

## OVERVIEW:

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is a tool that allows participants to collaborate online in real time. Review the best practices below to prep for Collaborate sessions with your students. The first list gives general best practices for all Collaborate sessions. The second list provides tips for setting up and using Collaborate rooms.

## COLLABORATE ULTRA BEST PRACTICES:

1. **Prepare students early** in the course with a “get acquainted” or “orientation” session. Use this time to help students increase comfort using Collaborate, the features you will use or expect students to use, as well as work out any bugs or issues they might have.
2. **Start with the simple tools**, using only the essential tools for accomplishing your goals. Then as the class becomes more comfortable, introduce more complex tools.
3. **Be prepared** with your content before your session.
  - a. **Start each session with an ice breaker.** Chit chat helps build the connections essential for a safe learning environment.
  - b. **Make it succinct.** Online sessions go very quickly, limit your content to allow time for light socializing, tech issues, and questions. Chunk content to make efficient use of time.
  - c. **Consider your class size.** The way you present your material and what tools you use will depend on how many students join. Smaller groups will need fewer guidelines for collaborating, while with larger groups you may need to do a formal presentation and then use break out groups to allow students to collaborate.
  - d. **Establish ground rules.** Let students know beforehand or at the beginning of a session how they are expected to comment or ask questions. Should they just turn on their mic and talk, raise their hand and wait to be called on, or use the chat? Should they keep their comments and thoughts to themselves until the end of the session during a question and answer period or are they allowed to question throughout?
  - e. **Set expectations for the content of the session.** Answer these questions in creating your material:
    - i. What do I and the students need to accomplish by the end of the session?
    - ii. What type of participation am I expecting from everyone in this session? Students should be engaged every 5-7 minutes.
    - iii. Which tools am I going to use to accomplish those goals?
    - iv. What presentation style will best accomplish those goals?
    - v. How long might it take to accomplish these goals? Is it too long, should I break it up into multiple sessions?

- f. **Have an agenda** for the session and stick to it, send it out beforehand and put it up at the start on the whiteboard or as a PDF or PowerPoint slide.
4. **Respect your students' time.** Always start and end on time (unless requested for longer) and join 20-30 minutes prior to set up and help students set up.
5. **Set up your physical environment** where there will be no distractions (physical or auditory).
6. **Have your technology ready**, we recommend a USB headset for audio and any internal laptop or external connected web camera.
7. **Send a reminder** a few hours before with the student getting started tutorial link and the online session etiquette tutorial link, along with the time to join and expectations.
8. **Join early** and set up your session and content.
9. **Be inclusive** of all participants and make sure everyone has the opportunity to participate.
10. **Remember you are live** – you can use your facial expressions and tone of voice to convey meaning, positively or negatively. Be professional, but personable.
11. **Technology problems will happen**, prepare for them by knowing how to troubleshoot, such as [clearing their browser cache](#), and alternatives to join, such as [calling in](#). Don't forget to be gracious of mistakes, this is new for both you and your students.

## COLLABORATE ULTRA TIPS:

### *Course Room*

1. **Edit the settings for the course room** to allow students to be moderators so they can meet with their peers at any time. (*Setting changes take about 5-10 minutes to take effect*)

### *Sessions*

2. **If you have groups in your course**, set up a no end date session named for each group. This way students can meet with their group in their own space whenever they need to.
3. **If you have students recording presentations** in your course, set up individual rooms for them to practice and then record in. The recording will take whatever name the room has and cannot be changed. Create rooms named after the student so they can easily find their recordings.
4. **If you have students presenting live and you want recordings**, create a presentation session and either start and stop recording at each students' presentation or record the whole session.
5. **If you want to record**, create and use a session so that the name of the session is the name of the recording (otherwise recordings will be named CourseRoom\_Recording1, 2, 3, etc.; recordings cannot be renamed).

*Virtual Office Hours*

6. **Use your MyWorkspace Course Room for your online office hours.** Use the guest link in your faculty information profile and edit the settings so users join as participants. This allows students from any of your courses to meet with you.

Adapted from:

[Video Conferencing Guidelines for Faculty and Students in Graduate Online Courses](#) by Cynthia Gautreau et al.

[The Core Rules of Netiquette](#) by Virginia Shea

[10 Rules for Using Web Conferencing Tools for Instruction](#) by Innovative Learning Institute, Teaching and Learning Services

[10 Guidelines for Running Synchronous Web Teaching Sessions](#) by Inside Higher Ed

[6 Rules for a Successful and Engaging Web Conference or Presentation](#) by FreeConference.com