

Recommendations for Teaching With a Mask

This fall, many faculty and instructors will be teaching in the classroom with personal protective equipment (PPE) including a [face mask and/or face shield](#). Our students will also be masked. If you are new to teaching with a mask, you may feel anxious about how you will communicate effectively with your students, build community in your courses, and facilitate classroom discussions while masked.

The following are some recommendations for teaching while wearing a mask:

- **Test different masks and microphones**
 - **Look for a comfortable fit** that doesn't slip down when you speak.
 - **Try surgical (paper) and cloth masks.** Surgical (paper) masks allow the speaker to be heard better than cloth, but both perform the same with lapel microphones.
 - Student Accessibility Services advises that all instructors **use a microphone** if one is available in the classroom. Check the [Classroom Profiles](#) or contact Classroom Technical Support (cts@uoguelph.ca or x52778) to **request a microphone**.
 - **Bring multiple masks** so you can change them during longer classes and throughout the day.
 - **Provide breaks during long classes** so you can go outside or into an office to remove or change your mask.
- **Ensure that you can be heard and understood**
 - **Build time into the class period** for speaking more slowly than usual, clarifying or repeating information, answering questions, and seeking feedback from students.
 - Before teaching, **invite a colleague** to sit in different locations in the classroom and let you know whether they can hear you from each location.
 - **Ask students for regular feedback** during each class session: “Can you hear me in the back?” or “Raise your hand if you can hear me.” You can also use an anonymous survey to gather feedback about the speed and clarity of your instruction.
 - **Use gestures and other forms of non-verbal communication** to convey emotion and importance of information. Encourage your students to do the same.

- **Provide information in multiple modes**, including written instructions (e.g., announcements on Courselink), visuals, and audio or video recordings, instead of relying solely on verbal communication. Have some printed copies of instructions available for students who missed them online.
- **Encourage safe interaction**
 - Human connection is important in teaching, and masks can make it more difficult for students to feel connected with you as the instructor. Use our [recommendations for building belonging in online courses](#). **Post a welcome video on Courselink** where students can see you without your mask.
 - **Incorporate collaborative learning** that does not require students to be in close proximity. For example, instead of discussing a topic with a partner or small group, students could contribute to a shared Google Doc or share their thoughts and questions about course readings using [Hypothes.is](#)
- **Gauge students' understanding**
 - Because it may be difficult to rely on students' facial expressions for feedback, consider using classroom response systems such as Menti.com or iClickers to **check students' understanding of course material** during your classes.
 - **Use closing exercises** such as a [one-minute paper](#) to gather feedback on students' main takeaway or unanswered questions from the class.

Acknowledgements

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Further reading

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