

# Guide to HyFlex teaching: Practical tips from SPS faculty

These tips are compiled with contributions from faculty attendees at [Hyflex teaching forums](#). Special thanks go to Aaron Wallen, Christine Straw, Eleni Vrana, Ellie Schwartz, John Parkinson, Matthew Sawyer, Michael Moon and Steve Safier.

## Preparation for class

- As soon as possible, become familiar with the classroom equipment and practice with your Course Associate (usually remote during class sessions) and Video Assistant:
  1. Sign up for a 45-minute **Group Hyflex Practice Sessions** to get an introduction to the equipment, including the in-class mobile video kit; you can sign up [here](#)
  2. Schedule an on-campus practice session **with a Video Assistant** at your earliest convenience. These sessions will enable you to practice the setup and flow of your class with a Video Assistant on-site and in-person. Please follow these [directions](#) to sign up and make sure to complete required [return-to-campus protocols](#).
- Consider signing up for a [Zoom](#) and a [Canvas](#) training. You can also sign up for a Zoom practice session [here](#). These are invaluable and will get you well-equipped for teaching in the Hyflex modality.
- Have a conversation with your Video Assistant about where you would like them to be located in the class and where the focus of the camera should be. For example, would you like the camera to pan to the blackboard when you are teaching, or focus on an in-person student when they are talking in class?
- Before the start of the semester, practice all the technical aspects of your class with your Course Associate or a colleague. For example you may review how to share a video with sound, how to arrange breakout rooms, or how to administer polls.
- If you plan to use the blackboard, acquire some sidewalk chalk. This low-tech solution makes it easier for the online students to read what is written on the blackboard.
- [Establish norms](#) at the beginning of the semester so that students understand your expectations. This is especially important in these times of uncertainty and change.
- Arrive before class starts. This allows you to talk to students informally and build a relationship with them.
- Consider playing some music [over Zoom](#) before class starts. This helps make the virtual "classroom" more welcoming.

## Tech Tips

- Don't overcomplicate it. Simplify as much as possible so that you are not juggling multiple devices or software. This will help you be more focused on the teaching and less on the hardware.
- Until you get used to it, it might be better to use Zoom tools for classroom engagement exercises so that you don't have to frequently switch between screens and technology. For example, [use Zoom polls](#) instead of other external polls and embed multimedia within powerpoints (you could download the media onto your computer and then embed the file).

- Bring a laptop to class. Use the computer at the podium to login to your Zoom session and to share slides. Use your laptop for your notes and to keep an eye on Zoom participants without having to turn to the screen.
- Remind all students that they need to be logged in to Zoom with a computer and not with their phones. A number of Zoom functionalities are not available on phones.
- Consider asking your Course Associate to monitor chat and to manage breakout rooms so that you can focus on other aspects of the class.

### Student engagement during live class time

- It may be easier to engage the students who are in the classroom than the students who are online. Balance out participation of online and in-person students as much as possible.
- You might notice that some students participate less than others. Some faculty have found that intentionally reaching out to students that don't usually participate is a successful strategy. Others have used ['think-pair-shares'](#) as a strategy to support students who may be less comfortable talking in class.
- Try to encourage discussions in which the online students and in class students are directly speaking with each other. This helps break down the "seam" between the two modalities and may be especially important for building community across the class.
- Remind students that it is imperative that they 'mute' themselves on Zoom when not speaking.
- Students tend to enjoy using the chat feature and faculty have found that more students participate in discussions via chat than they might otherwise have in-person. Ask your Course Associate to monitor the chat feature and respond as appropriate. Asking your Course Associate to read out some of the questions from the chat will also help the students who are asynchronous (watching your recording rather than attending class live).
- Don't forget to build in short breaks. This will help energize your class and keep students attentive.

### Group work

- If possible, form groups that are comprised of both in-person and online students. This enables all students to get to know each other. Building community is especially useful for online students, who may otherwise feel isolated in the HyFlex classroom. If audio feedback poses an issue, you may need to form separate groups of in-person and online students.
- Ask in-person students to bring headphones so that they can communicate with the online students during breakout room activities.
- For in-class breakout sessions, give clear instructions before students go into breakout rooms. You may consider posting instructions and your slides on Canvas in advance of class so that students have access to them once they are in the breakout rooms.
- For longer-term group projects, set clear expectations for participation during group work (e.g. through a [group participation agreement](#)) and for reporting out after.
- You can foster community across all student groups by creating group assignments ahead of time and assigning students prep work to complete in groups before class.
- Some faculty have suggested to their students that all group members use a similar virtual background, creating a sense of shared community and identity.

### Checking for understanding and engagement

- Regularly seek feedback from both online (synchronous and asynchronous) and in-person students about their learning experiences. One option is to have each group nominate a student ambassador who can confidentially share student suggestions and concerns.
- Two or so weeks after the beginning of HyFlex instruction, consider holding a focus group with online students to solicit their feedback about their learning experience.

### Student assignments and presentations

- For any required student presentations, consider asking students to pre-record their presentations and uploading them to Canvas for other students to watch before class. This will allow you to use class time to discuss feedback and comments on the presentations. You can sign up for Canvas training [here](#).
- If students are giving live presentations, consider using a timer (e.g. [Big Timer](#)) to ensure that they stay on time and on track.
- For presentations, you may consider inviting guest judges to virtually ask questions and critique the presentations. This could provide students with real-life perspectives on their work from professionals in the field.
- Give students the option of completing their assignments in writing (e.g. through a paper) or verbally (e.g. through a presentation). Students who feel that they have more control over the learning environment tend to be more successful and more motivated to succeed.

### Additional resources

1. [Hyflex resources on the Academic Affairs website](#), including a recording of a Hyflex classroom and interviews with Hyflex faculty and staff.
2. Sign up for all training and workshops [here](#).
3. Share tips and discuss challenges with your faculty colleagues by signing up for our bi-weekly Hyflex Forums [here](#).
4. Find [Teaching Tips here](#).