

# Strategies to Prevent and Manage Issues Related to Technology

2020 Online TA Institute

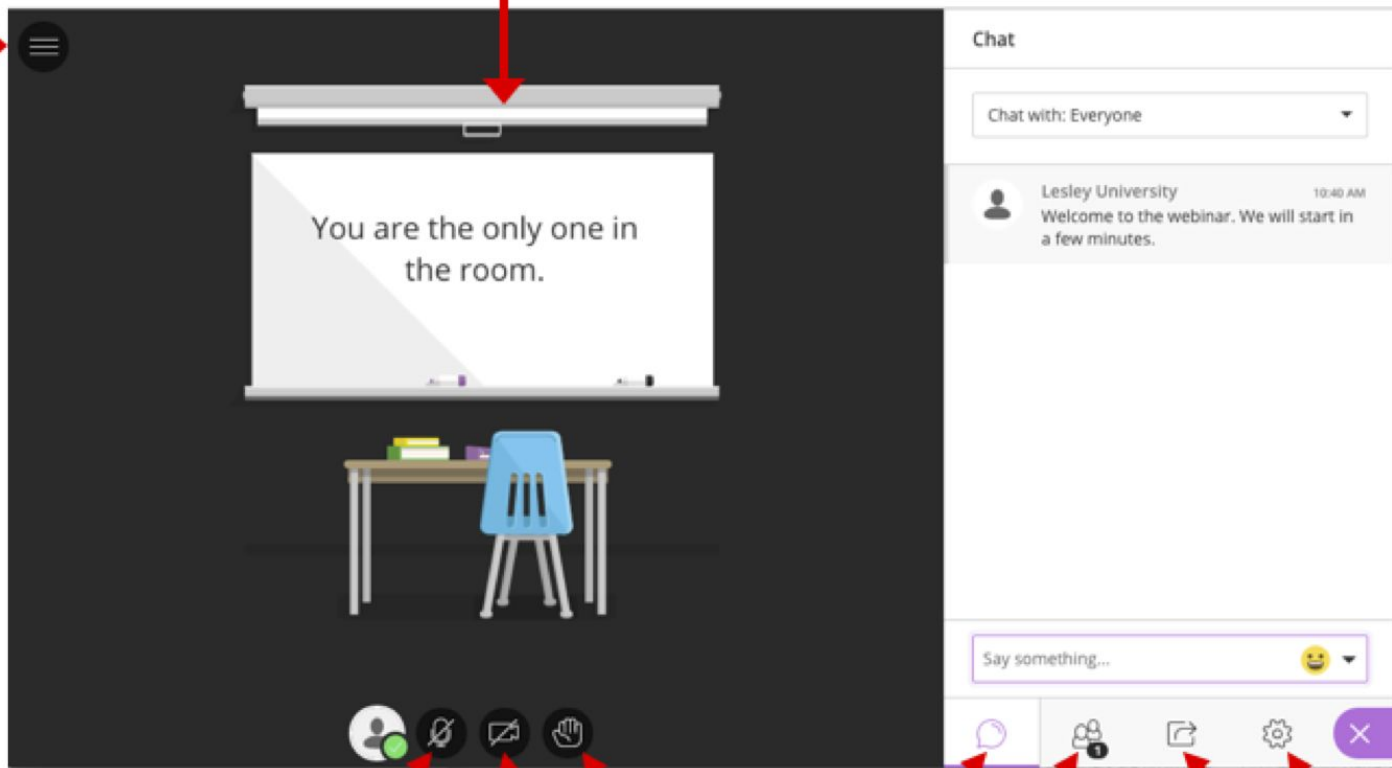
Sophie MacDonald  
Jens Vent-Schmidt

## Session Menu

(Recording, call in by phone, get help)

## Media Space

(Webcam, whiteboard, shared content)



Microphone on/off

Webcam on/off

Raise hand

Chat

Participants

Share content

Settings

# Share your expectations/goals for today using annotate

Understand better how to make Online sessions flow and retain engagement with the students  
to learn the difference between using annotate vs chat 

Hear from peers and presenter about what works, and what do differently.

learn and practice about technological skills for online teaching

How to help students who might experience tech issues during class, or who might not have the resources to have quality instruction

good ways to adapt teaching to online formats

finding out what resources exist for tech learning needs and on the spot difficulties

Tips and tricks about how to have the best online sessions    The potential issues we might face in the future (fall term maybe)

Learn to best facilitate remote learning for instructors and students.

Anticipate as much as I can in terms of possible issues so I don't panic when they happen :)

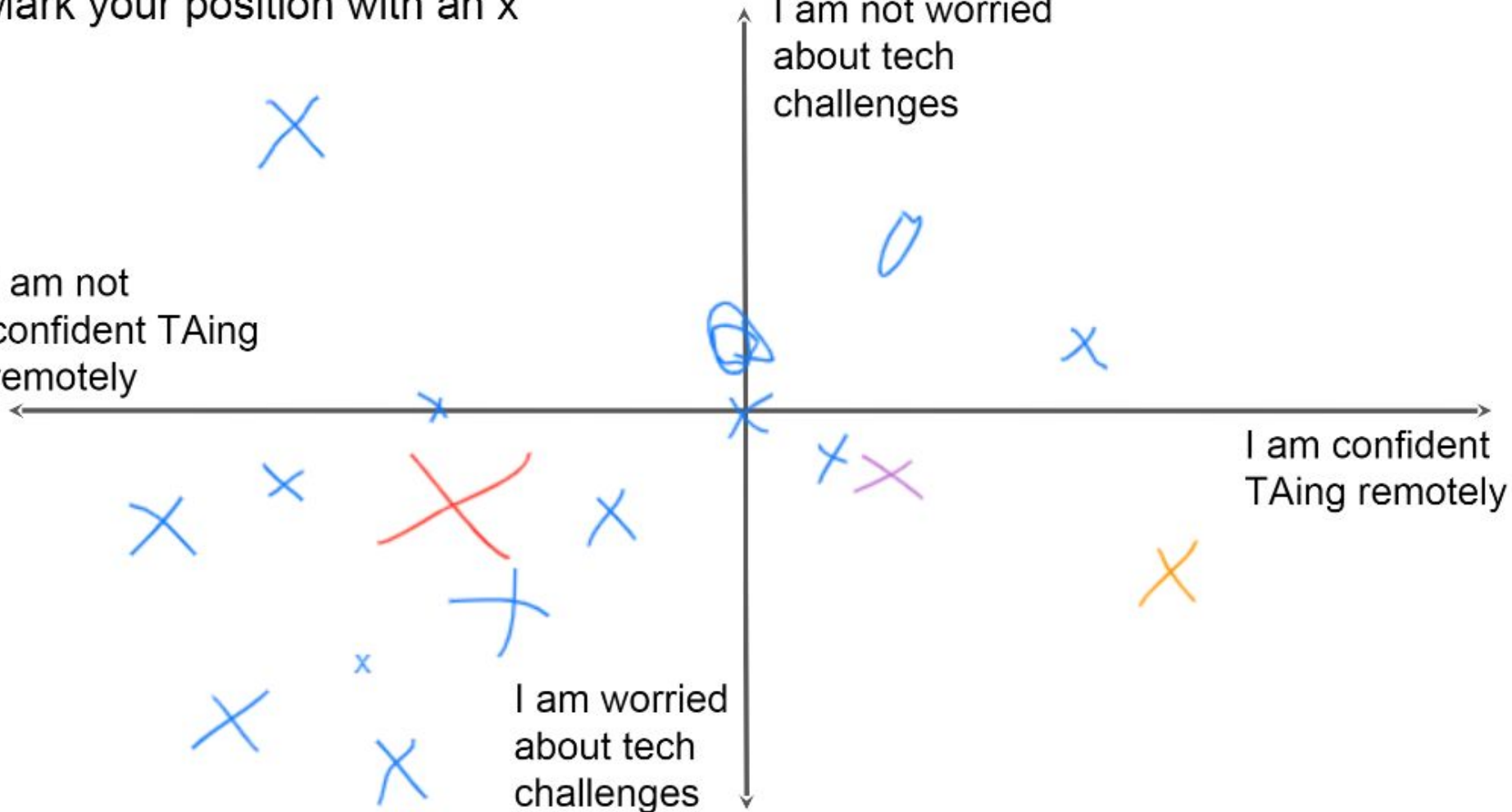
Mark your position with an x

I am not  
confident TAing  
remotely

I am not worried  
about tech  
challenges

I am confident  
TAing remotely

I am worried  
about tech  
challenges



# Activity 1

Go to this Google Slidedeck:

- Share challenges/issues/barriers related to technology you anticipate happening while you TAing
- Create one textbox per challenge/issue/barrier
- As your peers share their challenges/issues, we will sort these into common themes
- In the next activity, you will discuss these challenges/barriers in breakout groups

# If you are still on slide 6, you can find instructions to the activity on slide 7

- Facilitating discussion sections

Moving from a primarily vocal form of instruction to a primarily written one.

Estimate group size versus activity. Write now we are 20ish students typing on this slide. How about large group?

- Unstable internet connections

Time zone differences

Supporting students that are new to online learning

Lab assignment creation and marking

- Marking in class assessments for students in different time zones

**Managing Civility**

Individual student feedback

Explaining and discussing Math equations in an environment like excel spread sheet

Monitoring individual activity

- Technical difficulties (internet connection) with sharing video

- Assessing presentations without considering body language
- Engaging students in the topic. Students lose interest **Quick**
- Preventing cheating

Facilitating discussions

Synchronous vs asynchronous learning

Assessing student participation and engagement

Monitor participation if we don't see students names as they create text boxes, type stuff etc

Facilitating student sense of community

# Activity 2

- I move you into breakout rooms, one challenge theme per room
- In breakout rooms, discuss and summarize on your slide:
  - How does this challenge affect me vs. my students?
  - How can I ask the course instructor for support with this challenge?
  - What can I do independently to prevent vs. manage this challenge?
- Timeline
  - 15 min working on slides in breakout room (I'll keep the time)
  - 10 min break + “gallery walk”: look individually at other group’s slides
  - Brief slide presentations + discussion as a large group

# Challenge - Evaluation and Assessment, prevent cheating

- How does this challenge affect me vs. my students?
  - Greater possibility of cheating
- How can I ask the course instructor for support with this challenge?
  - Adapt the assessments to online instruction (make them timed/ interpretive/ open book) (unsure what this looks like for non-theoretical/arts based courses)
  - Develop community guidelines and go over them regularly (ways of participating/ addressing each other/ boundaries of using technology/ using right pronouns).
- What can I do independently to prevent vs. manage this challenge?
  - Try to curate curiosity/intrinsic motivation to practice/do the work and work to limit the temptation to cheat
  - Checking in with students through the term about their comfort with different modes of online instruction/ assessments
  - If there are blatant instances of cheating/ plagiarism - contact the student and perhaps give them another make-up assessment. This cannot be applied in all cases but in general it can foster a sense of conscience and responsibility.



# Challenge - Tracking student participation

## 1. How does this challenge affect me vs. my students?

- Me: can't pick up on nuances in students's questions, harder to gage if students are engaged without body language
- Students: feel disconnected from peers. Can get easily distracted, may not feel engaged in material

## 2. How can I ask the course instructor for support with this challenge?

- [Initiate clickers/online polling systems](#) (could be synchronous or asynchronous if you time them with recorded lectures)
- Implement in-class online activities or break-out groups (synchronous classes only)
- including media and content related to the course to show “real world applications”
- Piazza - discussion boards that allow students to post and answer each others questions -> helps them get answers and learn content (asynchronously)

## 3. What can I do independently to prevent vs. manage this challenge?

- Encourage students to jot their non-urgent questions down, and submit them for a response between classes.
- Pause for questions, check in occasionally for questions
- Ask students to answer simple (1-word answer) questions in the chat

# Challenge - facilitation discussions, lack of body language

## Group 3

- Online proctoring - proctorio or using collaborate
- Lack of body language could mean lack of reactions - uncomfortable
- Disconnect between real reactions vs using reaction emojis (not being able to see confused faces, for example)
  - Alternate between grid view and presentation view.
  - Frequent question periods
  - Promote activities that require reaction engagement (Zoom participant's windows, annotate features on Blackboard)
- Anonymity and privacy concerns of using Google, Zoom (bc of US servers)
  - Finding Canadian alternatives - Collaborate on Canvas

FYI, Zoom is officially allowed for UBC teaching
- Asynchronous vs synchronous discussions
  - Sync - google anonymous icons, live discussions (immediate feedback)
  - Async - blog posts/comments, research diary, discussion threads.
  - Finding a good balance between sync and async to accommodate for different learners and different circumstances.
- Workshops for students to get them engaging with the platforms before classes.
- Finding ways to engage and motivate students is more challenging online.
- Who is being left out through online learning?
  - (barriers to online learning like internet connection, etc)

# Challenge - technology/teaching mismatch

It seems at times that the higher need as an online TA is to be technically proficient rather than the traditional requirement to understand the subject in-depth. Take as much tech TA Training as available. **Can this be part of TA work hours total?**

Having issues with the platform absolutely stops learning flow and affects credibility as a TA. This Summer has shown us how far we have to go. But keeping a positive attitude with the students and a kind of flexibility helps big time.

I don't have TA experience but this challenge will put more pressure on me getting familiar with the technology to be able to help students.

I can ask the instructor to clearly define my responsibilities so I can work on that limited tasks. Also, I can ask for resources

I need to do more practice to familiarize myself with the online teaching platforms and all tools available to make the experience enjoyable for both students and me

<= Good point; don't want to be working more hours than being paid, esp. Dealing with tech

Offer as many opportunities to students as possible for one-on-one teaching sessions.

# Challenge - how to build the group coherence and manage civility (Group 5)

Having smaller groups and monitoring them time to time

Having peer evaluation forms. (considering a significant portion of grade)

Having video calls and one on one meetings with students from time to time, to build connections so everyone feels responsible for their actions and duties.

**Very time consuming, individual student calls**

Define the boundaries at the first session (e.g.starting emails with Hello, Hi, not HEEY. or considering the work hours, not sending email at 3 am)

Clarifying the expectations and responsibilities that TAs have

Preparing a guideline and including students

Some students may have some grouping preferences (e.g., time zone) and it may be possible to respect that. Have people that can get along well in the same groups.

# Challenge - What to teach asynchronously vs synchronously, mind the time-zone difference

How does this challenge affect me vs. my students?

Challenges:

- different time zones
- Monitoring the students' understanding during the class

Possible solutions:

- Group students as per time zones and give them assignments so they can coordinate better
  - Flexible office hours keeping in mind international students in different time zones
- Synchronous work to be done during class discussions. Asynchronous work assigned afterwards for individual or group assignments for more flexibility
- Using Collaborate Ultra's reactions and polls
- Students can message the TA's privately for help during class

# Short Break + Gallery Walk

Take some time individually to look at the other groups' slides

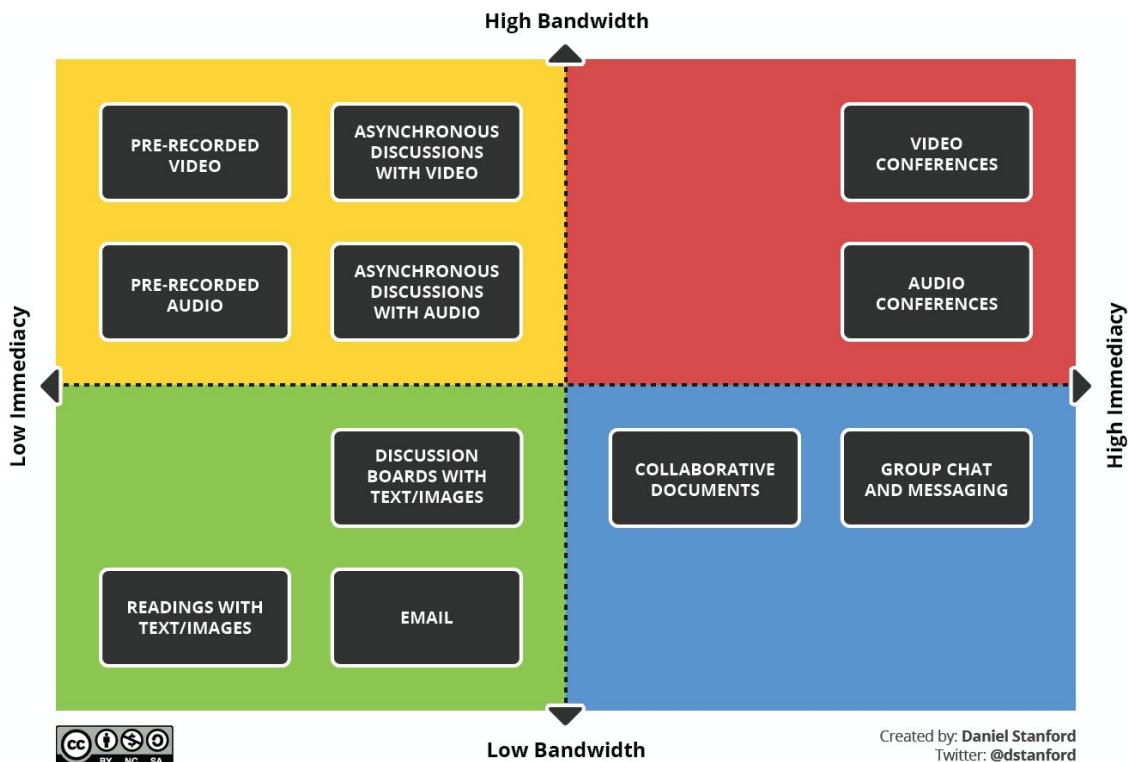
- Reflect on anything that seems helpful or relevant to you
- Add a comment to the slide, or take a private note

Also a great time for a quick bio break -- please be back by \_\_\_\_\_

# Large group debrief

- How does this challenge affect me vs. my students?
  - impersonal online teaching/learning
  - some students benefit from immediacy, helpful for you to gauge their engagement
  - pressure to familiarize ourselves with technology
- How can I ask the course instructor for support with this challenge?
  - rethinking some assessments -> assess learning rather than access
  - ask instructor for resources
  - ask for clear guidelines + expectations
- What can I do independently to prevent vs. manage this challenge?
  - practice; positive attitude as much as possible
  - for synchronous teaching, using the tools you have (e.g. reactions, polls)
- Other takeaways

# Can you offer course content and activities using low bandwidth, low immediacy media?



Created by: Daniel Stanford  
Twitter: @dstanford

Combine multiple technologies for

- content delivery
- learning opportunities

Can you alternate asynchronous and synchronous deliver?

Provide choice, apply principles from Universal Design for Learning - UDL



# Reflect individually and take notes on a paper or text editor

- What would be the best source of content for students: textbook, lecture, online search, other, all of these? Why?
- What is the added value of providing content through synchronous powerpoint slides when it is available elsewhere (books, internet, etc)? What are your reasons? Are they pedagogical or for other reasons?
- What activities do you provide to enable students to learn or apply the content in this course? Which of those can students do on their own time?
- How can you make sure your students are connecting with other students online, so they do not feel socially isolated, and how best can they use that connection to further their learning?

# Resources

UDL: <http://www.cast.org/>

UBC RTI: <https://institute.ctlt.ubc.ca/remote-teaching-institute/>

UBC keep teaching: <https://keepteaching.ubc.ca/>

CIRTL: Tips for Support Staff and TAs: <https://www.cirtl.net/events/874>

UC Davis Course (by Indiana University) on Teaching Online: <https://canvas.ucdavis.edu/courses/34528>

Tips for effective online discussions: <https://er.educause.edu/blogs/2018/11/10-tips-for-effective-online-discussions>

Tony Bates - Teaching in a Digital Age: <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/teachinginadigitalagev2>

Inclusion, Equity and Access <https://cte.rice.edu/blogarchive/2020/3/13/inclusion-equity-and-access-while-teaching-remotely>

Online team building ideas <https://www.leveraginglearning.com/lcl-blog/6-engaging-icebreakers-for-your-online-students>