

Guidelines to support schools using live video with students

This document provides guidance and support on the use of video when teaching and learning from home. The department has revised its recommendations and guidelines around using video in response to increasing numbers of students and teachers learning and teaching from home. NSW principals and teachers should read this document to help decide when and how to use live video in their lesson delivery.

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Key Questions

Can we use live video conference with students?

Yes, teachers can use live video conference with students with cameras enabled, but you must not record your students. Live recordings are not permitted.

This is for your privacy, as well as the privacy of your students and other household members who are present while the live video lesson is happening.

Which platforms can we use for video conferencing?

The following platforms have been approved for live video: MS Teams, Zoom and the department's own video conferencing platform.

Zoom – all stages (Years **K-12**)

Microsoft Teams – Stages 3-6 (Years **5-12**)

NSW DoE Video conferencing – Stages 4-6 (Years **7-12**)

These platforms have been tested by the department and some functionality such as live recordings and one-on-one chats have been disabled.

See [Which platform should we choose?](#) for a breakdown of the differences between the available platforms.

When should we use live video conferencing?

There are academic, social and wellbeing benefits for students in using video conferencing software to communicate and collaborate online with their class and teachers when they are learning from home or remote location.

We are aware that not all students or teachers will be able to connect to live video due to limited internet service or access to digital learning devices. In these instances we strongly recommend alternative methods such as regular telephone calls to stay in contact and maintain engagement with your student and their family.

Are chat sessions (video or audio) with students allowed?

Only whole class or group sessions are allowed. Teachers should not conduct 1:1 video, audio or chat sessions with a student.

If you need to have a private discussion with one student, make sure that there is a parent/carer and another teacher present.

If we are audio chatting with a group of students does a parent or other adult need to be present?

No. Parents can help their child set up devices, but should not join any group/class chats being moderated by the teacher. When the live online session is finished, you should wait for all students to exit the meeting before leaving. This ensures that students do not continue chatting without the teacher present.

Do different rules apply when connecting with high school students?

No, the same rules apply to both primary and secondary students.

Do these guidelines apply to distance education teachers and students?

No, distance education teachers and students operate under different protocols. These guidelines are for schools that are temporarily shifting to a learning from home model.

How is teacher and student privacy protected?

MS Teams and Zoom have the ability to customise backgrounds either by blurring the background or loading a static picture.

If you are using Teams or Zoom you should ask all students to blur or set their background to an appropriate static picture at the beginning of the lesson.

How long should a live online session be?

We recommend that teachers pre-record lessons and use live sessions for feedback from the teacher and discussion. Most sessions should be no more than **20 minutes** each.

Do we have to upload videos to reach teaching and learning requirements? Is it compulsory?

Pre-recorded lessons and live sessions can be helpful, but they are **not compulsory**. Teachers communicate with students in many ways, including sending home hard copies of work. Principals and teachers at a school should agree on a consistent school-wide approach wherever possible.

Who decides whether and how a school will use video conferencing and which platform?

After considering the needs of the students, teachers and the school community, the **principal** must decide whether teachers can use video conferencing software as an online synchronous tool for teaching and learning. These guidelines should be in line with the digital devices procedure developed by the school. For further advice on how to stay safe online, visit the department's [Digital Citizenship](#) website and the [eSafety Commissioner site](#).

Which platform should we use?

The department recommends the following platforms for the indicated stages and year levels:

Zoom – all stages (Years **K-12**)

Microsoft Teams – Stages 3-6 (Years **5-12**)

NSW DoE video conferencing – Stages 4-6 (Years **7-12**)

We have worked closely with the Child Wellbeing Unit, Legal Services Directorate, School Services and Information Technology Directorates as well as representatives from the Primary Principals Association and the Secondary Principals Council in developing these recommendations.

In response to COVID-19 and to ensure that teachers can engage with students in a safe and secure environment, we have made live video available between teachers and students and enabled video for all students.

The following tables break down the capabilities of each available platform, both in terms of what teachers and students can do, and how each support the wellbeing and privacy of students and teachers.

Table 1 – What can teachers and students do on the different platforms?

Function	MS Teams	Google Hangout Meet	Zoom (NSW DoE)	NSW DoE video conferencing
Broadcast video (teacher/student)	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/Y
Record lessons (teacher/student)	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
Blur video background or set to a static image	Y	N	Y	N
Group/class chat	Y	N	Y	N
Private 1:1 chat	N	N	N	Y

Table 2 – How do the platforms support student wellbeing, safety and equity?

	MS Teams	Google Hangout Meet	Zoom (NSW DoE)	NSW DoE video conferencing
Accessibility: Live captioning	Y	Y	N	N
Accessibility: Can pin video of sign interpreter	Y	Y	N	N
Classroom management: Teacher can moderate	Y	Y	Y	N
Legal: Can log audit trail	Y	Y	Y	N
Privacy: Teacher can restrict access to video chat	Y	N	Y	N

Setting up the technology and environment

- Provide clear instructions to students on how they can access the video lesson and if there are any password needed to access the online classroom.
- To avoid annoying feedback loops teachers and students should test their audio, webcam and speakers in advance. Most applications have inbuilt testing wizards.
- Pre-set your video lesson to mute participants' microphone automatically upon entry. You can choose to switch them on selectively to allow student participation.
- It's important to start with the teachers camera turned on. This reinforces to students this is a live session, and establishes a more personal connection with students. However, after a short while, the camera can be turned off to preserve bandwidth and focus students on learning.
- Where possible students and teachers should be in a quiet space with a simple background behind them. The background where possible should not include thoroughfares or active spaces that might accidentally lead to inappropriate vision or distractions.

Preparing for a video conference class

- As part of your lesson preparation, we recommend that students download learning materials to be used in the classroom before the lesson.
- Set up a lobby environment where students can engage with the class group while waiting for all students to enter the room. For example a quick poll, reading the learning objectives, background music or a countdown can be used.
- Prepare an agenda or plan for each class that you can share at the beginning. This gives students a clear idea of how the class will progress, what will be covered, and the activities they'll engage in.

Running a video conference classroom

- The video conference room is a classroom and the same school behaviour and discipline policies apply to this environment.
- Do not allow any unauthorised access to the video conference room. This includes parents, unless they have been authorised to attend by the teacher prior to the class.
- All invited guest adult speakers should have a current Working With Children Check (WWCC) before being admitted into an online room.
- Most of the products will allow you to remove participants if needed, **if** you are the host.
- Add a password to the room to ensure extra security when using Zoom.
- A teacher should enter the room before the start time. Students should not be in the online room without a teacher who is the host or co-host for the lesson.

- Turn off student cameras unless they need to demonstrate their learning to the class. In most programs individual camera access can be enabled and disabled as required by the host.
- Be careful when using screen sharing – it can be easy to accidentally share confidential information. We strongly recommend that you shut down any email programs during the lesson.
- Limit students' ability to chat amongst one another during a lesson unless it is required for group work. An in-meeting chat can be disabled by most software for the entire lesson.

Pre-recording your lesson

- **Do not record your lessons if students can be seen or heard**
 - It is impracticable to get the consent of all the people who may be recorded during a lesson at this point of time. We do not want a failure to provide consent in a timely fashion to result in a student's education being disrupted.
 - We cannot ensure that supervising adults are present at all times.
- We recommend that where possible, teachers use Adobe Connect to pre-record video lessons and publish them either in Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom for students to access at any time as part of flexible timetable learning. This supports students who are unable to attend the lesson.
- If possible, request that students log in with their first name and initial of their surname to keep their identity secure. An authenticated log in is preferred but the student may be identified.
- Be careful about where your recorded lessons are published. Do not publish class lessons publicly.
- Ensure all class pre-recordings are published only on department-authorised systems such as Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom. These are known and supported secure systems. Use the password protection built into the applications or use as a password protected online platform to link to the recording.

Best practice for lessons

The classroom teacher needs to be the manager of this online environment as they would be in a face to face classroom.

- To provide the optimal learning environment, consider organising two teachers to present the lesson. This provides the opportunity for one teacher to focus on delivering the lessons and the support teacher communicating via text chat and working collaboratively with the lead teacher to raise key questions.
- As a teacher (host) join your class early to ensure a proper connection.
- Welcome students and acknowledge them by name and engage in light conversation as a welfare check. Ask students to mute video and audio if this has not already been done unless they are answering, demonstrating or asking a question.

- Discuss online behaviour and expectations of the students in your first virtual class.
- Give clear and explicit instruction for the technology so they feel supported and regularly clarify their understanding.
- Embrace the pause. Take a moment after the end of your comments and allow for students to ask questions and engage before continuing on.
- Take time to promote questions, comments, and interactions from your class. Allow time for your students to raise their hand, write their questions in chat, or be unmuted to ask their questions live.
- When a student turns on video acknowledge them and any features of their background that may be visible. This allows the teacher to raise awareness that the environment of the student is visible to all the class.
- Speak slowly and clearly, especially for primary school students.
- You have to bring the energy into the classroom even when there is a perceived lack of engagement/response from the students.
- As the students become more confident in the online space, perhaps allow them to lead discussions or conversations. As in a physical classroom, the teacher doesn't need to run all the activities but do ensure that they the expectations are clear and all students know what their role is.
- Have students be the presenter and share projects with the class. This allows your students to show what they're working on while practicing their presentation skills. It also allows students to hear from one another.
- Try to make the lessons interactive and engaging by varying the way you deliver the lessons. Use the live lesson as an opportunity to collaborate, discuss and brainstorm ideas.
- Try to inject some wonder and fun into your online lesson. This is a time for the students and teacher to meet up and establish a social connection. Try a wonder of the week, fun facts or topic related puns.
- As you get more confident with using the tools experiment with some more advanced features such as white boarding tools, annotation tools, polls, screen sharing and breakout sessions to add variety to the lessons.
- Restrict the length of a video lesson to no more than 40min to maintain student focus.

Background and Context

NSW principals and teachers may want to use live video to connect and engage with their students where possible. It is important to work closely with your school community before making a final decision.

Until recently the department supported two video chat products for school use: Microsoft Teams and Google Hangouts Meet.

Both allowed teachers and other staff to display their video, but student video was disabled. Teachers and students have always been able to share their desktop screen during a group video call on both products.

Prior to COVID-19 the department did not need to change this stance as our students have generally been physically in front of us in our classrooms. Guidance from the eSafety Commissioner regarding our duty of care in an online environment said that this was reasonable.

In response to the rapidly changing landscape of the classroom and as more of our students begin to transition to learning from home we have revisited this position, taking into consideration applicable national and state laws, policies and procedures.

As our schools have responded to the rapid changes within their school communities and worked to identify ways to stay connected between teachers and students there was a significant uptake of the free version of Zoom. To ensure that we continue to support the safety and security of all of our teachers and students, the department has recently engaged in a 90-day enterprise licence trial with Zoom.

Professional learning for teachers

Professional learning for teachers in the use of these platforms has been and continues to be provided to assist teachers in their delivery of learning using these platforms.

This professional learning is delivered by teachers who have experience in delivering learning using these online platforms with students and who have a deep understanding of how curriculum and learning connect in an online world.

Additional professional learning has been developed by the Child Wellbeing Unit to support principals and teachers with a focus on students who are learning from home.

Privacy and security requirements for teachers and students is taken very seriously by the department and these requirements are embedded in the learning teachers experience in the professional learning provided by the Department. This can be accessed via MyPL or the [Learning from home hub](#)

Support for parents/carers

Principals are also encouraged to direct parents/carers to the department's [Digital Citizenship website](#) and the [eSafety Commissioner website](#) where there is helpful advice for parents to help their children have safe, enjoyable experiences online.