# **Synchronous vs Asynchronous: Be Prepared**

We know that many of you are considering synchronous delivery of your courses when we resume classes on March 30. Because synchronous sessions have the benefit of real time interaction, students have the opportunity for immediate feedback and everyone may feel a greater sense of interpersonal connection. These may be crucial or highly desirable elements for you, your students, and/or your course content. *But there are some challenges associated with the synchronous format*, so we offer some suggestions here to foster your success.

* **Choose the simplest format possible for your course delivery**. Synchronous delivery is NOT the simplest form. It is much easier to record in advance and post.
* **Asynchronous gives you more control**. In an asynchronous format, you can pre-record your content, post it, and test that it is working properly. If something goes wrong, you will likely have time to resolve the problem before your students access the content. For that reason, you may wish to rely more heavily on asynchronous content and limit the synchronous elements, perhaps by using synchronous sessions only once a week, or for short mini-lectures or Q & A sessions.
* **Get appropriate training on technology that our campus supports**. Synchronous technologies are not necessarily “hard” to use, but you do need to be familiar with them. If you plan to use synchronous tools, and you have not done so already, please get training. Check the [OIT website](https://newpaltz.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/1905/Portal/KB/?CategoryID=17233) for live or recorded training sessions. Be sure to use technologies our campus supports. This will not only ensure that you can get the support that YOU need from OIT, but it will also reduce the number of platforms your students will have to learn and ensure that they have also access to campus support.
  + **Choice #1 for you is Bb Collaborate**
  + **Choice #2 for you is WebEx**
* **Use your regularly scheduled class session.** It is essential that you schedule your synchronous class for its regularly scheduled class session. Most students are enrolled in multiple courses. If faculty do not keep to their regular class schedule, then students may have rescheduled synchronous sessions that overlap or conflict with one another.
* **Be prepared for the likely possibility that you or your students may encounter technical difficulties that disrupt or prevent the synchronous delivery.** The global move to online education is taxing broadband services. Your own or your students’ internet connections may falter. Some of your students may have limited internet access. You or your students may have trouble using new technologies with which you are not familiar.
  + **Test first**. Consider scheduling one or more “test” class sessions with your students where you have no intention of delivering content, but, rather, are giving everyone a chance to become familiar with whatever system you are using for your synchronous course. Ask students for feedback on what challenges they experienced in the test sessions and then work to resolve those issues before holding a session involving the delivery of course content.
  + **Record for students who can’t access the synchronous session.** It is very important that you record your synchronous session for students who are unable to join the session. Students may experience technical difficulties. Students, like faculty, may be working from remote locations that are less than ideal. Having a recording of the session will enable them to participate once their technical or other challenges have been resolved. Knowing that the session will be recorded may alleviate anxiety they may experience over
  + **Have a back-up plan and make sure that you and your students know what the back-up plan is** if you experience technical challenges that require you to abandon your original plan.
    - How will you communicate that you are moving to your back-up plan? Will you post an announcement in Bb or send an email?
    - Will you move to a synchronous “chat” space where you and your students can type your communication?
    - Will you record the intended content and post it later that day?
    - Will you move to an alternate synchronous platform?
  + **Have an experienced colleague on stand-by to assist.** If you are inexperienced with synchronous technologies, you may want to consider asking an experienced colleague to be available to you by cell phone during your first foray into this learning environment. That way you will have immediate access to someone who can help you troubleshoot any problems you or your students might be having.
* **If you have problems:**
  + Check with the [ITS Knowledge Base](http://www.support.newpaltz.edu) before sending in a ticket and use the search bar there to type your inquiry. Your question may already be answered there.
  + Try to resolve your problem within your department before reaching out to OIT. Colleagues from your own discipline or from disciplines with similar pedagogical approaches are often well equipped to help you think about what works best with the sort of content you are delivering.
  + OIT is training additional staff to assist with tickets, but OIT resources are heavily taxes right now. So please recognize that there may be some delay before OIT staff can respond to your ticket.