

Should I require students to turn on their web camera?



PROS

- Creates a sense of [connection and accountability](#)
- Fosters [community and enhances presence](#)
- Helps to [build engagement and trust](#)
- [Stimulates in-person instruction](#)
- Makes it easy to identify students by name
- Gallery view or the “Brady Bunch” view makes everyone visible to each other at the same time, which may help to break perceived power differential

CONS

- The [digital equity gap](#) for example limited bandwidth, internet access, and no camera on older laptops
- Invasion of [privacy](#). Students can see other students’ faces all the time
- Self-consciousness is also an issue
- The stimulation of [staring into faces at close range can be exhausting](#)
- Video overshooting; students do not want to show their surroundings
- Concerns about [FERPA-protected information](#)
- Limited numbers of students visible in Collaborate Ultra (4-6?). TEAMS may be a possibility in future. Zoom is not recommended because of security concerns

Other Ways to Keep Students Engaged

- Polling students
- Asking students to post in the chat
- Having students move themselves to specified breakout rooms
- Asking students to answer discussion questions (by raising their hands to contribute or by posting in the chat window)
- Individual or collaborative work that results in a product (see below for further interactive work options)
- Reviewing attendance records of streaming sessions (Blackboard provides a log of who has been logged on/length of time as well as recordings of course sessions and the chat window if selected).
- Requiring students who were unable to connect to view recordings and either summarize or answer specific questions about missed session

For more resources, tips and training visit at [Kent State Keep on Teaching](https://www.kent.edu/keeponteaching) <https://www.kent.edu/keeponteaching>.

Think about it

Consider the pros and cons, your own teaching style, the subject matter, size of the class and alternate ways of keeping students engaged.

- Establish expectations for turning on cameras early on and explain why
- Set norms for synchronous meetings and the use of video camera
- It is helpful to remember that some students may be uncomfortable being on camera. Students with limited internet capabilities may also have technical issues with being on camera. You can help these students in the following ways:
 - Encourage students to participate in whatever way is most comfortable. Normalize the use of both the camera and chat functions whenever possible
 - Be explicit about when camera use is necessary for course requirements, such as demonstrating a task, giving a presentation, or taking an exam.
 - Provide alternatives when possible. For example, can the student submit a video to you directly rather than being on camera in front of the entire class
 - You may ask students to make themselves visible if they are asking/responding to a question; otherwise, use chat
- Consider having short conferences to have face-to-face time with students. You may choose to encourage, but not insist on, the use of video camera for discussions, virtual office hours, and consultations
- In larger classes, limitations to technology (especially bandwidth) may mean you tell students to turn their cameras off during lectures, only putting them on to ask questions or not at all. In those cases, other mechanisms for maintaining engagement (see suggestions above) may be desirable

If turning video cameras on is mandatory, that should be clearly explained in the syllabus and exceptions are likely going to have to be made when students are experiencing technical problems.

If the student notes that their webcam concerns are related to a disability (such as severe anxiety), you can reach out to SAS to discuss possible alternatives or accommodations.