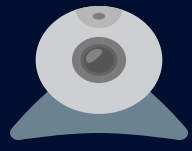




Cameras On or Cameras Off?



Faculty often inquire about whether they should or should not ask their students to turn web cameras on during synchronous online sessions.

Pros of cameras on

- May build engagement and trust
- May foster community within the class
- May enhance student presence
- May create a sense of accountability
- May facilitate learning student names
- May simulate in-person instruction

Cons of cameras on

- May create digital inequity for those students with limited bandwidth or internet access
- May lead to privacy issues and concerns for students
- May increase student self-consciousness
- Creates risk to FERPA-protected data
- Leads to exhaustion when staring into faces at close range

Suggestions

- Consider why you want students to have their cameras on. Will the camera enhance their learning? Do the pros outweigh the cons for your particular class situation?
- Turning cameras on should not be mandatory
- Recognize we do not always know the entire student situation; be patient, supportive, and maintain flexibility to account for situations when a student is uncomfortable or unable to turn the camera on.
- Recognize that many students will have poor bandwidth; camera usage will increase bandwidth requirements.
- Recognize that students may be in locations or situations that make it difficult, impossible, or uncomfortable to turn on a camera.
- Establish expectations for cameras at the start of the semester, including a statement in the syllabus explaining when and why the camera should be on.
- Consider starting the semester with a class discussion about pro's and con's of camera use and establishing in collaboration with the students a suggested class guidelines for camera use; this may lead to better class buy-in to camera use..
- Cameras can be required for an assessment or an authentication procedure if students are informed of this expectation in your syllabus.
- Considering asking students to turn on their camera when asking or responding to a question.
- Do not use a camera to monitor whether or not a student is attending or paying attention in class.
- Explain in the syllabus that faculty desire visual feedback and non-verbal cues during class and ask students to be flexible with camera use when possible.

Resources:

[“Should showing faces be mandatory?”](#), Inside Higher Ed, May 2020

[“8 ways to be more inclusive in your Zoom teaching”](#), Chronicle of Higher Education, April 2020

[“Should students show their faces on Zoom?”](#), Norman Eng blog

[“Why is Zoom so exhausting?”](#), Chronicle of Higher Education, April 2020

[“Synchronous online classes: 10 tips for engaging students”](#), Faculty Focus, June 2017