



Theatre for Lifelong Learning

10 Virtual Learning Tips for Acting Students and Instructors

- 1. Welcome students to the course.**
 - Humanize online learning by showing your own face even if you do not require students to show theirs.
 - Show enthusiasm and let your students know that you want to be there. If you don't want to be there, they won't want to be there.
 - Emphasize that an online course is a (virtual) community.
- 2. Practice setting up equipment properly.**
 - Check your lighting, audio, and camera position.
 - Avoid setting up your camera with backlighting because it will make you appear in silhouette.
 - Position your webcam so that it is at eye level by stacking your laptop on a small box or a few books.
 - Update your username to the name you would like to be called.
 - Use headphones to decrease background noise.
 - Set a profile picture or icon to use when your cameras are off. This is not required, but is an opportunity to choose how you would like to represent yourselves
- 3. Practice using functions of the virtual classroom.**
 - Dedicate a section of an early class to practice using audio, video, breakout rooms, polls, whiteboarding, chats and messaging, video shares, screen shares, muting and unmuting, etc.
- 4. Create a focused space.**
 - If possible, find a space to designate as a learning space. This will help train your mind to be ready for class and will also allow you to compartmentalize.
 - Remind students that it is not appropriate to message each other in class about topics unrelated to class, come to class late or leave early in ways that cause distraction, and to put their phones on silent to minimize interruptions.
- 5. Remember you may be seen.**
 - While you do not need to be "camera-ready" there may be moments when you will be seen. Be fully dressed (in case you need to stand up).
 - To make this fun, dress as your character(s) using things you find around your home.
- 6. Practice clear communication.**
 - Mute yourselves when you are not speaking.
 - Use the "raise hands" function when multiple people want to speak at the same time.

- If you think of questions you may forget while waiting to speak, post them in the class chat.
7. **Establish standards of netiquette as a class.**
 - Discuss what it means to be respectful. You will learn that people have different ideas of what that means.
 - Agree on standards for the class as a group.
 - Emphasize the importance of treating each other kindly.
 8. **Address accessibility matters and how to self-advocate.**
 - Tell all students the process for getting accessibility needs addressed. *Describe all visual images and provide captions as a general practice.*
 9. **Explain what breakout rooms are.**
 - Discuss how you will use the breakout rooms in class and give students instructions on how to make the most of them.
 - Give students lots of opportunities to practice interacting in small groups.
 - Start with playing a trivia game or doing ice breaker questions in small groups.
 - To help get the break out discussions going, assign a moderator, a notetaker, and a speaker (who will summarize the small group discussions to the class).
 10. **Establish that you can learn from anywhere.**
 - Discuss strategies for adapting any environment to a learning environment.
 - Students may have multiple members of their households attempting to access WiFi at the same time, which can eat into bandwidth. It is ok if their cameras have to be off in order to access the course as long as they are able to engage in other ways.
 - Emphasize the importance of a strong WiFi connection and quiet space.
 - Think creatively and brainstorm examples of alternative spaces from which to learn. Many schools and libraries make their WiFi available from their parking lots, so a vehicle can become a satellite learning space.

Bonus tip!

Everyone is always learning.

- Your instructors are learning the technology as well and expect that it may take a few classes for the course to run smoothly.
- There may be new things that will come up to aid online learning. If someone has a good suggestion for an improvement, try it out. You have the agency to train and learn from each other.