



## Preparing for a Video Conference Instructional Notes

**Description:** Video conferences are *synchronous*; students see and speak with each other in real-time. The goal is for students to have meaningful conversations and connect more directly with their peers abroad, which can be especially important for young people who may not have many opportunities to travel internationally. Two strategies are employed to facilitate and support effective video conference discussions between classrooms: 1) Each video conference is guided by a topic; 2) Students prepare with role play.

### Objectives:

- Prepare students for meeting and engaging with their peers virtually.
- Engage students in real-time online intercultural interaction and collaboration.
- Practice critical communication skills such as active listening and asking response questions.

### Student Outcomes:

- Generate a list of questions to ask their partners.
- Practice asking response questions to deepen conversations.

**Time:** One session

### Resources for Program Facilitators and Teachers:

- [Video on how to support student dialogue for a videoconference](#): This 14-minute video from Face to Faith provides excellent examples of students in cross-cultural videoconferences asking questions that elicit deep responses and conversation.
- [Video on asking response questions during a video conference](#): This 8.15 minute video from Face to Faith describes key words to use when asking good response questions in a dialogue.
- [Creating a Culture of Peace in the English Language Classroom](#). See Chapter 4 (Communication) of this curriculum guide, which focuses on improving interpersonal skills that will enable individuals to address intergroup conflict effectively and nonviolently.

### Agenda:

1. Choosing a topic
2. Preparing questions
3. Role play
4. Agenda and role assignments
5. Active listening and effective speaking

**Steps:**

**1. Choosing a Topic**

- In advance of preparing for the video conference, teachers from the partner schools should decide on a topic.
- Example topics include:
  - *Learning about the school and social lives of our partners abroad.*
  - *Responding to current events.*
  - *Describing a recent holiday celebration (e.g. Ramadan, Christmas, etc.)*

**2. Preparing Questions**

- Either as a class or in small groups, have students generate a list of questions to ask their peers about the assigned topic.
- As a class, decide which 4 - 5 questions to ask at the video conference and in what order (in case there is not enough time; it helps to prioritize.)
- During the video conference, small groups of 2 - 3 students will take turns posing and responding to these questions. Determine who will be in each group and what question they will ask. Other roles are described below under #4.

**3. Role Play**

- Use small group role play to practice posing and answering questions generated by students for their peers. Alternatively, ask a student to respond to one of the questions and have the class generate examples of good follow-up questions together. You might contrast with examples of bad follow-up questions to highlight the difference between positive and negative communication skills.
- The following is a list of “Respectful Conversation Starters” by [Empatico](#) that students can practice in their role play.

Paraphrasing	I think you're saying that... In other words, you believe/think that...
Giving your opinion	I believe/think/feel that... From my perspective...
Checking for understanding	Can you explain _____ again? What did you mean when you said _____?
Agreeing	I agree with _____ because... I want to add to what you said...
Disagreeing	I understand your point of view, but I respectfully disagree because... I'm not sure about _____, can you tell me why you think that?
Showing empathy and understanding	I see why you feel/think that way because... I hear what you're saying, can you tell me more?

#### 4. Agenda and Role Assignments

- Map out a proposed agenda for the videoconference. For example:
  - *Greetings by instructors: Begin with the two teachers and/or facilitators greeting one another and chatting briefly; this helps model conversational language and behavior for the students.*
  - *Optional Icebreaker: See [here](#) for short ice breakers.*
  - *Welcome: Led by 1 - 2 student representatives on each side*
  - *Questions: Back and forth between the two classes*
  - *Closing: Thank you and goodbye greetings*
- Assign roles. For example:
  - *Tech support - Helps set up and test video conference equipment*
  - *Classroom setup - Helps arrange chairs in the classroom, including two seats in front of the camera.*
  - *Welcome - Provides introductory greetings and tells partner school how many students are in the class.*
  - *Questions and Responses - Groups of 2 - 3 students who take turns asking and responding to questions.*
  - *Closing - Thank you and goodbye greetings.*
- Ensure that students who are assigned roles are provided an opportunity to develop and practice their script.

#### 5. Active Listening and Effective Speaking

- Tell students that the video conference is an opportunity to practice real-world communication skills.
- Through discussion, highlight these qualities of **active listening** that they will need to demonstrate in the video conference:
  - Body language, facial expressions, and posture express interest.
  - Look directly at the screen, especially when partners are speaking.
  - Do not interrupt speakers.
  - If you don't understand or disagree with something that is being said, watch one's body language and facial expressions. Simply state "I don't understand."
  - Asking someone to say more about their experiences or thoughts is a way to show that you are interested.
- Also highlight some of the characteristics that will contribute to **effective speaking** and help make students understood including:
  - Don't mumble; make an effort to enunciate your words.
  - Speak up; it can be hard to hear depending on the equipment and connection.
  - Try to avoid using a lot of slang or colloquialisms like "ya know's"
  - DO feel free to ad lib--to show support or enthusiasm as you experience it
- An excellent video from the organization *Face to Faith* demonstrating examples of students responding to one another in video conferences can be found [here](#).