



Conducting a Video Conference Instructional Notes

Description: In a virtual exchange program such as STEAMuseum, video conferences provide a critical time for students to see one another in real-time. With different languages, cultures, and time zones, it is important to provide some structure to the video conferences with clear goals, an agenda, and predetermined roles & responsibilities for students. The general tone of the video conference should be casual and conversational, allowing students to be comfortable and responsive to one another.

Objectives:

- Connect students virtually in real-time to converse and interact.
- Pique students' curiosity and knowledge about one another's lives and cultures.
- Improve students' communication skills by practicing active listening and effective speaking with native speakers of the target language.

Student Outcomes:

- Meet and engage with peers abroad in real time.
- Practice conversational skills, including active listening and asking follow-up questions.
- Share and exchange cultural perspectives on a topic (e.g. school life, current events, etc.) with peers.

Time: One session

Materials:

- Video projector
- Laptop or other computer
- *Optional but ideal:* external speakers and microphone
- Nametags

Agenda:

1. Setting up
2. Connecting
3. Reflecting

Steps:

1. Setting up

- *Video projector:* Set up the projector and computer in the front of the class so that it projects on a screen or wall that is visible to all. Connect any available accessories such as external speakers and microphone. Arrange 2-3 chairs for the students who will be speaking.
- *Test the equipment!* If possible, set up a few minutes early so there is time to test and troubleshoot any issues with connecting. It's useful to be in communication with your partner at this time on What's App or whatever platform you are using.
- *Arranging the classroom:* Make sure everyone has a chance to be seen. Arrange the class in a semi-circle or push their chairs close together.
- *Agenda:* Post the agenda with timings, student roles, and other information related to the call, so that students can follow and expect what's next.
- *Nametags:* Have each student write their name clearly on a nametag (sticker or pin) and place it on a visible location on their upper body.

2. Connecting:

- *Greetings:* Especially the first time, students may be nervous and unsure of what to expect. Instructors or program facilitators can set the stage by greeting one another and chatting briefly, since they will probably know one another by now. This is also a good way to model dialogue for the students.
- *Icebreakers:* If you want, include a short (less than 5 minutes) icebreaker at the beginning of each video conference to engage both classrooms, and to show similarities across cultures. Examples include:
 - Hands Up: Provide a general category (e.g. ice cream) and have students raise their hand for their choice. For example, vanilla or chocolate? Strawberry or mint? Choose categories and choices that will bridge the two classrooms together rather than focusing on differences.
 - Birthday Month Stand Up: Go through every month of the year, asking students to stand up for their birthday month.
 - Group Greeting: Practice a welcome message/greeting from all students.
- *Introductions:* When the students meet in front of the camera for the first time, they will begin by introducing themselves. Have them state not just their name, but one or two things about themselves: how old they are; a sport they like to play; their favorite subject in school; etc.
- *Dialogue:* Proceed with the video conference, inviting student groups to take turns sitting in front of the camera, asking their questions, listening to their peers and responding accordingly. Try to time the groups so everyone has a chance to speak; some groups will run shorter or longer depending on their dialogue and connection to one another.

- *Support and encourage students as needed:* Encourage students to respond to what their peers are saying by asking deeper questions. This shows active listening and will support an actual dialogue between the two classes, rather than just answering short questions back and forth. Elicit deeper responses by asking:
 - Would the students here like to respond to what we just heard?
 - How do they feel about what we just heard?
 - Would the students here like to share a similar experience or thought?
 - *Let students be themselves:* This is the best way for them to connect; and sometimes a conversation about something that excites them will lead to a spontaneous song or dance which takes the dialogue completely off topic. This is perfectly fine and should be encouraged!
 - *Closing:* Students tend to have a Pavlovian response to the bell--they hear it and bolt. Be sure to leave time for a formal good-bye; often this consists of everyone waving and crowding the camera. Do whatever works for your class, but just make sure that there is some kind of closure to the meeting.
3. **Reflecting:** Make some time--either right after the video conference or during the next class--for a quick reflection about what the students just experienced. You can ask:
- What was surprising to learn and why?
 - I used to think...but now I realize...
 - How do you feel after the call?
 - What worked well with the call today?