

## Extending the classroom with Adobe Connect

The evolution of technology and the Internet has led to innovative opportunities for human interaction, including new methods and tools for collaborative teaching and learning. One example is the extended or virtual classroom. Institutions can now offer learning opportunities to a broader set of students. Educators and students can connect with classrooms around the world.

Adobe Connect includes a comprehensive set of tools and features for extending learning beyond the brick and mortar of traditional classrooms. However, when bridging the physical and the virtual worlds, certain challenges need to be overcome.

In this guide, we explore three ways to extend your classroom with Adobe Connect and offer best practices and tips for successful online teaching.

### Suggested uses for the extended classroom

The term “extended classroom” can mean different things to different people. For some, extending the classroom is as simple as posting and retrieving homework assignments online. Others use online classrooms to connect with one or more people in an interactive virtual environment. Table 2 includes three ideas for extending the classroom by using an interactive virtual environment.

**Table 2** Extending the classroom with Adobe Connect

<p><b>Create a reusable set of class materials</b></p>	<p>Holding classes in an Adobe Connect meeting room removes the physical limitations of the traditional classroom. Anyone with access to the Internet can attend. Because Adobe Connect meeting rooms persist after the first meeting, students can return to the same familiar location (URL) for additional classes. This allows instructors to reuse the meeting room for similar classes. Materials, such as presentations or handouts that are added to the room, remain there for use in future classes.</p>
<p><b>Connect groups of remote learners</b></p>	<p>When you think of online classes, you may picture each participant sitting alone in front of a computer. This is not always the case. You can use Adobe Connect to connect classes or groups of students in different locations, thus creating opportunities for students with different backgrounds to interact and learn from each other.</p> <p>For example, a group of students may use Adobe Connect to connect with a group in another country or region to compare cultural similarities and differences.</p>
<p><b>Invite guest speakers</b></p>	<p>Having guest speakers visit your physical classroom is sometimes challenging. You can reduce or eliminate the cost of travel, housing, and other logistics by inviting guest speakers to attend via an Adobe Connect meeting. Any guest speaker with access to the Internet can attend your class. Speakers can even appear on video and communicate by using the built-in Adobe Connect voice capabilities or a conference call. Students can also appear on video and take turns asking questions.</p>

### Best practices for extending the classroom

The following are best practices when extending your lecture to a class of remote learners or inviting a virtual or guest speaker to present to your class.

#### Design

- If presenting to a group of students who will attend your class online, work with an Adobe Connect administrator to enter students in Adobe Connect as users in advance. The administrator can also organize students into related user groups. This makes scheduling classes and inviting students much easier.
- Plan your class schedule ahead of time and create an agenda slide you can display in a Share pod at the start of class. If you are inviting a virtual guest speaker to present to your class, work with your guest to establish an agenda for the meeting. Make sure to schedule time for breaks, unforeseen technical difficulties, and student interaction, questions, and so on.
- Create a welcome slide for students to see when they first enter the meeting room. Let people know the meeting will begin soon, and include tips for successfully participating in class.
- Before class, create class materials, including presentations, videos, homework assignments, reference documents, and quizzes. Tools available for producing quality online content include Adobe Presenter, Adobe Captivate, and Adobe Acrobat. For more information on creating reusable online content, see *Tools for developing reusable online content*.
- When designing video files for use in Adobe Connect, keep in mind that Adobe Flash video (FLV) files can be loaded into an Adobe Connect meeting room Share pod, but to show other video (such as AVI or MOV documents), you must share your desktop and play the video from your computer. For this reason, FLV is the best format for use in Adobe Connect.
- Create an attendance list of enrolled participants. Keep this handy so you can quickly determine when all or most of your registered students have entered the online meeting room.
- Create an Adobe Connect meeting room and customize your layouts for the type of meetings you will lead. You can reuse this meeting room for more than one class.
- If you plan to use virtual breakout rooms, plan for how you will distribute students and assign activities during the breakout sessions.
- Write surveys or polling questions you plan to use during class.
- Design student assessments or quizzes.

#### Prepare

- E-mail invitations. The invitation includes a link to test their connection settings and system requirements. Students can install any necessary components and test them prior to the start of class. In addition to the Adobe Connect invitation, consider sending a nicely formatted invitation by e-mail or mail.
- Before the meeting, add all meeting materials, including welcome and agenda slides, presentations, videos, polls, and reference documents. Keep in mind that some document types cannot be added to the meeting room. You must share them from your computer by sharing an application, window, or your entire desktop.
  - You can store the following document types in a Connect Pro meeting room and share them by using a Share pod: PPT, PPTX, JPG, PNG, SWF, FLV, MP3, PDF, ZIP.
  - To share other documents during the meeting, you must share your computer window, application, or desktop.
  - You can also upload printable documents, such as DOC, XLS, or PDF documents, to the Files pod so meeting participants can download them to their computers. A Files pod is added automatically in the Collaboration meeting room layout.
- When adding content to the meeting room, be sure to add documents to the most appropriate layout. For example you can begin with presentations on the Sharing layout, and then transition to the Discussion layout to conduct a poll, and then move to the Collaboration layout for posting downloadable documents and handouts.

- To ensure successful communication, arrange a conference call as a backup or as an alternative to using the built-in Adobe Connect voice feature (VoiceOver IP).
- If you are the meeting host, presenter, or facilitator, enter the meeting room and run through all presentations at least once before the scheduled meeting. Send participants a list of ground rules for participating in the online class.
- Suggest that students review reading assignments or other prerequisite materials prior to class to promote greater understanding, discussion, or collaboration during the online class.
- Ask students to come to class with prepared questions for the guest.
- Be prepared with a Plan B for communicating if there is a problem with the audio conferencing. For example, make sure everyone knows how to use the Chat pod.

#### Lead

- Set up a “participant” computer nearby so you can see what the remote participants will see during the online meeting.
- Use a hands-free microphone or phone extension.
- If you have created a waiting room or lobby, change to this layout and open the welcome presentation before students arrive.
- Enter the dial-in phone number and passcode for conference numbers in the Chat pod when the class begins.
- When class begins, change to the Sharing layout and display your class agenda for review.
- Take a few minutes to orient students to the Adobe Connect meeting room layout, Chat pod, and other ways to communicate.
- Be sure to leave a few seconds between presentation slides or animations to make sure participants’ computers stay in sync. Periodically ask participants if the pace is working.
- When presenting to a large audience, you may get more questions than you can handle, or a participant may insist on constantly asking questions during your presentation. If possible, have an assistant field technical issues and support the class or guests while you keep the meeting on track.
- Allow for small group discussion and collaboration by using the breakout view in the Attendees pod.
- During class, promote certain students to the role of Presenter when you want them to be more active in the session.
- Record your online meeting or class for those who were unable to attend.

#### **Best practices when adding virtual components to a physical classroom**

Consider the following when designing, preparing, and leading online classes between two or more groups of students located in separate physical classrooms.

#### Design

- Schedule your meeting at a time that is convenient for both locations. Take into consideration time zone differences.
- Decide ahead of time how students will interact with other virtual participants. Are students allowed to speak at will, or must you call on them? Will all students appear on camera together, or will there be a “hot seat” where students can go to ask questions and interact with your guest.
- Create an Adobe Connect meeting room and customize layouts for the type of meetings you will lead. You can reuse this meeting room for more than one class.

#### Prepare

- Install and test all equipment, including computers, Internet connections, video cameras, microphones, and Adobe Connect meeting room access before the scheduled meeting.
- Use the Adobe Connect Audio Setup wizard to quickly set up and use your audio devices. You can test sound output, select a microphone, tune the microphone volume, and adjust the silence level.

- Establish ground rules with the class before the session begins. Be sure to remind students to offer the same respect and active listening they would extend to a live guest speaker or group.
- Prepare the physical classroom to limit distractions such as noises, phones, and visitors. Place a sign on the door to indicate you are participating in a live broadcast.
- Consider using a projection system to project the computer monitor to a larger viewing screen for the entire class to see.
- If students will appear on camera together, arrange the classroom desks or chairs so that all students can be seen together on camera.
- Test your camera and make sure the room lighting is adequate for a good image. Make sure to test this at the same time of day when the meeting will occur. Room lighting can differ throughout the day.
- To ensure successful communication, arrange a conference call as a backup or as an alternative to using the built-in Adobe Connect voice feature (VoiceOver IP).

### Lead

- Set up a “participant” computer nearby so you can see what the remote participants see during the online meeting. If you do not have access to a second computer, you can log in to the meeting by using a second Adobe Connect account on the same computer and then toggle back and forth between the two meeting room windows.
- Ask all students in the class to turn off mobile phones or other devices that may cause distraction.
- Periodically check in with the other group to make sure they can still hear and see you.
- Place instructions in the Chat pod for what to do if the other group can’t hear you or loses a connection. Provide an alternate phone number (such as a mobile phone number).
- If you’ve been speaking for a while without hearing from your guest, check to make sure the guest is still connected.
- Use a handheld (wireless) microphone that can be passed around the class for increased participation.
- Encourage students to be creative and have fun with the experience, while maintaining order and adhering to the ground rules.

For more information on Adobe Connect best practices, see *Adobe Connect best practices*.

For information on creating rich content for Adobe Connect meetings, see *Tools for creating reusable online content*.