



Teaching and Learning While Masked

Teaching and learning while masked presents some challenges as we use visual and audible cues when communicating. Masks make these non-verbal cues harder to register, and ambient noise and other distractions in the classroom may make it more difficult for both you and your students to hear each other.

Some considerations while you and your students are wearing masks:

- Make sure everyone can be heard and understood. Speak louder, more slowly and invite your students to do so. One faculty engaged students in a scale of loudness (1 to 10) activity to determine at what level everyone could be heard: “Let’s start with a soft whisper as 1, and end with a top of our lungs shout at 10. Give me a 6 when you talk in class.” This playful, memorable activity helped remind students to speak louder.
- You may choose to wear surgical/paper masks as they allow the speaker to be heard better than cloth. Use a microphone when possible; many classrooms have audio systems built in. You may contact the Classroom Support Hotline at 610-519-5631 if you’re interested in trying a microphone, to report classroom A/V problems or request training.
- Ask students for feedback on technical aspects of the class: “Can you hear me in the back?” or “Raise your hand if you cannot hear me.”
- Gauge students’ understanding. You may use polling tools, [Poll Everywhere](#), [Top Hat](#) to check students’ understanding. Incorporate ways of formative assessment to gauge students’ understanding, e.g., [one-minute paper](#), [muddiest point](#), [think-pair-share](#), [concept mapping](#).
- Use a Google Doc as a “parking lot” for students’ questions if they prefer to ask questions in writing or are concerned that they may not be heard with the mask. This tool can serve the same purpose as the Chat in Zoom and invites student participation in a different way.
- Create a [virtual gallery walk](#) using Google slides in place of/in addition to asking groups to “share out” their work to the larger class.



Please let us know what you have found helpful/effective when teaching masked by [emailing](#) your tips to VITAL.

Adapted from “[Can you hear me in the back?](#)” [Strategies for teaching while wearing a mask](#)
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