



## Ways to connect with learners using video conferencing

Video conferencing adds a new dimension to the way we connect with friends and family.

When used effectively, it can also be a valuable tool in aiding instruction as it can enhance students' learning and keep them engaged while supporting their mental health, particularly when they are isolated from classmates, friends and extended family.

It can provide different learning opportunities for students including those with special needs.

However, advancements in video conferencing technology also mean an increased level of responsibility.

There are considerations with respect to technology, security, privacy, confidentiality, and consent.

Some of the most popular video conferencing platforms were not created for educational purposes. Hackers have been able to crash sessions and steal information, which raises concerns about student privacy and the security of information such as recorded videos.

The following is intended to assist you in exercising professional judgment to avoid potential risks and safely create your own virtual learning space.

Remember that everyone is in this together. We all learn at our own pace. Be patient with yourself and with the technology – and don't despair as you expand your ability of using technology.



# Communicating with students, parents and guardians



1. Follow the policies, resources and advice provided by your employer, the Ministry of Education and the Ontario College of Teachers.
  - Use employer-approved digital platforms and technology.
  - Become familiar with each platform and its guidelines to ensure confidentiality and privacy.
  - Avoid using your personal email/personal texting and social media accounts for instructional purposes.
  - Employers should ensure that members know where to find their policies and protocols.
2. The same standards, behaviours and legal obligations that apply in the classroom also apply online.
  - Keep your language and tone professional.
  - Remember you are on camera. Assume that you are visible and can be heard throughout your session. Video conferencing enables you to acknowledge facial expressions, inflection and tone of voice.
  - Ask your students to participate from an appropriate room, for example a shared space like a home office, family room, or kitchen.
3. Maintain professional boundaries. When video conferencing is used, professional boundaries can begin to blur as students and teachers are participating from their homes. All communication exchanges with students, parents and guardians should be professional and:
  - occur during the regular instructional day;
  - be related to student learning or progress;
  - not be personal.
4. Use professional judgment to ensure that protocols are in place for the safety and privacy of participants.
  - Be aware of content ownership, student information and privacy settings.
  - Let students and parents know that video sessions may be recorded – by you or other participants.
  - Keep in mind that video sessions could be recorded and shared broadly. While some platforms will not allow students and parents to record a session, other devices could be used to record it.
  - Record one-on-one sessions.
  - Be aware that chat features are not private and should not be used for side conversations.
  - Keep notes as you normally would.
5. If you become aware that students are being abused, neglected, cyberbullied, or are experiencing mental health issues, follow board protocols.

Please also refer to the College's professional advisories:

- [Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media](#)
- [Supporting Students' Mental Health](#)
- [Responding to the Bullying of Students](#)
- [Duty to Report](#)

Be forgiving of mistakes during a video conferencing session. It is a new communication platform. There are bound to be technical glitches.

Everybody is learning how best to use the tools at hand to try to continue to provide instruction in a less-than-perfect environment. Be patient with yourself, your students, with parents, and guardians.

