Virtual Training Tips

# Preparation and Practice

Preparing and practicing are critical. Check out the **Virtual Training** **Preparation Checklist** to see if you are ready:  
<http://actforyouth.net/resources/capp/vebp/virtual-training-checklist.docx> (Word download)

# Is streaming video during a training a good idea?

One of the main differences between virtual and face-to-face training is the lack of visual contact. Instead, we rely on technology to communicate and engage with participants.If you are planning to ask all participants to keep their cameras on during the training, keep in mind there a few good reasons not to do this. For one, it increases the amount of Internet bandwidth and thus slows down the connection speed, potentially causing participants’ visuals to freeze up. Secondly, watching all participants (including oneself) in small windows distracts participants from engaging with learning activities and content.

# Your voice matters!

A clear voice is very important for virtual training. As in radio broadcasting, your voice should be crisp, easy to understand, and devoid of annoying habits.

* Avoid filler words (*um, OK, and y’know)*
* Watch your volume. Use your normal speaking voice, do not shout. Use volume control on the computer or phone to adjust.
* Adjust your speaking rate. What is the right speed so participants do not get bored, yet slow enough that they can understand? Ask participants for feedback.
* Be mindful of the pitch and tone of your voice when you deliver. Speaking in a monotone is one of the worst things a trainer can do in the virtual classroom. Use inflection to add interest to your voice, expressing excitement and emotion. You should sound energetic and animated about the content.
* Posture affects your voice. Sitting with proper posture (straight up with your head over your shoulders and your shoulders over your hips) makes it easier to breathe and sound more energetic and engaging.
* Control the nervous voice. When you get anxious, we can hear it in your voice. Practice beforehand, make sure you are be prepared, and use deep breathing techniques to control your voice.
* Warming exercises help prevent a “frog” in your throat. For example, humming in a low register for a few minutes before speaking keeps your vocal cords warm.
* Stay hydrated.

# Engaging Participants

* As we do in in-person trainings, it is best to engage participants throughout the session. A basic rule of thumb is to have participants respond and be actively engaged every 4 minutes.
* Engage participants from the beginning. While waiting to begin, post a question they can respond to as they come into the virtual classroom.
* Utilize all the functions of the platform you are using. Common functions include:

**Sharing documents**: Document sharing (such as PowerPoint or Prezi slides) can be used to provide content and help participants follow along.

**Chat:** Participants can send messages to the presenter and each other. You can use the chat to have participants:

* Answer questions
* Give you feedback on the material presented
* Work in teams and communicate with each other privately via chat

You can also post time reminders in the chat to keep participants on track.

**Annotate**: Annotation allows for real-time “drawing” on top of shared documents or slides. Participants can draw, post signs, type text, and highlight words, actively engaging them with the content. Annotation can also be used to assess learning. For example, you could share a crossword puzzle with clues related to reproduction, having youth enter the correct terms. Be sure to check up front that participants have annotation privileges.

**Whiteboard**: Like a classroom whiteboard, the virtual whiteboard is a blank screen on which you can type, write, or draw using the program’s annotation tools. The whiteboard is useful for brainstorming or gathering participants’ ideas and feedback. Be sure to check ahead of time:

* How many whiteboards can be opened and shared at one time?
* Do participants have annotation rights?

**Polling:** Once they are set up, polls allow you to ask survey questions in real time. Keep in mind that polls must be created prior to the training session to be administered during the session. The questions can be multiple choice, multiple answer, or--in some programs--open-ended. Polls can be used for myth and fact activities and to quiz participants’ understanding of a topic, generate discussion using opinion questions, and solicit feedback.

**Raise Hand:** This feature enables participants to directly communicate with the trainer. Raising hands can be used to get responses to a quick poll (by asking closed-ended questions). For example you might ask, “Who has heard of STDs before? Please raise your hand.” This feature can also be introduced to participants as a way to ask a question during the session.

**Breakout Groups**: Breakout groups allow you to implement small group discussions and activities. In their breakout groups participants can have private conversations and share documents and whiteboards. The trainer can move in and out of the breakout groups. Participants in smaller breakout groups will be more likely to engage in the activity than in a larger group. Breakout groups may be used to practice skills or collaboratively work on assignments. Some platforms have limits on the number of breakout groups at one time.

Source: Cindy Huggett. 2nd Edition. 2018. *Virtual Training Basics.* ATD Training Basics Series. Alexandria, VA: ATD Press

<https://www.cindyhuggett.com/archive/virtual-training-basics/>