



# Webinars in Teaching

TECH STUFF: 1. You can use webinars through [Blackboard](#)

[Collaborate](#) (students will have to log in to Blackboard but you can provide a guest link too) or you can webcast directly to [Youtube](#) (you need to apply for verification on Youtube first and then use the Live Stream function).

With Youtube you will need a program on your computer to handle the streaming, for example, [Vmix](#) or [OBS](#).

2. You will need a [webcam](#) attached to your computer. A good external one tends to work better than built-in versions and often have better microphones. A particularly good one is Logitech C922 or similar. You will also need [headphones](#) to ensure that you can monitor the sound.

3. Always try to use a [wired ethernet](#) connection. Webinars will work with WIFI but the signal tends to fluctuate and can make for a frustrating user experience.



4. The microphone on your webcam is likely to be fine. But investing in a [good external microphone](#) is probably the best next step in improving overall quality. A good USB microphone is the Blue Yeti. Alternatively, the Zoom H1 or a lavalier (lapel microphone) solution such as the Zoom F1 will work very well.

5. If you want to share your screen to show slides or documents, you can do this easily with Blackboard or Vmix.

6. It is a good idea to [record webcasts](#). Youtube will do this automatically but you can also set either Vmix or Blackboard Collaborate to record.

7. If you want to write (as in a screencast) you will need a tablet connected to your PC. A simple solution is the Wacom [graphics tablet](#) (see the guide on making videos) although it can be tricky to use such a device to write with.

8. A more advanced setup would be to use a tablet (like a [Surface Pro](#) machine) to run the webinar from. It is possible to connect the display of a second machine to the webinar but this is a more advanced set up and would typically require an external "HDMI capture" card.

## TIPS

1. Webinars are not difficult to run but there are [many things to keep track of](#), for example: Is the stream running? Am I recording? Is there sound? Are there chat questions coming in? Where is my PowerPoint screen? Until you become proficient, it is a good idea to have someone else in the room to help keep track of the various elements.



A particularly effective use for a [second presenter is to keep track of the questions](#) and interrupt the webinar at various points so that the questions can be dealt with.



2. Always inform your students about the webinar close to the time. It is best to put the information, including a link to join, in an email so it is easily accessible.

3. Always let students know if you are recording the webinar.

4. Before beginning the webinar, [use the chat facility](#) (in YouTube or in Collaborate) to ensure students can see and hear you. Alternatively arrange with a colleague to remotely log in and confirm at the start of the webinar that the live stream is working properly.

5. Webinars are ideal for student engagement. The chat facility allows for effective dialogue with students so you should [design your webinars with a few points where students are asked to respond](#) or answer quizzes or questions through this facility. The earlier in the webinar you ask students to use the chat, the more likely they are to use the chat later.

#### WHY USE THEM?

1. Webinars are particularly effective for [creating dialogue with students](#) because some students are unwilling to speak up in a large group setting.

2. Webinars are effective for [modelling dialogue](#) particularly if you have a second presenter. Seeing academics discussing topics with each other can both encourage students to ask questions and put their points of view across, but the dialogic mode of delivery can be pedagogically effective because it moves a teaching session away from a “transmission” mode towards a more active and engaged delivery. A very effective use of webinars is for other instructors or academics to join remotely, even if only for a part of the webinar. Having multiple voices and presenters is an effective way of engaging students and keeping their interest. It is possible for remote presenters to join as “presenters” rather than students so that they can speak.

3. Webinars are very flexible ways to teach. They can be scheduled or arranged at very short notice as there is no need to book a room. You can present a webinar from more or less any location. All you need is a laptop with a webcam, headphones and a good internet connection.



Figure: Webinar in session from Bristol through Blackboard Collaborate with remote presentation from Boston, USA.

Author: Alvin Birdi, University of Bristol