**ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

1. **What the experts say**

Communicating electronically is a great way to meet “face-to-face” when you can’t travel the distance to be in person. It allows you to share your ideas and allows you to “see, hear and converse with others located hundreds or even thousands of miles away.”

-Instructional Communications Systems website - <http://www.uwex.edu/ics/video/about.htm>

**What is videoconferencing?**

Videoconferencing is a powerful telecommunication tool which transmits two-way interactive live video and audio simultaneously between two sites or multiple sites. A CODEC (compressor/decompressor) compresses the television audio and video signals, allowing them to be transmitted via high-capacity, ISDN telephone lines or the Internet. Compression technology makes videoconferencing easy and affordable. And, communication between sites is two-way and interactive.

Compressed video can be combined with multiple media: Text and graphics can be transmitted with a document camera; Computer graphics, documents, web sites, DVDs, and videotapes can be transmitted and viewed; and participants without access to to a videoconference system can join via audio teleconference using a telephone handset or speakerphone.

**Face-to-face, worldwide**

Meet face-to-face with your colleagues, or conduct courses and seminars without travelling across the state or country using videoconferencing. Videoconferencing makes your meetings come alive by bringing your associates into your meeting room. You can see, hear and converse with others located hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

It also helps to create a “global experience” while essentially eliminating geographical barriers. By limiting travel, it saves time and money.

-Brighthub website - <http://www.brighthub.com/education/special/articles/17936.aspx>

Most importantly, helps keep people connected.

# Video Conferencing in Education

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Updated Feb 3, 2010 • Related Guides: [Higher Education](http://www.brighthub.com/guides/higher-education.aspx)

Technology has penetrated into the classroom. Video Conferencing is an accepted mode of instruction in education. It works well for courses offering higher education and for professionals pursuing education. It is one of the best means of instruction for students with disabilities.

## Advantages and Tips

Video conferencing is an accepted mode of instruction in education these days. It is very close to normal classroom instruction in the sense that it is live. A two way connection using audio video equipment is established between multiple locations and visuals and voice are transmitted back and forth.

The advantages of Video Conferencing in Education are:

* Allows the students and the teachers to be at different locations;
* The students can be spread over multiple locations;
* Helps create a global classroom;
* The students are exposed to diversity in terms of culture, society, thought process etc;
* Geographical limitations are eliminated;
* Helps schedule learning as the student is not left by himself as in the case of a correspondence course;
* Is a preferred mode of learning for working professionals, as they do not need to relocate to the city of the college or university and classes can be scheduled during off hours from work;
* It is close to classroom instruction; communication between student – faculty, student – students can take place on the spot;
* Promotes collaborative learning.

It is a technique which is heavily dependent on means of communication and technology. This requires the teacher as well as the students be well adjusted to the technology being used. Normally, there is a technical person available on both sides, but a comfort level with technology at both ends does no harm.

For a Video Conferencing session to be successful it requires preparation. The level of preparation is more than what is required for a normal face-to-face class. The preparation needs to be done at both the ends. The following points need to be remembered before starting a class through video conferencing:

Technology: Both ends need to be accustomed to the equipment being used. Understand the complete functioning of the system. Running a test run can be of additional help. In case the technical person is not present do not miss to record his contact information for emergencies.

Lightning & Voice Transmission: The lightning and voice transmission equipment needs to be more than sufficient. Any kind of shortcoming could affect the quality of transmission and reception. The micro-phone, the camera, the lights all need to be placed carefully. Echo is something that can be a problem in Video Conferencing.

Video Conferencing Etiquettes: The students need to be apprised of the etiquettes that have to be observed during a session. Ruffling of papers, tapping of pencils, desks could be major disturbances.

In case the number of students is on the larger side, decorum or an order regarding communicating needs to be pre-decided. Since it is a two way communication, many people should not end up speaking at the same time.

Body Gestures and Movement, Voice (Volume, Pitch, Tone) all need to be worked on carefully.

Coordination: The faculty as well as the student needs to move in a planned and a scheduled manner. The students need to know before hand what content has been planned for a particular session. The students need to have before hand the necessary hand outs for a particular session.

Stimulating and Enriching: Since the teacher and the students are not present at the same location, there is a tendency to get into the lecture mode by the faculty and the passive mode of learning by the students. The session has to be kept interactive and interesting to avoid the pitfall of monotony.

With some sensitivity, it can be customized for students with special needs. It works well for courses offering higher education to professionals. There are a few short comings involved in this system like, the expense involved, dependence on technology, and non- involvement of active student participation. But the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

1. **A review of the main information presented in the video**

**Improving the Quality of Electronic Communication**

Manage the equipment – check software, camera, microphone and speakers

Manage the environment – think about the location and equipment being used

Determine time and who will initiate the call

Make sure all parties are registered correctly

**Four Key Components to Active Listening**

Focus on the speaker

Look at the camera

Forward documents in advance

Make sure documents show up clearly

Think about what the speaker is saying

Don’t let the technology get in the way

Ask for the information to be repeated

Respond verbally

Avoid speaking too softly or in a monotone voice

Speak in short, clear sentences

Respond non-verbally

Use precise and deliberate gestures

**Dealing with Delays**

Wait until the other person is finished talking

Take notes and paraphrase

Write down clarifying questions

Be confident

1. **Thinking with my family and friends**

Make a conferencing checklist – list the steps that you should go through before starting to communicate digitally. Be sure to include the steps that apply to your situation. Keep the list and add things to it as you become more experienced.

Dress Rehearsal – Before a conference, practice with a friend in another room or across town. This will allow you to be confident when the real event happens.

Listening – Be sure to remember your listening skills when communicating digitally. Interrupting can interfere with the process.

Agree on a signal – You may agree on a visual signal to use to let your partner know that you are ready to make a point. This way you don’t have to interrupt what they are saying but they can tell that you have a point to make. The nonverbal signs that we pick up on when we are in the same room with someone can often be lost with electronic communication.

1. **Thinking on my own**

Prepare yourself – Make a list of points, stories, questions or ideas that you want to share when you begin your conference. Read through the list to be sure that you have everything on it.

Practice – Practice going through the steps to get started before your event. It is even a good idea to see what you look like on screen so you are not surprised if you are using a method that shows your face.

Remove Distractions – Check out your area and remove items that may be distracting. Be sure to remove/turn-off your other electronic devices, too.

**5.  Extending my thinking**

Websites

Google Video Chat – an alternative to Skpye for anyone using Gmail

<https://www.google.com/chat/video>

Face Flow – a system that allows up to four locations to participate at one time

<http://www.faceflow.com/>

VSee – a host for video conferencing and sharing your desktop with other people

<http://vsee.com/>

Big Marker – use to create a private or public meeting room online

<http://www.bigmarker.com/>

Using video conferencing in the classroom:

<http://www.brighthub.com/education/special/articles/17936.aspx>

Troubleshooting Website:

<http://www.conferenceplus.com/techsupport/videotips.html>