

# Engagement When Teaching Remotely

This guide will walk you through how to engage with students in Canvas while you are teaching online. This guide assumes that you teach on-ground and are not very familiar with Canvas. Use it in conjunction with the remote teaching resources provided on the [Office of Distance Learning website](#).

## Announcements

Use the Announcements area (left navigation) to send messages to your students. Your first announcement should include your contact info, such as your Northwestern email (or other email if that's what you'll have easier access to), phone number, etc. Typical uses for announcements include: weekly wrap-ups, class updates, and reminders about sync sessions.

Another way to communicate with students is through virtual office hours via Zoom (see sync session below).

## Discussion Boards

Just as you would hold small group discussions in a class or ask questions as part of your class, you can hold online discussions. This is a space that allows instructors to discuss course content or assignments with students, or for students to share work or ask questions. Pose the same types of questions that you would in class. Then go back in a day or two later and ask additional questions and guide the discussion by commenting on their conversations. Don't feel that you need to comment on everything---just drop in where your insights are most useful. Explain to students that they are responsible for taking the lead and having a rich conversation. Here's [how to set up a discussion board in Canvas](#). [Learn more about discussions and get recommendations](#).

Instructors often expect students to read during the early part of the week, then start posting on Wednesday or Thursday and continue discussing through Saturday night. You don't have to follow this timeline, but it is a common way to handle this.

## Groups

For larger classes, we often recommend that you divide your class into groups of about 7-9 students per discussion. That way, students will respond to the discussion board in an easy-to-manage format. You can put everyone into the same discussion, but it can get overwhelming. Here's [how to set up group discussions](#).

## Sync Sessions

During your regular class time slot, you can hold an online sync session. This session could include a discussion about the course material, go over the next, big assignment, a short, mini-lecture by you or a TA, or a Q&A from the whole class. These sync sessions don't have to be held during every class period that you would have had on campus. Schedule them when you feel they are needed most.

The Zoom web conferencing tool is integrated into Canvas. Use Zoom to host sync sessions with your class. Review the [Zoom: Getting Started & Support Option](#).

[Read this for tips about conducting sync sessions](#). If students need live captioning for sync sessions, encourage them to reach out to [AccessibleNU](#) as soon as possible for accommodations.