

Blackboard Collaborate: Best Practices

Below are a few tips and tricks which we collected from various sources as well as from our own experiences using Blackboard Collaborate. We hope they will be helpful for your own practice with this tool.

Tips for Setting Up/ Planning a Session:

- Recommend that all participants who will be speaking during a Collaborate session use a headset with a built-in microphone.
- Before starting a Collaborate session, spend some time scripting your lecture and preparing materials you will use.
- Create a lesson folder on your computer in which you will save all content for your sessions (presentations, images, audio, video, links for web tour exercises, quizzes, etc).
- Design your sessions to be interactive by providing students with opportunities to participate and collaborate with each other, for example by including discussion questions, quizzes, or surveys.
- It is easiest to use PowerPoint to create lecture materials for use with the Whiteboard. Include one slide (placeholder) for every poll, quiz or interactive exercise.
- If you will be asking students to view an external video or click a link to a website, keep in mind that embedded links become inactive when PowerPoint is used in the Whiteboard. Save URLs separately and copy and paste them into the notes area
- You can create quizzes directly in a Collaborate session and save them as .vcq (Collaborate Quiz file format) for use in subsequent sessions.
- Uploading Lesson Materials:
 - Lesson materials do not persist in Collaborate; i.e. you need to re-load them every time you start a new session. Thus, it is important that you save all your materials in an available Collaborate format (.wbd or .wbp for Whiteboard, or .vcq for quizzes) before exiting to reuse in future sessions. All content—including interactive elements—added to the Whiteboard pages during the sessions will be saved as well.
 - You can also upload files directly to the online classroom once you enter the session by using the “Load Content” button.
 - You can use File Transfers to push files to participants for download during a session. Go to Window > Show File Transfer Library. Upload your files and select “Prompt recipients that the file can be saved”

Tips for Moderating a Session:

- Greet participants as they join your session.
- Remind your participants to use the Audio Setup Wizard in order to test their microphones and speakers (for example, post a screenshot on your introductory slide).
- At the beginning of the session, explain the use of the Raise Hand, Step Away, Feedback, and Poll Response buttons.
- Establish a protocol for asking questions (i.e. raise hand, then when called on, press “talk” and ask question)
- Look at the whole screen and not just the Whiteboard area. Watch the chat window for messages, and the Participant Panel for new participants joining the session.
- Ask questions and provide opportunity for interaction to engage participants. Conduct brainstorming activities on the Whiteboard.
- Right-click on elements on Whiteboard to see who created them
- To put students in breakout rooms, you can have Blackboard evenly distribute participants among the rooms when creating the breakout room, drag and drop participants into rooms or have participants

distribute themselves. To have participants distribute themselves, click: tools>breakout rooms>allow participants to move themselves to breakout rooms

- When application sharing, open the program beforehand and do not minimize it
- When polling:
 - Alternate between polling response options to make it more interesting
 - If you lock responses, the button will be taken away from participants so they can't change their response
 - If you want to make polling responses invisible, set this before conducting the poll
 - Remember to clear responses after each poll
- Web tour and application sharing are each better suited for particular types of activities:

Web Tour	Application Sharing
Active participation	One-time activities
Independent component	Demonstrations of tasks or websites
Accessing YouTube	Password-protected sites

Depending on the type of session you create, you might want to prepare the following:

- A welcome slide, stating "we will begin shortly," a few details about the session and instructions on how to run the audio/video wizard
- Icebreaker exercises
- Lesson and Discussion content for use with the Whiteboard
- Interactive exercises
- Check-point quizzes
- Application Sharing exercises
- Web Tour Exercises
- Group Work (e.g. breakout room exercises, and report backs when groups return from breakout rooms)
- Questions you might ask during the session to re-focus students
- Exit or follow-up assignments (reflect on the session, survey, reports, next meeting etc)

Blackboard *Plan* and *Publish*:

Blackboard offers two stand-alone applications: *Plan*, which lets you prepare materials and program actions beforehand and *Publish*, which lets you share the recordings of your sessions with people outside of Blackboard.

To learn more about *Plan*:

<http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Collaborate/Products/Blackboard-Collaborate/Web-Conferencing/Plan.aspx>

To learn more about *Publish*:

<http://www.blackboard.com/Platforms/Collaborate/Products/Blackboard-Collaborate/Web-Conferencing/Publish.aspx>