaptation to and instruction of online or hybrid lessons, and help you grow in your skill, comfort, and ability to effectively teach in an online space. Whether new to distance learning or an experienced online educator, the following best practices can support you in your journey to effective, instructional excellence, no matter where you are teaching.

## DESIGNING YOUR CLASSROOM



**Remember the Essentials:** *Knowing your students and how they learn are as important for online learning as for face-to-face instruction.* Engaging content, good instructional practice, classroom management, and frequent assessment are also fundamental in all settings. As you develop your curriculum, lessons, and activities for online classes, consider how you will appropriately and equitably plan for each of these elements of quality teaching, how they need to differ for the virtual environment, and how you will implement them in a way that centers around student learning and achievement for every child.



**Deciding on Format and Technology:** Ask yourself the questions below to determine what lesson format and technology is best suited for your classroom:

- What is the purpose of your lesson?
- Does it need to be interactive?
- How many students will attend your lesson?
- Do you want students to dial in and engage live, or have something available on demand?
- Will there be more than one teacher?
- What device will the students use to view the lesson: laptop or mobile phone?
- What is the duration of the lesson?
- Do the students need to see details on the screen, such as settings and functionality, or is the lesson more concept based?

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Like anything, there are pros and cons to every format, but the following will help you determine the best format based on your objectives.

- Live training such as a web-seminar or Facebook Live event:
  - **Pros:** Real-time interaction and engagement with the students, community building with immediate feedback, and lessons can run longer and still remain engaging.
  - **Cons:** The students cannot re-watch or stop and start the lesson while they complete other tasks. If something goes wrong such as internet failure or audio, you have a live audience watching.
- On-demand lessons such as videos, pre-recorded audio, voiceover slides, and e-learning:
  - **Pros:** On-demand lessons are scalable. You can edit the lesson before making it available. Students can also access the material anytime, re-watching or starting and stopping the lesson while they complete other tasks.
  - **Cons:** There is no real-time interaction for Q&A. It can feel less personal and does not have a strong community building aspect. This type of instruction is not ideal for long lessons i.e. more than 40 minutes.

*\*When creating on-demand lessons, please ensure you get approval from your local Meta Program Manager before making a recording publicly available.*

When doing on-demand training recordings it is also good to consider your audience and whether you will be catering for people with hearing disabilities. If so, then we would suggest adding subtitles.



**Web Seminars:** When choosing a web conferencing platform, it is important to look for features that enable a great learning experience for both you and the student. When selecting the service consider if the service has the following features:

- Ability to host the number of students who will be in attendance e.g. if you want to invite 100 students, check if the service can support that many people.
- Ability to host an unlimited number of classes. Some services only allow you to host a small number of classes before charging you for every additional session.
- No time limits on instruction. Some services limit the lesson duration then you are cut off.
- Allows for whiteboarding, so you can highlight parts of the screen you are talking about, draw, etc.
- Allows for breakout rooms if you need to have students break out into groups to do activities.
- Allows you to record your lesson. Please secure the express permission of students prior to recording sessions and protect the privacy of the students.
- Ability to screen share, so you can share slides, documents, etc.

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## Tips:

1. Provide an opening slide for students that explains the functionality of the video conference service being used so they know how to ask questions, answer polling questions, whiteboard, etc.
2. Avoid slides that are very detailed especially if your audience is dialing in from a mobile device. Detailed slides could be text heavy, imagery, graphs, videos, etc.
3. If possible, also have a moderator in the lesson. The moderator can respond to questions in the chat window, time check, and direct questions to the teacher. It is hard to do this while presenting a topic by yourself.
4. Record the lessons so you can go back and review questions, etc. This will help you have more relevant things to say in your wrap-around services and post-lesson discussions. Before recording a session make sure you inform the students before starting that the session will be recorded — depending on your country's privacy laws you may have to get their consent.
5. Some services allow the meeting host to build in polls and quizzes to their lessons. If this is possible, build these in advance so they are ready to go when needed.
6. Make sure you mute all students, so you don't get distracted by background noise during the class. Students can unmute themselves if they would like to ask a question.



**Pre-Recorded Trainings:** Video/audio recordings are a great way to scale lessons to a large audience. Once you have a completed recording and are happy with the result, you can share via multiple channels and on a regular basis. Another advantage for the student is that they can view the lesson more than once, and they can stop and start the recording while they complete other tasks.

The best thing about recording video/audio is that it is okay to make mistakes. You can stop and record again as many times as needed. It is a lot easier to create a professional video/audio than it is to provide the same professional view live, but as mentioned earlier there are pros/cons for any situation.

A benefit of a recorded video when viewed on a mobile phone is that the learner can turn their phone on the side and see what is being presented at a larger scale.



## Tips:

1. Using a web conference platform is a good way to record your lesson. You can simply start a meeting on your own and use the screen sharing, whiteboarding, and record functionality to record your session. This file then saves as an MP4 and is easy to share with your students.
2. When you press the start button, count to three before you start your message. Likewise, at the end, count to three before you press the stop button.

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## FACEBOOK LIVE

Facebook Live is also a great platform to use to engage with your students and a great way to interact with them in real time. Answer their questions, hear what is on their mind, and look at their live reactions to gauge how your class is going. Your students can receive notifications when you go live, so they know to tune in to your lesson at just the right time.

Also, Facebook Live brings your students behind the scenes and gives them the opportunity to seamlessly interact with you around your lesson content.



### Tips:

1. The quality of your internet connection determines the quality of your experience and your audiences. If you test at one time of the day, it might vary at another time of the day. The worst time is 5 pm-8 pm. Note: Facebook Live recommends a bit rate is max 4000 Kbps (4 mbps) and an audio bit rate is 96 Kbps or 128 Kbps.
2. To get started on Facebook Live, we recommend checking out the links below:
  - [Tips for doing Facebook Live](#)
  - [How to start Facebook Live](#)
  - [How to schedule a Facebook Live](#)
3. Remember the students will likely be dialing in from a mobile phone — the following shows the view they can expect.



4. Schedule your Facebook Live as an event creating awareness among your students or on your Facebook Group.

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 **Make Space:** When you turn on your camera, you are turning the lights on in your classroom; think about the tone you want to set. Stage a background that can support your lesson and focus or stimulate your students (depending on their needs). A plain wall with a motivational message or daily mantra written on paper and taped up, a simple bookshelf that keeps students grounded in the learning environment, or a Zoom background of a science laboratory are all examples of how you can design the space around you to reflect your intentions and lessons. You can also place things like plants/pictures on the wall or in the background to create a more dynamic look. Try not to over clutter the shot or make it too busy. Avoid walls with patterns, unnecessary furniture, or clutter in the room. A calming background with a neutral color, medium contrast, and soft texture will often make the best background. Ensure you have enough space to be a comfortable distance from the camera.

Demonstrate to your students that you are dedicated to giving your class the same focus and commitment that you are asking of them. Minimize distractions by setting up your workspace in a low-traffic area of your home and put away cell phones or other distractions just as you would in the physical classroom — even if they are off screen.

 **Be Seen:** Communication and learning takes place in many ways; just because you are not in the same physical space as your class does not mean that you are not physically communicating with your students. You will want to be clearly visible so you both can benefit from the full spectrum of communicative expression to support learning and engagement, from oral movements in language lessons to a smile of excitement and pride at a student accomplishment. Set yourself square in front of the camera, making sure that your eye line is directed at it as much as possible. When setting up your device to record make sure you leave room at the top, so your head is not right at the top of the screen. Follow the rule of thirds to compose a well-balanced shot. Avoid shirts and dresses with stripes, small dots, or black and white lines as these will not look good on video. Natural light is always preferred when filming and taking pictures. If your light source is behind you or above you, you are under a downlight, and it will give you dark circles under your eyes which will make you look untrustworthy. Here are some other helpful tricks:

- You should face the light, but the light should not be so bright that you squinting.
- The light source should come from behind the camera.
- If natural light is not available, and you are reliant on ceiling lights, they will do a good job at lighting up a room but make sure you are not standing directly under the light as this will cast shadows.
- Use a desk lamp or soft spotlight shining toward you to balance the light. The further away the lamp is, the softer the light will be on your face.
- Both the soft face lighting and camera should be at eye level toward you.

 **Be Heard:** Reliable, strong audio is essential in keeping students' attention and optimizing their learning. Online learning relies on instruction where the educator may be off screen or not visible. This is especially true when sharing screens or materials. During these times, a positive and energetic tone of voice becomes more important. Vocal cues can communicate what you previously may have, in more traditional environments, relying primarily on body language or other non-verbal communication methods to convey. Remember to audibly affirm students, as they may not be able to see you nodding your head or smiling as encouragement.

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 **Teach Your Students the Tech:** Remember that, just like you, your students might be new to online learning, too. After you've had a chance to determine and learn your virtual teaching best practices, make sure to pass that on to your students as your first online lesson. Whether this is an informational session or during your first class together, make sure your students know how to navigate all the tricks and tools, where to find resources, and understand your expectations for their attendance and participation. Make sure that parents/guardians/caretakers are invited to learn the technology and know the expectations as well.

 **Your Equipment Checklist:** Just because you aren't commuting does not mean you aren't going to work. Gather the supplies you need for the day and bring them to your workspace. This includes functional tools and resources — such as chargers, pencils, papers, and workbooks — as well as creature comforts like water, snacks, and tissues.

Similarly, write a list for your students of what supplies will be helpful and/or essential for them to have nearby, and provide it in advance. This will ensure that all of your students are able to obtain any supplies that are required to successfully participate in lessons, have ample time to communicate if they will not be able to get them so other plans can be made, and that once the class has begun, time is not spent waiting for students to run to another room to grab a notebook.

## USING YOUR TOOLS

 **Do a Mic Check:** Facilitating a live or pre-recorded lesson is best done with a good headset and in a quiet environment. If you have the space to or like to move around, consider using a wireless headset so that your audio remains consistent even if you are standing up to demonstrate a part of the lesson. Before starting the class or beginning to record, test the equipment in the location you will use to ensure learners will be able to hear you in real-time, that there are not unexpected echoes or interferences, and that your recording is crisp and easy to understand.

 **Practice Your Platform:** Make time to “rehearse” on your virtual learning platform and to make any necessary adjustments. Make sure the height of your camera/computer allows a clear view of your face and that your microphone is positioned to optimize your sound. Take time to develop your comfort level with speaking to the camera, navigating the presentation system, and switching between the live screen and slides, video, and other tools. You might even record your sessions (even if teaching live) for later review to identify areas for improvement with content and facilitation.

 **Check Before You Start:** If you are making a recording, make sure you have enough space on your phone/laptop to save the file. Backup your photos and videos to make space, if needed. If you are doing a live broadcast, then doing a speed test for your internet is highly recommended. Ensure you have a power outlet close by to plug into.

 **Eliminate Accessibility Barriers:** Many video conferencing and learning platforms have settings for closed captioning, text to voice, or other built-in tools that can support learners with different accessibility needs. Explore what options are available on your platform so that you can support your students in activating them.

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 **Prepare for Technology Issues:** Should you or your students experience a connectivity issue, it is a good idea to have a bank of pre-recorded, or asynchronous, lessons and independent activities prepared that can easily be used in case of connectivity or technology issues. Pre-recorded vignettes, quick learning experiences or exercises linked to the lesson, or other resources for students to turn to in case an issue arises will ensure that no precious class time is wasted waiting for a fix and that students remain focused on the lesson. Consider creating a body of simple “offline” activities that students can engage with if you are unable to engage online. Create simple instructions that can easily be followed by students, such as a 20-minute reading exercise or household item scavenger hunt.

Ensure that students have access to these in advance of any issue occurring; for example, by sharing them in advance via email along with the daily or weekly lesson plan and other resources. In your initial technology lesson, train your students on what to do if they lose some or all connection, and reiterate this protocol regularly so that they are prepared, and you are not trying to figure out how to give them instructions while troubleshooting.

## ELEVATING YOUR LESSONS

 **Break Up Learning:** Online learning and engagement requires a high level of mental activity, and as such you need to plan carefully how to present lessons that will not overly tax — or completely lose — your students. Remember that, for some students, they are not only learning the lessons but also the technology and tools and how to navigate them. Plan lessons, synchronous and/or asynchronous, in smaller chunks to increase engagement and maintain attention. Oscillate between high- and low-intensity activities, and build in brain and movement breaks.

 **Use the Board:** Think of the screen as a whiteboard or smart screen, and incorporate its use into your lesson to reinforce concepts by providing context, demonstrating work, and showing examples as you would in a classroom. When teaching remotely consider ways you can use the screen to frame the concepts you are teaching. Use annotation tools, such as arrows and drawing lines, to show progression and scaffolding of ideas. Invite your students “up to the board” to lead or demonstrate to the class.

 **Pick Your Mix:** When planning your lessons, decide which portions will be “face-to-face” presentation and/or discussion on screen, pre-recorded video or a third-party video, presentation slides/projected text, and independent work. Varying how you present information and asking students to respond can increase engagement and recall. Consider what “offline tools” will be required for yourself and for your students, such as pencil, paper, or dry-erase board. When designing independent learning time and exercises for your students, remember to design activities that do not require a lot of hands-on help from adults or others in the home.

 **Encourage Questions:** Online learning offers many different ways for learners to ask questions about the content and resources. This is incredibly beneficial for students to gain deeper clarification in ways which support their learning styles and comfort levels, and that are not necessarily available in the traditional physical classroom. Let students know the different ways they can ask questions (verbally out loud, write it out in the chat, use the “raise hand” function in the tool, or embed a question activity in the lesson where everyone can add theirs to a padlet, for example).

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**Provide Feedback:** Teachers are responsible for both managing and monitoring learning. Use the tools at your disposal and bite-size structure of your lessons to create opportunities to provide regular feedback to your students on their work and learning. Conduct short in-class quizzes and quiz games, and use recall breaks and knowledge checks to reinforce the content with students in varied formats. Provide written feedback on submitted assignments and arrange for ways to gather peer feedback from their fellow students when appropriate. Create designated space and time for students to follow up individually.



**Engaging Your Community:** Regardless of the format you use to teach your students, it is important to communicate with the students before and after the lesson, so the lesson experience has multiple touch points over a period of time versus a single interaction. Using technologies such as Facebook Groups, WhatsApp Groups, online discussion boards, or phone calls can provide valuable interaction opportunities and a chance to further connect with your students. Also, using gamification like a quiz, knowledge test, or homework is another option to consider to keep your students engaged. This is even more important when you are providing on-demand training as you need to provide a platform for students to discuss topics and ask questions. This is often referred to as wrap-around engagements.

Communicate regularly with your students to inform them of upcoming lessons, how to ask questions, etc. But, be careful that you do not communicate with them too much or too often.

## CREATING THE FULL CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE



**Start Strong:** Begin your class allowing students to talk with their peers. This creates an open and friendly environment and sets a casual and comfortable tone which will support student engagement, collaboration, and ease with speaking up and asking questions. Post a schedule or agenda that is visible during the conversational period so those learners who require preparation for the learning experience can familiarize themselves with the plan, and include on the list any supplies the students will need for the lesson. Open the learning experience with a breathing exercise, affirmations, or journaling, to ground the students and signal the transition from peer conversation to learning environment. Make these times and activities habitual, so students know what to expect when they enter the classroom.



**Support Student Connection:** In your lessons and in your classroom, design ways for students to interact with each other and support each other's learning. They will learn more, and be excited by, the opportunity to brainstorm together, collaborate on projects, and work on projects together. Couple this with individualized learning activities and full class lessons to create a well-rounded learning experience that also fosters relationships and builds social and cooperative skills.

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**Embed Experiential Learning:** Experiential learning can be a digital learning tool as much as it is in a face-to-face environment. Consider problem-, project-, service-, and virtual-learning experiences. These can be done individually, in groups, or as a whole class, and give students life and world-applicable lessons in which to invest and share with the class. Examples include:

- **Problem-based exercise:** Present students with a real world, societal need, such as reef erosion, and have them pitch their solutions or plans to the class.
- **Project-based exercise:** Have students plant tomato seeds in a pot and in the ground and monitor which grows better.
- **Service-learning exercise:** Offer students the opportunity to read to younger students through a virtual exchange program with another class.
- **Virtual-learning experience:** Tour a museum that offers a virtual, simulative experience online



**Teach Digital Citizenship:** Moving a class from the physical to online space is an ideal opportunity to teach, apply, reinforce, and ingrain good digital citizenship practices in your students. Using the classroom as your microlab, you can model and teach students how to respectfully and thoughtfully engage in virtual conversations via chats and comments, produce responsible material on and for the virtual space, and consistently reinforce through the classroom community respect for personhood and accountability to others.



**Self-Care/Them-Care:** Online teaching and learning can be exhausting and isolating, especially if it is full-time. It is important to be intentional in building in ways for you and your students to create community, connect, recharge, and experience joy both in and out of your lessons.

*Teachers are members of learning communities.* For yourself, find opportunities to connect with other teachers in professional learning and peer communities to workshop problems, voice bright spots and frustrations, and share lesson plans, resources, and teaching tips. Do your best to make time to take care of yourself — whether that is regular exercise, a relaxing hobby, or quality time with your close people over dinner — so you can come to the classroom energized and less stressed, and show up for your students.

In your classes, build in regular movement and bio breaks. Make time for students to enjoy and celebrate together, honoring birthdays, special achievements, and holidays. Create personal connections with your students, taking time to meet with them individually and talk to them about their life, not just their work.



**Reflection:** *Teachers think systematically about their practices and learn from experience.* Many times, it feels like digital learning opportunities and resources are infinite and who has the time to master them all? The answer is no one! Do carve out time to reflect on what is working and what is needed by you or your students. Providing opportunities for your students to give informal, quick feedback on lessons and the new tools you may be implementing will help you grow as a community and model curiosity and a love of learning.

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**Optional Resources:** There are many resources online for educators beginning to navigate online teaching. Here are some great places to start.

Webinars such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Core Connection series, offers webinars such as Everything you Wanted to Know About Technology, which can train you on everything from how to share a Google document to how to superimpose a picture of yourself over a dynamic background to create a visually compelling (and fun) learning tool to what social emotional learning, SEL, looks like in a virtual setting.

ISTE offers many free resources for [online learning](#) as well as more extensive courses and academies. They also offer information on [digital citizenship](#) best practices and ways to support student learning in this area.

Many institutions and organizations have put together resources for effective online teaching and offer resources to incorporate into lessons, including universities such as Harvard University and media companies like PBS.

As always, teachers are the best resources for shared content! Educators worldwide are sharing their lesson plans, best practices, and tips for teaching. Connecting with your peers, professional learning communities, and professional networks will yield generous ideas upon which you can build, expand, refine, and accelerate your craft!

*The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards contributed to this guide.*

*To learn more about this organization, please go to: [nbpts.org](http://nbpts.org).*

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