

Using Zoom to teach online classes

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Getting Started

Zoom is the most user-friendly video-conferencing site to deliver English language lessons online. It is possible to run many of the same activities and stages that would normally use in face to face lessons, such as peer/group discussion, recording and displaying new language for students, nominating and sharing audio/video. As a teacher, you are able to monitor students, control their input, share visuals and audio, and respond to questions. However, there are obviously some key differences between face to face and online teaching which we need to keep in mind.

Key differences between f2f and online learning

Below are some of the key differences between teaching online and teaching face to face.

- **Classroom management**

It is important to establish ground rules at the start of any online teaching course, and to remind students of these as and when are necessary. These will include punctuality, respect, active listening skills, polite requests to be excused when needed, and focus and attention on the lesson.

- **Variety of activities**

Obviously some activities aren't going to work online (Find Someone Who's come to mind!). However there are still ways of including variety in lessons which we will look at later.

- **Lack of visual feedback**

Not as easy to get body language cues from students, to gauge attention or motivation.

- **Anonymity of not being physically present**

May be some issues with attendance (easy to skip online classes!).

- **Building rapport**

While initially you may have already taught your online students face to face, there may be some new students who join your online class and it may well be more difficult to build rapport with these students. A short online tutorial with such students would prove beneficial to help get to know them more and build a relationship.

- **Start and finish times**

There are some advantages with online teaching for start and finish times. For example, if technical issues delay the start of the lesson, there is no reason why you can't finish the lesson slightly later (you don't need to vacate your virtual classroom for another teacher!).

- **Student progress**

Students are unlikely to progress as quickly as they would within classroom-based lessons due to few opportunities for meaningful face to face interaction.

What is needed?

A lot of the same as what you'd need teaching face to face! Here is a rough overview of the essentials.

- **Coursebook** (all students should have this under their nose)
- **Scans/photos of material** (if you have a scanner this is useful for sharing any additional material for students that is not in their coursebook. An alternative option is to take a photo of material on your phone and share this).
- **Downloaded materials** (You may be using some downloaded material from an ELT resource site or possibly some authentic material)
- **Audio** (you can play audio on Zoom which students can hear. This could be audio material from the coursebook, played through the Teacher software, or could be a youtube video or other audio file).
- **Virtual whiteboard** (Zoom has this feature which you can use to present/record language for feedback. You can also 'democratise the whiteboard' by inviting students to annotate).
- **Powerpoint slides** – these can be used to adapt or personalize course book material easily. You can also use them to record language for feedback, and you can then save and share these slides with students after the lesson.
- **Paper/notebook** – this is useful for teachers to make notes on students' use of language, and also for students to record new language just as in a face to face class.
- **Room invitation code/meeting link** – to give students access to the virtual classroom!

Setting up your 'Zoom' classroom

Once you have signed up for a Zoom Pro account here, you can set up your virtual Zoom classroom. To do this, click on the 'My Account' option at the top right of the screen, then go into 'Settings' on the task bar on the left. You'll see you can now scroll down a list of options. Make sure you have the following options set to 'on':

- Participants video

Matt Lunt

- Chat
- Polling
- Screen sharing
- Annotation
- Breakout room

Breakout room

Allow host to split meeting participants into separate, smaller rooms



Allow host to assign participants to breakout rooms when scheduling

Once you have configured the above, you can then enter your virtual classroom by clicking in 'Meetings' and scheduling a new meeting. You can then start this meeting at any time by clicking on 'start' below:



To invite students to join your meeting, click on the 'My Meeting' tab and you'll see the option below with a link:

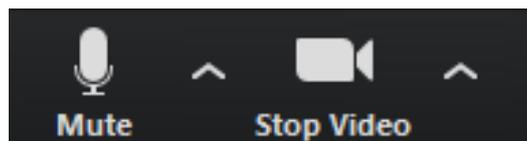


You can then email or send this link to anyone which will give them access to the meeting/lesson.

Best Practice

Just like in the real classroom, there are some 'best' practices for teaching live online.

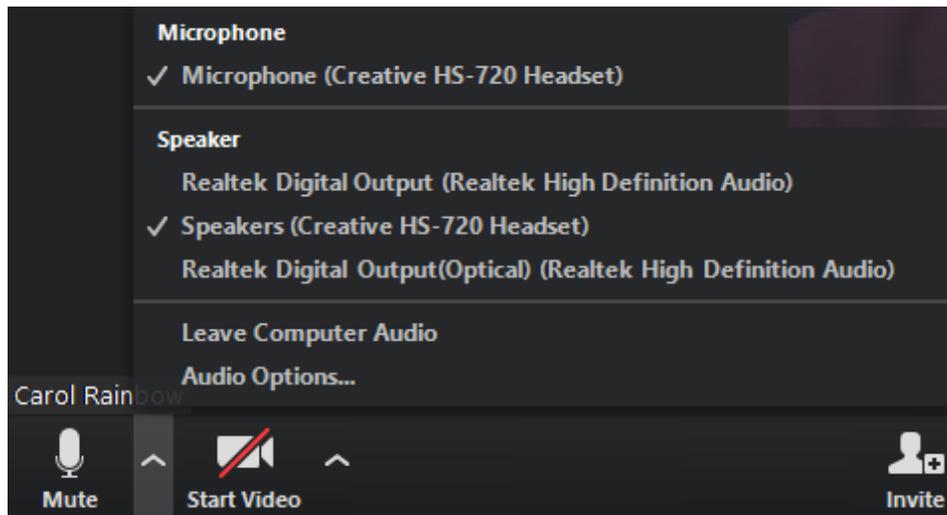
- It's good to keep all participants **cameras on** during the lesson
 - **Audio/Video Settings (Bottom bar left)**



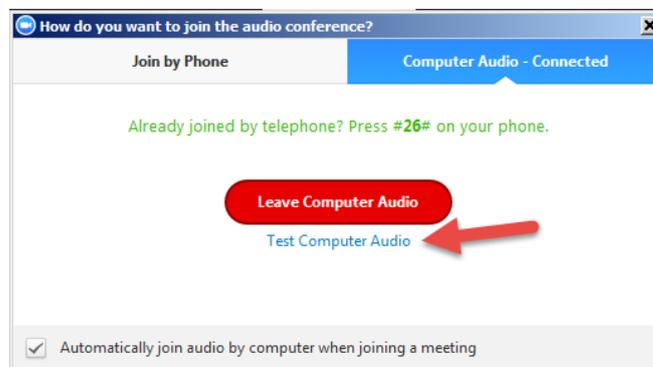
- **Mute:** Click on it to mute or unmute your microphone. Once you are set up and it is working please keep it muted unless you are talking, this eliminates background noise. There will be times when you will be asked to speak, it is best to unmute then.
- **Start/Stop Video:** Click on it to turn your webcam on or off during the session, to save bandwidth you may be asked to switch it off on occasions.

- **Audio**

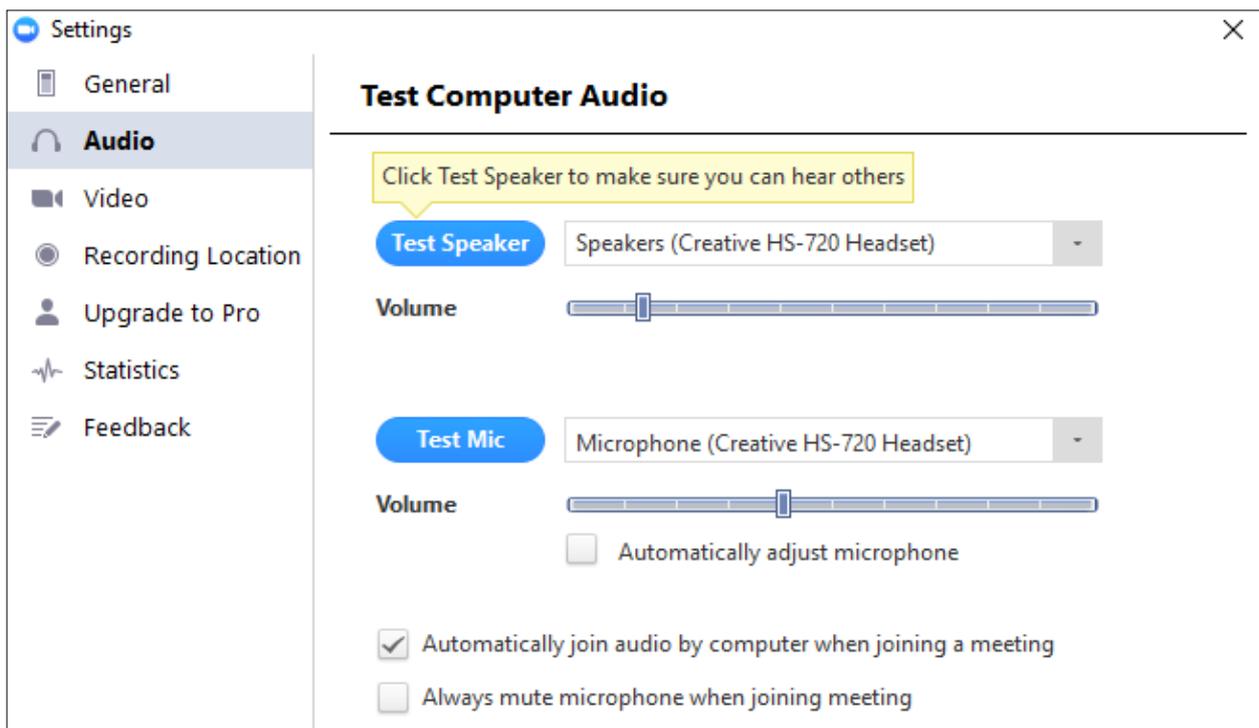
On the arrow, next to the microphone, you will see the choice of microphones available to you. Please use a headset to avoid echo and background noise. You can see clearly in the following image that the headset is selected for both the microphone and speakers. You can also see that the video is switched off as it has a red line through the camera icon.



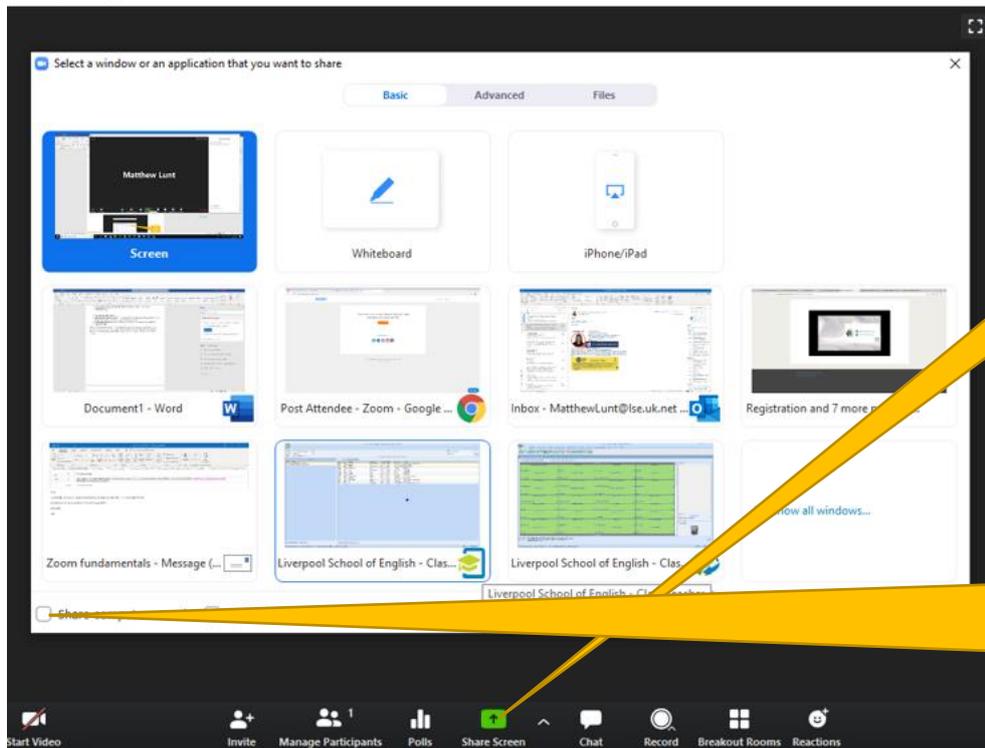
- Selecting **Audio Options** gives you an opportunity to set up and test your audio settings though in Zoom they do usually work straight away. In the pop up window, click **Test Computer Audio**



- Click **Test Speaker** to hear a sound, and **Test Mic** to speak into the mic. If you can hear the sound from speaker test, and your own voice from the mic test, you are set up, ready for your online session.



- Do not tick the Automatically Adjust microphone box as that will try to boost any background noise for the users in the room to hear it
 - Establish **'housekeeping'** rules at the start of a group and with new students.
 - Take regular breaks away from the screen – don't spend any longer than 90 minutes at your desk in one go!
 - Take regular **light physical activity** between sessions. Look for online videos around seated yoga stretches and short tai chi/Qi Qong routines to reduce the risk of developing aches and pains from prolonged sedentary work. A couple of suggestions here!
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xbCfTHz3mU>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DtWiyRQ5w8>
 - **Set up** facebook/whatsapp/google Docs/Edmodo **groups** to facilitate communication.
 - **Share your screen** – sharing your screen allows you to display a variety of content to students. By clicking the green 'Share screen' tab at the bottom of the screen you are then given an option to share any windows that are open on your desktop, as well as the whiteboard. You can share the teachers interactive coursebook software this way, and also youtube videos, powerpoint slides and web pages.

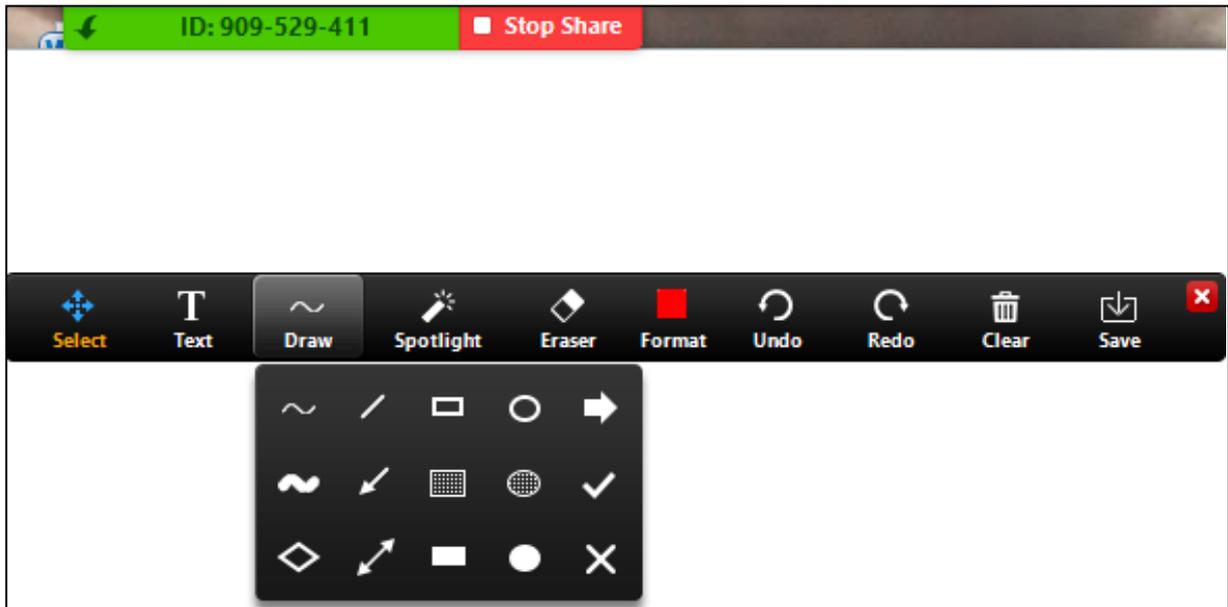


1. Share your screen

2. Click 'share computer sound if you need to share audio'

Annotation Tools for any Shared Screen

When a participant or the presenter is sharing a screen such as a presentation, document, web page, pdf or image, an annotation bar will be available at the top of the screen. Firstly, make sure that you are in **Full Screen** mode. Click on the green bar that says who is sharing a screen and you will see a list of options. Choose **Annotate** for a set of tools.



To move something use the **Selection** tool.

Use **Text** for typing but choose your colour from the **Format** icon.

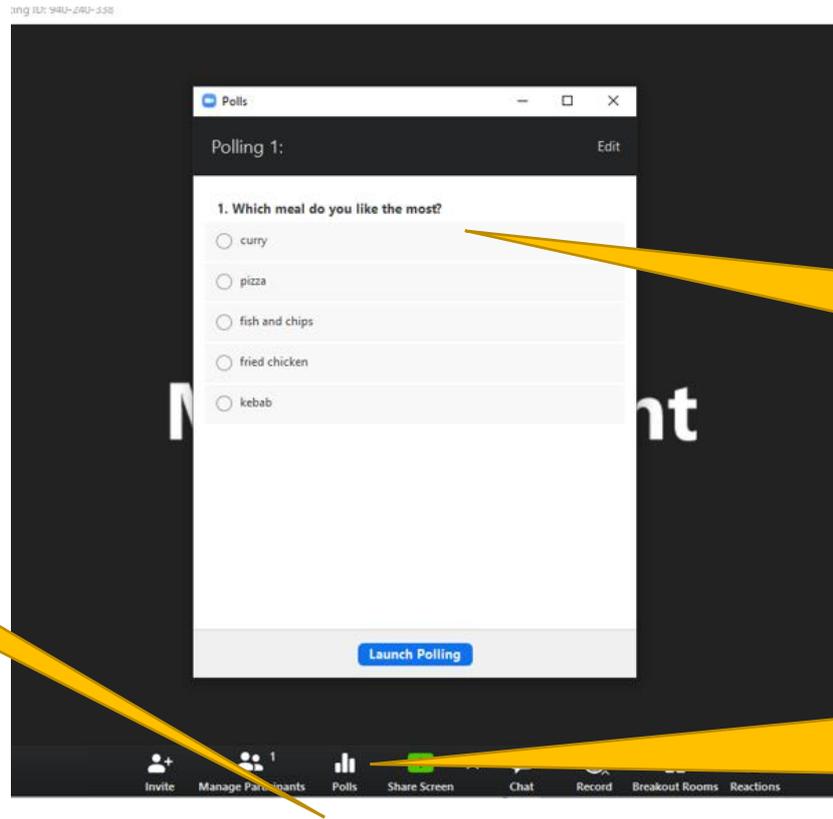
Use the wide pen and a light colour from the **Draw** tool as a highlighter.

The **Clear** tool allows participants to remove all of their own annotations but the host can remove all annotations.

The **Spotlight** tool gives you an arrow with your name on it to put by something that you wish to mention, highlight or spotlight in some way.

- **Involve learners every five minutes** – the online interaction will be seen as a precious opportunity to communicate with others, so make sure they benefit from this!
- **Change activity frequently** – just like in the face to face classroom, keeps everyone engaged!
- **Use Polls/Quizzes/chat feature for questions**

Once you have activated polling on your account settings (see above), you can use this feature to set questions 'whole group' mode. They are great for leading into a topic or getting feedback on activities. Simply click on the 'Polling' tab at the bottom of your screen. Then type your question and possible answers



1. Click here to activate Polling

2. Type question and answers

Launch question for students

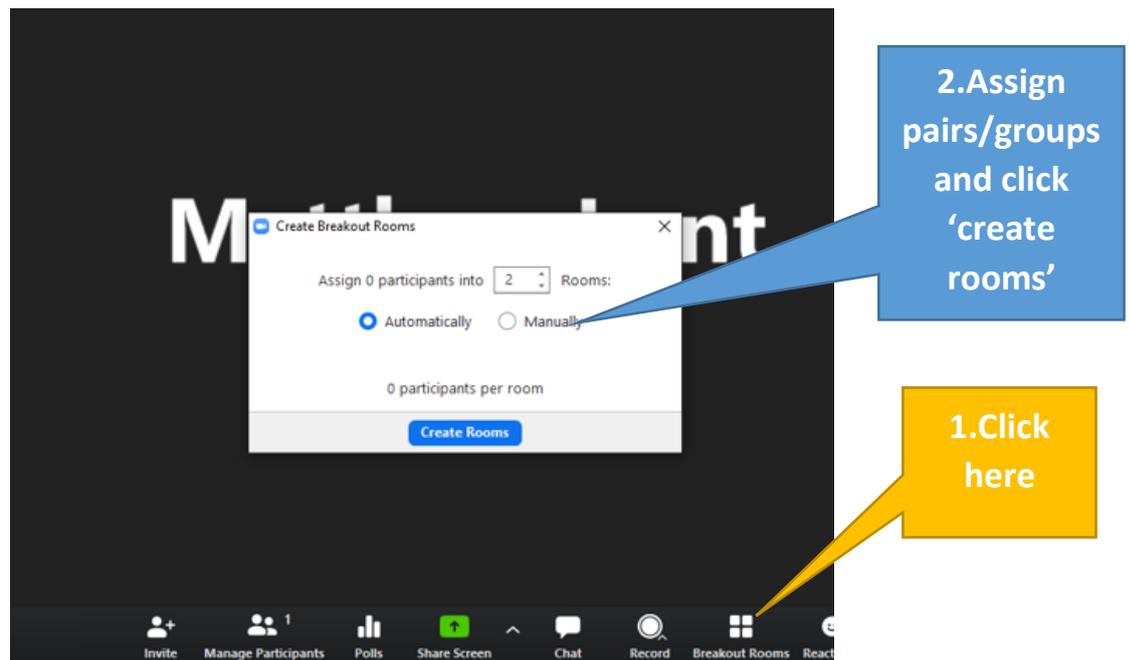
For quizzes, the 'chat' feature is the most user friendly for this. Simply click on the 'chat' tab at the bottom of the screen and then type questions in the chatbox sidebar (see example below).



- **Use Breakout rooms for pair/group work**

Maybe the most useful feature of Zoom is 'breakout rooms'. Here you can split students into pairs/groups to do a discussion task or compare answers. You can group students either manually or randomly too. Once you have launched the breakout rooms, you can then join each room to monitor how pairs/groups are getting on (just like monitoring in the face to face classroom!). If you are asking

students to discuss some questions prepared on a powerpoint slide, you'll need to make sure they screenshot this before joining the breakout room.



- **Group assignments and group discussion** – between face to face sessions you can set group assignments or discussion activities that students can work together on. You could get the students to do this through Whatsapp, a facebook group, or through Google Docs. Alternatively, if it's during a shorter break, you could assign breakout rooms and leave the meeting running (you can leave the meeting without ending it, or you can just mute yourself and turn off video). Groups can then use the face to face session to present their findings.
- **Self-guided work** – self-study is an important part of online learning given that students are unlikely to be engaging in as much online class time as they would face to face class time. It is therefore important to make use of LSE-Learning and any extra online course book software as these are valuable sources of learning for students outside of face to face lesson time.

Supporting self-guided study

Here are some ways you can support and coordinate students' self-study. It would be good to discuss with your students which of the tools they would most prefer at the start of the group.

- **Google Classroom** – this is a great way to share resources and allow students to communicate with each other. Make sure your students download the Google classroom app for ease of use. It is also a useful tool for collecting written homework and giving feedback.
- **Edmodo** – like Facebook for classes, students can share videos, images, comments and communicate.
- **LSE-Learning** <https://etestify.com/?b=lse> – all students should be registered for this and should have accessed it as part of their induction. Encourage students to make use of this.
- **Instagram** – you can set up a private group for your students and invite them. Great for sharing and commenting on images and videos!

Further resources and lesson ideas

There is a comprehensive list of further resources, tips and links on Sandy Millen's website here

<https://sandymillin.wordpress.com/2020/03/14/ideas-for-adapting-group-lessons-to-working-on-zoom/>

Spend some time going through this as it's a treasure trove of advice!

The following ELT video lesson resource sites would also be compatible/adaptable for online teaching:

- <http://film-english.com/> - well-crafted lessons around short videos with follow up communicative activities.
- <https://lessonstream.org/> - short lessons based around short youtube videos. Fun and engaging.
- <https://viralelt.wordpress.com/> - lots of higher level language rich lessons here with complete audio scripts available. All based on viral videos.

Webinars:

- A couple of webinars here on adapting coursebook activities for teaching online
<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-online-using-your-coursebook-ideas-breakout-rooms?fbclid=IwAROGnygXN-JJfXQby41k8mCpqqo90MYeGnKfNBDKgxIM17f74XRP5JMaSycY>

Demo online lesson

There is a recorded lesson of Hugh Dellar delivering a lesson online to 11 students using Outcomes

Advanced here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Wzl-f33Cxc&feature=emb_title

Word Clouds

Word clouds are a fun way to present words in classes and they are very simple to make.

The very simplest is Abcya: http://www.abcya.com/word_clouds.htm, click on start, add about ten words and choose create. Play with the colours! Choose your favourite and click on the menu, choose save. You can download it to your computer to use in a presentation for a lesson. Most Word Cloud makers are all very similar in how they work.

It is best to make a list of the words that you want to use beforehand – here are two sets below to play with.

For most apps the more iterations of a word there are the bigger it shows up in the cloud.

If you want to put two or more words together they are usually joined by a tilde.

Ones with Shapes which you can use are Taxedo and Word Art:

<https://wordart.com/>

<http://www.tagxedo.com/> (Asks you to install Silverlight if you don't already have it!)

<https://worditout.com/word-cloud/create>

Images

Images are very useful to start a lesson with and lead in to a topic. You can share an image with a few questions about it (either on Powerpoint or questions in the chatbox). You can then invite students to give answers in the chatbox or you can put students in breakout rooms to discuss questions. Google images is the easiest way to do this, however this site <https://unsplash.com/> has a bank of free to use images.

Word searches

A great way to lead into a topic or recycle/revisit vocabulary from a previous lesson. A free word search generator here: <http://www.johnsesl.com/generators/wordsearch/> You can use 'snipping tool' function to copy the word search image onto a powerpoint slide and then share your screen.

Eleven activities for online teaching

1 *Sounds of me* This activity can be used at the beginning of an online course. It helps learners to get to know each other a bit. Choose four or five songs which are significant to you in some way, and add them to an online play list (Grooveshark is a good one). Provide a link to your playlist (e.g. in a forum in your online course, or in a blog). Include why you chose each of the songs, and why they are significant to you. Your learners can listen to your playlist, and then respond to your posting with comments or questions. Learners then create their own online playlists, and post a link and explanation each. They listen to and comment on each others' choice of music. Instead of using audio, you and learners could create online video playlists e.g. in a site like You Tube. People often have strong emotional ties to certain pieces of music, so this can be quite a powerful sharing activity. I especially like the way this activity brings in other media (audio or video) – one danger in online courses is that they become too relentlessly text-based.

2 *My precious...* This is another great activity to help learners in an online course get to know each other better. Get learners to take a digital photo of an important/significant object that they own. This could be a piece of jewellery, a souvenir, a talisman or good luck charm, a drawing or painting, a CD, a piece of furniture that has been in the family for generations ... (If your learners don't own digital cameras, they could find an image of a similar object on the Internet, and use that). Learners prepare a 100-word text explaining what the object is, and why it is significant. They post their photo and text to a forum in your online course, or to a blog. They then read about and comment on each other's objects. Like 'Sounds of me' above, this activity enables learners to share meaningful personal information with each other, and can really help the group to 'gel'. It also brings in another form of media – digital images – which helps add variety to course content.

3 *Podcast dictations* I find that many language learners love dictations. So how about building up a bank of dictations as a series of podcasts over time, which learners can regularly listen to and transcribe? Use a free podcasting site (such as Voice Thread, or Podomatic) to record yourself dictating a short text. You could also provide a transcript as a separate text document, so that learners can check their dictations afterwards. Add one dictation a week to your podcasting page, based on course work. This is a great way to review course content, and to also give your learners plenty of practice in listening skills, and grammar. You could even get your learners to record dictations for each other!

4 *Your message to the world* This activity is good for speaking practice. It gets learners to record a short speech, based on a model you provide. Record yourself speaking for a minute or two on one of the following topics: What is your vision of a perfect world? If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be, and why? What is the most annoying thing in the world? What is the best thing in the world? If you could say one thing to the world, what would it be? Upload your recording to your online course site, and get learners to listen and post comment or questions in reply. Give them the list of topics above, and ask them to record their own one or two minute speeches (e.g. using Sound Recorder on their PCs, or Simple Sound if they have a Mac). Learners then share their own recordings in a forum, and listen to and comment on each other's. You could set a summarising task in the same forum, by asking questions such as 'Who talks about world peace? Who is worried about climate change? etc, based on the recordings. Of

course it's important to remember that recording their own speech can be immensely challenging for learners, especially at lower levels. Make it clear that they don't need to speak for a long time, and that they can rehearse and use notes to help them.

5 Web tours This is a synchronous activity, which means you and the learners are online at the same time, in a video chat room. Your chat room needs to have shared web browsing, so that you can show each other websites in real time. We use Elluminate for our online course video chats, but there are also free platforms such as Dimdim, or WizIQ you could use. Take your learners on a tour of your favourite website in the chat room, showing a few pages, and telling them what you especially like. One of my favourites is this site of paintings of redheads in art . Get each learner to then show the group their favourite website — preferably a non-language learning site! (They will need to have chosen this site before the chat, and have the URL ready to browse to). Make sure each learner doesn't speak for more than two or three minutes. At the end of each web tour, the other learners in the group need to come up with one question about that website for the learner. To summarise the activity, provide a list of the website names and URLs for learners to take away.

6 My window, my world - This is a getting-to-know-you activity. Start by taking a photo of your regular workspace (preferably including the closest window and what you see out of it when you aren't looking at the computer). Prepare a short written description of it. Post both the description and the photo to your discussion forum* or class blog. Learners then do the same. You and the learners then read each other's descriptions and comment on them.

7 Five clicks away This is a great reading activity that really can only be done online. First find a visually attractive web page on a topic of general interest to your learners. Choose one that has several links on the page, preferably in one area of the page. A news or magazine site will work well, or a site on a specific topic, such as the World Wildlife Fund or a film review site. Tell the students they must start at this site. They begin reading on whatever takes their interest. However, they are ONLY ALLOWED FIVE CLICKS away from that page. At the end of five clicks they stop browsing and take a screenshot of the page they reached and prepare a description of 1) the end page they got to and 2) the steps they took to get there. They post these to your course website. It's often very interesting to see how different people ended up in completely different places.

8 Follow that story! Here's another reading activity. Find a large news site in English and choose four to five news stories that you think "have legs" (that is, they will keep going for at least a week, e.g. the world cup would have been a good one in July). Give the list of news stories to the students, and provide them with the URLs to several news sites in English. They must "follow" their news story for a week, reading or watching items relating to it in English from a variety of news sites. At the end of the week, they summarise their findings into a report and post it on the course site (or email it to you).

9 What's my line? This listening activity works as a homework activity or even in a face to face class if you have a connection to the internet. But I've used it in distance courses too. First, choose a series of movie trailers for movies that are out or coming out now. Four to six should do. Watch each trailer and make a note of two phrases you hear in the trailer. Then add a "distractor", a phrase that isn't in the trailer but that could be. Give the students the title of the trailer and the three phrases. They have to watch the trailer and identify the distractor. This activity is always very popular, and learners can make their own "What's my line" activities for a partner afterwards.

10 Binomials This is a synchronous activity, which means you and the learners are online at the same time, for example in a chatroom. In fact, this activity needs to be in a chatroom so people can type answers at the same time. Nicky and I have found that chats work really well for social stuff and helping a group to “gel”, as well as for little language quizzes. In this activity, the teacher starts by typing half of a binomial, e.g. bread and... The learners all then type as quickly as possible the first word that comes into their head (in this case, butter). Continue with other “halves” of binomials, but slowly widening these out so that there may be more than one choice. Here are a set you can use:

war and...; love and...; man and...; right and...; king and.... I use this activity as a warmup, and I like using binomials. But you could do the same with irregular verbs, synonyms, antonyms or any other word pair.

11 Parting gifts

I learned this activity from Nicky herself and Gavin Dudeney (they were my tutors on my first e-moderation course some seven years ago now) but it actually was first used by Ana d’Almada, another online tutor we work with at the Consultants-E. It’s a great closing activity. Towards the end of the course, set up a forum called Parting Gifts. Invite learners to contribute a little virtual gift to the course site as a way of saying goodbye to the group. There are so many possibilities of cool things to “gift” online for free that I am always amazed by what learners come up with. I’ve had funny youtube videos, links to great resources, jokes, recipes, video messages...the list of possibilities is endless, and people always like leaving comments on how much they enjoyed each other’s “parting gifts”.

Creating original content

A useful blog post here by Nik Peachey on some tools you can use to create online content.

<https://www.oxfordtefl.com/blog/developing-course-content-for-teaching-online>