

# VIRTUAL CLASSROOM DESIGN & FACILITATION

## Frequently Asked Questions



### **Q: What is the difference between a virtual presentation and a virtual training session?**

A: If you want participants to be able to do something new after the program, you are delivering training. Training is characterized by collaborative interactions among participants, some type of assessment, and potentially work that is to be completed before and after the live event. Make sure that you can test your learning objectives in the environment. For example, if an objective requires that the learner observe a computer engineer install a router, you may not be able to achieve that objective in the virtual classroom. You may need to hold off on that until the learner can observe the engineer in an asynchronous demonstration environment.

If you are sharing information and have no practice or assessment involved, you are delivering a virtual presentation ([webinar](#).)



### **Q: How often should we engage participants?**

A: Create interactions and have participants do something every three to five minutes. This could mean interactions with people, technology, or a participant workbook. It could also mean thinking or writing! It is important to re-engage your participants as often as possible. While much of this type of interaction should be built into the course design, there will be times when you will need to create interactions on the spot. Doing this keeps participants focused on the program and helps to ensure that your audience is still present.

(For more information regarding using interaction and collaboration, check out [Virtual Classroom Tool Design Basics: A Virtual Engagement Primer](#) and [Use Interaction & Collaboration to Maximize Engagement in the Virtual Classroom](#).)



### **Q: How does video facilitate interaction?**

A: While most virtual classrooms now include the capacity to incorporate live video by using webcams, you need to ask the question, "What does using live video add to the experience?" Strategic use of live video when it adds instructional value will force participants to pay attention to the new engagement opportunity screen but only if you follow the [Rules to Go Live By in To WebCam or not to WebCam](#).



### **Q: Do you think learning is more effective if you do a 2-hour session as two separate sessions over two days with a self-directed learning exercise to complete before the second session?**

A: Blended learning has many design implications which keeps us from giving a simple answer. For example, at its essence, blended learning is not only about matching content to the most appropriate delivery medium, but doing it at the learning objective level. Instead of making a design decision to teach project management via Webex Training Center, we break project management into its component learning objectives and match each learning objective to the best technology available and then determine length, number of days, etc. For more information on designing blended learning see, [Designing Blended Learning with Bloom's Digital Taxonomy](#) and [Blended Learning: Not a Passing Fad](#).



### **Q: What is the role of the producer? Is there an advantage to using multiple presenters?**

A: The producer assists the facilitator by acting as an extra pair of hands during a synchronous event. The producer does not need to be in the same physical location as the facilitator. In addition to handling training responsibilities, the producer handles technical support so the trainer can focus on the instruction. Using a producer practically eliminates the need for live event technical support.

In addition, the producer is also essential for maintaining a high level of interaction with participants. For example, the producer might help make the slides more dynamic by using the whiteboard tools to highlight and add material. The producer can also help manage breakout rooms and assist participants with assignments. The producer can also act as a second presenter if they are comfortable with the content. For more information on using a producer see, [10 Virtual Classroom Team Teaching Tips: The Instructional Producer](#) and [Appreciation for Virtual Producers](#).



### **Q: What is the recommended number of participants to include in a session?**

A: While virtual classrooms can accommodate literally hundreds of participants at the same time, such large numbers are not appropriate for hands-on interactive training programs.

In our experience, a program should contain no more than 75 percent of the number of participants you would invite to the same program taught in a traditional manner. It is challenging to manage any type of classroom environment. Because of the introduction of new technologies, the geographical dispersion of the audience, and the loss of eye contact and body language, a synchronous environment can be even more challenging than a traditional classroom.



### **Q: What is your recommended maximum learning time in a virtual classroom?**

A: We recommend that you keep content-heavy sessions to 45 minutes absolute maximum, with interaction every three to five minutes. And no session, no matter how collaborative and engaging, should be longer than two hours (including a break.) Some organizations have longer sessions but it becomes increasingly difficult to be successful, especially in a culture new to virtual training.



### **Q: Any best practices for conducting the action planning phase of a program? Do you ask people to do that on a whiteboard? Other techniques to ensure learners do it and benefit from each other's ideas?**

A: There are many best practices that have been developed for designing for the virtual classroom. We have recently published a series of design techniques to our blog. I suggest you start with [Virtual Classroom Tool Design Basics: A Virtual Engagement Primer](#) and then explore all of the interesting virtual classroom tools including [chat](#), [breakout rooms](#), [whiteboards](#), [application sharing](#), [synchronized web browsing](#), and [survey and feedback tools](#).