Camera Use In Zoom: Making the Right Choice for Your Class

Why Students Have Them Off

- **TECHNOLOGY** Students may lack webcams, sufficient WiFi access, or the computer processing capability to handle all Zoom features.
- **FATIGUE** Students may be in Zoom classes for many hours a day and may need a break from constantly being "on." They may have anxiety, image concerns, or a history of trauma that makes sharing their image difficult.
- **ILLNESS** Students may have parental or elder care needs that prevent them from being in front of the camera.
- **CARE NEEDS** Students may have anxiety, image concerns, or a history of trauma that makes sharing their image difficult.

Why Instructors Like Them On

- **FACE-TO-FACE SIMULATES LEARNING** Face-to-face interaction is important to community building.
- **ASSISTS WITH COMMUNITY-BUILDING** Instructors can confirm student engagement.
- **DRAWING TO TEACH "EMPTY BOXES"** Instructors can use Breakout Rooms and polls.
- **TO CONFIRM STUDENT ENGAGEMENT** Instructors can review student answers.

Ask Yourself: Is There a Learning- or Student-Centered Reason to Have Cameras on in Your Class?

**NO**

As an instructor, I just prefer to have cameras on.

- **STATE YOUR EXPECTATIONS** As part of your syllabus.
- **MINIMIZE ANXIETY** Instead of beginning class with announcements or lecture, start with a warm-up activity.
- **PLAN FOR MOMENTS THROUGHOUT THE CLASS** Many students may turn cameras off for the first 5-10 minutes and may be more inclined to keep them on through the period.
- **INCREASE POLLS** Instead of口头 inquiries, students can express agreement, confusion, excitement, and more.
- **CREATE A VIRTUAL BACKGROUND** Students can be invited to use the "virtual" function in Zoom.

**THEN**

- **Review the reasons why students may have "FPD symptoms."** Ask them reasonable accommodations you can make around camera use that reflect student realities.
- **State your expectations in class** (just like you would in person).
- **Provide students with a clear rationale** for why you prefer cameras on.
- **Consider the difficulty of confirming engagement** through video alone, as students could be looking at the computer but actually reading emails. A better approach is to use Zoom features that invite active engagement.

**OBSEVERABLE SKILLS**

I am teaching observable skills such as public speaking, dance, or sign language. I need to be able to see my students to give them effective feedback.

**THEN**

- **React to a lack of observable engagement.** Students who don’t react to a question or activity may be disengaged or not see your virtual background.
- **Ask students to use the "reaction" function in Zoom.** Be aware that not all computers have sufficient processing power to handle a virtual background.
- **Ask students to upload a current photo as their Zoom profile picture.** This way, it's easier to confirm camera use if you can't see their faces.

**THEN**

- **Consider the difficulty of confirming engagement through video alone.** As students could be looking at the computer but actually reading emails. A Better approach is to use Zoom features that invite active engagement.
- **Before class, place the prompts for small-group activities in a Google Doc, Slides, or other collaborative space.** Instructors can assign students to work with them or answer their questions.

**ENAGGEMENT**

I want to make sure that students are engaged in the class, since engagement predicts learning.

**THEN**

- **Ask students to answer questions in the chat.** Students can "reply all" or directly to you with their answers. Chat responses can be a better indicator of engagement and community-building than physical appearance.
- **Before class, plan the prompts for your small-group activities in a Google Doc.** All students can contribute to the collaborative product, and can contribute at their own pace.

**COMMUNITY-BUILDING**

Community is important to me, and that feels easier to build when cameras are on.

**THEN**

- **Use the Breakout Rooms feature** of Zoom for small group activities. Invite students to work in small groups on an engaging task, and you can drop in to work with them or offer feedback.
- **Experiment with the types of feedback you give to students both in Zoom and on their work.** Feedback that validates student intellectual scaffolding toward deeper levels of understanding can enhance feelings of support and connection.